NATURAL THEOLOGY AND TRUTH:
DOES THOMISM AUGMENT BELIEF IN THE REUSRRECTION?

Greg Stiekes[1]

From the latter half of the twentieth century, during the erosion of positivism, or the confidence

that rational propositions are verifiable through empirical means, the philosophical inquiry

known as "natural theology" has made a surprising comeback.[2] In fact, today natural theology

enjoys a prominence among leading apologists and philosophers that it has not known since the

medieval writings of Thomas Aquinas. "Theism," claim William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland,

"is on the rise; atheism is on the decline."[3]

Natural theology has classically referred to reflection upon the reality of the existence of

God apart from divine revelation.[4] Familiar, classical arguments such as cosmological

arguments, teleological arguments, moral arguments, ontological arguments, and even arguments

from religious experience, are used to build a case for the existence of God with, and only with,

what is visible and rational in the phenomenal universe. But in today's philosophical currency,

natural theology can also refer to the logical investigation of any religious or theological

---

[1] Greg Stiekes, M.A., M.Div., Th.M., Ph.D., is an assistant professor of New Testament at Bob Jones Seminary in Greenville, SC. The reflections in this paper were initiated during in a doctoral seminar directed by Greg Welty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[2] William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, "Introduction," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland; Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), ix, explain, "The collapse of positivism and its attendant verification principle of meaning was undoubtedly the most important philosophical event of the twentieth century. Their demise heralded a resurgence in metaphysics, along with other traditional problems of philosophy that verificationism had suppressed. Accompanying this resurgence has come something new and altogether unanticipated: a renaissance in Christian philosophy."

[3] Ibid. Craig and Moreland cite Quentin Smith, a secularist who is sorry to report that, at least in the philosophy departments of the university, God is not "dead" any longer. To explain the current openness to propositions about the supernatural and transcendent, one need look largely at the failure of modernism to provide meaning, and the resulting rise of postmodernity.

[4] Charles Taliaferro, "The Project of Natural Theology," in in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland; Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1, says, "Natural theology is the practice of philosophically reflecting on the existence and nature of God independent of real or apparent divine revelation or scripture. Traditionally, natural theology involves weighing arguments for and against God's existence, and it is contrasted with *revealed theology*, which may be carried out within the context of ostensible revelation of scripture."

proposition, using the epistemic tools of evidentialism rather than those of presuppositionalism, and rejecting fideism, which appeals to Scripture and to Scripture alone.

Perhaps the foremost religious proposition of this sort today is the proposition that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead. Christian apologists such as Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, and more recently Michael Licona, N. T. Wright, and Timothy and Lydia McGrew have each challenged the academy with cogent arguments in favor of the resurrection of Jesus, which initially stand aloof from the authority of Holy Scripture.

The basis for such a project which, ironically, argues for the claims of Scripture while divorcing the debate from the authority of Scripture, has a long history which first reached a zenith with Aquinas's *Summa Theologica.* In the *Summa*, Aquinas finds justification for natural theology in Rom 1:20, where Paul claims that God's *invisible things* (ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ), which include his "eternal power and divine nature," may be *understood* and clearly *perceived* (νοούμενα καθορᾶται) *through the things which have been made* (τοῖς ποιήμασιν). So God's *visible* creation, Paul says, is the *instrument* through which *invisible* attributes of God may be understood. But God's creation would be no instrument at all, argues Aquinas,

> unless the existence of God could be demonstrated through the things that are made; for the first thing we must know of anything is, whether it exists.
> Demonstration can be made in two ways: One is through the cause,… The other is through the effect…. When an effect is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God . . . can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us.[5]

---

[5] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1.2.2. Translation from Peter Kreeft, ed., *Summa of the Summa* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 58–9.

Thus natural theology can be seen as an attempt simply to read a supernatural cause from its resulting phenomenal effect.[6]

Nevertheless, in the history of philosophy, Thomistic evidentialism has met with several detractors. To cite a few examples, Blaise Pascal believed that persons who are devoid of light to begin with will, when confronted with *a posteriori* evidences of God's existence will find only obscurity and darkness; and it is for this reason, furthermore, that there are no examples in the Scripture of proving religious claims through natural evidences.[7] The presuppositionalist Cornelius Van Til argued that natural theology actually destroys true reason in place of "autonomous reason"; for it begins with a denial, rather than a recognition of the "the existence of a rationality higher than itself that has legislated for all reality," i.e. God himself.[8] Douglas Groothuis, in fact, defends the use of

---

[6] William Lane Craig, "Classical Apologetics," in *Five Views of Apologetics* (ed. Steven Cowan; Grand Rapids: 2000), 40, argues that Rom 1:20 teaches that God expects his creatures to infer the nature and character of God, which is invisible, though the visible evidence he has left for them. He offers the translation, "God's invisible nature is perceived through reflecting on the things that have been made."

[7] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* 4.242–43 (trans. W. F. Trotter; Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1994), 42. Pascal says, "I admire the boldness with which these persons undertake to speak of God. In addressing their argument to infidels, their first chapter is to prove Divinity from the works of nature. I should not be astonished at their enterprise, if they were addressing their argument to the faithful; for it is certain that those who have the living faith in their hearts see at once that all existence is none other than the work of the God whom they adore. But for those in whom this light is extinguished, and in whom we purpose to rekindle it, persons destitute of faith and grace, who, seeking with all their light whatever they see in nature that can bring them to this knowledge, find only obscurity and darkness; to tell them that they have only to look at the smallest things which surround them, and they will see God openly, to give them, as a complete proof of this great and important matter, the course of the moon and planets, and to claim to have concluded the proof with such an argument, is to give them ground for believing that the proofs of our religion are very weak. And I see by reason and experience that nothing is more calculated to arouse their contempt. It is not after this manner that Scripture speaks, which has a better knowledge of the things that are of God. It says, on the contrary, that God is a hidden God, and that, since the corruption of nature, He has left men in a darkness from which they can escape only through Jesus Christ, without whom all communion with God is cut off.

"This is what Scripture points out to us, when it says in so many places that those who seek God find Him. It is not of that light, "like the noonday sun," that this is said. We do not say that those who seek the noonday sun, or water in the sea, shall find them; and hence the evidence of God must not be of this nature.

