More Progress in Christian Apologetics:
Revelational Theism (rev 3)

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*"In order that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,
I say to the paralytic, 'rise, take up your bed and walk'". Mark 2:10, 11*

"But supernatural facts require supernatural confirmations." A. Campbell

In my previous paper I traced the logical steps by which Oxford philosopher Antony Flew moved from systematic a-theism to belief in an omnipotent personal God based on evidence from science using non-deductive reasoning. Flew's journey I believe is representative of progress in Christian apologetics. However, Flew did not make the final step to belief that God had revealed himself in human history, nor in Jesus' Resurrection nor in the afterlife. In this paper I show that the progress in Christian apologetics did not end with Flew's God, but blossomed into new arguments for historic revelational theism including miracle, The Resurrection of Jesus, and the afterlife. Finally, I show that some differences between Alexander Campbell's philosophical fathers, John Locke and the Scottish common sense thinker Thomas Reid mimic the philosophical shifts of Antony Flew and American analytic philosopher Alvin Plantinga.

Introduction

In Forty Years of Progress in Christian Apologetics[1] I outlined the steps by which Oxford philosopher Antony Flew moved from a-theism to belief in an omnipotent personal God. The key steps were a rejection of the skeptical arguments of philosopher David Hume (1776) including acceptance of cause and effect, acceptance of some kind of direct experience of the real world, and acceptance of alternate forms of inference such as "best explanation" and use of Baysian inference (abduction) sometimes called probability. For convenience I will call these three steps "Flew's trifecta."

In the current paper I will apply Flew's trifecta to historical arguments from miracle and fulfilled prophecy for Jesus' deity and Biblical revelation (let us call this outcome "revelational theism") and outline how these revived arguments gain new life, but I do not provide a full argument, but rather a suggested research program. In the process, I will note that elements similar to Flew's trifecta were shared by Scottish Common Sense philosopher Thomas Reid, Alexander Campbell and Alvin Plantinga.

I conclude that recent developments against Hume's anti-miracle arguments and developments in the philosophy of religion provide fruitful basis to revive the argument from miracle to divine revelation. I cannot help but wonder if given more time to absorb refutations of Hume, Antony Flew would have accepted the Resurrection. However, I stress that this paper is report of progress on the components of an argument based and not the argument itself.

Outline

Historical Arguments for Revelational Theism
Philosophical Objections to Miracle
Improved Arguments for Miracle from Testimony
Improved Arguments for Revelational Theism from Miracle
Improved Philosophical Foundations

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[1] William L. Custer, "Forty Years of Progress in Christian Apologetics," SCJ 25.2 (Fall 2022) pp-pp.

Historical Arguments for Revelational Theism

What was the traditional argument from miracle and fulfilled prophecy for revelational theism?[2] Two examples are given here that are sufficient to reveal the structure of the argument. Philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) drew a connection between miracle and credentials of a messenger in his popular Discourse of Miracles:

> "To know that any revelation is from God, it is necessary to know that the messenger that delivers it is sent from God, and that cannot be known but by some credential given him by God himself. Let us see then whether miracles, in my sense, be such credentials, and will not infallibly direct us right in the search for divine revelation.[3]

Theologian, apologist, and philosopher of religion Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) stated the argument in terms of confirmation of testimony as follows:

> "But supernatural facts[4] require supernatural confirmations. Hence, when the confirmation of the gospel is spoken of in the apostolic writings, it is resolved into the doings or works of the Holy Spirit. "Demonstrations of the Holy Spirit" are the confirmatory proofs of the gospel. When Paul delivered the testimony of God, or the testimony concerning Jesus, to the Corinthians, he says, "*It was confirmed among them*." And if we examine into the confirmation of the testimony as Paul explained it, we shall find that he makes the spiritual gifts, or those extraordinary and miraculous powers which the apostles themselves displayed, and which so many of their converts also possessed, an assurance or confirmation which he promulgated." The Christian System, "On Confirmation of Testimony,"[5]

What is confirmed in Campbell's quote is the gospel spoken of in the apostolic writings. The "confirmation" of it is by "the doings and work of the Holy Spirit." The doings and works of the Holy Spirit are the "spiritual gifts" or "extraordinary and miraculous powers" which the apostles and disciples displayed. Campbell is unpacking a statement from the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 2:4.

Paul does not explain how miracle and fulfilled prophecy were a "demonstration" that his message was from God. Nor do other New Testament writers explain words like "sign" (John 20:30) or "attested (Acts 2:22)." Nor does Jesus explain the words "in order that you may know" (Mark 2:10). None of these statements then are arguments in the philosophical sense of the word. Clearly each meant that there is some type of evidence relation between miracle and divine authority, but the relation cries out for elaboration. Campbell gives some elaboration of what he means by "confirmation" such that it could be called an argument.[6] For now, let us call the proposed evidence relation between miracle and revelational theism the "confirmation of testimony argument" (COTA) whether fully elaborated into an argument or in its more primitive New Testament form. There is no circularity in the COTA, it starts with the Bible as an historical document and argues that it is more.

This COTA can be clarified using two tools that Flew uses, namely the argument from "best explanation" and the use of "probability." Both "best explanation" and "probability" have been philosophically elaborated in the last several generations, primarily as part of scientific theory confirmation but also utilized in theology for the same purpose. That elaboration has also resulted in advances in Christian apologetics.

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[2] Many writers too numerous to list have versions of the argument. For purposes of this paper the statements of Locke and Campbell are sufficient to outline the thesis to be developed. For others who have developed the evidence relation between miracle and revelational theism see: Dulles, Paley, Warfield, Montgomery.

[3] John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity with A Discourse of Miracles and Part of A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*. Edited, abridged, and introduced by I. T. Ramsey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958) 80.

[4] "By facts we always mean a thing said or done." Alexander Campbell, "On Confirmation of Testimony," *The Christian System: In Reference to the Union of Christians, and a Restoration of Primitive Christianity, as Plead in the Current Reformation*, originally published 1839, reprinted (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1974) 95-96.

[5] Ibid., 98.

[6] Campbell turned this into an argument as we shall see.

The COTA has as a prerequisite that miracles did occur and that the historical record is sufficient not only to believe them, but also to make them a foundation for other beliefs.[7] Philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) challenged both of these assumptions, but new refutations of Hume using Baysian theories of probability have revived apologetics.

Philosophical Objections to Miracle

Empirical skeptic philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) in his chapter titled *On Miracles*[8] offered arguments against miracle that have been widely accepted in academic circles for the last two centuries. These arguments for all practical purposes killed the COTA against which it was addressed and revolutionized Biblical scholarship through canons of historical criticism. It is therefore critical for the COTA to succeed that we understand Hume's arguments and their refutation. Hume divides *On Miracles* into two sections. On one reading, Part I addresses the possibility a miracle occurrences and Part II addresses the credibility of testimony about miracle if it were to occur. The first is sometimes called the *a priori* rejection of miracle and the second *the balance of probabilities argument*.[9] Some writers defend that Hume presents only one argument, the balance of probabilities argument (BOPA).[10] Given that in Part I it is the miracle and not the testimony that violates the laws of nature it is likely that there are two separate arguments, however the progress of this paper does not hinge on the question since both views have adequate refutations.

Miracle Possible[11]
Is Hume's First Objection Circular? In Part I of *On Miracles* he argues that the laws of nature are a proof against a miracle. He says "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 be possibly imagined."[12]

Lewis Calls It Circular. C.S. Lewis concludes that Hume is arguing in a circle: "Now of course we must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely "uniform experience" against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately, we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle."[13]

If God, Then Miracle Possible. Lewis gave another argument for the possibility of miracles, namely the existence of God. If nature is not the whole show there is no guarantee against a miracle occurring.[14] Richard Swinburne makes a similar argument: "But in so far as there is evidence that there is a God, there is evidence that a violation of natural laws is a serious possibility."[15] This is particularly true of the attributes of the God for which Swinburne and Antony Flew argue,[16] a God who interacts with His creation can perform miracles, indeed might be expected to do so. Whether the regularity of nature is the result of some mechanism that God set up and occasionally suspends intentionally or whether each event in the universe is the direct cause by God without some intermediate mechanism, the argument of Lewis and Swinburne holds.

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[7] Jesus' claim to be the unique Son of God is no small claim.

[8] David Hume, Of Miracles in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals,* Reprinted from the Posthumous Edition of 1777 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) Section X: Of Miracles, Par 90.

[9] I owe David Corner for the name "balance of probabilities" which so aptly captures the argument. David Corner, "Miracles," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource.* https://iep.utm.edu/miracles/, n.d.

[10] Robert J. Fogelin, *A Defense of Hume on Miracles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) 19, 20.

[11] For a helpful summary of the philosophical arguments see David Corner, Ibid.

[12] Hume, op. cit.

[13] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1947) 105.

[14] Ibid, 10-14.

[15] Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) 31.

[16] Antony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007) 150. See also Custer, op. cit., Flew argues for an intentional God, Swinburne for interaction with creation.

Defining Miracle

Violation? Some discussions of Hume focus on his definition of miracle as a "violation" of the laws of nature.[17] The word "violation" seems too strong for Hume's view that the laws of nature are mere generalizations of our experience.[18] Violation conjures images of divine rape, although Swinburne continues to use the word with modification (quasi-violation).[19] Perhaps "anomaly" is a good term, miracles as a series of anomalies that have their own identifiable pattern of design, but that does not capture the force that "quasi-violation" does.

