

# Supernatural Resurrection and its Incompatibility with the Standard Model of Particle Physics: Second Rejoinder to Stephen T. Davis

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**Abstract:** *In response to Stephen Davis’s criticism of our previous essay, we revisit and defend our arguments that the Resurrection hypothesis is logically incompatible with the Standard Model of particle physics—and thus is maximally implausible—and that it cannot explain the sensory experiences of the Risen Jesus attributed to various witnesses in the New Testament—and thus has low explanatory power. We also review Davis’s reply, noting that he evades our arguments, misstates their conclusions, and distracts the reader with irrelevancies regarding, e.g., what natural laws are, what a miracle is, and how “naturalism” and “supernaturalism” differ as worldviews. Contrary to what Davis claims (even in his abstract), we do not argue that “if the Standard Model of particle physics (SM) is true, then the resurrection of Jesus did not occur and physical things can only causally interact with other physical things.” Davis distorts our claims and criticizes straw men of his own creation.*

**Keywords:** Resurrection, Christianity, Jesus, Miracles, Soma Pneumatikon, Apologetics, Naturalism, Supernaturalism, Standard Model, Stephen T. Davis, William Lane Craig, Inference to the Best Explanation, Criteria of Adequacy

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**W**e are grateful to Professor Davis for his willingness to engage in a dialogue on the foundational doctrine of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Believers and skeptics will surely agree on the importance of this inquiry—for arriving at a correct “verdict” on the Resurrection, for judging the veracity of the most widespread and powerful orthodoxy in world history, and, theologically, for what the falsehood of this doctrine would reveal about the extent to which God (if he exists) allows humanity to be deceived on matters of

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<sup>1</sup> We also thank Evan Fales and Michael Licona for providing generous feedback on this article.

great religious significance. This is now the fifth article in this exchange. For brevity, we refer to our original essay in EJPR as “Assessing,” our previous essay in SHERM as “Refutation,” and Davis’s first and second replies as “Defense” and “On Behalf.” These articles address the Resurrection hypothesis (abbreviated “*R*”) as defined by William Lane Craig: *God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead*.

In “Assessing” and “Refutation,” we provided detailed arguments—based upon the Standard Model of particle physics (abbreviated “*SM*”)—that *R* is exceedingly implausible and has low explanatory power. Unfortunately for proponents of *R*, Davis’s second reply is no improvement over his first. There are two basic problems: Davis again ignores our arguments, and he misleads the reader with irrelevancies. Accordingly, we divide our rejoinder into two parts. First, we revisit the two core arguments of “Refutation” that Davis ignores: the argument that *SM* entails that *R* is false and the argument that *R* cannot explain the alleged appearances of the Risen Jesus to the witnesses. Second, we review “On Behalf” to expose its many omissions, fallacies, misrepresentations, and irrelevancies. In fairness to Davis, we acknowledge that he is faced with the impossible task of defending a miracle. Needless to say, he is not accountable for flaws inherent in the Resurrection hypothesis itself.

### **1.0 The Two Core Arguments that Refute *R***

The main problem with “On Behalf” is that Davis—once again—offers no argument of any kind on behalf of the Resurrection but at the same time ignores the two core arguments that we present in Standard Form at the end of Parts 2 and 3 of “Refutation” (pp. 77 and 83). His persistent evasiveness here is baffling—why would Davis comment on our charge that he was evasive in his first reply (see his footnote 10) while ignoring our arguments yet again in his second?<sup>2</sup> He *refers* to the arguments—misstating their conclusions in both cases—but he says nothing about their logical structure or the truth-value of their premises. Yet it is incumbent on philosophers to state and critique

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<sup>2</sup> We beg the reader’s indulgence for the frequency with which we repeat the charge that Davis ignores our arguments. Those familiar with the exchange between Davis and Michael Martin on the Resurrection (some twenty years ago) will recall Martin’s own frustration that Davis repeatedly ignored and evaded arguments, misunderstood key points, and introduced irrelevancies. See pages 65, 66, 73, and 74 of Michael Martin, “Reply to Davis,” 62–76, and pages 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, and footnotes 9 and 19 of Michael Martin, “Christianity and the Rationality of the Resurrection,” 52–62. See also Martin’s follow-up essay at [Infidels.org](http://Infidels.org).

arguments in Standard Form.<sup>3</sup> Doing so makes explicit their premises and conclusion and reveals their logical structure. This in turn enables critics to determine whether the premises are true (or false or questionable) and whether the premises together entail the conclusion or make it probable. We presented our key arguments in Parts 2 and 3 of “Refutation” in Standard Form for the benefit of the reader and especially for Craig and Davis. We also gave Bayesian arguments in Part 4 against *R* and for the Legend hypothesis. It is therefore incredible that Davis—in consultation with Craig himself and Professor Eric Yang—completely ignores these. He presumes that our arguments are easily answerable; yet he fails to respond to a single one.

### 1.1 The Argument that *SM* Entails that *R* is False

Let us return now to these two arguments, starting with our argument that *SM* is logically incompatible with *R* (i.e., that *SM* entails  $\sim R$ ). Notice first that Davis misstates the conclusion twice, incorrectly attributing to us these claims: “if *SM* is true, the resurrection of Jesus did not occur” (p. 15) and “*SM* entails that Jesus was not raised from the dead.” (pp. 16 and 21) But this is not what we conclude, and Davis is saddling us with claims that we in fact reject. We will later explain in detail why these statements are incorrect. Since Davis ignores the argument, we again present it here in Standard Form. This will be followed by an evaluation of its soundness.

Let  $T_R$  be the moment in time at which, according to the New Testament Easter traditions, the (alleged) Resurrection occurred and let  $T_D$  be the moment in time immediately preceding  $T_R$ . Then:

1. *R* entails that the body of Jesus was dead at the moment of time,  $T_D$ , immediately preceding the Resurrection.
2. Therefore (by 1), the natural input for *SM* in the case of the Resurrection is the natural event of the corpse of Jesus being dead at time  $T_D$ .
3. The natural output of *SM* in the case of the Resurrection is the natural event of the body of Jesus being in some natural state at time  $T_R$ .
4. Any natural event of the body of Jesus being in some natural state at time  $T_R$  is logically incompatible with the supernatural event of God

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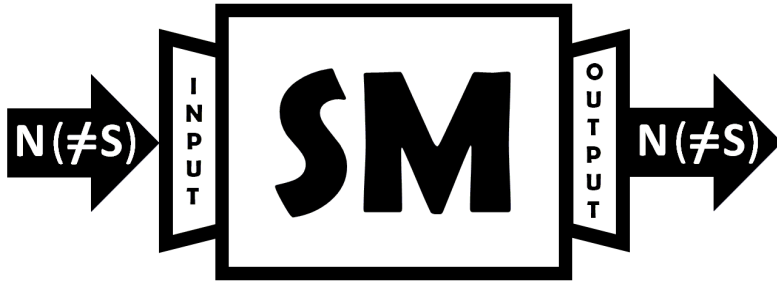
<sup>3</sup> Craig does so for his theistic arguments—in particular, the Kalām and Fine-Tuning arguments—but never for his argument on behalf of the Resurrection hypothesis.