243. "It is an astounding fact that no canonical writer has ever made use of nature to prove God. They all strive to make us believe in Him. David, Solomon, etc., have never said, "There is no void, therefore there is a God." They must have had more knowledge than the most learned people who came after them, and who have all made use of this argument. This is worthy of attention.

[8] Cornelius Van Til, "Nature and Scripture," in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium* (Westminster Seminary Faculty; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, 1946), 292–93. Van Til

natural theology against no less than nine separate objections to it.[9] These objections

include the argument that natural theology undermines a high view of the authority of

Scripture. In the words of Herman Bavinck, "Scripture … does not make God the

conclusion of a syllogism, leaving it to us whether we think the argument holds or not.

But it speaks with authority."[10]

Despite these cogent arguments against natural theology, given its fresh

popularity and its ostensible ability to argue for supernatural, religions propositions, *is

there a justifiable benefit that natural theology provides in making a case for God and

the miraculous works of God?* This paper will explore an answer to that question, first by

considering the kinds natural arguments which have been more recently presented for the

reality of Jesus' resurrection, and then by reflecting upon whether or not a belief in the

resurrection is impacted positively by this approach.

---

concludes, "For all its vaunted defense of reason, the natural theology of Aristotle and his modern followers destroys reason. The autonomous man cannot forever flee back and forth between the arid mountains of timeless logic and the shoreless ocean of pure potentiality. He must at last be brought to bay. He cannot forever be permitted to speak of nothing that reveals itself exhaustively into nothing and yet pretend to convey meaning in his speech. The autonomous man has denied the existence of a rationality higher than itself that has legislated for all reality. In so doing it has itself legislated for all reality. Yet it also allows for pure potentiality that is beyond all rational power. It has undertaken to do, or rather claims already to have done, what it also says is inherently impossible of accomplishment. On the other hand, the natural theology of the Confession, with its rejection of autonomous reason, has restored reason to its rightful place and validated its rightful claims. In recognizing the Sovereign God of grace, the God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, goodness, justice and truth, as its chief and ultimate principle of interpretation, the natural theology of the Confession has saved rationality itself. Without the self-contained God of the Confession, there would be no order in nature and no employment for reason."

[9] Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 174–84. Objections include the claim that rational proofs lead to pride, that natural theology is in competition with special revelation, that the true God cannot be known through natural theology, that the reasoning of natural theology is too complex, and that, ultimately, natural theology cannot lead a person to faith.

[10] Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (trans. William Hendrickson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 78, as cited in Groothuis, *Apologetics*, 176.

Natural Arguments for the Resurrection

Several leading Christian apologists and theologians defend the historicity of the resurrection

using a Thomistic natural theology. A superb example is Michael R. Licona's *The Resurrection*

of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach. Taking his departure from Gary Habermas's

minimalist approach, which argues for the veracity of the resurrection from the minimum of

evidence scholars agree upon given the historical data,[11] Licona attempts to build an airtight case

for the likelihood of the resurrection by narrowing the pieces of evidence to those alone which

pass the test of critical scrutiny by a majority of scholars. He ends up with three pieces of

evidence he refers to as the "historical bedrock," or the facts of the case that most historians will

typically concede:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion
2. Very shortly after Jesus' death, the disciples had experiences that led them to believe and proclaim that Jesus had been resurrected and had appeared to them.
3. Within a few years after Jesus' death, Paul converted after experiencing what he interpreted as a postresurrection appearance of Jesus to him.[12]

Notably, there are pieces of evidence traditionally cited as arguments for the resurrection that

Licona decides not to include as part of the indisputable "historical bedrock." One is Jesus'

postresurrection appearance to Jesus' brother, James (1 Cor 15:7), which is supported by the fact

that James, who was not a follower of Jesus before the crucifixion (cf. Mark 3:21, 31–35; 6:3;

John 7:1–10), suddenly embraced Jesus' claims and became the leader of the Jerusalem church

---

[11] See David Baggett, ed., *Did the Resurrection Happen? A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 22–23). Incidentally, Habermas wrote his 1976 dissertation for the University of Michigan, which was entitled, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry.* An electronic copy is available at http://www.garyhabermas.com/books/dissertation/Pensgard-v1c_Resurrection_Dissertation_1976_ Habermas_ FRAMES.htm.

[12] Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 463.

(Acts 1:14; 15:13–21; 21:17–19).[13] Another piece of evidence Licona sets aside is, remarkably, the empty tomb.[14]

Having established three critically defensible pieces of data in his "historical bedrock"—the genuine death of Jesus, the conviction of the disciples that Jesus had appeared to them after his death, and Paul's conversion experience—Licona constructs a hypothesis which will best explain the evidence. His hypothesis is as follows:

> *Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared to a number of people, in individual and group settings and to friends and foes, in no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse.*[15]

A defensible hypothesis, explains Licona, must be judged by at least five criteria.[16] First, the hypothesis must have *explanatory scope*, or explain all of the relevant data. Second, the hypothesis must have *explanatory power*, or explain the data easily, without unnecessary ambiguity. Third, the hypothesis must be *plausible*, or probable to a significant degree. Fourth, the hypothesis must be lacking in *ad hoc* presuppositions. In other words, a hypothesis tends to be unconvincing if it attempts to explain the evidence by introducing imagined assumptions that are themselves not supported by the evidence.[17] Finally, the hypothesis must be able to *illuminate* other historical questions or observations rather than confuse them.

---

[13] Ibid., 440–61.

[14] Ibid., 461–63. Licona does not include the empty tomb in his "historical bedrock" because he cannot demonstrate a strong enough base of critical scholars who hold to this evidence as indisputable.

[15] Licona, *Resurrection*, 583.

[16] Ibid., 108–14. In building these five criteria, Licona interacts mainly with the work of C. Behan McCullagh, who has published various works on weighing historical hypotheses. See, for example, his *The Truth of History* (New York: Routledge, 1998), and his *The Logic of History* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[17] An example of an *ad hoc* hypothesis may be found in the work of Robert Greg Cavin, *Miracles, Probability, and the Resurrection of Jesus* (Ph.D. dissertation; University of California-Irvine, 1993), who explains the evidences for the resurrection with the hypothesis that Jesus had a twin brother who showed up after Jesus' crucifixion, setting the resurrection accounts into motion.