Caused by God. Some include the cause of miracle (God) in the definition.[20] To do so is to confuse two questions, did the event happen and what/who was the cause? We prefer to separate the historical question, did the event happen, from the interpretation, what caused this event? The result is that one could talk of Christian as well as non-Christian or even occult miracles and need criteria to distinguish the former from the latter. To determine whether God caused the event one could employ the tool of "best explanation." What other events accompanied the miracle? Was the event accompanied by a voice that said "I am JHWH," or "this is my beloved son…?"

Theological vs Apologetic Definition. To include "caused by God" in the definition of miracle also confuses the apologetic task. If "caused by God" is part of the definition then by this definition the event has both a theological and an historical dimension. In this circumstance historians would be quite right to say the "caused by God" portion is not an historical question. That the tomb was empty is an historical question, that God raised Jesus is a theological question. Because of this nuance we suggest that the apologist not use "caused by God" in the definition but argue for it later as the best explanation of the event. To argue that God is the best explanation is another form of the argument for revelational theism.

Campbell uses both definitions. When arguing the COTA he defines miracle as "suspension of some known law of nature," To limit miracle only to Jewish and Christian miracle he says: "With us a miracle is a display of supernatural power in attestation of some proposition presented by God to man for his acceptance. Miracles are, therefore, signs manual attached to commissions to authenticate messengers from God." [21]

Defined by Example (Ostensive). To give a set of necessary and sufficient conditions to describe an event to be miraculous is difficult, but that difficulty is not unique to the word "miracle;" description is a larger philosophical question. To avoid the difficulty, historian and apologist John Warwick Montgomery proposes an ostensive definition, one that points to examples.[22] To define "dog" one points to many examples, anything that fits most of the characteristics is a dog. The method requires some fine tuning but it avoids the need for metaphysical essences such as Aristotle. As a starting place for ostensive definition of miracle we can look at Jesus answer to John the Baptist. The blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead are all healed (Luke 7:20-23), and this fulfills prophecy.

Descriptive Definition Not Needed. Not only does one not need necessary and sufficient conditions to define miracle, one does not need to define an event (such as a miracle) for it to be treated as evidence. Moreover, although miracles are improbable in comparison with the regularity of nature, once rare events are allowed into our canon of events, they can have a regularity of their own, a regularity that lends credibility to accounts of them. Miracles could happen just frequently enough to establish a pattern, but infrequently enough so as preserve the elements of sign and wonder. Let us call this regularity of the "non-natural frequency principle."

Supernatural Occult Phenomenon Today. One does not need supernatural events of a Christian nature to establish a pattern of non-natural frequency. Documented accounts of occult phenomena across cultures and historical periods

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[17] Lewis, 61

[18] Fogelin, op. cit. 48.

[19] Richard Swinburne, op. cit., 17-26. Swinburne modifies violation with "quasi" in the context of indeterminacy in physics.

[20] Norman L. Geisler, Miracles and Modern Thought (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1982) 13.

[21] Campbell, CB '24, p.89. MH, '45, pp. 484-85. Quoted in Royal Humbert, Compend of Aleaxander Campbell's Theology (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1961) 68, 69.

[22] John Warwick Montgomery, apologetics lecture notes, 1971.

can establish a pattern of non-natural frequency that defeats Hume's BOPA.[23] Craig Keener's work on the topic of miracle documents occult miracles.[24] Historian John W. Montgomery has also argued for the credibility of occult phenomena down through history.[25] To distinguish Christian miracles from those of the occult we will later introduce the power of Jesus and his disciples over the latter.[26]

Intentionality & Teleology in Miracle. A characteristic of miracle that runs through our thread of examples is intentionality. The event related the actions of the performer such that we say the act was intended, it was by design. Dembski following Steven C. Meyer argue that identification of intentionality is not an argument from analogy with our own intentions but is an argument from best explanation.[27] The best explanation of a event (the miracle) which shows signs of intention is that it had a personal cause. To argue that an event is best explained as caused by a person is to see miracle is the ultimate teleological argument. In the teleological argument for God, one reasons from design to a designer. Design may be further unpacked as intentional action which in turn is a function of mind. So we look for a cause of the event that is personal.

Assembling Miracle. Putting these observations about miracle together we avoid Hume's definitional argument against the possibility of miracle in anticipation of future argument to a personal cause sufficient to explain these events. Those who require a scientific theory compatible with the observation of miracle data can start with Alvin Plantinga,[28] William Lane Craig,[29] and Richard Swinburne.[30]

Miracle Probable

A Personal God Probably Communicates. It is characteristic of persons to interact with others. So one would expect that Flew's God who acts and has the characteristics of a person would interact with His creation, and in particular with the creatures He has created. The arguments of Thomas Tracy whose action theory influenced Flew to accept the God who acts, should have taken Flew a logical step further, to allow the possibility of miracles and special revelation. Tracy unpacked for Flew concepts of agency, intentionality, and action that were not well analyzed at the outset of Flew's career.[31] Elizabeth Anscombe's seminal work on intention[32] had challenged traditional concepts in the 1950's, but the work of Christian philosophers such as Alan Donagan and others were not yet available with positive accounts.[33] Nevertheless, older writers such as Paley made the case that a personal God would want to communicate with his creation.

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[23] Jack Cottrell, *The Reasons for our Hope* (Mason, OH: The Christian Restoration Association, 2020) 19-31. See also his *Cults and the Occult*, 2019.

[24] Craig Keener, Miracles: The Credibility of New Testament Accounts. 2 Volumes. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

[25] John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973). Also Demon Possession: Papers Presented at the University of Notre Dame (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1975; NRP Books, 2015).

[26] Alexander Campbell's sparse demonology did not prepare him for this type of argument. For him demons are the souls of the departed but here he gives no accounting of spiritual warfare. Perhaps he does so elsewhere. See Alexander Campbell, "Address on Demonology: Deliverd Before the Popular Lecture Club, Nashville, Tennesse, March 10, 1841" Reprinted in Popular Lectures and Addresses (Nashville, TN: Harbinger Book Club, nd.) 379-402.

[27] William Dembski, Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science & Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 272f. "The chief difficulty with arguments from analogy is that they are always also arguments from disanalogy."

[28] Alvin Plantinga, Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 91-125. "… there is nothing in current or classical science inconsistent with special divine action in the world."

[29] William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994) 127-155 sets miracle in the context of quantum physics vs. the Newtonian world-machine.

[30] Swinburne, op. cit., 17-26.

[31] Tracy*, God, Action, and Embodiment*, 87-141.

[32] G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*, 1957.

[33] Alan Donagan, *Reflections on Philosophy and Religion*, Edited with an Introduction by Anthony N. Perovich, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 24,25. Donagan is an example of a Christian who lost his faith at the university and found it again as a professional philosopher. He arrived at Oxford just after the famed discussion between Elizabeth Anscombe and C. S. Lewis over naturalism. In his original chapter 3 of Miracles, Lewis addressed the contemporary version of naturalism which was materialism. Anscombe objected. Lewis acknowledged that her objection to his paper was sound, but Anscombe praised Lewis for raising a problem which she did not recognize and which she said remains

Paley Argues Probability. Suppose a creator who had as one of his purposes the happiness of his rational creatures who would obey him. And suppose that he intended that after their physical death, these people would still exist and would move into a new state of existence depending on what they did in the former. "If God wants to make such a revelation, and he wants to make it in such a way that we cannot mistake it for the mere words of man, there is really no other way to seal it than by a miracle—the guarantee, to us, that this is a genuine word from God and not someone's fine-sounding philosophy or a well-crafted tale."[34]

Miracle Testimony Credible
Hume's Balance of Probabilities Argument (BOPA). In Part II of *On Miracles*, Hume claims that even if miracles are possible, they are not credible, one could not in principle establish through historical evidence that an extraordinarily infrequent event happened. He says: "no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish." And therefore, we must always decide in favor of the lesser miracle.[35] [36] In this argument, Hume balances the probability of the laws of nature remaining intact against the probability that the testimony is correct.

Lewis Responds. Although one must have principles that eliminate the excesses of medieval "miracles", there are contravening excesses of modern historiography that would believe any natural explanation before accepting the supernatural. Lewis elaborated it this way: "Collective hallucination, hypnotism of unconsenting spectators, widespread instantaneous conspiracy in lying by persons not otherwise known to be liars and not unlikely to gain by the lie—all these are known to be very improbable events: so improbable that, except for the special purpose of excluding a miracle, they are never suggested. But they are preferred to the admission of a miracle.[37]

Lewis' observation calls out the result of Hume's BOPA, historians who propose fantastic alternatives ad hoc. What he describes is not only present in modern Biblical scholarship but defended as a principle to be followed. Let us demonstrate using the words of New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman in his debate with William Lane Craig on the resurrection.

Bart Ehrman's BOPA and Canons of Historical Research. Ehrman has undeniable credentials in his field. Yet without full awareness of his dependency on Hume's BOPA, Ehrman elaborates his own BOPA with clarity and defends it as a rule (canon). In his debate with Ehrman, William Lane Craig lays out a positive argument as follows: "(i) There are four historical facts which must be explained by any adequate historical hypothesis: 1) Jesus' burial 2) the discovery of the empty tomb 3) his post-mortem appearances 4) the origin of the disciples belief in his resurrection. (Ii) The best explanation of these facts is that Jesus rose from the dead." Instead of addressing the details of Craig's argument Ehrman responds with his BOPA:

"Historians can only establish what probably happened in the past, and by definition a miracle is the least probable occurrence. And so, by the very nature of the canons of historical research, we can't claim historically that a miracle probably happened. By definition, it probably didn't. And history can only establish what probably did."