- supernaturally raising the corpse of Jesus from the dead as a *soma pneumatikon* at time  $T_R$ .
5.  $R$  states that God supernaturally raised the corpse of Jesus from the dead as a *soma pneumatikon* at time  $T_R$ .
  6. Therefore (by 1 through 5),  $SM$  is logically incompatible with  $R$ .<sup>4</sup>

This argument is clearly deductively valid and all of its premises, we submit, are obviously true. Premise 1 is true given the definitions of “resurrection,” “ $T_D$ ,” and “ $T_R$ ”: The definition of “resurrection” entails that the body to be supernaturally resurrected is dead at one moment and alive at the next, and “ $T_D$ ” and “ $T_R$ ” are simply our terms for these two moments in time. Premise 2 is true as well. For the equations of  $SM$  take only natural inputs and yield only natural outputs, and the natural input for  $SM$  in the case of the Resurrection is the natural event of the body of Jesus being in some natural postmortem state at the moment of time ( $T_D$ ) immediately prior to its alleged resurrection. Premise 3 is also true since, once again,  $SM$  is expressed by equations that take only natural inputs and yield only natural outputs, and so the natural output of  $SM$  for the body of Jesus at time  $T_R$  consists of the natural event of its being in some natural postmortem state—not the supernatural event of God making it a *soma pneumatikon* (see the diagram below). Davis affirms the truth of this premise when he states that, “of course, the equations of  $SM$  never yield supernatural results” (p. 16). Premise 4 is a conceptual truth because the categories *natural event/state* and *supernatural event/state* are mutually exclusive, i.e., the statement of the natural event of a body being in a natural state at a given time is logically incompatible with the statement of the supernatural event of God supernaturally raising it from the dead as a *soma pneumatikon* at that time. This is a key point that Davis ignores even though it is in accord with his own statements (p. 14) that rightly draw a sharp distinction between the naturalist and supernaturalist worldviews, between physical and non-physical entities, and between events that can be explained within the natural sciences and (alleged) phenomena which cannot be explained without appeal to supernatural agency (God). Finally, premise 5 is true because it is just the definition of  $R$ , as understood by Craig, which Davis and most Christians accept. It is clear, then, that our core argument of Part 2 of “Refutation” is sound: it is deductively valid and its premises are obviously true. The burden is on Davis (for the third time now) to identify a problem. Ignoring the argument will not suffice.

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<sup>4</sup> The reader is advised to refer to the two footnotes associated with this argument in “Refutation.”



Since the laws of *SM* have only *natural* inputs and outputs, it immediately follows that they have no *supernatural* inputs or outputs. Otherwise, they would be at least partly the laws of the supernatural—not the laws of nature. In the case of Jesus, each input and output is the natural event of the body of Jesus being in some *natural*—not *supernatural*—state. In this diagram the *natural output* takes place at the precise moment of the alleged supernatural resurrection of Jesus by God and the *natural input*—the corpse of Jesus undergoing a slight increase in postmortem decomposition—takes place at the time immediately prior to that. The natural input in the case of the alleged Resurrection is the event of the body of Jesus being in some state of post-mortem decomposition; and the natural output is the event of some further state of decomposition rather than the event of the body of Jesus being supernaturally raised from the dead by God. Every *natural* input or output is, equivalently, an input or output that is not *supernatural* (as depicted within the arrows).<sup>5</sup>

It is crucial to observe that our argument for the logical incompatibility of *SM* and *R* generalizes to *any* scientific theory, i.e., to any theory that contains only natural terms (together with mathematical terms) and includes corpses within its scope. We restate this more general argument here formally:

1.  $v(n_i) = n_o$ .
2.  $n_o \neq s_o$ .
- ∴ 3.  $v(n_i) \neq s_o$ .

In this schema,  $v( )$  is the relevant natural (and presumably mathematical) event-function of the theory, e.g., Statistical Mechanics as a particular branch of *SM* applied to the process of postmortem decomposition;  $n_i$  is the *natural input* for the theory, viz., the natural event of the corpse of Jesus being in some state of postmortem decomposition at time  $t_i$ ; and  $n_o$  is the *natural output* for the theory, viz., the natural event of the corpse of Jesus still being in some state of postmortem decomposition at time  $t_o$ —(most probably) that of an incrementally more advanced stage, rather than (much less probably) the same stage, or (least probably) an earlier and less advanced stage. In contrast,  $s_o$  is

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<sup>5</sup> The diagram occurs on page 55 of “Refutation.”

the supernatural event that contradicts the natural outcome  $n_o$  predicted by theory, *viz.*, the supernatural event of God raising Jesus from the dead at time  $T_R$ . Being a supernatural outcome, it conflicts with and is entailed not to occur by the natural outcome,  $n_o$ . Let us now assess this argument for soundness. It is clear, first, that the argument is deductively valid: the two premises entail the conclusion by the Law of Identity. Second, the first premise is clearly true:  $v(n_i) = n_o$  is any well-confirmed scientific theory and (even apart from being well-confirmed) as a *scientific* theory can accept only *natural* inputs, *viz.*,  $n_i$ , and yield only *natural* outputs, *viz.*,  $n_o$ . Finally, the second premise is also clearly true by definition of terms: no *natural* output of a scientific theory can be a *supernatural* output of the theory since, more generally, no *natural* event can be a *supernatural* event. Since this argument is deductively valid and its premises are both clearly true, it follows that the argument is sound. Again, this argument is a generalization of the previous argument that *SM* entails  $\sim R$ , *i.e.*, that it is *impossible relative to SM* for God to *supernaturally* raise Jesus from the dead. We thus show in this more general argument that *any* scientific theory (including any refinement of *SM* or future Theory of Everything) entails  $\sim R$ —that it is *impossible* for God *relative to any scientific theory* (current or future) to *supernaturally* raise Jesus from the dead.<sup>6</sup> Since we've now proven that both of the above arguments are sound, Davis has no rational choice but to accept the conclusion. Yet, despite both arguments, Davis denies that *SM* is incompatible with *R*—and he does so, incredibly, without bothering to even *consider* the arguments, much less provide a critical assessment to show that they are unsound.