Moreover, in order to be plausible, a hypothesis, in terms of these criteria (explanatory scope and power, plausibility, non *ad hoc* elements, and illumination) must outstrip competing hypotheses. Accordingly, much of Licona's project is taken up in weighing his resurrection hypothesis against six competing hypotheses in terms of their ability to satisfy the five criteria. These competing hypotheses are current attacks against the resurrection hypothesis, and range from the explanation that we cannot know what exactly happened with Jesus of Nazareth, to the hypothesis which explains the evidence according to laws of social science, to hypotheses that the disciples were only hallucinating under emotional duress, akin to people who claim to see Big Foot or UFOs, or that Paul saw the risen Jesus in a kind of trance.[18] In his defense of the resurrection, then, Licona carefully weights all of the hypotheses together in terms of the five criteria, and concludes that his resurrection hypothesis "outdistance[s] competing hypotheses by a significant margin" in terms of probability.[19]

The above description of Licona's project is intended merely to highlight its framework, in order to provide an example of how natural theology works toward warranting religious conclusions apart from unadorned faith in Scripture as authoritative. Before moving on from Licona, however, there are two observations about his work which will help us to segue into the work of other apologists. First, we should note that although natural theology does not start from the Bible as divinely revealed truth, natural theology makes use of the Bible as a source of ancient evidence, treating it as any other historical document. As Gary Habermas explains,

> If [the Bible] is the inspired Word of God, like a lot of Christians claim, well then, Jesus is raised from the dead. If this book it is not inspired, but it's reliable, Jesus has been raised from the dead. But what if the skeptics are right, and it's neither … inspired nor reliable, and it's a book of ancient literature on the level with Homer or Plato? … My argument is, Jesus is still raised from the dead. *We have*

---

[18] Licona, *Resurrection*, 618–19, offers a brief summary of the competing hypotheses.
[19] Ibid., 468.

enough data in an unreliable book (if [that is what] it is) to argue that Jesus is raised from the dead.[20]

So, for example, in 1 Corinthians, which is among the documents regarded by critical scholars as genuinely Pauline, the apostle says in 15:3–5,

> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Regardless of whether the reader believes Paul's claim, the highly stylized, formulaic saying that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose on the third day, and appeared, is evidently an older, preformed text of Christian teaching that Paul, having "received" it just as he says, is now quoting.[21] Moreover, if Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in the mid-50s, then the gospel saying he "received" is older than the letter. Therefore, within twenty years of Jesus' death there was a confessional statement or creed already circulating among Christians, demonstrating that they affirmed belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ. At the least, this confession is evidence which historians must account for.

Second, we must note that the approach Licona embraces in his project, as described above, is commonly known as "Argument to the Best Explanation." But there is another approach that Licona considers, namely, "Arguments from Statistical Inference."[22] An Argument from Statistical Inference makes a case for the hypothesis on the *statistical* likelihood that the

---

[20] Gary R. Habermas, "The Resurrection Argument That Changed a Generation of Scholars," The Veritas Forum, November 8, 2012 [Video file]. Retrieved from http://academics.holycross.edu/files/crec/resurrection-debate-transcript.pdf.

[21] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 683, explains that the verb παραλαμβάνειν ("received") is "a technical term for receiving tradition," such as Paul uses in Gal 1:11–12. He also cites several scholars who all take the content as preformed gospel material harnessed by Paul in this letter (pp. 683–84). See also Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 722, as well as Anthony Thiselton's detailed treatment of the tradition in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1186–1203.

[22] Licona, *Resurrection*, 114–20.

hypothesis is true, given the evidence. The popular method for testing the statistical likelihood of a hypothesis, a method which Licona entertains in his *Resurrection* is Bayes' Theorem.[23]

Simply put, Bayes' Theorem (BT) is a statistical algorithm developed by Thomas Bayes (1701–1761) in order to measure the probability of a hypothesis given the evidence, while taking into account significant factors which affect the final outcome. The classic Bayesian formula reads in the following way:

$$P(h|e) = P(e|h)\, P(h)\, /\, P(e)$$

In other words, the probability P that the hypothesis *h* is true given the evidence *e*, is equal to the product of (1) the probability that we would have this evidence given that the hypothesis is, in fact, true, times (2) the probability that the hypothesis could actually be true in the first place (known as *prior probability*), divided by the probability that we would already have this kind of evidence in the status quo, whether the hypothesis were true or not.

For example, given how little I pay any attention to professional baseball, it is highly probable that the 2016 World Series will come and go and I will not even know it. So let's suppose that someday late in October, a friend of mine, a real Cubs fan, says to me, "Guess what! The Cubs won the World Series!" At first, I find no reason to doubt the word of my friend. But then I get to thinking about it. My friend is a real prankster, and has been known in the past to give me false information for his own amusement. So in my mind, I use Bayesian inference to calculate the probability P that the hypothesis *c* (the Cubs won the World Series) is true, given the evidence of my friend's testimony *f* ; or, P(*c|f*).[24] Following Bayes' Theorem, I calculate that

---

[23] John Earman, *Bayes or Bust? A Critical Examination of Bayesian Confirmation Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 117, says that, despite some lingering challenges, Bayesianism has "pride of place among approaches to confirmation and scientific inference."

[24] This first part of BT is known as the "posterior probability of the hypothesis," because it is the probability that the algorithm is attempting to discover.

$P(c|f) = P(f|c)$—or the probability that I would expect my friend to tell me that the Cubs won

the World Series if they, in fact, did win—multiplied by $P(c)$, or the probability that the Cubs

could actually win a World Series championship to begin with.[25] In this case, I will assign $P(f|c)$

a numerical value of 1.0 (100%), since I believe that if the Cubs were to win, my friend, who is

an avid Cubs fan, would certainly tell me. On the other hand, because all I know about the Cubs

is that they have not won a World Series championship in over one hundred years, I will assign

the *prior probability* that the Cubs could actually win the series, or $P(c)$ a statistical value of 0.2.