Ehrman again "I wish we could establish miracles, but we can't. It's no one's fault. It's simply that the canons of historical research do not allow for the possibility of establishing as probable the least probable of all occurrences. For that reason, Bill's four pieces of evidence are completely irrelevant. There *cannot* be historical probability for an event that defies probability, even if the event did happen. The resurrection has to be taken on faith, not on the basis of proof."

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unsolved, namely the connection between the grounds and actual occurrence of belief. Lewis rewrote chapter 3 of Miracles, changing the title from "The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist" to "Cardinal Difficulties of Naturalism."

[34] Timothy McGrew, "Arguments from Providence and from Miracles OF MIRACLES: THE STATE OF THE ART AND THE USES OF HISTORY," Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God, edited by Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 350. He paraphrases William Paley, A View of the Evidences of Christianity (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), 11ff and I further smoothed the language.

[35] Hume, Enquiries, 115f.

[36] Robert J. Fogelin, A Defense of Home on Miracles (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) 19, 20.

[37] Lewis, op. cit*.,* 103f.

We may represent the BOPA as follows:
   a. When arguments conflict, pick the higher probability
   b. Natural law always has high probability   (probability of 1?)
   c. Miracle testimony always has low probability (probability of 0?)
   d. Conclusion – miracle testimony should always be rejected

Bayesian Interlude
Scoring the BOPA: Bayes Wins, Hume-Ehrman Lose. Recent success in the use of Baysian probability theory has resulted in refutations of Hume's BOPA, Ehrman's BOPA, and Ehrman's canons of historical reliability. Perhaps Hume can be excused for not seeing the insights of later probability theory, but Ehrman cannot. We will describe the Baysian refutation of Hume and Ehrman, but first let's look at the development of Baysian inference and its use of background information to modify the probability of an outcome given new information.

Baysian Inference Conceived and Matured.[38] Following the publication of Hume's skeptical arguments against cause and effect, Thomas Bayes, a Presbyterian minister and amateur mathematician, developed a method to arrive at causes from their effects. This is sometimes called reverse probability. The method was later perfected by a-theist French scientist Pierre Simon Laplace into a theorem using logical notation. Bayes theorem nearly died several times before it was successfully used by Alan Turing's team to crack the Nazi German Enigma code used to encrypt wartime messages. Baysian inference gained further success following WW II. McGrayne lists some of these successes: "During the Cold War, Bayes helped find a missing H-bomb and U.S. and Russian submarines; investigate nuclear power plant safety; predict the shuttle Challenger tragedy; demonstrate that smoking causes lung cancer and that high cholesterol causes heart attacks…"[39] However, it wasn't until the availability of computing power in the 1980's and 90's that Baysian Inference gained widespread use, particularly in the sciences but also in theology. In my earlier paper I showed how Richard Swinburne made convincing use of Baysian inference in various arguments for the existence of God. Let's now see how Swinburne and others used Bayes in defense of miracles.

Bayes in the SAC: How to Assess Risk. Baysian inference as theory of probability is a rival to the relative frequency theory. The following illustration should make clear one difference: Bayes handles background information, relative frequency does not.[40] Following WWII, the US government was developing the Strategic Air Command (SAC) that would keep 15% of its 1800 B-52 bombers in the air at all times, loaded with nuclear warheads. A 23-year-old statistics PhD from the University of Chicago, Albert Madansky, was hired to evaluate the probability of an accidental nuclear detonation in the SAC program. Since there had never been such an accident, under the relative frequency theory, the probability of an accident would be zero.

Madansky's Background Knowledge. But Madansky had background knowledge, he was privy to classified list of 16 "of the more dramatic incidents" between 1950 and 1958 that had occurred in the SAC program. Though none had involved unauthorized detonations of nuclear warheads, people had died, in one case when a B-50 nose-dived near Lebanon, Ohio. These cases where clearly relevant as background information to his question, but the relative frequency interpretation did not seem to permit it. To that theory Madansky reasoned: "As long as you are set that the probability is going to be zero, then nothing's going to change your mind. If you have decided that the sun rises each morning because it has always done so in the past, nothing is going to change your mind except one morning when the sun fails to appear."[41] Similarly, "As Dennis Lindley had argued, if someone attaches a prior probability of

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[38] Sharon Bertsch McGrayne, *The Theory That Would Not Die: How Bayes' Rule Cracked the Enigma Code, Hunted Down Russian Submarines, & Emerged Triumphant From Two Centuries of Controversy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011) This whole section follows McGrayne.
   [39] Ibid., X.
   [40] Ibid., 120-26.
   [41] Ibid., 121.

zero to the hypothesis that the moon is made of green cheese, "then whole armies of astronauts coming back bearing green cheese cannot convince him.""[42] [43]

Bayes Accounts for Background Knowledge. Madansky knew he needed an alternative to the relative frequency theory of probability for this problem, one that took account of background knowledge. Enter Bayes theorem. Using Bayes theorem and his background knowledge of previous accidents in the SAC program, he calculated the number of accident opportunities based on the number of weapons, their longevity, and the number of times they were aboard planes or handled in storage. His report resulted in the implementation of multiple safety features in the SAC program and in greater use of Baysian inference where it blossomed in the 1980's and 1990's.

Hume's BOPA Revived but Expires. It was in this climate of Baysian success that proponents of Hume's BOPA argument against miracles attempted to vindicate Hume using Bayes theorem. Would not any alternative to a miracle be more probable than the miracle itself Hume argued? Formalizing Hume's BOPA in Baysian notation would prove Hume right they conjectured. Unfortunately for Hume's followers the plan backfired. When formulated in Baysian terms Hume's argument fails.[44] In other words, reports of miracles can be credible.

Swinburne summarizes the problem in ordinary language this way. "I shall suggest, when we come to the detailed historical evidence, that although there is quite good detailed historical evidence in favor of the Resurrection, it is not strong enough to equal the very strong force of the background evidence—*if the latter is construed only as evidence of what are the laws of nature* (Custer's italics)." He then argues that Hume did not include the existence of God in the background evidence along with the laws of nature.. When one does, the testimony of miracles can be credible.[45]

Further Bayesian Wins
Cumulative Weight Argument Vindicated. Not only was Baysian Inference used to defeat Hume's BOPA, but it was also used to show that the cumulative weight of multiple creditable miracle accounts can overcome Hume's objections. Again, McGrew summarized: "A second technical point is even more striking: under a few fairly weak and general assumptions, Hume's pessimistic conclusion can be shown to be false. The proof of this was worked out first by Charles Babbage…" … "The cumulative weight of independent testimony can overcome any finite presumption against a miracle. Or, in layman's terms, *Hume is wrong*."[46] But that raises the question, what kind of evidence would constitute cumulative weight? Multiple independent testimonies as argued in classical apologetics? Multiple modern accounts as documented by Craig Keener? Multiple reliable accounts of near-death experiences? As cumulative weight mounts up and feeds Baysian inference as background knowledge, perhaps the existence of God need not be argued first to make miracle accounts credible. As we shall see later, Baysian inference has shown that it is not necessary to argue for God's existence to make miracle accounts credible. Under this scenario, miracle accounts could be combined with cosmological and teleological evidence from science into one large argument.

Further Background Information
Keener on Credibility Through Regularity. New Testament scholar Craig Keener has argued that many cultures do not have an anti-miraculous bias because miracles are frequent enough in the culture to provide an expectation. In his two-volume work he has documented miraculous events in multiple regions of the world.[47] This work is somewhat unique in addressing the question of credibility through regularity and cumulative weight.

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[42] Ibid., 123.

[43] Spoiler alert, although Hume would have no way of knowing about future developments in probability theory, his arguments against miracle will be shown false by Baysian calculations.

[44] McGrew, Op. Cit., 342.

McGrew summarizes this failure: "By the late 1990's, the suspicion was confirmed by several different authors: Hume's objection, probabilistically formulated, does not work. The Humean faithful were not happy and series of professional papers ensued.

[45] Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) 31.

[46] McGrew, Op. Cit., 343.

[47] Keener, op. cit.

Near-Death Accounts. Some 50 years ago books on near death experiences appeared but they were anecdotal in nature. Since then, some one hundred thousand accounts reliable accounts have been catalogued taking this phenomenon beyond the anecdotal stage. The popular book by John Burk explains: "I know it sounds like science-fiction fantasy, which is why I've mostly chosen the testimonies of professors, medical doctors, wealthy professionals, or children, who don't seem to have anything to gain (and credibility to lose) by such amazing stories. Yet as you'll see, thousands of people from all walks of life, saying much the same thing, makes you start to wonder… Could it be?"[48]

Balancing Natural Law and Intentionality. Miracle needs to be common enough in context to permit belief based on historical inquiry but rare enough to beg for explanation. But what kind of explanation might one propose? Scientific explanation is commonly understood to be subsumption under a law. According to this view we have explained gravity when we have subsumed it under Newton's law. Intentional actions of persons on the other hand defy subsumption under law. Indeed, various determinists have tried to treat the actions of persons as lawlike[49] The nature of miracle events calls for a different kind of explanation modeled after the actions of persons.

One way to look at the needed balance of law and the quasi-violation is to contemplate answered prayer. If every prayer were answered immediately, we would confuse answered prayer with a natural law; answered prayer would become part of natural law. A similar comment could be made about miracle. Miracle needs to be rare enough to get our attention, but common enough to be credible and require explanation.

