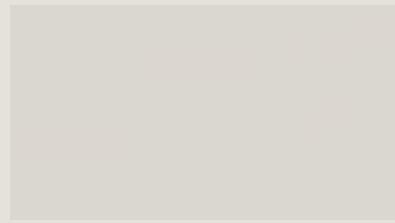




THINK  
THEISM

# Brought to you by RC-TAMU

---



Think Theism lectures are supported by Ratio Christi @ Texas A&M, but the opinions represented herein do not necessarily reflect the beliefs or values of Ratio Christi. This content is presented to encourage discussion and critical thought about challenging questions.



RATIO  
CHRISTI

# The Structure of Classical Apologetics

---

God is the best explanation for...

- the beginning of the universe  
(Cosmological Argument)
- the fine-tuning of the universe  
(Teleological Argument)
- the foundation of morality  
(Axiological Argument)



1

**Natural Theology  
Arguments for God**

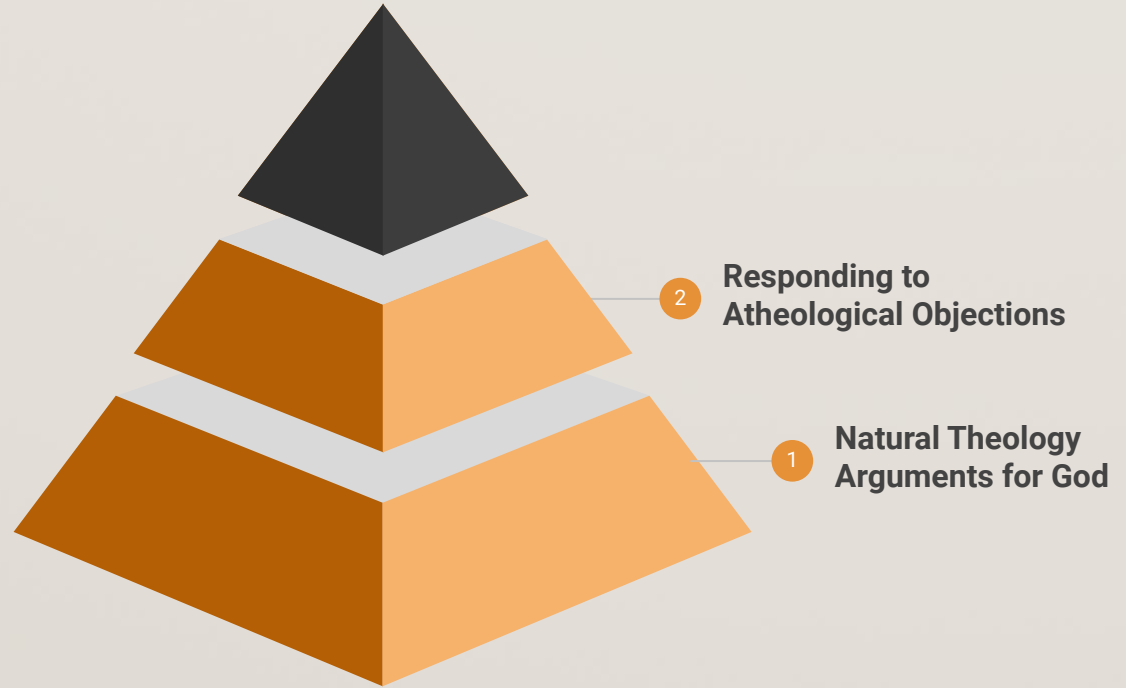
# The Structure of Classical Apologetics

If evil exists, then it is impossible that God exists

- Response: This is a strong claim that fails if it is merely *possible* there is a morally sufficient reason for God to allow evil

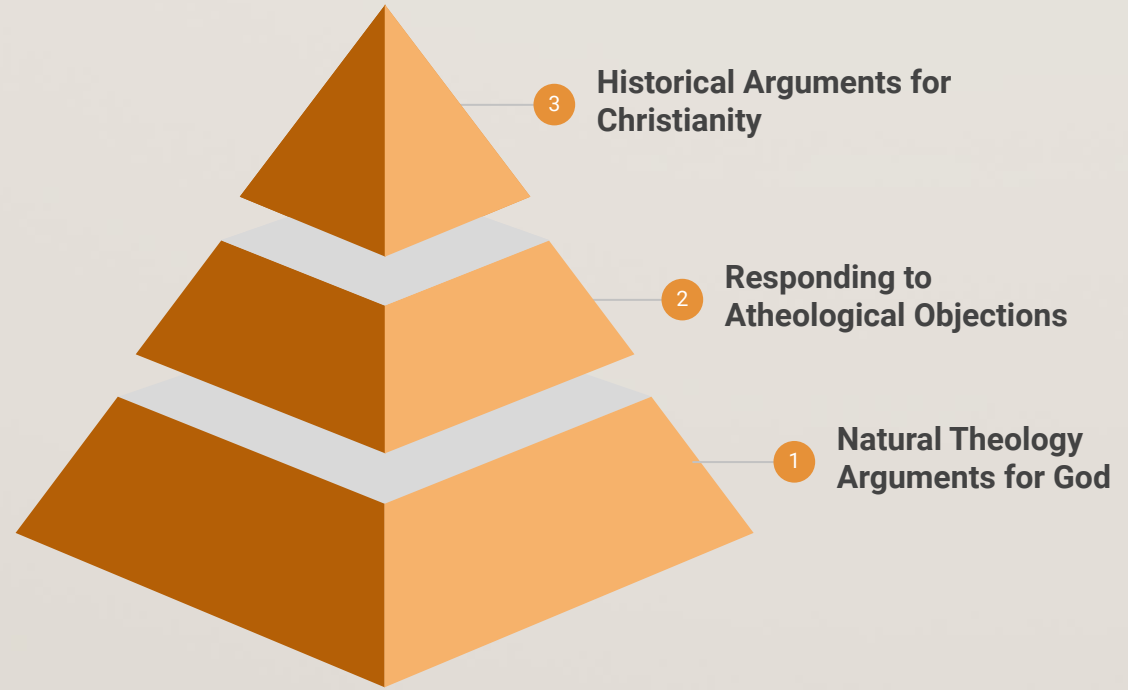
If evil exists, then it is unlikely that God exists.