Finally, I divide the product of $P(f|c)$ 1.0 × $P(c)$ 0.2 (= 0.2) by $P(f)$, or the probability that my

friend would tell me that the Cubs had won the World Series whether they had or not.[26] Here I

will take into account that my friend is a prankster, and I am reasonably certain that if the Cubs

did not, in fact, win the World Series, he would still say they did. In other words, the evidence of

my friend's testimony that the Cubs won is likely to appear either way. So I will assign $P(f)$ a

statistical value of 0.8. I am now ready for my final calculation:

$$P(c|f) = P(f|c) P(c) / P(f) \; or \; P(c|f) = 1.0 \times 0.2 / 0.8 \therefore P = 0.25.$$

As BT shows, the probability that the hypothesis c (the Cubs won the World Series)

given the evidence f (my friend's testimony), is unlikely. But the probability can change if other

evidence is introduced. So I reach for my iPhone to say to Siri, "2016 World Series." She replies,

"In the 2016 World Series, the Chicago Cubs faced the Cleveland Indians." So now I know that

the Chicago Cubs actually played in the World Series, raising the *prior probability* that the Cubs

won. Since at this point I do not know what the odds are that the Cubs would have defeated the

---

[25] The formula $P(f|c)$ is known as the "posterior probability of the evidence," or whether or not we could expect this evidence if in fact the hypothesis were true. The formula $P(c)$ is known as "prior probability," or, here, the probability that the Cubs could win a World Series championship even before the hypothesis c is asserted.

[26] The formula $P(f)$ is known as the "prior probability of the evidence," or the value of whether we would have this evidence no matter what.

Indians, I will consider it just as likely as not that the Cubs will win, raising *prior probability* to

0.5. My Bayesian formula now reads

$$P(c,w|f) = P(f|c,w) P(c,w) / P(f) \ or \ P(c,w|f) = 1.0 \times 0.5 / 0.8 \therefore P = 0.625.$$

Thus the new evidence raises the likelihood that the Cubs won the World Series significantly.

Moreover, new evidence will continue to affect the probability that the hypothesis is, in fact,

true.

Using Bayesian calculus, Licona should be able to test each of the competing hypotheses

against his resurrection hypothesis *r* and conclude by comparing their relative probabilities. For

example, using his "historical bedrock" of evidence that critical scholars will concede, we may

test the probability P that Jesus rose from the dead *r* using the evidence that Jesus was indeed

crucified *c*, that the disciples believed he had appeared to them *a*, and that the apostle Paul was

converted *p*. The formula would read:

$$P(r|c,a,p) = P(c,a,p|r) P(r) / P(c,a,p).$$

Yet in the justification of his methodology, Licona considers it impossible to use BT to calculate

historical probabilities such as the resurrection *r*,[27] even though the theorem appears to be useful

in managing epistemic inferences from historical data.[28] The reason Licona rejects the use of BT

is that he cannot assign a value to the prior probability of the hypothesis, or P(*r*). First, it is very

difficult to determine prior probability for events as unique as the resurrection. Since *r* represents

a one-of-a-kind event, the data needed to calculate P(*r*) is missing.[29] In other words, if the prior

probability of a person rising from the dead is statistically zero, then the entire algorithm will

---

[27] Licona, *Resurrection*, 115–9.

[28] John Earman, *Bayes or Bust? A Critical Examination of Bayesian Confirmation Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 117, says that, despite some lingering challenges, Bayesianism has "pride of place among approaches to confirmation and scientific inference."

[29] Licona, *Resurrection*, 116, 119–20. Licona compares the probability that a human being would rise alive from the grave to the probability that the earth would come into existence (116). But this comparison is dubious. We must at least assume the existence of the universe.

equal zero. Second, assigning a value for P(*r*) presents a logical contradiction, for we must both

posit the existence of God as a prior while seeking to obtain the probability of God's existence in

the outcome. As Licona explains:

> Standard arguments for God's existence, such as the argument from design, the argument for an eternal first cause and the argument from objective morality, would all be assessed in the Bayesian framework relative to the prior probability that God exists—they cannot, therefore, supply that probability. Similarly, calculating the prior probability that "God raised Jesus from the dead" would include assessing the prior probability that God exists. Accordingly, the prior probability of God's raising Jesus from the dead is very difficult to get a handle on.[30]

In other words, it begs the question to assign a value for P(*r*) because such a value requires us to

assume the existence of a God who wanted to raise Jesus, when this is in fact the very

proposition we would be seeking to justify. Third, related to this second objection, we simply

cannot—as historians—predetermine the existence of God. And even if we could calculate P(*r*)

provisionally, using natural proofs for the existence of God (e.g., the cosmological argument),

we still cannot predetermine whether or not this God would *want* to raise Jesus from the dead.[31]

Hence, Licona surmises that "we will not be able to use [BT] for weighing hypotheses pertaining

to Jesus' fate, since the background knowledge required is unavailable."[32]

The problem of prior probability that Licona sees as inscrutable, however, is not a

problem for Bayesian Richard Swinburne, and it is to Swinburne's work, therefore, that we now

turn. Swinburne has published the most remarkable Bayesian statistics to date, calculating the

posterior probability of the Resurrection to be 100/103 or roughly 0.97.[33] Swinburne's formal

---

[30] Ibid., 116.
[31] Ibid., 175.
[32] Ibid., 128.
[33] Swinburne, *Resurrection of God Incarnate*, 213–4; Richard Swinburne, "The Probability of the Resurrection," in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion* (ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 128–9.

calculus will not be represented here; only the observation that he is able to reach this total

largely by meeting the challenge of prior probability head-on:

> [T]o determine whether Jesus rose from the dead, it is not enough to investigate whether
> [the historical evidence] is the kind of evidence to be expected if Jesus rose, but not
> otherwise. One must also investigate whether general background evidence supports the
> worldview that there is a God of a kind able and likely to intervene in human history in
> this kind of way in this kind of situation, or whether there is no such God. And we must
> also investigate the prior historical evidence—that is, whether the nature and
> circumstances of the life of Jesus were such that if there is a God, he would be likely to
> raise *this* person from the dead.[34]