So far, we have chronicled renewed arguments to establish the possibility and probability of miracles as well as establish the possibility of credible accounts of supernatural events. By modifying the background information to Hume's BOPA with the existence of God or by current reliable accounts of the supernatural, we see that historical miracle account can be highly credible. We have also seen that multiple credible accounts of the supernatural add weight to the overall testimony. Use of the Bayesian method has solidified these conclusions. Finally, we have noted that events bearing the marks of intentionality cannot be explained by subsumption under a natural law, they call out for a different kind of explanation. With these observations in place, it is left to Biblical scholars and historians to argue that the miracles of Biblical history actually happened.[50] [51]

Improved Arguments for Miracle from Testimony

Method in Historical Research
Miracles Historical. In this section I call attention to improved arguments for the Resurrection proposed by William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, and Richard Swinburne. In the process I call for elimination of outmoded canons of historical research based on Hume's BOPA.

Craig vs Ehrman Debate. William Lane Craig wrote a doctoral defense of the bodily resurrection under German scholar Wolfhart Pannenberg and has had numerous debates on the subject including one with Bart Erhman in 2005.[52]

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[48] John Burk, *Imagine Heaven: Near Death Experiences, God's Promises, and the Exhilarating Future that Awaits You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015) 43, 58.

[49] Plantinga, Where the Conflict Really Lies, 35-38.

[50] It is likely that some historians have not gotten the news about the defeat of Hume's BOPA through Baysian argument. As disciplines become more technical, the need for cross-disciplinary interaction between the philosopher, theologian, and historian is more important than ever. Where is that renaissance man?

[51] Timothy McGrew, "Miracles," in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2010 ed., http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/miracles/ describes four types of miracle argument: deductive, probabilistic, abductive or explanatory, criteriological.

[52] William Lane Craig vs. Bart Ehrman - Is There Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus? March 28, 2006. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRTUrvTTRAQ and https://www.apologetics315.com/media/resurrection-debate-transcript.pdf for a transcript of the debate.

In this debate Ehrman admitted that since the evidence for a miracle would always be less probable than any non-supernatural explanation, he would always opt for a naturalistic explanation.

In the debate Craig argued that the resurrection of Jesus is best explanation of the following facts:
"(i) There are four historical facts which must be explained by any adequate historical hypothesis: 1) Jesus' burialhe discovery of the empty tomb 3) his post-mortem appearances 4) the origin of the disciples belief in his resurrection. (Ii) The best explanation of these facts is that Jesus rose from the dead."
Ehrman's response was not to question Craig's evidence but to argue that any explanation would be more probable than a miraculous one. If we compare this closely with Hume we see that it is Hume's BOPA.   Ehrman further argued that this BOPA constitutes a canon of historical research. Given the defeat of Hume's BOPA it is unclear how one would still claim that rejection of miracle accounts should be a canon of historical research.

Historical vs Theological Questions. In our discussion of the definition of miracle we urged that "caused by God" not be part of the definition but argued for as the best explanation later. This played a role in the debate. In the debate, Ehrman misread the conclusion of Craig's argument "Jesus rose from the dead" as "God raised Jesus from the dead." Craig's conclusion is an historical question, Ehrman's misreading is a theological question. This confusion is evidence of the need to define miracle ostensively without reference to "caused by God."

The Sound of Silence. "Consider the argument from silence—typically, the argument that because some person or place or event is unmentioned in a particular historical text, or perhaps unmentioned in any text we now possess, that person or place never existed, or the event never transpired."
   1. Grafton's *Chronicles*, which embrace the reign of King John, make no reference to the *Magna Carta*.
   2. In the extensive memoirs of Ulysses Grant there is no mention of the Emancipation Proclaimation
   3. Neither Herodotus, Thucydides, nor any of their contemporaries mention Rome
   4. In his sprawling travelogue, Marco Polo never refers to the Great Wall of China, or tea, or printed books.
McGrew continues to say these are just a few examples, the argument from silence fails *spectularly*.[53]

New Rules for the Historian-Actually the Old Ones. In 1697 Charles Leslie proposed four rules to justify that an event had happened. These are reproduced by McGrew[54]
   1. "That the matter of fact be such, that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears may be judge of it.
   2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world.
   3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed.
   4. That such monuments, and such actions or observances be instituted, and do commence from the time, that the matter of fact was done."
Alexander Campbell uses Leslie's rules in his debate with Owen.[55]

Hume's Rules. David Hume's rules from 1777 are somewhat more restrictive, adding education as a requirement. His standards are in the form of a denial. "For *first*, there is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good-sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable: All which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men." [56]

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[53] McGrew, Op. Cit., 347.
[54] McGrew, Op. Cit., 348f.
[55] Campbell Owen, p. 348.
[56] Hume, Enquiries, 116f, Par 92.

Alternate Research Program? Given the failure of Hume's BOPA, Christian historians need to openly push back on any criteria of historical research that excludes miracle prior to evaluation. Further, there is a need to examine use of other common principles such as the argument from silence; rather, operate on the principle of charity (believe unless there are reasons not to). Finally, historical arguments need to be crafted carefully to avoid mixture of the theological with the historical. Given these proposed changes to historical method and practice we appear to be operating under a new research program which looks very much like the old evangelical research program.

Under these new rules, the argument could look something like the following: Belief in the miracles of the Bible is the best explanation (or a Bayesian inference) for the following, where we list standard works in the evangelical paradigm. See Appendix A for a suggested list. However, formulating an argument from such a large body of evidence is difficult, so we will focus on the more minimalist arguments of William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, and Richard Swinburne for the resurrection. In the process we will elaborate two inference methods: best explanation and Bayesian inference appealing to industry standard models.

Improved Methods of Inference

Improved Non-Deductive Argument Forms. Early writers on the subject of how to move from evidence to belief in miracles did not have at their disposal recent developments in the concept of "best explanation" and Bayes Theorem abduction) brought on by the confirmation debate in science. Peter Lipton's *Inference to the Best Explanation*[57] is an industry standard on the subject of non-deductive inference. In it he distinguishes induction, explanation, the causal model, inference to best explanation, and Baysian abduction. Of those best explanation and the Baysian method are popular in theological contexts. Although some think the Baysian method poses a threat to best explanation, Lipton argues that they are generally compatible with each other[58] Furthermore, William Dembski, Christian writer on Intelligent design Dembski says of the 1991 edition of Lipton's book: Peter Lipton's model of Inference to the Best Explanation (IBE) has no way of precluding "divine intervention" as the best explanation for a given phenomenon.[59]

"Best Explanation"

Demski (following Meyer) gives three characteristics of Best Explanation. For B to be the best explanation of A,

1. Consonant – B must be consonant with A
   To be consonant, B must not inject discord into A as well as the network of beliefs of which A is a part.
   It is more than coherence, it involves both goodness of fit and aesthetic judgment. n25 n26 Lipton
2. Contribute – B must contribute to A
   B must perform some useful work in helping to explain A
   B must solve problems or answer questions pertinent to A which could not be handled without it. This includes Ockham's razor ensuring that adding B to our stock of beliefs won't be superfluous.
3. Reigning Champion – B must be the reigning champion. n27 Lipton
   B must do a better job of explaining A than its competitors

William Lane Craig. Craig gives his six characteristics which elaborate Best Explanation[60]
The best hypothesis will have:

1. Explanatory scope - explain a wider range of data than will rival hypotheses.
2. Explanatory power – make the observable data more epistemically probable than the rival hypothesis.
3. Plausibility – be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths and its negation implied by fewer.
4. Less ad hoc – will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge.
5. Accord with accepted beliefs – when conjoined with accepted truths, will imply fewer falsehoods.

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[57] Peter Lipton, Inference to the Best Explanation, second edition (London: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 2004)

[58] Lipton, op. cit., 104.

[59] William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999) 283 n35.

[60] William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland. Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, 2nd Edition (Downers Grove, IL: 2017) 55.

6. Comparative superiority – will so exceed its rivals in meeting conditions (1) through (5) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis exceeding it in fulfilling those conditions.

Dembski / Meyer	Craig
D1 Consonant - a. No discord	C5 Accord with accepted beliefs
D1 Consonant - b. Aesthetic judgment	Not represented?
D2 Contribute – a. Useful work explaining	C1 Explanatory scope
D2 Contribute – b. Solve problems not otherwise	C2 Explanatory power
D2 Contribute – c. Ockham's razor / simplicity	C4 Less ad hoc – is this the same as simplicity?
D3 Contribute - a. Reigning champion	C6 Comparative superiority
	C3 Plausibiity

Craig's categories are easier to follow and seem to include those of Dembski-Meyer with exception that Craig does not seem to include consideration of aesthetic judgment. In debate with Ehrman he claims that the resurrection meets his criteria for best explanation and the alternatives do not.

> The Resurrection Hypothesis passes all of the standard criteria for being the best explanation, such as explanatory power, explanatory scope, plausibility, and so forth.
>
> Of course, down through history various alternative naturalistic explanations of the resurrection have been proposed, such as the Conspiracy Hypothesis, the Apparent Death Hypothesis, the Hallucination Hypothesis, and so on. In the judgment of contemporary scholarship, however, none of these naturalistic hypotheses has managed to provide a plausible explanation of the facts. Nor does Dr. Ehrman support any of these naturalistic explanations of the facts.

From Craig's argument we see that arguments to best explanation require two components, that one hypothesis meets the criteria and that alternates do not. One can see that argument to best explanation might involve a very large body of evidence, similar to that of a legal proceeding, and that for methodological reasons the apologist must keep it simple. It follows that methodological minimalism in arguments for the resurrection can be viewed as an advance.