One further observation about the conclusion of our first core argument is worth emphasizing. It follows by the Logical Consequence Theorem (LCT) of the Probability Calculus that the entailments of any scientific theory are at least as probable on the evidence for that theory as is the theory itself.<sup>7</sup> But now, we have shown that *SM* entails the hypothesis  $\sim R$  that God did not supernaturally raise Jesus from the dead. It is well-known that *SM* does not hold for all realms of science, *e.g.*, for the phenomena of gravity. Yet, *SM* certainly does hold for the realm of everyday objects and events and is exceptionally well-confirmed for it by the scientific evidence. But among the objects and events of this realm are human bodies—including the corpse of Jesus—and the events of postmortem decomposition. Since *SM* entails  $\sim R$ , it follows (by LCT)

<sup>6</sup> To the *proviso* objection that the laws of nature describe what occurs in the universe only when left to itself (*e.g.*, C. S. Lewis and Alvin Plantinga), see our detailed reply in “Refutation” section 2.4.

<sup>7</sup> LCT states that, if  $\psi$  is a logical consequence of  $\phi$ , then  $P(\psi) \geq P(\phi)$ .

that  $\sim R$  is at least as well-confirmed (if not more strongly) by the scientific evidence we have for  $SM$  as is  $SM$  itself. This proves, contrary to what proponents of  $R$  such as Davis and Craig think, that scientific evidence is not only directly relevant to  $R$  but actually strongly disconfirms it.

### 1.2 The Argument that $R$ Cannot Explain the “Appearances”

Our second core argument addresses the issue of explanatory scope and power. We argue that, in order for  $R$  to be able to explain the supposed data of sensory experiences (allegedly) had by witnesses of what appeared to be the Risen Jesus, the body of the Risen Jesus must be *perceivable*. But  $SM$  and  $R$  jointly entail that the body of the Risen Jesus is not *physical*. Because the term “physical” is ambiguous, we drew the crucial distinction between “physical” as understood within  $SM$  in contrast to how this term occurs (idiosyncratically) in statements by Craig and Davis. To prevent confusion, accordingly, we labeled these two senses “physical<sub>SM</sub>” and “physical<sub>CD</sub>.” Only the first is relevant to explaining the data statements in  $E$  regarding “appearances” to the witnesses since—in order to be *perceived* (seen, heard, or touched)—the body of the Risen Jesus *must be able to interact* with the physical<sub>SM</sub> world (including the witnesses). Bodies that are physical<sub>SM</sub> are comprised of the particles of  $SM$  which, fundamentally, are localized disturbances in oscillating quantum fields. If  $SM$  is true, then *interaction* occurs only between particles/fields and the bodies comprised of them. However, the (presumably) “physical” body of the Risen Jesus is not comprised of these particles/fields. If it were, it could not be immortal, imperishable, or (according to Craig) able to dematerialize into and out of the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe at will, as nothing comprised of the particles/fields of  $SM$  has these supernatural properties. Remarkably, not only does Davis never define what he means by “physical,” but he flouts equivocation by expressing indifference about the meaning of this term:

It is a matter of indifference to me whether [...] we have two different senses of the word “physical” at work here. As long as Jesus’ resurrection body can be seen, touched, located, etc., that point will not matter.<sup>8</sup>

As the reader can see from this quote, Davis (like Craig) is begging the question regarding explanatory scope and power. He is *assuming without argument*—

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<sup>8</sup> Davis, “Defense,” 20.

while completely ignoring ours—that the body of the Risen Jesus can be seen, touched, located, etc.

Let us now revisit this second core argument. As with the first, Davis merely *refers* to our argument but says nothing about its logical structure or the truth-value of its premises. Again he misstates the conclusion (twice), saddling us with one we flatly reject: “only physical things can causally interact with physical things” (p. 16 and 18).<sup>9</sup> Here is the argument displayed in Standard Form as originally given in “Refutation”:

1. In order for *R* to explain the sensory experiences (allegedly) had by the various witnesses (e.g. Mary Magdalene, Peter, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the disciples in the upper room, and Thomas Didymus), the body of the Risen Jesus must be able to interact with the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe and, in particular, must provide the senses of these witnesses with the *physical*<sub>SM</sub> inputs they *require* for sight, sound, touch, etc., e.g., photons in the case of the eyes, sound waves in the case of the ears, and physical contact pressure in the case of Meissner corpuscles of the epidermis.
2. *R* hypothesizes that the body of the Risen Jesus is “physical” and yet an immortal and imperishable *soma pneumatikon* that can dematerialize out of and rematerialize back into the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe at will.
3. A body that is “physical” and yet an immortal and imperishable *soma pneumatikon* that can dematerialize and rematerialize at will is not physical<sub>SM</sub>.
4. Therefore, the body of the Risen Jesus is not physical<sub>SM</sub>.
5. A body that is not physical<sub>SM</sub> cannot interact with the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe in any way and, thus, cannot provide the senses with the physical<sub>SM</sub> inputs they *require* for sight, sound, touch, etc.
6. Therefore, the body of the Risen Jesus cannot interact with the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe in any way and, thus, cannot provide the senses with the physical<sub>SM</sub> inputs they *require* for sight, sound, touch, etc.
7. Therefore, *R* cannot explain the sensory experiences (allegedly) had by the various witnesses.

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<sup>9</sup> Apart from this not being the conclusion of our argument, what we actually say is that, on *SM*, only those things that are physical<sub>SM</sub> can interact with things that are physical<sub>SM</sub>. Davis imposes the term “causal” onto our statement and ignores the crucial qualifier “if *SM* is true,” or “on *SM*.” Moreover, we never say that God, a non-physical being, cannot “causally” interact with physical things. He can, but not without making *SM* false.



The premises of this argument are all true. Premise 1 is obviously true: the body of the Risen Jesus cannot be seen, heard, and touched by the witnesses unless it is visible, audible, and tactile. In fact, this is presupposed by Craig, Davis, and other Christian apologists in their claim that *R* can explain *E*. As we point out in “Assessing,”

An essential part of what Craig means to affirm by taking “raised from the dead” in *R* to imply that the body of the risen Jesus is *physical* is that it possesses the ability to interact with its surroundings and, in particular, to be seen, heard, and touched through the use of the eyes, ears, and hands—for this is how he envisions *R* serving as an explanation for the sensory experiences the women and disciples had of the risen Jesus as stated in *E*.<sup>10</sup>

Premise 2 is true by the definition of *R* as understood by Craig. Notice that immortality and imperishability are part of the orthodox conception of “resurrection body,” whereas the ability to dematerialize and rematerialize in and out of the physical universe is postulated by Craig himself (perhaps as implicit in the orthodox conception or as supported by the gospel narratives).