As we may suppose from this prescription, Swinburne sets off to establish prior probability for

the resurrection, first by demonstrating natural evidence for the existence of God, and secondly

by surmising based on what we know of Jesus if it is more likely than not that God would raise

him. I will here summarize briefly only the former of these two projects. Swinburne establishes

the existence of God as a prior based on his prolific and articulate argument for natural theism,

more particularly in his *The Existence of God*.[35] This project has two main endeavors. First,

Swinburne presents cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments for the vast complexity of

the magnificent universe in which we live, demonstrating that what we observe is *a priori*

improbable, unable to be explained scientifically.[36] Second, he posits the existence of God as the

simplest explanation for this complexity, having argued that the truth is most often the simplest

---

[34] Swinburne, "Probability of the Resurrection," 119–20.
[35] Swinburne, *Existence of God*; though also see Swinburne, "Probability of the Resurrection," 117–30;
Richard Swinburne, "Evidence for the Resurrection," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the
Resurrection of Jesus* (ed. Stephen T. Davis, et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 191–212.
[36] Swinburne, *Existence of God*, e.g., 48–50, 150–1.

hypothesis to explain the evidence.[37] His "modest" conclusion is that the existence of God is just

as likely as not, and he therefore calculates the prior probability of the resurrection to be 0.5.[38]

Timothy and Lydia McGrew take a different tack. By calculating the plausibility of the

Resurrection using a Bayes *factor*, rather than the more recognized form of BT, they are able to

overwhelm prior probability through a multiplicity of evidence.[39] The Bayes factor here tests the

likelihood for any fact F given that the Resurrection hypothesis R is true, against the likelihood

that F would obtain given ~R; or,

$$\frac{P(F|R)}{P(F|\sim R)}^{[40]}$$

Bayesian analysis using this ratio form shows that the posterior probability of R is equal to the

product of its prior probability (before any facts are introduced) and the Bayes factor; or,

$$\frac{P(R|F)}{P(\sim R|F)} = \frac{P(R)}{P(\sim R)} \times \frac{P(F|R)}{P(F|\sim R)}^{[41]}$$

Now, this calculus takes into account only a single Resurrection factor, say, the likelihood that

the apostle Paul would have been converted if R against the likelihood that he would have been

converted if ~R: $P(P|R)/P(P|\sim R)$. One factor alone may not be enough to overcome a low prior.

However, the formula allows an endless number of factors to be multiplied together. For

---

[37] Ibid., 53–66; 70–1; Richard Swinburne, *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1997), 1: "I seek in this essay to show that—other things being equal—the simplest hypothesis proposed as an explanation of phenomena is more likely to be the true one than is any other available hypothesis, that its predictions are more likely to be true than are those of any other available hypothesis, and that it is an ultimate a priori epistemic principle that simplicity is evidence of truth."

[38] Swinburne, *Resurrection of God Incarnate*, 30–1, 211. Actually, Swinburne does not focus so much on the various evidences for the resurrection, such as the empty tomb, the appearances, etc. Rather, he argues that if we can demonstrate that the kind of God described in the Bible exists, then the resurrection is certainly probable, since only God could alter the natural laws that he himself put into place. Once the existence of such a God is established, we have only to provide a case for the fact that God would *want* to raise one such as Jesus from the dead.

[39] Timothy and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland; Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 617–8.

[40] Ibid., 617.

[41] Ibid., 617–8; Hugh G. Gauch, Jr., "Natural Theology's Case for Jesus's Resurrection: Methodological and Statistical Considerations," *Philosophia Christi* 13 (2011): 343–4.

example, we may combine the evidence of Paul's conversion P, the initial witness of the women

W, and the appearances of Jesus to the disciples D in the following way:

$$\frac{P(R|F_1 \& \ldots \& F_n)}{P(\sim R|F_1 \& \ldots \& F_n)} = \frac{P(R)}{P(\sim R)} \times \frac{P(P|R)}{P(P|\sim R)} \times \frac{P(W|R)}{P(W|\sim R)} \times \frac{P(D|R)}{P(D|\sim R)}$$

The McGrews explain:

> Verbally, this says that the ratio of the posterior probabilities is equal to the product of the ratio of their priors with the product of the Bayes factors for each of the independent pieces of evidence. It is in the product of those Bayes factors that the cumulative force of the evidence of the set of facts $F_1 \& \ldots \& F_n$ can be seen. If each factor is somewhat top-heavy, the cumulative force of a significant number of these factors will be enormous.[42]

This they demonstrate by justifying at length estimates for each of the factors above. The

likelihood of Paul's conversion P given R against its likelihood given ~R is 10^3; the witness of

the women W, 10^2; and the appearances of Jesus to the disciples D, 10^{39} for a combined evidence

total of 10^{44}. The Bayes factors thus provide "a weight of evidence that would be sufficient to

overcome a prior probability (or rather improbability) of 10^{-40} for R and leave us with a posterior

probability of the hypothesis R in excess of 0.9999."[43]

Nevertheless, not all natural apologists find success in using BT to posit Jesus'

resurrection. William Lane Craig ran into a buzz saw when trying to use a Bayesian approach in

a debate with Bart Ehrman. Ehrman declared,

> I am sorry. I have trouble believing that we're having a serious conversation about the statistical probability of the resurrection or the statistical probability of the existence of God. I think in any university setting in the country, if we were in front of a group of academics we would be howled off the stage.[44]

---

[42] McGrews, 618.

[43] Ibid., 630.

[44] William Lane Craig and Bart D. Ehrman, "Is There Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus?: A Debate Between William Lane Craig and Bart Ehrman," March, 2006, n.p. [cited 26 September 2012]. Online: http://academics.holycross.edu/files/crec/resurrection-debate-transcript.pdf.