Methodological Minimalism. Both Wiliam Lane Craig and Gary Habermas have advanced scaled down arguments for the resurrection as part of their method. This may be because they are frequent speakers and debaters where time is limited but the resulting simplicity makes it easier to evaluate best explanation. The method of debate also advances the argument from best explanation because it presents an open challenge to one's opponent to produce a better explanation.[61]

Deductive Recast. Another method by which the best explanation can be clarified is to recast a best explanation argument into deductive form. C.S. Lewis in his famous argument that Jesus is Lord, lunatic, or liar presents a forced option so that by elimination of two options the final one is the winner. It is a sound deductive argument, but the difficulty is in the major premise. Are there not more than three options, many have asked. Then produce another option, is the response. The method can be seen as the final step "comparative superiority" of an argument from best explanation.

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[61] Habermas especially focuses on I Cor 15:3-8 as a quotation from an earlier generation embedded in Paul's letter recognized by 75% of New Testament scholars as Pauline and dated around AD 57. See Gary Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004). "Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present: What Are Critical Scholars Saying?" http://www.garyhabermas.com/articles/J_Study_Historical_Jesus_3-2_2005/J_Study_Historical_Jesus_3-2_2005.htm

Bayesian Method Unpacked

Swinburne's Baysian Argument for Resurrection. Bayes method starts with the premise that belief is a matter of degree that is represented by probabilities. By starting with an original belief based on background evidence, one can calculate a new belief when that background evidence is enlarged. Bayesian inference is one of several non-deductive methods of inference called induction and is used as a method of theory confirmation. Lipton summarizes the method this way: "What makes Bayesianism exciting is that the standard axioms of probability theory yield an equation that appears to tell us just when this condition of confirmation is satisfied, so to give us a precise theory of induction."[62] In his appendix "Formalizing the Argument" Swinburne gives a lucid eleven-page technical description of how he applied Bayes Theorem to the resurrection.

It is this method that Swinburne applies to evidence for the resurrection. Here is an informal summary of the evidence he used. He divides the evidence into three categories consistent with the Baysian method:
1.   background evidence – God's reason for incarnation, marks of an incarnate God
2.   prior historical sources – life and moral teachings of Jesus, his implied divinity, he taught his atonement, he founded a church
3.   posterior historical evidence – appearances of the risen Jesus, the empty tomb, the observance of Sunday, rival theories of what happened, the significance of resurrection.

From this evidence and some basic assumptions, he calculates the probability: "…it is indeed very probable that Jesus was God Incarnate who rose from the dead."[63]   This is an amazing conclusion that has not gone without challenge. Several objections to the Baysian program have been made.

Plantinga's PDP Objection Overcome. McGrew summarizes Swinburne's method: "In the third volume of his *Warrant* trilogy, Alvin Plantinga mounts a criticism of the historical case for Christianity, claiming that Swinburne's argument is vulnerable to something that Plantinga calls the Principle of Dwindling Probabilities." (PDP). To this McGrew responds: "How someone technically sophisticated enough to understand the chain rule in probability could have thought that he could give a proper representation of Swinburne's argument without making any use of Bayes's Theorem remains, to this day, an unsolved mystery. But the critique based on the PDP unquestionably collapses, for several reasons." These reasons are particularly technical and difficult summarize. The curious can read them here.[64]

Baysian Method Subjective. Bayesian probability is a measure of belief, nevertheless because it produces "results," widely adopted in science and theology since the 1980's when computing power became available to the general population. But that raises the question, what is the status of the "results"? Are not the "results" about beliefs and not necessarily about the real world? In this sense it resembles the debate in science between realism (theories are about real objects) and instrumentalism (theories give us results, we don't care if the objects are real). One way of looking at Bayesian inference is that if you believe proposition P and you apply new background evidence, it is rational for you to believe the resulting P with some probability from 0 to 1. As such it is a method to measure the rationality of our beliefs. The unanswered question is, if you start with beliefs that are warranted or true, is the result of a Bayesian inference also warranted or true?

A second criticism of the Bayesian method is that the initial probabilities are subjective. Starting with a prior probability of .5 may seem like a reasonable assumption, but is it? Others have criticized that Bayesian inference is about beliefs and is not a justification of knowledge. On this criticism, which seems correct, Bayesian inference is about rationality and not warrant. If you believe "A" on the basis of background information "B" and you factor in new background information "B2" then rationally you get a new probability, new belief. For more discussion of the

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[62] Lipton, op. cit., 103.
[63] Swinburne, op. cit., 215.
[64] McGrew, op. cit., 344.

Bayesian method see Habermas.[65] Bear in mind that thought leaders such as Lipton and Plantinga say that probability is difficult.

Flew and Miracle. Regarding the evidence for miracles, Flew was exposed to some of the best defense of Jesus' Resurrection in debates with his friends Gary Habermas and Terry Miethe.[66] [67] Flew's was not persuaded by historical documents even within 30 to 50 years of Jesus death. He wanted contemporary accounts. In 2004 discussion between Habermas and Flew, just following Flew's public announcement that he was a theist, Habermas cited accounts of out of the body deathbed experiences. To this Flew had asked whether the person had brainwave tracings and Habermas provided evidence of that. (FH 204, 205) Flew said in correspondence with Habermas that this evidence "certainly weakens if does not completely refute my argument against doctrines of a future life" but in 2004 Flew was not yet willing to give in. He was still troubled by how to identify a bodiless person.[68] When Flew accepted the concept of a bodiless person in 2007, he still rejected the resurrection. There is no record that Flew changed his mind about that before his death in 2010.

Classification of Arguments for Miracle. Following McGrew's classification of arguments for miracle, Clanton identifies the following: deductive approach – William Paley, probabilistic approach – Richard Swinburne, abductive approach – Gary Habermas, and criteriological approach – Alexander Campbell.[69]

Alexander Campbell Argues for Miracle. In his book length debate with skeptic Robert Owen, Alexander Campbell devotes some 150 pages to developing the argument for Biblical miracle. In doing so, he touches in some detail on all of the themes we typically see argued today but without the advantage of the last 200 years of scholarship: internal and external evidence for authorship and date, reliability of the witnesses, willingness to die for testimony, failed counter claims, establishment of memorials, and the establishment of the church itself. J. Caleb Clanton categorizes Campbell's argument as "criteriological" and offers a helpful summary which we note in the next section.

Assuming the conclusions of either Craig, Swinburne, or Campbell how would one proceed to build an argument for revelation based on miracle. In other words, how would one develop Campbell's COTA.

Improved Arguments for Revelation from Miracle

Preliminaries
The strategy. We are finally back to Campbell's COTA. Thus far, we have examined failures in traditional arguments against miracles followed by improved arguments for belief in them. In this section we examine improved methods of inference by which miracles could confirm that a testimony is from God. First, we do some negative work. We dispel claims from Hume and Mackie that miracles cannot confirm a revelation. Then, the positive work, we describe use of best explanation and Baysian probability as tools in the COTA. Finally, we call attention to the logic of retroduction (the back-and-forth interplay of deduction and induction, by which a body of beliefs is built up in stages) and the toleration of anomalies.

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[65] Gary R Habermas, "Probability Calculus, Proof and Christian Apologetics," *The Simon Greenleaf Review of Law and Religion*, Volume VIII (1988-1989) 57-88. Cited in Terry L. and Gary R. Habermas, *Why Believe? God Exists!: Rethinking the Case for God and Christianity* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1993) 199 and 241n16. Habermas was agnostic for 10 years.

[66] Gary Habermas, Antony Flew, and Terry Miethe, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987). Also see *The Resurrection Debate* (Gary Habermas and Antony Flew, Did the Resurrection Happen?: A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew (Veritas Books, 2003). This is the text of the Veritas Forum at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. See also Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004).

[67] William Lane Craig has multiple books on the Resurrection that reflect his doctoral dissertation under Wolfhart Pannenberg.

[68] Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland, *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998.

[69] J. Caleb Clanton, The Philosophy of Religion of Alexander Campbell (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013) 170.

Hume's BOPA used against COTA. Hume ruled out the possibility of inference from miracle to the foundation of a system of religion, based on his BOPA, or in this case a theoretical balance of proofs: "Upon the whole, then, it appears, that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less a proof; and that even supposing it amounted to a proof, it would be opposed by another proof; derived from the very nature of the fact, which it would endeavour to establish. … therefore we may establish it as a maxim, that no human testimony can have such a force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion."[70] But as indicated earlier, Baysians have shown this argument to fail. Also, Swinburne exposed the Achilles heel of the Humean argument, namely limiting background information to laws of nature without God.

Mackie defeated by Bayes. But is Swinburne's evidence for God the only type of background information that can shift the balance of probabilities to make miracle testimony a foundation for other beliefs (i.e. to support the COTA)? J.L. Mackie argues that it is, but even that claim has been dispelled by Baysian argument. McGrew reports "J.L. Macke claims that a reported miracle cannot have evidential force for anyone who does not already believe in the existence of God." "But as Richard Otte showed in 1996, within a Bayesian framework, which Mackie himself elsewhere adopts, the claim collapses at once…"[71]

Arguing From Miracles for Theism? Baysian disproof of the Mackie's thesis gives flexibility to the order by which the apologist builds a case. At stake here, is not the credibility of miracle testimony but is it probable enough to support a "system of religion." Must one first establish a probable argument for God that permits miracle testimony that is probable enough to support the COTA argument; or could one present some other background information to accomplish that? What other background information could raise the probability of testimony about the supernatural?