Premise 3 is true because supernatural properties are ruled out by *SM*. Davis seems to not understand why it is that a body that is “physical” and yet an immortal and imperishable *soma pneumatikon* that can dematerialize and rematerialize cannot be physical<sub>SM</sub>. The reason is that, according to *SM*, bodies that are physical<sub>SM</sub> are composed of particles that are ultimately oscillations of quantum fields. However, it makes *no sense* to say that what is by its very essence an oscillation of a field can leave that field (going, e.g., to Heaven or Hell), return to it, or change into something other than the oscillation of a field. This is a category mistake. It is so utterly nonsensical that even calling it “wrong” gives it too much credit. Consequently, since by the definition of *R* the body of the Risen Jesus is immortal, imperishable, and (according to Craig) able at will to dematerialize out of and materialize back into the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe and the fields that comprise it, it *cannot* be physical<sub>SM</sub>. If it is “physical” at all, it must be so in some sense other than physical<sub>SM</sub>. Note well that *SM* allows that supernaturalism is true. *SM* is not naturalism. *SM* does not rule out the metaphysical possibility that God has created innumerable non-physical<sub>SM</sub> entities (angels, ghosts, faeries, etc.) that may have immortal, imperishable, and dematerializing bodies; however, it does rule out that such bodies are physical<sub>SM</sub>.

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<sup>10</sup> Cavin and Colombetti, “Assessing the Resurrection Hypothesis,” 217.

and, thus, that they can interact with the particles or quantum fields of the physical<sub>SM</sub> world.

Statement 4 is a sub-conclusion that follows deductively from premises 2 and 3 by Universal Instantiation. Premise 5 is true precisely because *SM* is a theory of *interaction*—of the interactions of particles (oscillations of quantum fields) and, by extension, the particles and bodies comprised of them. Most ultimately *SM* gives us quantum fields oscillating in various ways and interacting in the process of quantum coupling. Again, *SM* does not exclude the metaphysical possibility of non-physical<sub>SM</sub> entities or events in a non-physical<sub>SM</sub> world. Nor does it deny the omnipotence of God. To be clear, *SM* (assuming God exists) entails that God never interacts with quantum fields.<sup>11</sup> However, this does not deny the omnipotence of God but, rather, entails (*a posteriori*) that God is *unwilling*—for his own good purposes—to act in the world he has created, i.e., unwilling to act in the world so as to falsify *SM*. In other words, if *SM* is true, then God never interacts with the *SM* universe, and *vice versa*. *SM* excludes “interaction” that does not involve *exchange of the particles of SM* between things that are physical<sub>SM</sub> or, most ultimately, quantum fields mutually inducing oscillations in one another. This is why the non-physical<sub>SM</sub> body of the Risen Jesus (being merely “physical<sub>CD</sub>”) cannot—i.e., cannot *without making SM false*—interact with the physical<sub>SM</sub> world *even if* Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity and the Incarnation of God.

Statement 6 clearly follows from statements 4 and 5 by Universal Instantiation. Finally, the conclusion follows from premise 1 and statement 6 by Modus Ponens. This is why *R* cannot explain the supposed historical data of the “appearances” to the witnesses. But Davis completely ignores our argument, saying nothing at all about the topics of its validity and the truth of its premises. Instead, he brings up a number of red herrings: the omnipotence of God, naturalism, gravity, philosophy of science, theology, and (in a footnote) mind/body dualism.

Davis seems to think that we are denying the omnipotence of God because we say that the Risen Jesus—as the Second Person of the Trinity and the Incarnation of God—never interacts with quantum fields.<sup>12</sup> But the fact is, as we’ve just seen, we do not deny the omnipotence of God. It seems that Davis does not understand the logical relation between God and the laws of science as our best approximations to the laws of nature. This relation is elucidated in the following argument:

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<sup>11</sup> God’s creating quantum fields *ex nihilo* is not an act of interacting with them.

<sup>12</sup> In his brief reply, Davis mentions the powers and abilities of God no fewer than a dozen times.

1. God is (by definition) omnipotent.
2. So, if God does not do something, it is not because he *cannot* do it, i.e., lacks the power to do it, but because he *prefers not to* do it, i.e., he does not see it as the *best* thing for him to do, and cannot therefore bring himself to do it (e.g., God never lies or causes evil, although he has the power to do so).
3. *SM* (as our best approximation to the laws of nature for all phenomena except those relating to gravity) entails that entities that are not quantum fields or particles within them (i.e., the oscillations thereof) do not interact with quantum fields and particles within them (i.e., the oscillations thereof) and *cannot* so interact *without making SM false*.
4. So (by 2 and 3), God, although omnipotent, cannot bring himself to interact with the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe, i.e., cannot bring himself to use the power he has to interact with it because he doesn't see it as the best thing for him to do.

This argument shows that Davis is wrong to conclude that our argument entails that God is not omnipotent because we hold that Jesus, as the Second Person of the Trinity, cannot interact in his non-physical<sub>SM</sub> body with the physical<sub>SM</sub> universe—without thereby making *SM* false. Davis fails to see that the term “cannot” is ambiguous. It can mean either “lacks the power to do” or (as in the case of God) “cannot bring himself to do.”

And so, it seems that Davis remains confused about what we do and do not claim—and this in spite of our best efforts at clarity. Most significantly, we do not hold that God lacks the power to supernaturally raise Jesus from the dead. Nor do we deny that God has the power to make *SM* false. All we deny is that God can *supernaturally* raise Jesus from the dead without thereby making the very well-confirmed theory *SM* false. We show in both “Assessing” and “Refutation” that this is an impossibility even for God because it involves a logical contradiction. It is impossible to see how Davis can get around this logical inconsistency between *SM* and *R*, unless he were to reverse his rejection of *Cartesian omnipotence*, i.e., the view that God can change the laws of logic or change the truth value of any proposition, including that of logical contradictions.

## 2.0 Error and Irrelevancy in Davis's Second Reply

We have seen that the stand-out feature of Davis's reply is his persistent evasion of the two main arguments of "Refutation." Our summaries in Standard Form for these arguments take up only two pages. Yet Davis complains about the length of "Refutation" (56 pages) and, quoting *Macbeth*, characterizes our essay as "sound and fury." We have taken the trouble to study, not a few dozen, but many hundreds of pages written by Davis and Craig on the Resurrection across numerous books and articles. More importantly, we made a good faith effort to interpret their writings charitably and to ignore none of their arguments. We believe we have responded with fairness. We have gone so far as to offer them something that is conspicuously missing from their extensive body of work: a logically correct argument schema (see below) that, if suitably instantiated, could justify the Resurrection as probable. Far from being so much "sound and fury," our essay was crafted to respond to objections and questions that Davis himself raised in his first reply. In so doing we took care to present our premises and the logical structure of our main arguments in the clearest terms. Unfortunately, "On Behalf" is a reply that provides the unsuspecting reader with a shallow, distorted, inaccurate, and—by its evasiveness—very incomplete "exposition" of our essay. Let us now examine (in three parts) some of the problems with Davis's reply.