Ehrman's incredulity is based upon his conviction that "historians, as historians, have no privileged access to what happens in the supernatural realm; they have access only to what happens in this, our natural world."[45] And since miracles "violate" the order in the natural world, "their probability is infinitesimally remote."[46]

To be fair to William Craig, on this occasion he was only using Bayesian inference to illustrate a flaw in Ehrman's reasoning. But Craig by his own admission does not use BT to argue for the resurrection, since he thinks that "probability is inscrutable, given that we're dealing with a free agent," explaining, "I don't see how we can assess or assign specific numbers for those."[47] By "free agent" Craig is referring to the fact that, even if there is evidence for God which we can use to calculate a positive value in the prior, we have no way of knowing if or when God would desire to raise Jesus from the dead.[48] In his typical debates and lectures, Craig argues eloquently from the historical evidence to the best explanation of the evidence, typically focusing on the empty tomb, Jesus' appearances after his death, and the disciples' belief in his resurrection.[49]

---

[45] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14.

[46] Ehrman in Craig and Ehrman, "Is There Historical Evidence?"; cited in Licona, *Resurrection*, 173. Several of Ehrman's arguments at this juncture of the debate are similar to those made by David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1777) (vol. 2 of *Essays and Treatments on Several Subjects*; ed. Peter Millican and Amyas Merivale; Leeds, U.K.: Leeds Electronic Text Centre, 2010), 114 [cited 25 September 2012]. Online: http://www.davidhume.org/texts/ehu.html: "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them?"

[47] Craig in Craig and Ehrman, "Is There Historical Evidence?"

[48] Stephen T. Davis, "Is Belief in the Resurrection Rational?: A Response to Michael Martin," *Philo* 2 (1999): 58, explains that "the Resurrection hypothesis involves the free choice of an agent, viz., God. . . . [which] means that if God wanted to vindicate Jesus, God may have chosen to raise him from the dead precisely because resurrections are so rare and striking." Davis goes on to say that BT "is a useful tool in some epistemic situations, but it is a blunt instrument when used in discussions of the resurrection of Jesus" (p. 59).

[49] An accessible version of Craig's presentation is available in his *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 219–64.

As a final example of an approach to arguing for the resurrection of Jesus in the vein of natural theology, N. T. Wright has produced an erudite volume in his *Christian Origins* series which examines closely the *kerygma* resulting from the resurrection of Jesus.[50] In *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Wright demonstrates to the history of religion scholars that there is no sufficient historical explanation for why the followers of Jesus believed he rose bodily from the tomb; that there was no teaching in pagan philosophy or Jewish theology which could account for the conclusion of the resurrection as it is taught in the New Testament. "If your favorite Messiah got himself crucified," says Wright, "then you either went home or you got yourself a new Messiah. But the idea of stealing Jesus' corpse and saying that God had raised him from the dead is hardly one that would have entered the minds of the disciples."[51] So Wright establishes the thesis that the disciples' "… future hope for ultimate bodily resurrection and the various ways in which that hope had been made more precise, their redefinition of the metaphorical meanings of 'resurrection,' and their sense of who they themselves were and who Jesus was, were based on *their firm belief that Jesus of Nazareth had himself been raised from the dead*."[52]

Furthermore, the two pieces of evidence Wright sets forth as undeniable are (1) the empty tomb and (2) the public meetings with Jesus. By themselves, Wright explains, these two pieces of evidence are not sufficient conditions for believing Jesus to be alive. On the one hand, an empty tomb, but no meeting with Jesus would be a perplexing problem, but not a long-term problem. It would have eventually been put down to something like grave robbery, or any

---

[50] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).
[51] This quotation is attributed to Wright by William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 372.
[52] Wright, *Resurrection*, 211.

number of theories which have been offered over the centuries to explain this phenomenon. On the other hand, meetings with Jesus but no empty tomb would also be explained away somehow, perhaps through psychological arguments or by claims of visions. But *taken together*, Wright says, two insufficient conditions may form one powerful, *sufficient condition*. That is what Wright believes we have here. He eventually nuances this claim, but essentially he submits that both the empty tomb and the meetings with Jesus form a *sufficient* condition for the rise of Christian belief in the resurrection.[53] It is in this part of Wright's treatise that his own skepticism concerning statistical inference with historical propositions issues forth in this summary:

> The historian is never in a position to do what Pythagoras did: not content with drawing more and more right-angled triangles and demonstrating that the square on the hypotenuse always does in fact equal the sum of the squares on the other two sides, he constructed a theorem to prove that this *must* always be the case. With history it is not like that. Almost nothing is ever ruled out absolutely; history, after all, is mostly the study off the unusual and unrepeatable. What we are after is high probability; and this is to be attained by examining all the possibilities, all the suggestions, and asking how well they explain the phenomena. It is always possible that in discussing the resurrection someone will come up with the skeptical critic's dream: an explanation which provides a sufficient condition for the rise of early Christian faith but which, by fitting into post-Enlightenment epistemological and ontological categories, or even simply mainstream pagan ones, causes no fluttering in the critical dovecotes. It is worthy of note that, despite the somewhat desperate attempts of many scholars over the last two hundred years, … no such explanation has been found. The early Christians did not invent [1] the empty tomb and [2] the 'meetings' or 'sightings' of the risen Jesus in order to explain a faith they already had. They developed that faith because of the occurrence, and convergence, of these two phenomena.[54]

Reflections on the Project of Natural Theology

Orthodox theologians will largely agree that natural theology alone will never bring a blind unbeliever (2 Cor 4:4) to personal faith in Jesus Christ. For one thing, even if we can calculate

---

[53] Ibid., 706–10.
[54] Ibid., 706–07.

Thomistically from *a posteriori* evidence a probability of 1.0 that Jesus died and rose again, this in itself is not the message of the gospel. The gospel is bound up in the *significance* of that death—that Christ died *for our sins*—and the significance of that resurrection—he was raised *for our justification* (Rom 4:25; cf. 1 Cor 15:3–5). The spiritual blessings of atonement and justification are not able to be measured empirically. For another thing, natural theology has an inherent weakness in the fact that its project is to establish, in the words of N. T. Wright, "high probability," rather than certainty. In Michael Licona's words, for instance, the resurrection hypothesis must merely "out distance" the competing hypotheses in order to succeed. As we have seen, probability is a moving target, because the degree of probability changes whenever fresh evidence is introduced.

Nevertheless, does the inability of natural theology to bring an unbeliever to faith in Christ disqualify it altogether as superfluous or otherwise unnecessary, even counterproductive? Or are there ways that Thomism can augment the process of believing faith? Reflecting on the above projects of natural theology to provide cogent reasons for the resurrection, I wonder if there might be at least three ways the dynamic of believing faith may be augmented through such projects.