Elevating the Probability of Miracle Testimony with Occult Background Information. How about a uniform testimony of supernatural phenomena from the occult accompanied by the testimony of the Christian power over it and the reports of out of the body experience both referenced earlier? Could this raise the credibility of Biblical miracle high enough to support a system of religion such as the COTA argument? Mackie's question was whether the apologist must present evidence for God first before the COTA argument or whether the evidence could be presented in one best explanation argument. Many apologists argue first for God's existence, then for miracles; William Lane Craig is an example of that approach. At least one other apologist presents miracle evidence apart from arguments for God; that is John Warwick Montgomery.

"Best Explanation" Approaches to COTA

William Dembski and Stephen Meyer. William Dembski's work in Intelligent Design discusses the nature of signs, and what they signify. He treats the argument from miracles as an argument from "best explanation."[72] When Jesus healed the paralytic "in order that," he was implying an argument. Dembski formulates this argument by unpacking the nature of a "sign," its signification lies in its value as the best explanation. The best explanation for Jesus' miracles in the context of his fulfilment of prophecy and teaching is …" So, the possibility, probability, credibility, and historical evidence for miracle opens up the use of miracle as evidence for something else. For Dembski, the best explanation is one that has explanatory power, which he sees as similar to Imre Lakatos' term "heuristic power" and Larry Laudan's "problem solving ability." In his development of best explanation, Dembski relies on the work of Stephen Meyer.[73]

The Resurrection of William Paley. I am told that William Paley's Evidences was once required for all who entered the colleges of "Oxford University." Perhaps Paley's works should be resurrected.

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[70] Hume, op. cit. 98.

[71] McGrew, op. cit. 243

[72] Dembski, op. cit.

[73] Dembski, op. cit., 200, 295n17, n18. He says he summarizes Stephen Meyer's treatment of explanation in "Of Clues and Causes: A Methodological Interpretation of Origin of Life Studies" (Ph.D. diss, University of Cambridge, 1990).

Montgomery's Single Stage Argument. John Warwick Montgomery defends that the argument from the Resurrection and fulfilled prophecy could stand alone without other theistic arguments. As we have seen, Bayesian arguments show that in principle this is possible. In this scenario, one would need to address counterfeit claims from unclean spirits. One way to do this is with a power principle such as: whenever Christians encounter supernatural events intentionally caused by such spirits, Christians have power over them.[74]

Legal Reasoning and Cumulative Induction. Historian, legal scholar, and apologist John Warwick Montgomery put forth a cumulative inductive defense of Christianity that is consistent with the non-natural frequency principle, the priority of Biblical miracles, the existence of occult phenomena, and the power of Christians over it. His inductive argument is an argument from best explanation.[75] He is most widely known for his historical works.[76] However, most treatments of Montgomery's apologetic method miss entirely his second career as a lawyer, judge, and founder of multiple legal institutions. Grounding apologetics in legal reasoning represents for him somewhat of a return to sanity from the excesses of professional philosophy. In a court of law one may not suppose any wild hypothesis to save a client, rather one is restricted by legal principles.[77] Furthermore, legal theory has embedded within it the principle of intentionality so needed by apologists to defeat materialist reductionist arguments. The difference between manslaughter and murder is intentionality.[78] Intent does make a difference; it is built into our legal system.

Bayesian Approaches to COTA

What would a Bayesian approach to the confirmation of testimony argument look like? I'm not aware that anyone has offered such an argument so I will sketch out what it might look like and plead for someone to do it. Modeling the evidence after the categories of Bayesian inference and what Swinburne did in his resurrection argument the evidence would look something like the following:

Part I: General Background Evidence
1. Principles for Weighing Evidence
2. God's Reasons to Communicate
3. The Marks of God's Communication

Part II: Prior Historical Evidence
4. The Historical Sources
5. The Moral Teachings of the Bible
6. Eternal Life After Death
7. Law and Law Breaking
8. Warning
9. Grace

Part III: Posterior Historical Evidence
10. Miracle Accompanying Prophets
11. Prophecy Accompanying Prophets
12. Christian Power Over Occult Miracles
13. Death Bed Experiences
14. Major Competing Claims

Part IV: Conclusion – Balance of probability
15. The Words of the Prophets are Confirmed from God

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[74] John Warwick Montgomery, Tractatus Logico-Theologicus (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

[75] John Warwick Montgomery, "The Theologian's Craft" *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970) 267-313.

[76] John Warwick Montgomery, *Where Is History Going* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969).

[77] See John Warwick Montgomery, "A Lawyer's Defense of Christianity. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxMEisHKewc

[78] John Warwick Montgomery, *History Law and Christianity, with commendatory letter from C. S. Lewis* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, 2002). Also *The Law Above the Law: Why the law needs biblical foundation / How legal thought supports Christian truth*. Including Greenleaf's Testimony of the Evangelists (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975).

Bayesian inference would look something like this:

16. The Probability P that the words of the prophets are confirmed from God based on Evidence E4-E9 would change based on new evidence E10-E14. A cursory reading of the E-4-E9 would suggest that the probability would go up, but whether it exceeds ½ (.5) will depend on the numeric values assigned to the background evidence E1-E3

Marks of God's Communication. Of particular interest would be E3 The Marks of God's Communication and whether one might expect from God communication as propositional or some sort of Spockian mind meld (I refer here to the Star Trek myth). One might collect the many reports whereby a culture is directed by vision or dream to find the person with the book. Why need a book? Don Richardson's story of the local prophet who predicted that a man was coming with a book is representative (Eternity in Their Heart). There are recent similar accounts of Muslim experiences directing them to the Christian Bible. Alexander Campbell's argument from the idea of God if cast as a best explanation argument might fit here. But then these are just suggestions about how such an argument might go; it is neither a statement of the evidence nor an actual argument.

Cumulative Effect of Probability. One cannot repeat too often that probability arguments are cumulative in nature. When theistic proofs are cast in deductive form, one can eliminate each argument by finding one deductive flaw. The new arguments from "best explanation" and Bayesian inference do not permit that. The opposite in fact is the case, each probable argument adds to the other with a cumulative effect. Oddly enough the cumulative effect of multiple items with independent evidence is one of the conclusions evidenced by Bayesian inference itself.[79]

Alexander Campbell's COTA
Context of the COTA. What were the assumptions of Campbell's confirmation of testimony argument presented above? Here is a summary paraphrase: By facts we always mean something said or done. The works of God and the words of God. First facts, then testimony, then belief, and finally an emotional effect upon us. We can reason from effect to cause: grief (in his example), belief, testimony, fact. When we ascend from cause to effect it is fact, testimony, belief, grief. Laws call for obedience and testimony for belief. Where there is no law there can be no obedience, and when there is no testimony there can be no faith. The certainty of faith depends upon the certainty or credibility of the witnesses. The more ordinary the fact the more ordinary the testimony necessary to establish it. It is only extraordinary and supernatural facts which require supernatural testimony, or testimony supernaturally confirmed. To confirm testimony is neither more nor less than to make it credible to those to whom it is tendered. To be credible, testimony needs to be had to the capacity, attainments, and habits of the beings receiving it. But why emphasize on the word confirmed? Because the holy apostles have emphasized it. It is therefore necessary that we should pay a due regard to the confirmation of testimony.[80]

What precedes the COTA in *The Christian System* are sections titled, *fact*, *testimony*, and *faith*. What follows the COTA in *The Christian System* is not an elaboration of Campbell's reasons to believe miracle and prophecy, but an extended discourse on the kingdom and its ordinances (baptism and Lord's Supper) and a long discussion of the relationship between baptism and regeneration. So, the context of Campbell's COTA is not to present the evidence, but to show that faith and belief depend on it in contrast to views of regeneration by his religious neighbors.

Miracle as Power. For Campbell miracle is an indication of a higher power. It has often been asked, what necessary connection is there between a miracle and a revelation from Heaven? If the term miracle is properly defined to be

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[79] Ted Poston, "(Z) the Argument from (A) to (Y): The Argument From So Many Arguments." In op. cit. *Two Dozen*, 372. He s "My goal in this chapter is to offer a Bayesian model of strength of evidence in cases in which there are multiple items of independent evidence."

[80] Campbell, Christian System, 95-98.

"the suspension of some known law of nature," the connection will be as follows: The suspension intimates the certain presence of a power superior to the law, and this is all it proves."[81]

Miracle as Moral Power. From the moral nature of Biblical miracle one deduces the character of the agent. "…the moral character of the agent is to be deduced from the nature of the miracle combined with the end for which it is said to be performed. The miracles of our Saviour are chiefly of a beneficent kind, and the declared end of them is to establish a mission most salutary. From a consideration of the character of his miracles and the salutary end for which they were wrought, we are constrained by the rules of right reason to believe that they were effected by the Spirit of God, and not by Beelzebub…"[82]

Two Kinds of Power: Suspension of Nature and Prophecy. Campbell says: "Of this supernatural power there are two sorts—one that extends beyond the physical laws of nature; and one that extends beyond the intellectual power of man. The foretelling of some complex future event, not depending upon any human knowledge of the operations of matter or mind, is as clear a proof of supernatural intellectual power, as the removal of a mountain, by a word, would be of a supernatural physical power."[83]

Miracle as Sign. Since Biblical miracle is "in attestation of some proposition presented by God to man for his acceptance" it is therefore seen by Campbell as a sign.