### 2.1 Problems of Method and Epistemology

Davis begins with definitions and metaphysical assumptions. He defines *natural law* (e.g., gravity) in terms of descriptions of observed regularities and he understands *miracle* as an "intervention" by God. Following Swinburne, he adds that "a miracle amounts to God violating one or more natural laws" while leaving the law intact. But these definitions are an irrelevant distraction. Davis is confusing metaphysical/theological claims with the scientific claims that form the basis of our two core arguments in "Refutation." These arguments have nothing to do with the concept of "natural law" but everything to do with *well-confirmed scientific theory*. Indeed, we do not claim that *SM* is a "natural law." The reader can verify this by referring back to the two arguments above in Standard Form. Davis fails to see that his definitions, even if correct, have absolutely *nothing to do* with our two core arguments. The

problem for Davis is that *SM* entails that *R* is false. His definitions serve only to distract the reader from this fact.

Davis also summarizes his understanding of the distinction between *naturalism* and *supernaturalism*, confessing his rejection of one and preference for the other. Again, this is entirely irrelevant to our two core arguments. Indeed, these arguments show—as we took pains to emphasize in both “Assessing” and “Refutation”—that we do not presuppose naturalism. We made every effort in these essays to circumvent the reactive Christian apologetic of falsely claiming that the skeptic is committed to naturalism. Davis’s claim (in both his first and second replies) that we presuppose naturalism in our criticism of miracles and the Resurrection exemplifies an apologetic error that we call the *Naturalism Fallacy* fallacy, i.e., the fallacy of falsely charging that an argument presupposes naturalism. We emphatically and *repeatedly* state that we assume (for the sake of argument) the existence of God. Each premise of our arguments—as the reader can easily verify—is logically compatible with theism. The problem for Davis is that the fact that *SM* entails  $\sim R$  does not entail naturalism or that God is not omnipotent. What it entails, rather, is that God (if he exists) chooses in his omnipotence to uphold *SM* rather than to supernaturally raise Jesus. Moreover, *SM* is not unique in this capacity. Indeed, any proposition *p* (true or false) entails that if God exists, then he chooses in his omnipotence to uphold *p* rather than to supernaturally falsify it. Our point, in other words, is merely logical and not, as Davis falsely concludes, profoundly metaphysical.

Davis claims that, in view of the historical data, it is rational for Christians who believe in the existence of an omnipotent, perfectly wise, and intervening God (call this “theism”) to conclude that *R* is probable. Unfortunately, he fails to provide any kind of reasons to justify this conclusion or to even clarify the method or logic by which he reaches it. However, we offered Davis just such a method in the form of a logically correct argument schema (p. 43 of “Refutation”). Thus, to assess the probability of *R* in comparison to its alternatives  $A_1, \dots, A_n$  one needs to account for the total evidence as summarized in two terms: “*B*” for the compendium of relevant background information and “*E*” for the compendium of facts to be explained. Theism can be included either as a part of *B* (as we did in “Refutation”) or as a separate term. Here again is that schema, now with theism (*T*) as a separate term:

1. The total relevant and available evidence consists of  $B&E&T$ .
  2. The hypotheses ( $R, A_1, \dots, A_n$ ) are a mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive set.
  3. Hypothesis  $R$  is the best explanation of the evidence in that it satisfies the full range of the *criteria of adequacy* for explanatory hypotheses better, overall, than the disjunction of  $A_1, \dots, A_n$ .
- 

Therefore,  $R$  is probable, i.e.,  $P(R|B&E&T) > 0.5$ .

We followed our presentation of this schema with a brief discussion of each premise, the minimal requirements for making them true (e.g., relevance and completeness), and certain fallacies to be avoided (e.g., Special Pleading and Incomplete Evidence). We also provided a “balance diagram” to help the reader visualize the *comparative* aspect of explanatory reasoning, and we provided a Bayesian rendering of the schema that would make the argument for  $R$  more rigorous and precise. Despite this, however, we showed that premise 3 is false and that, consequently, the argument fails to substantiate the conclusion that  $R$  is probable. Yet Davis ignores all of this. He has not offered an alternative schema of his own to justify the conclusion that  $R$  has a probability of greater than 0.5, nor has he offered a way to instantiate our proposed schema so as to yield true premises. Davis provides no method for assessing hypotheses and offers no argument on behalf of the Resurrection.

He does, however, comment on the epistemology of rational degrees of belief. Here Davis claims that it can sometimes be rational to believe as true a proposition that has an epistemic probability of less than 0.5. He completely disregards the careful distinction we drew in “Refutation” (p. 41) between *all-out* belief and *degree* of belief. Davis suggests an abstract example consisting of four mutually exclusive explanations:

Suppose that A, B, and C, so far as we can tell, each have a probability of 0.1 (and thus the probability that one of them is true has a probability of 0.3). And suppose that the probability of D is 4.5. This would doubtless be a case where much is unknown and more research is needed. But suppose further that, for some pragmatic reason, we must now choose one of the four. Then, I would argue that it is rational to believe D.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Davis, “Defense,” 21.

We hope for his sake that Davis does not take this approach to gambling! He is placing bets at greater-than-even odds on a horse known to have only a 45% chance of winning (notice that he gives D a 4.5 probability, but he surely meant 0.45). In his example, it is indeed rational to *prefer* D over the other three (D will still “win”); but it is not rational to believe that D is *true*.<sup>14</sup> Now, if Davis is suggesting that one of these four options represents *R*, why would he think it is D rather than one of the others? Where is his argument? On the other hand, even if *R* has a final probability of 0.1 (which we argue is absurdly high) or far lower, one may very well have “some pragmatic reason,” as he puts it, to believe it anyway. For example, belief might contribute to happiness or enable a person to live virtuously. We have no problem with demonstrably irrational but pragmatic belief in resurrection; on the contrary, as with the consumption of 70’s disco music, we encourage it so long as there is no harm to self or others. But Davis then adds that this (pragmatic belief) is not his actual position on the Resurrection. He admits that the prior probability of *R* is low but claims that if one assumes supernaturalism together with the evidence statements in *E* and background information *B*, then “the [final] probability of *R* is well above 0.5.”