First, theology allows us to engage intellectuals with the gospel. This is a ministry of compassion. If we as believers are not willing to engage the critics in their own arenas, then we leave them with the false understanding that our beliefs are intellectually indefensible, or that they are not inwardly consistent, and we risk losing an opportunity to engage them. Gary Habermas describes how the scholarly community back in the sixties used to smirk and laugh aloud whenever someone tried to make an argument for the resurrection using evidence such as the appearances of Jesus and the empty tomb. But not anymore, he says. Today, no one is

laughing, because most scholars have conceded the evidence. They do not know what to do with the evidence, but they have conceded the evidence. This consensus about the evidence is demonstrated by the very fact that there are competing hypotheses by unbelieving scholars which all attempt to explain what actually happened that first Easter, while taking the evidence seriously. Learning to build an apologetic approach these to unbelieving evidentialists is time consuming and mentally demanding, but it demonstrates our compassion toward them when we value them enough as those for whom Christ died—and rose again—to learn to engage them.

Second, natural theology can help provide evidence which may turn unbelieving skeptics to investigate the claims of the Word of God. This is a ministry of evangelism. Unbelievers may not want to read the Scriptures unless we give them a *reason* to read the Scriptures. As one example, my apologetics professor at Southeastern Seminary, Greg Welty, was an unconverted philosophy student at the University of California when he picked up and read C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. He said that he was fascinated because he had never before heard anyone offer cogent, evidentialist arguments for the existence of God. It drove him to read the Bible, he trusted Christ, and went on to Westminster Seminary, and from there to Oxford where he earned masters and doctoral degrees in philosophy under Richard Swinburne.

Is there any biblical precedence for evidence leading a person to believe in the resurrection? One example that leaps to mind is the story of the original Thomas in John 20:24–31. When Thomas heard the witness of the other apostles, he absolutely refused to believe without verifiable evidence—the scarred body of the living Lord (John 20:25). For eight days Jesus allowed Thomas to persist in unbelief (v. 26a), before he appeared to him with the hard evidence. Offering his body to Thomas for examination, Jesus said, "Do not disbelieve, but believe" (v. 27b). Because of this evidence, Thomas came to genuine belief in the resurrection.

Jesus never questions Thomas's faith. John includes Jesus' conclusion that, in contrast to Thomas, many will be blessed who believe without having to see. But this saying by Jesus is directed ultimately toward the readers of John's Gospel, most if not all of whom would not have seen the Lord personally (cf. 1 Pet 1:8). That is why the stated purpose of the Gospel immediately follows: "[T]hese are written that so that you [the reader] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (v. 31). So in the example of Thomas we find a person who will not accept apostolic witness of the resurrection, but who came to believe in that witness through a process of evidential examination, leading him ultimately to faith in Christ. This example causes me to wonder if there are certain people who will be believe the claims of the New Testament gospel only after they are presented with verifiable evidence of its claims. If so, by neglecting the discipline of natural theology, we who have the ability to master the arguments of natural theology may be missing evangelistic opportunities. Are we really, as Herman Bavinck might suggest, undermining the authority of the Scripture by offering rational arguments for its claims, or are we rather upholding the Bible's authority by offering cogent arguments to those who would otherwise reject the Bible out of hand?

Finally, perhaps natural theology can encourage our own faith. This is a ministry of edification. Personally, I do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus the Son of God because Richard Swinburne and the McGrews did the math and demonstrated the truth with significant statistics. Nor is my belief driven by the high historical probability of such an event as presented by N. T. Wright or Michael Licona. I believe in the death of Christ for my sins and his bodily resurrection because the work of the Holy Spirit within me, bringing me to faith in Christ. But even though I am already faithfully committed to a belief in the resurrection, there is still

something uniquely satisfying about hearing defensible arguments constructed from observing the residual historical evidence of the fact that Jesus was dead, but came back to life. It is the same intellectual excitement one feels after believing all his life that the city of Jericho once existed because the Bible says it did, and was destroyed in the manner the Bible teaches, despite the fact that critics call Jericho a myth, when suddenly the news comes that archaeologist Bryant Wood and his team have confirmed the ancient city and its story, putting the skeptics in their place. Perhaps the exaltation of truth, even through evidentialist, Thomistic projects like natural theology can be used by God to minister to our own hearts, and bring greater joy to our faith.
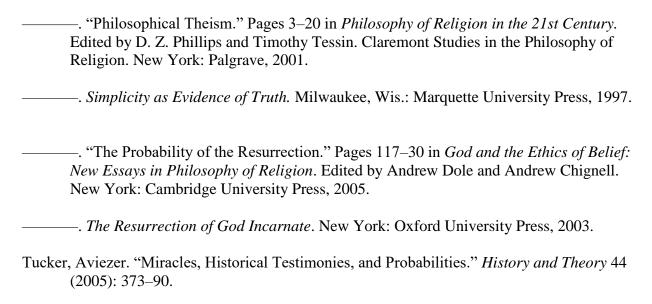
Bibliography

Akin, Danny, et al. "A Roundtable Discussion with Michael Licona on The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach." *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 71–98.

Alston, William P. "Biblical Criticism and the Resurrection." Pages 148–83 in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*. Edited by Stephen T. Davis, et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

———. *Beyond "Justification": Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Ankerberg, John F. "The Church as Proof of the Resurrection and a Word about Alternate Critical Theories." Page 97–109 in *Resurrected?: An Atheist and Theist Dialogue.* Edited by John Fr. Ankerberg. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Bartholomew, David J. *Uncertain Belief: Is It Rational to Be a Christian?* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Beckwith, Francis J. "Hume's Evidential/Testimonial Epistemology, Probability, and Miracles." Pages 117–40 in *Faith in Theory and Practice: Essays on Justifying Religious Belief.* Edited by Elizabeth S. Radcliffe and Carol J. White. Chicago and La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1993.

Carrier, Richard C. *Proving History: Bayes's Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 2012).