Campbell says that one "deduces" the character of the agent from the moral nature of the miracle. As we have noted, modern writers such as Dembski would say that first we must establish that there was an intelligent agent as the cause, and also that the agent is moral. Dembski concluded that the argument to intelligence is one of best explanation. We could add that the moral character of the agent is also one of best explanation, but to complete the matter so is the argument from prophecy. It would appear that all of the components of Campbell's COTA need to be recast in the form of "best explanation." But that is no surprise given that there is similar discussion about the nature of scientific confirmation today. Campbell was a man of his age and we can fix his argument.[84]

Improved Philosophical Foundations

In the previous paper we saw how dead theistic proofs were revived into strong non-deductive arguments that brought a-theist Antony Flew to belief in God. Central in Flew's movement was the acceptance of cause and effect, acceptance of direct experience of the real world, and acceptance of alternate forms of inference such as "best explanation" and use of Baysian probability (abduction). These, we called Flew's Trifecta; it is a rejection of Hume's skepticism. But Flew stopped short of belief in miracles and Christian Trinitarian theism. In this section we point out that Flew's philosophical journey was not unique but mirrored the collapse of strong foundationalism into weak foundationalism or even further into a Reidian common sense philosophy.[85] Given that Alvin Plantinga openly describes his views as Reidian, he provides a foundation by which one could support a confirmation of testimony argument (COTA) even though Plantinga chose not to do so. Finally, we call out some similarities in the collapse of strong foundationalism and Campbell's use of both Locke and Reid in hopes that others will elaborate Campbell's philosophy further.

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[81] Campbell, CB, '24, p. 89. As cited in Humbert, ibid.
[82] Campbell, CB, '24, p. 89. As cited in Humbert, ibid.
[83] Campbell, MH, '45, pp. 484-85. As cited in Humbert, ibid.
[84] J. Caleb Clanton, The Philosophy of Religion of Alexander Campbell, op. cit., 60-66, devotes a helpful section to Campbell's argument from miracle.
[85] I witnessed the beginning of this foundational transition as a graduate student in the philosophy department at the University of Chicago where we read Carnap, Quine, Kuhn and theories of probability. I have also followed it through the foundation of the Society of Christian Philosophers in 1976 which blossomed in the work of many younger Christian philosophers.

Strong Foundationalism Collapsed

In a nutshell, philosophical foundationalism consists of a set of basic beliefs (such as sense impressions or the self-evident deliverances of reason) from which are derived non-basic beliefs (such as the moon is not made of green cheese) through a connection such as the logic of deduction. The goal of foundationalism is knowledge that has the maximum justification. Strong foundationalism began with Descartes who attempted to move from the basic belief (I exist) using the logic of deduction to other beliefs (non-basic beliefs). He didn't get very far. John Locke continued this epistemic program by enlarging the set of basic beliefs to include sense impressions and enlarging the connection to include inductive logic as well as the logic of deduction. The problems Locke faced getting from the sense impressions of the mind to an external world[86] and absence of a developed theory of probability are well known.[87] Despite these failures, the program of strong foundationalism continued into 20th century until logical positivism collapsed.[88] This collapse was the beginning of Flew's philosophical change.

Weak Foundationalism Develops

With the collapse of strong foundationalism came a crisis in the philosophy of science and the theory of knowledge by which some proposed that progress in science should be seen not as a rational process but modelled along political power struggles of successive revolutions. On this view the theories of younger scientists overtake that of their elders through power. Those who wished to preserve the rationality of the science and of knowledge proceeded to weaker forms of foundationalism by including more basic beliefs and enlarging the move to non-basic beliefs to include not only deduction and induction, but also elaborating the concept of "best explanation" and probability theories such as Baysian Inference. Strong and weak foundationalism could be pictured as follows.

	Descartes – Strong Foundationalist	Locke – Strong Foundationalist	Flew – Weak Foundationalist	Common Sense
Basic Beliefs	I exist	I exist	I exist	I exist
		Sensation	External world known	External world known
				Moral truths
Basing Relation	Deduction	Deduction	Deduction	Deduction
		Induction	Induction	Induction
			Causality	Causality
			Best explanation	Best explanation
			Baysian probability	Baysian probability
Non-Basic	God exists?	God exists	God exists	God exists
			No resurrection	Resurrection Miracles
			No revelation	Revelation

Flew's Trifecta. Antony Flew appears to be in this in this camp of weak foundationalists, adopting cause and effect, belief in the real world, and non-deductive inference. But Flew stopped short of belief in Jesus' resurrection and an afterlife. The question is, could not one use the tools of Flew's weak foundationalism to argue for miracles, the resurrection, and the afterlife? What he seems to have missed was the refutation of Hume's BOPA by extending the background evidence to include God. Flew used Swinburne's Bayesian probability argument in his argument for God.

Swinburne defines a "P-inductive" argument as one for which the premises make the conclusion "probable" and a "C-inductive" argument as one for which the premises make the conclusion "more likely" or "more probable" than it would otherwise be.[89] Swinburne concludes that most arguments for theism result in good C-inductive arguments. Swinburne adds a further step to his confirmation theory that most non-theists miss—that inductive arguments are

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[86] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945) 611-13.

[87] Richard I. Aaron, *John Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, 3d ed.) 248

[88] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Then, Now, and AI," Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers, Vol 28, Num 3 (July 2011) 253-56 describes this period succinctly.

[89] Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 4-6.

cumulative. That is, the C-inductive success of each of the above arguments can add up to the P-inductive success of a common conclusion, that God exists. If we add Swinburne's more recent work on the probability of the resurrection based on the background evidence of God's existence we get the following:

Argument	Swinburne, 13	Flew
Cosmological from Big Bang	C-inductive, 152	"begs an explanation" (TG 145)
Teleological from laws of nature	P-inductive, 166	"imposes itself on the rational mind (TG 112)
Teleological from fine tuning	C-inductive? 188	"the only viable explanation (TG-121)
Teleological from intentionality	P-inductive? 212	"the only satisfactory explanation (TG 132)
Moral awareness	C-inductive 218	Fails (TG 49)
Ontological argument	Not discussed 9	Fails (FH 201)
Miraculous Events	C-inductive 292	Fails
All Arguments taken together	P-inductive, 342	"only be explained" (TG 155) By Existence of God

The question is, why not add one or two more Bayesian probability arguments to the chart.

Miraculous Events / Resurrection	P-inductive	Swinburne
Confirmation of Testimony	C-inductive	Campbell and others
All Arguments taken together	P-inductive	Because in probability, arguments are cumulative

Common Sense Philosophy
For some, the collapse of Foundationalism led them back to the broad outlines of the Scottish common-sense views of Thomas Reid, so popular in the early history of the U.S. Blake McAlister unpacks beautifully how the assumptions of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume which he calls "introspective foundationalism" led to skepticism.[90] In the language of foundationalism, belief in the external world cannot be properly basic, but must be inferred from other properly basic beliefs. This program led to skepticism: "It was not until this seed was nourished by Locke, pruned by Berkeley, and brought to full bloom under Hume's green thumb, that its skeptical fruit was clearly identified.[91] The final move to common sense was that a denial of skepticism demanded it. McAlister states the premise this way, a premise that both Reid and Hume accept: "…If introspective foundationalism is correct, then we can know little beyond the existence or our own thoughts and ideas."[92] McAlister continues: "Reid thinks it more reasonable to reject introspective foundationalism than to accepts its skeptical implications."[93] Common sense supports a belief in the external world.[94] [95]

Having arrived at common sense, one might also wish to accept cause and effect as more than Hume's "constant conjunction." Flew did so on the basis that Hume accepted causal inference elsewhere in his writings and called for revisions to his earlier book on Hume. In any case, from common sense we get two of the three elements of Flew's Trifecta. The third element of the trifecta, improved theories of non-deductive inference such as Bayesian inference,

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[90] Blake McAlister, "Restoring Common Sense: Common Sense Epistemology and the Restoration Tradition" in *Restoration and Philosophy: New Philosophical Engagements with the Stone-Campbell Tradition*, ed. J. Caleb Clanton (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2019) 28-31.

[91] Ibid, 29.

[92] Ibid, 30.

[93] Ibid.

[94] I do not wish to short change many important themes in the philosophy of science, for example, the Realism vs Idealism debate or the assumptions of science, metaphysical or otherwise. What I do suggest is that Reidian writers such as Alvin Plantinga are a good place to begin the investigation and that one can build arguments on his foundation that he may or may not have made. His theory of warrant faces significant objections from cognitive psychology. See Lipton, op. cit., 108f.

[95] See also Noah M. Lemos, *Common Sense: A Contemporary Defense, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004). Cited in Nugent, SCJ Spring 2009, p. 30.

may not require Common Sense philosophy. On the other hand, it might. Alvin Plantinga says: "…probability is such a confusing and ill-understood morass. (See chaps. 8 and 9 of my *Warrant and Proper Function*.)"[96]

Alvin Plantinga and Common Sense

It will come as a surprise to some that Alvin Plantinga identifies his view of warrant to be in the common-sense tradition of Thomas Reid. In one of his most recent books, *Warrant and Proper Function*, he says: "… the position I shall develop is broadly Reidian; the global outline of Thomas Reid's epistemology seems to me to be largely correct."[97] This Redian program has not always been the case for Plantinga. Early in his career, when he wrote *God and Other Minds*, Plantinga indicates that he was an epistemic foundationalist, although he did not know it.[98] What are the fundamental features that make Plantinga a Reidian and what were the basic steps that took Al on his journey from foundationalism?