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<sup>14</sup> Davis is confused. He uses the terms “probability” and “belief.” But is “probability” for him the same as “degree of belief”? Or is it the same as “objective chance”? He doesn’t say. On the other hand—although it is not entirely clear—it does seem that by “belief” Davis means what we term “all-out-belief” (p. 41 of “Refutation”), i.e., belief to degree 1.0. For his conclusion is simply that it is rational to believe hypothesis D. So now, suppose that by “probability” Davis means “degree of belief” (rather than “objective chance”). Then it follows that he is contradicting himself by giving D contradictory degrees of belief of both 0.45 and 1.0! Suppose, then, that in order to avoid this contradiction Davis means by “probability,” not “degree of belief,” but, rather, “objective chance.” Then it follows that he is now violating the principle of probability theory that one’s degree of belief in a proposition *p* conditional on the information that the chance of *p* is equal to *n* should itself be *n*:

$$P(p|Ch(p) = n) = n$$

Here “*P*( )” is epistemic probability, i.e., probability in the sense of “degree of belief,” and “*Ch*( )” is probability in the sense of “objective chance.” This instantiates in the case of Davis’s example as:

$$P(D|Ch(D) = 0.45) = 0.45$$

But this contradicts Davis for it shows that one’s degree of belief in D conditional on the information that the objective chance of D is 0.45 should itself be 0.45—not 1.0 as Davis seems to think. Thus, on either interpretation, Davis is wrong: it is irrational to believe D. Davis ignores Shimony’s quasi-Dutch book proof that one should never have degree of belief 1.0 in a contingent proposition on pragmatic grounds since it opens one up to—will make one falsely count a bet to be fair—that pays you nothing if you win and makes you forfeit everything if you lose.

This is an astonishing conclusion. And yet, again, Davis nowhere presents an argument for it.<sup>15</sup> In light of our second Standard Form argument to the contrary—an argument that he inexplicably ignores—one has to wonder how Davis arrives at this impressive final probability.

## 2.2 Error, Misunderstanding, and Misrepresentation

Instead of providing the reader with an accurate exegesis and fair assessment of our arguments, Davis presents a bullet-point list of seven truisms that he erroneously claims we “emphasize” (p. 16). Due to constraints of space, we comment on just three of these.

Davis states that, “of course, if naturalism is true, any naturalistic explanation of an event or phenomenon is superior to any supernaturalistic one.” The statement is correct, but Davis misleads the reader by again raising the bugbear of naturalism when, in fact, we *repeatedly* state in “Refutation” that we do not appeal to naturalism. The judicious reader can verify this by inspecting the Standard Form arguments above. Our only appeal therein is to *SM*; and *SM* neither is nor entails naturalism. Now, although Davis’s truism is true, it is also a peculiar understatement. For, if naturalism is true, then natural explanations are not merely probabilistically superior; rather, they are “the only game in town,” i.e., the only available explanation. Moreover, Davis is overlooking a related truism: the superiority of a natural explanation *does not depend upon* the supposition that “naturalism is true.” For example, Davis would surely agree that—even if naturalism is false—the natural explanation that he lost his keys because he got distracted by an emergency call hardly depends upon naturalism. Likewise, he would surely agree that there are still superior natural explanations of such (alleged) phenomena as the gravity-defying levitation of Yogi Subbayah Pullavar in 1936 in full view of witnesses and cameras. Maybe the “levitation” was a hoax or a magician’s trick; maybe the photos were faked. The correct truism here is that a natural explanation can be proven superior to a supernatural one *without naturalism being true*.

Davis states that, “of course, the equations of *SM* never yield supernatural results.” Well, if this is obviously true, then Davis must agree with us that *R* is incompatible with *SM* because (a) the equations of *SM* have as their

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<sup>15</sup> Craig and Swinburne do provide (failed) arguments that the final probability of *R* is greater than 0.5. For our critique of Swinburne’s Bayesian argument, see Cavin and Colombetti, “Negative Natural Theology and the Sinlessness, Incarnation, and Resurrection of Jesus.”



natural input the event of the corpse of Jesus being in some stage of postmortem decomposition, (b) they yield as their output/result the subsequent natural event of the corpse of Jesus being in some stage of postmortem decomposition (most probably more advanced and less probably slightly less advanced or the same), and (c) this natural result cannot, *ex hypothesi*, be *any* supernatural event—including the supernatural event of God supernaturally raising the corpse of Jesus from the dead. We earlier (section 1.1 above) and in “Refutation” gave the most general and simple version of the argument. But Davis ignores it and inexplicably denies that we have a sound argument to show that *SM* entails  $\sim R$ . We will count this as an error of omission.

The seventh “truism” listed by Davis is actually no truism at all! He states that, “of course, it follows that if God never supernaturally causes Mars and Kepler-186f to switch places, then those two items do not switch places.” But suppose God *never* supernaturally causes Mars and Kepler-186f to switch places. This hardly entails that those planets *do not* switch places. They could do so by the whim of a supernatural agent other than God, e.g., Satan, Legion, or Michael the Archangel (beings that Davis believes to exist); or by purely natural means, e.g., by some gravitational catastrophe that ejects Kepler-186f out of its orbit and into the orbit of Mars while some rogue star knocks Mars out of its orbit and into the present orbit of Kepler-186f, or perhaps by space aliens playing a frame of snooker with the planets. Thus, not only is Davis wrong in his critique of our argument at this point, but even his “truism” is wrong. The problem here is that Davis recklessly distorts one of our examples and entirely misses the point. Our example was intended to illustrate the principle that *negative natural fact* (in this case, the fact that the two planets do not switch places) has profound entailments regarding *what God does not do*. The point we were making was in rebuttal to his previous claim that “science [...] confines itself to the physical realm as described by *SM*.” We provided a detailed argument in section 2.1 of “Refutation” that (on the assumption of theism) science *does not and cannot* confine itself to the natural realm; rather, scientific theories have entailments regarding the supernatural and God. Davis completely misunderstood the point of this argument.

Beyond falsely claiming that we “emphasize” the above truisms, Davis goes on to claim that the first of “the main arguments of [Cavin and Colombetti]” is that, and we quote, “*SM* entails that Jesus was not raised from the dead” (p. 16). But we have *never* said this. We can now explain why Davis’s statement of our conclusion is manifestly false and why it shows that he misunderstands the fundamentals of our argument. For Davis here omits the crucial term “supernatural” from Craig’s definition of the Resurrection

hypothesis. That is, he omits from *R* that God *supernaturally* raises Jesus from the dead. This error further exposes his persistent failure to either comprehend or respond directly to our arguments. It is no wonder that “On Behalf” is such a mishmash of misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

Davis should take note that Craig himself has been exact and unequivocal about the supernatural character of the Resurrection, claiming for two decades now that a *natural* resurrection is virtually impossible whereas a *supernatural* resurrection—when considered in its religio-historical context—is not at all implausible. Craig’s statement is worth quoting at length:

I once also held that the appropriate hypothesis should be “Jesus rose from the dead,” and that the miraculous nature of the resurrection was a subsequent question. But my interaction with [Robert Greg] Cavin [...] led me to conclude that the hypothesis “Jesus rose from the dead” is too ambiguous. For this hypothesis can be taken to mean “Jesus rose naturally from the dead,” or “Jesus rose miraculously (or supernaturally) from the dead,” and the probability assignments one gives to these two interpretations may be wildly divergent. That Jesus rose naturally from the dead [...] is a hypothesis so absurdly improbable that virtually any other explanation—hallucinations, apparent death, even E.T. abduction—will be more probable. But whether the hypothesis that Jesus rose miraculously from the dead is improbable will depend on whether one agrees or not with Hume that miracles are unacceptably improbable. [...] I think it is evident that the general hypothesis “Jesus rose from the dead” is too ambiguous to serve usefully as an explanation. Depending on how you interpret it, one’s assessments of how it measures up to the criteria for best explanation will be very different. So it is necessary to be clear that one is offering a supernatural explanation: “God raised Jesus from the dead.”<sup>16</sup>

The distinction Craig draws here is correct. Yet he has learned the wrong lesson. It is actually *supernatural* resurrection that is the most improbable, and, indeed, *impossible relative to SM* and thus maximally implausible; whereas the laws of nature do not preclude the possibility (albeit astronomically improbable) of a *natural* resurrection. Technically speaking—although it would be highly irrational to believe such things—the corpse of Jesus could have been *naturally* resurrected, either accidentally through random fluctuations of its molecular

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<sup>16</sup> See “Closing Response: William Lane Craig,” 186–87. The “interaction” Craig refers to was a debate on the Resurrection at U.C. Irvine in 1995.

constituents that decrease its entropy or deliberately through the shenanigans of meddlesome space aliens.<sup>17</sup> In a *natural* resurrection, the natural inputs for *SM* would be followed by natural outputs. In “Assessing,” we refuted Craig’s argument for the plausibility of *R* by showing that his alleged religio-historical context for the Resurrection is myth and, more importantly, by showing that *SM* entails  $\sim R$  since *R* states that the Resurrection is a *supernatural* event brought about by God—a feature Craig realizes to be essential but Davis overlooks. In “Refutation,” we did this again in considerably more detail. Yet Davis inexplicably ignores all of this.

Bizarrely, Davis attributes to us the modal statement “ $\sim P \Rightarrow \Box \sim P$ ” (which we absolutely disown as patently absurd) and he wonders what we could possibly mean by the term “impossible” when we say that it is “*impossible* and therefore *maximally implausible* on *SM* that God supernaturally interferes” in the realm of everyday events. He need not have troubled himself to wonder, for we say in the very next paragraph—and it is difficult to see how Davis could have missed this:

...the reader must take care not to misunderstand what we are arguing. We are not denying the obvious fact that improbable events do sometimes occur. Nor are we denying divine omnipotence, i.e., that God (if he exists) has the power to supernaturally intervene in the affairs of the physical universe, e.g., by raising Jesus from the dead. What we are arguing, rather, is that *SM* and *R* are *inconsistent* and, that, because they are, *SM* entails that God *does not exercise* his power to supernaturally interfere in the affairs of the physical universe so as to violate the laws of *SM*—most significantly, by raising Jesus from the dead. It is only in this special sense of “relative to *SM*” that we argue that it is “impossible” and, thus, “maximally implausible,” i.e., “epistemically improbable,” for God to supernaturally

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<sup>17</sup> For example, space aliens visiting first-century Jerusalem could have raised Jesus with an Acme Revivification Machine: a medical system outfitted with molecular-scale nanodevices that can maneuver the atoms of a corpse one by one and thereby reverse decomposition and death. Such a machine can produce resuscitation or any other kind of natural revivification (e.g., metamorphosis). While not technologically feasible, the Revivification Machine is *in principle*—i.e., nomologically—possible. As physicist Richard Feynman observes:

The principles of physics, as far as I can see, do not speak against the possibility of maneuvering things atom by atom. It is not an attempt to violate any laws; it is something, in principle, that can be done; but in practice, it has not been done because we are too big. (See Feynman, “There’s Plenty of Room at the Bottom,” 22–36)

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interfere in the affairs of the physical universe covered by *SM* and, thus, raise Jesus from the dead.<sup>18</sup>

More generally, to say that *q* is impossible on or with respect to *p* is just to say that *p* and *q* are inconsistent—or, equivalently, that *p* entails  $\sim q$ . There is no exegetical mystery here, let alone denial of the omnipotence of God. Davis is simply confused.

### 2.3 Irrelevant Appeal to Supernaturalism

Davis in “On Behalf” repeats a claim he has been making for decades—that rational belief in miracles depends upon one’s choice of worldview: naturalism or supernaturalism. This epistemic stance is surely due to the influence of C. S. Lewis, who states on the first page of his classic *Miracles* that,

If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been victims of an illusion. If we hold a philosophy which excludes the supernatural, this is what we always shall say.

For Davis, Christians who believe in the existence of an omnipotent and intervening Creator are “within their intellectual rights” in believing that *R* is probable on the evidence, while atheistic skeptics are also being reasonable in their own (misguided) way. Christians and skeptics arrive at different conclusions about the Resurrection, Davis thinks, because they proceed from different metaphysical assumptions. But, in light of our refutation of Davis above, the reader can now see that this is false. Our two core arguments show that Lewis and Davis are wrong. For, as we have shown in our detailed reply to Davis, these arguments make no appeal whatsoever to naturalism. Moreover, Lewis and Davis are mistaken about the significance of assuming supernaturalism and, more specifically, theism (both of which the skeptic can afford to grant). Supernaturalism is clearly a necessary condition for *R* being true or probable since *R* is defined as having a supernatural element: God *supernaturally* raised Jesus from the dead as a *soma pneumatikon*. But supernaturalism is obviously not a sufficient condition since one can be a supernaturalist (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu) and yet have good reasons to

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<sup>18</sup> Cavin and Colombetti, “The Implausibility and Low Explanatory Power of the Resurrection Hypothesis,” 50.

reject *R*. Davis is surely aware of this. But what he overlooks, quite ironically, is that the *supernatural* element in the definition of *R* is *the very thing* that makes *R* logically inconsistent with *SM* and thus maximally implausible. Moreover, the assumption of theism does nothing to raise the plausibility (i.e., prior probability) of *R*. This is because, as even Craig himself acknowledges, we have no way of knowing what God would do with respect to raising Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Even if an omnipotent and intervening God exists, the problem for Davis is that this makes no discernible difference to the probability of *R*. Although we know what God *can* do (by the definition of omnipotence), we do not know what God *would* do, i.e., we do not know the occasions and ways (the “when” and “what”) of Divine intervention. Theism ensures that miracles are metaphysically *possible*, but not that they actually occur. Mere possibility is not probability—and Davis overlooks this as well.