Cavin, Robert Greg. *Miracles, Probability, and the Resurrection of Jesus*. Ph.D. dissertation. University of California-Irvine, 1993. 389 pages.

Craig, William Lane and Bart D. Ehrman. "Is There Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus?: A Debate Between William Lane Craig and Bart Ehrman" (March, 2006). No pages. Cited 26 September 2012. Online: http://academics.holycross.edu/files/crec /resurrection-debate-transcript.pdf.

Crupi, Vicenzo, Roberto Festa, and Tommaso Mastropasqua. "Bayesian Confirmation by Uncertain Evidence: A Reply to Huber [2005]." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 59:2 (2008): 201–11.

Daston, Lorraine. *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Davis, Stephen T. "Is Belief in the Resurrection Rational?: A Response to Michael Martin." *Philo* 2 (1999): 51–61.

———. "'Seeing' the Risen Jesus." Pages 126–47 in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*. Edited by Stephen T. Davis, et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Earman, John. "Bayes, Hume, and Miracles." *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993): 293–310.

———. "Bayes, Hume, Price, and Miracles." Pages 91–109 in *Bayes's Theorem.* Edited by Richard Swinburne. Proceedings of the British Academy 113. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

———. *Bayes or Bust? A Critical Examination of Bayesian Confirmation Theory.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992.

———. *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Fitelson, Brandon. "Pollock on Probability in Epistemology." *Philosophical Studies* 148:3 (2010): 455–65.

Gauch, Hugh G., Jr. "Natural Theology's Case for Jesus's Resurrection: Methodological and Statistical Considerations." *Philosophia Christi* 13 (2011): 339–55.

Habermas, Gary R. "Experiences of the Risen Jesus: The Foundational Historical Issue in the Early Proclamation of the Resurrection." *Dialogue* 45 (2006): 288–97.

———. "The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus: The Role of Methodology as a Crucial Component in Establishing Historicity." *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 15–26.

Habermas, Gary R. and Michael R. Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004.

Huber, Franz. "Reply to Crupi et al.'s 'Bayesian Confirmation by Uncertain Evidence'([2008])." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 59 (2008), 213–5.

———. "What Is the Point of Confirmation?" *Philosophy of Science* 72 (2005): 1146–9.

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1777). Vol. 2 of *Essays and Treatments on Several Subjects*. Edited by Peter Millican and Amyas Merivale. Leeds, U.K.: Leeds Electronic Text Centre, 2010. Cited 25 September 2012. Online: http://www.davidhume.org/texts/ehu.html.

Kaplan, Mark. "A Bayesian Theory of Rational Acceptance." *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 305–30.

Licona, Michael R. "In Reply to Habermas, McGrew, and McCullagh." *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 55–69.

————. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010.

Martin, Michael. "Reply to Davis." *Philo* 2 (1999): 62–76.

————. "Why the Resurrection is Initially Improbable." *Philo* 1 (1998): 63–73.

Marxsen, Willi. *Jesus and Easter: Did God Raise the Historical Jesus from the Dead?* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.

————. *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.

McCullagh, C. Behan. "The Resurrection of Jesus: Explanation or Interpretation?" *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 41–53.

McGrew, Timothy J. "Has Plantinga Refuted the Historical Argument?" *Philosophia Christi* 6 (2004): 7–26.

————. "Inference, Method, and History." *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 27–39.

McGrew, Timothy and Lydia. "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth." Pages 593–662 in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Edited by William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Miller, Steven. "Swinburne's Challenge: A Note on Probability Estimates for Nontypical Potential Evidence Instances." *Quality and Quantity* 33 (1999): 353–60.

Murphey, Murray G. *Our Knowledge of the Past*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980.

Niebuhr, Richard R. *Resurrection and Historical Reason: A Study of Theological Method*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.

Parsons, Keith M. *God and the Burden of Proof: Plantinga, Swinburne, and the Analytic Defense of Theism*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1989.

Plantinga, Alvin. *Warranted Christian Belief.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Press, S. James. *Subjective and Objective Bayesian Statistics: Principles, Models, and Applications*, 2d ed. Wiley Series in Probability and Statistics. Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2003.

Prevost, Robert. *Probability and Theistic Explanation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

————. "Swinburne, Mackie, and Bayes' Theorem." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 17 (1985): 175–84.

Salmon, Wesley C. "Religion and Science: A New Look at Hume's Dialogues." Pages 167–93 in *The Improbability of God*. Edited by Michael Martin and Ricki Monnier. Amherst, N. Y.: Prometheus Books, 2006.

Schupbach, Jonah N. "Comparing Probabilistic Measures of Explanatory Power." *Philosophy of Science* 78 (2011): 813–29.

Shyamalkumar, N. D. "Likelihood Robustness." Pages 127–43 in *Robust Bayesian Analysis*. Edited by David Ríos Insua and Fabrizio Ruggeri. Lecture Notes in Statistics 152. New York: Springer-Verlag, 2000.

Sobel, Jordan Howard. "On the Evidence of Testimony for Miracles: A Bayesian Interpretation of David Hume's Analysis." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 37 (1987): 166–86.

Sober, Elliot. "A Modest Proposal." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 68 (2004): 487–94.

————. "Bayesianism—Its Scope and Limits." Pages 21–38 in *Bayes's Theorem.* Edited by Richard Swinburne. Proceedings of the British Academy 113. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Swinburne, Richard. *Epistemic Justification*. New York: Clarendon Press, 2001.

————. "Evidence for the Resurrection." Pages 191–212 in *The Resurrection: An Inter-disciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*. Edited by Stephen T. Davis, et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

————. "Introduction." Pages 1–20 in *Bayes's Theorem.* Edited by Richard Swinburne. Proceedings of the British Academy 113. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

————. "Philosophical Theism." Pages 3–20 in *Philosophy of Religion in the 21st Century.* Edited by D. Z. Phillips and Timothy Tessin. Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

————. *Simplicity as Evidence of Truth.* Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1997.

————. "The Probability of the Resurrection." Pages 117–30 in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

————. *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Tucker, Aviezer. "Miracles, Historical Testimonies, and Probabilities." *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 373–90.

Wedderburn, Alexander J. M. *Jesus and the Historians*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 269. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.