Those interested in Plantinga's philosophical development will read his own account of it.[99] Lifelong colleague and friend Nicholas Wolterstorff wrote a brief and humorous summary of Plantinga's philosophical accomplishments along with the impact on the philosophical community.[100] Brief but helpful comments on Plantinga's views are given by Walls and Dougherty in their introduction to The Plantinga Project[101]

Plantinga's final position is that belief in God and even Christian belief is properly basic, they do not require further argument; for this reason, his epistemology is commonly known as "Reformed Epistemology." It is called "Reformed" because a key element in Reformed theology is that saving faith is a gift of God whereby the Holy Spirit operates upon our spirit to awaken it from the dead.[102] This view of faith was a primary point of contention in Alexander Campbell's 1843 debate with Presbyterian Rice, so use of Reformed Epistemology to support Campbell's COTA might seem strange at first.[103] However, Plantinga acknowledges that on his view of basic beliefs, arguments are still valuable. Walls and Dougherty summarize this well in their introduction to *Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God*.

> From Plantinga's view that belief in God is properly basic, it follows that arguments are not needed but it does not follow that arguments do not serve other valuable or useful purposes. Plantinga himself has pointed out that there are at least four such purposes: First, [theistic arguments] can move someone closer to theism—by showing that theism is a legitimate intellectual option. Second, they reveal interesting and important connections between various elements of a theist's set of belief. … Third, the arguments can strengthen and confirm theistic belief. … Finally, and connected with the last, these arguments can increase the warrant of theistic beliefs."[104]

Summary. From Common Sense philosophy we can get two of the three elements of Flew's Trifecta from which he built cosmological and teleological arguments for God, and from which we suggested above he could have argued for the resurrection and the afterlife. What one cannot get from Flew's weak foundational empiricism is the moral argument for God, it depends on the existence of moral data that cannot be obtained empirically. Terry Miethe tells

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[96] Alvin Plantinga, "A Christian Life Partly Lived" in Kelly James Clark, ed. *Philosophers Who Believe: the Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 279n15.

[97] Alvin Plantinga, Warrant and Proper Function, p. X.

[98] Alvin Plantinga, "A Christian Life Partly Lived," 45-82.

[99] Plantinga, ibid.

[100] Nicholas Wolterstorff, op. cit. 252-66.

[101] Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty, "Introduction," *Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God*, edited by Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 1-7.

[102] Roger Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011)156-63.

[103] In this regard note that The Westminster Confession of Faith simply asserts that the Bible is God's word and makes no reference to any reason such as Campbell's COTA.

[104] Walls and Dougherty, op. cit., 3-4.

us that justification of moral data was a primary motivating factor for Reid's adoption of the common-sense method.[105]

We have now, two philosophical paradigms that could support arguments for the COTA, Flew's weak foundationalism and Plantinga's Reidian program. That raises interesting historical questions about Alexander Campbell's use of foundationalist John Locke and common-sense philosopher Thomas Reid.

Locke, Reid and Alexander Campbell

J. Caleb Clanton, in a very respectable philosophical work, argues persuasively for the predominant influence of Scottish common-sense philosophy (Thomas Reid and others) on Campbell.[106] Campbell is committed to the idea that a natural theology (as opposed to natural religion) is needed to justify belief in God's existence and belief that one has a divinely revealed source appropriate for grounding the remainder of one's theology.[107] As Clanton explains, Campbell thinks all previous arguments for God have failed to explain the origin of the idea of God:

> "Campbell thinks that all previous attempts to provide a natural theology argument for God's existence have failed to do what they should. And, importantly, he thinks they have all failed for pretty much the same reason: none of them provides an adequate empirical account of the origination of the idea of God employed in the course of the argument on offer; instead, they simply begin with that inadequately explained idea as a given. Consequently, in his view, all previous stabs at natural theology have been misguided from the outset. … In short, he thinks that there can be no explanation for the origin of our idea of God, short of saying that God himself revealed it to humanity."[108]

So, Campbell thinks that natural theology is needed to ground the COTA, but that all traditional attempts have failed without his idea of God argument. Earlier in this paper we have seen that Flew argued for God using "best explanation" and Bayesian inference that could then be used to support the COTA. We have also seen through Bayesian inference that the COTA strictly does not need arguments for God's existence first in order to succeed. Rather, other sources of background information such as contemporary reliable and repeatable testimony of occult supernatural events could be fed into that BOPA to give testimony of Biblical miracle enough credibility to ground the COTA.

Regarding Locke's contention that the mind is a tabula rasa, a primary empiricist notion, Richard Knopp documents disagreement among Campbell interpreters.[109] Although Campbell rules out the direct experience of God, see Clanton's discussion and conclusion "Frankly, it seems to me that he does not really need to."[110] If Clanton is correct how would one do so from a blank slate? Would direct experience of God be more compatible with common-sense philosophy?

It seems to me that Campbell could support his COTA either from a weak foundationalism based on Locke's empiricism supplemented by Flew's trifecta or by the Common-sense philosophy popular in his day.[111] He needs justification of the first two elements of the trifecta (cause and effect[112] and access from the senses to the real world)

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[105] Terry L Miethe, "The Enlightenment, John Locke, & Scottish Common Sense Realism," In *I Am Put Here for the Defense of the Gospel* Edited by Terry L. Miethe (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016) 286.

[106] J. Caleb Clanton, The Philosophy of Religion of Alexander Campbell, 17. He says Campbell followed Scottish common sense to avoid the skeptical implications that Hume drew out of Locke.

[107] Clanton, op. cit., 29.

[108] Clanton, op. cit., 28.

[109] Richard Knopp, "Lessons from the Philosophy of Science for the Restoration Movement Heritage (and Others)," *Restoration and Philosophy: New Philosophical Engagements with the Stone-Campbell Tradition*. Edited by J. Caleb Clanton. (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2019) 142n15.

[110] Clanton, op. cit., 54.

[111] Craig, Foundations, p. 101. "In one form or another, foundationalism has been the dominant theory of epistemic justification throughout most of the history of Western philosophy."

[112] Clanton, op. cit., 51. "I take It that it that Campbell thinks that something like the causal principle is self-evident, axiomatic, and supported by inductive generalization."

and it is unclear how he gets that apart from common sense. He could also benefit from more current elaborations of "best explanation" or inductive inference in Bayesian terms. In contemporary philosophy the word "induction" does not carry with it the logic of discovery as it did in Bacon's day, but only the logic of justification. So cavalier dismissal of induction as used today because it fails the logic of discovery is premature, "induction" in one of its many forms as elaborated by Lipton[113] just is the logic of justification.

Campbell and his contemporaries also struggled with the vestiges of Scholastic essences brought on by Descartes inversion of the priority of epistemology to metaphysics. How does one justify an essentialism epistemologically? Locke, and others were concerned to jettison talk of transubstantiation and other theological terminology. This transition from metaphysical priority has implications in the philosophy of language on which this paper has not touched. It does seem to me a worthwhile project to trace that transition from Locke's day to the present non-essentialist views of language. C.S. Lewis for example in response to the verification principle of meaning in Logical Positivism argued that all language is metaphorical.[114] Adopting something like Lewis does not seem to impinge on a central RM principle: rejection of the language of metaphysics and the Scholastics resulting from inferences, in favor of Bible names for Bible things as a basis for Christian unity.

Observations and Conclusions

1. There has been no small impact that Christian philosophers have had on apologetics in the last forty some years.
2. Hume's objections to miracles have been successfully answered, opening the way for both credible testimony from the Biblical narrative but also renewed systematic work on special revelation. This follows both from the existence of God and from the non-natural frequency of supernatural events.
3. Apologists have published persuasive arguments for the resurrection and miracle generally.
4. New formal documentation of supernatural events such as miracles and death-bed experiences have gained respectability and contributed to the credibility of such events.
5. Efforts in inductive inference, particularly "best explanation" and Bayesian inference have been profitable.
6. Legal reasoning in Christian Apologetics can be used to restrict the imaginations of those who will propose anything to avoid God. Explanations proposed in a court of law must have some basis in fact.
7. Efforts in action theory are profitable for unpacking arguments from event to personal cause.
8. Efforts in legal Apologetics bypass philosophy altogether therefore focus on reasoned defense.
9. Philosophical grounding from either weak foundationalism (plus Flew's trifecta) or common sense philosophy might support the confirmation of testimony argument.
10. The statement by Alexander Campbell of the confirmation of testimony argument could profit by adjustment based on progress in philosophy.

Appendix

1. The existence of God – Craig, Flew
2. Reliability of the gospel accounts and Pauline corpus within mid-to late first century – Bloomberg, Fiensy, Guthrie
3. General harmony of the gospel accounts – McGarvey
4. External testimony for the authorship and date of the New Testament documents – Theissen, Guthrie
5. Acts written in the first century pushing the Gospel of Luke into the first century – Ramsey, Hemer
6. Reasonable explanation for alleged discrepancies – Haley, Archer,
7. Archaeological fit of the Biblical documents – Kaiser
8. Fulfilled Old Testament prophecies of Messiah – Smith, Kaiser
9. The message of Jesus -

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[113] Lipton, ibid.

[114] C.S. Lewis, "Bluspels and Flalansfers: A Semantic Nightmare," Selected Literary Essays. Edited by Walter Hooper. Cambridge University Press, 1969.

10. The resurrection – Craig and Greenleaf, minimalism Habermas
11. The legal arguments – Montgomery
12. Biblical revelation – Pinnock

Abbreviations

BOPA – Balance of Probabilities Argument   Given conflicting probable arguments, reject the least probable
COTA – Confirmation of Testimony Argument   Campbell's argument that testimony is validated by miracle
PDP – Principle of Dwindling Probabilities   Plantinga's argument against Swinburne's Bayesian inference