Davis’s appeal to supernaturalism is an irrelevant distraction. In fact, we have no problem with Davis’s understanding of “supernaturalism” but only with its epistemic significance. We especially concur with his remark that: “God has the ability and perhaps occasionally the intention to bring about events that apart from God would not naturally have occurred; they are usually called miracles.” Davis has this exactly right. But regarding God’s presumed intentions—how does Davis or anyone know the content of what God intends or which (if any) of his intentions God actualizes? Again, how can anyone know the “when” and “what” of Divine intervention? God’s intentions are profoundly mysterious (Isa 55:8–9) and, apart from the creation of the universe and its laws, no one knows what God wills (positively) to occur. In contrast, we assuredly do know what God has *not* willed to occur (because it never happened) and (because of this) what God has an *extremely weak tendency* to will to occur (as revealed by the patterns of nature). This is part of what we call Negative Natural Theology (NNT) and the *Via Negativa*—both of which Davis unfortunately ignores.<sup>20</sup> For example, we know with very high probability based upon thousands of years of observations that God has an extremely weak tendency to part the Atlantic Ocean, to stop the sun in the sky, or to raise saints on Easter Sunday. Nature itself is our best evidence of what God (assuming he exists) does not forbid and thus allows to happen. And the evidence of nature and of

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<sup>19</sup> Craig puts it this way: “The difficulty here is that we are dealing with a free agent (the Creator of the universe), and how do we know what he would do with respect to raising Jesus?” See Craig, “Closing Remarks,” 327.

<sup>20</sup> For the distinction between positive and negative natural theology, see Cavin and Colombetti, “Negative Natural Theology and the Sinlessness, Incarnation, and Resurrection of Jesus,” 409–18.

history overwhelmingly tells us that God—although omnipotent—allows innocents to suffer, allows even prophets and the “elect” to be deceived on matters of religious importance, and does not produce events that are contrary to *SM*. Davis fails to appreciate that appeal to the evidence of nature is compatible with generic theism (as opposed to any specifically supernaturalist theism) and is not to be confused with atheism or naturalism.<sup>21</sup>

The only reply left to Davis and Craig is an appeal to the *proviso* objection according to which scientific laws contain an implicit “causal closure” proviso to the effect that God does not supernaturally interfere in nature. However, we already refuted this conception of scientific laws in section 2.4 of “Refutation” through four counterarguments.

We may now conclude by observing that Davis offers no criticism of the two additional arguments in Part 4 of our essay: a Bayesian argument against what we call  $R_{min}$ —the *minimal* hypothesis that Jesus became bodily alive again *in some way or other* (regardless of the particulars)—and a Bayesian argument for the Legend hypothesis. Indeed, in the final section of “On Behalf,” Davis expresses only puzzlement that we ended with an argument for the Legend hypothesis (as if mysteries are not worth solving!). Again, he has nothing to say about the logic of the argument or the truth-value of its premises.<sup>22</sup> Instead, he wonders why we would attack the evidence for *R* if *SM* by itself entails that God did not supernaturally raise Jesus from the dead. Perhaps Davis is forgetting that we allowed Craig’s evidence statements *only* for the sake of argument. Also, like any other aficionados, we are keen to know what *really* happened on that first Easter Sunday. The crucial evidence consists of reports of vivid, detailed, and polymodal “appearances” of the Risen Jesus to multiple witnesses, at different times and places, as dramatically recounted in the gospels. Skeptics have tended to adopt the strategy of attacking the reliability of the gospels. But our approach is distinguished by the concessions we are able to make to proponents of the Resurrection: the existence of God, supernaturalism, as well as the full measure of the aforesaid gospel evidence.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Baptists and Catholics alike reason correctly in concluding that it is highly probable that God does not levitate the water out of the baptistery or baptismal font based upon copious past evidence of God not doing so.

<sup>22</sup> Nor does Davis say anything in response to our arguments in “Assessing” for the superior explanatory scope of the Hallucination and Apparent Death hypotheses (hypotheses we reject). These arguments assumed that the detailed statements in the gospels regarding the empty tomb and reports of “appearances” are true, i.e., that the Legend hypothesis is false. Davis completely ignores these arguments.

<sup>23</sup> Apologists might be asked what concessions (not already forced by evidence) they are willing to make to skeptics. Bart Ehrman, for example, has asked Michael Licona and Timothy

But, again, these concessions are merely provisional and strategic. So, if our Bayesian argument for the Legend hypothesis is successful, this provides an independent path to the refutation of the Resurrection—an important motivation that Davis entirely misses. In fact, we ended this section of “Refutation” by noting that,

The implication of this conclusion for the historical argument for the Resurrection is clear: the New Testament evidence for *R* is largely bogus and thus—even apart from *SM*—the epistemic probability of *R* is quite low.<sup>24</sup>

The combination of exceedingly low prior probability, deficient explanatory power, and bogus evidence—even apart from the superiority of several naturalistic explanations in the unlikely event that the “appearances” are established by a logically correct Bayesian argument—shows *overwhelmingly* that *R* is false. What’s so puzzling about that?

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McGrew (in video debates) whether they think the gospels contain any error—even one—or whether they hold to the view of inerrancy. They hem and haw for long stretches, never giving a direct “yes” or “no.”

<sup>24</sup> Cavin and Colombetti, “The Implausibility and Low Explanatory Power of the Resurrection Hypothesis,” 91.

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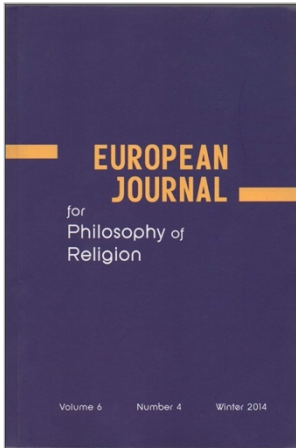
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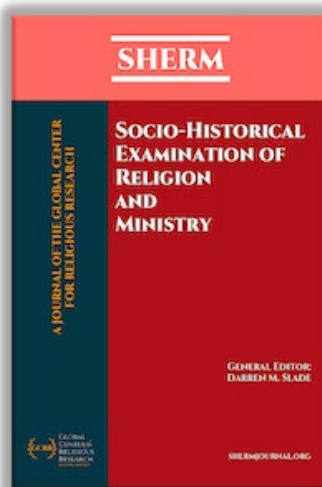
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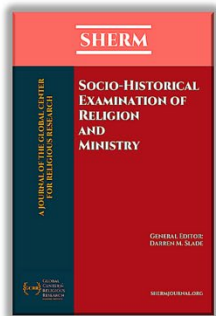


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