- Response (1): Evil *could* be evidence against God, but not stronger than the evidence for God.
- Response (2): It's not obvious that it is evidence against God (skeptical theism)
- Response (3): It's not evidence against God because we can have an idea of why God allows evil (theodicy).



# The Structure of Classical Apologetics

If the arguments of natural theology are successful in showing the existence of god and responding to counter arguments, the last step is to argue for Christianity in particular.

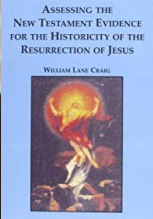


The background features a dark space filled with small white stars. A bright, glowing yellow arc, resembling a rising sun or moon, spans across the upper half of the image. Below the arc, the foreground is composed of a complex, purple wireframe landscape with jagged, mountain-like peaks and valleys, creating a sense of depth and perspective.

# Did Jesus of Nazareth Rise from the Dead?

*The historical argument for the resurrection of Jesus*

# Sources



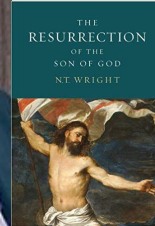
William Lane Craig

**Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus**  
*William Lane Craig (1989)*



Mike Licona

**The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach**  
*Michael R. Licona (2010)*

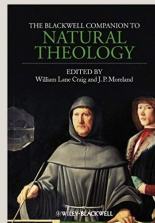


N.T. Wright

**The Resurrection of the Son of God (Vol. 3 of Christian Origins and the Question of God)**  
*N.T. Wright (2003)*



Tim & Lydia McGrew



**"The argument from miracles: a cumulative case for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth" in The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology**  
*Timothy and Lydia McGrew (2012)*

# Summary of the Fate of Jesus

1. Jesus was crucified under the reign of Pontius Pilate.
2. Joseph of Arimathea probably buried Jesus in a tomb. This tomb was likely found empty by a group of Jesus's women followers on the first day of the week following the crucifixion.
3. Various individuals and groups thereafter experienced on different occasions and under varying circumstances **appearances** of Jesus alive
4. The first disciples came sincerely to believe in Jesus's resurrection in the absence of sufficient antecedent historical influences from either Judaism or pagan religions

Background Facts

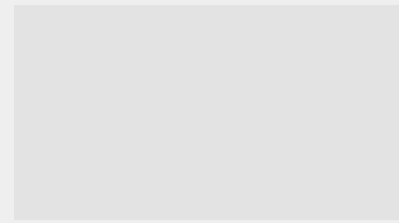
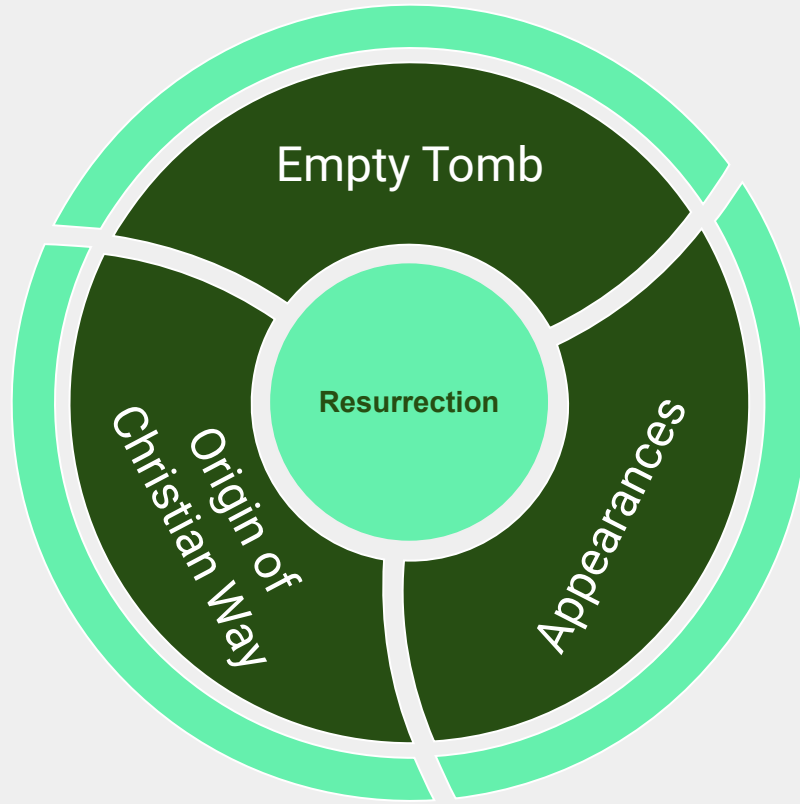


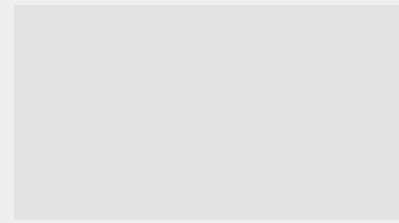
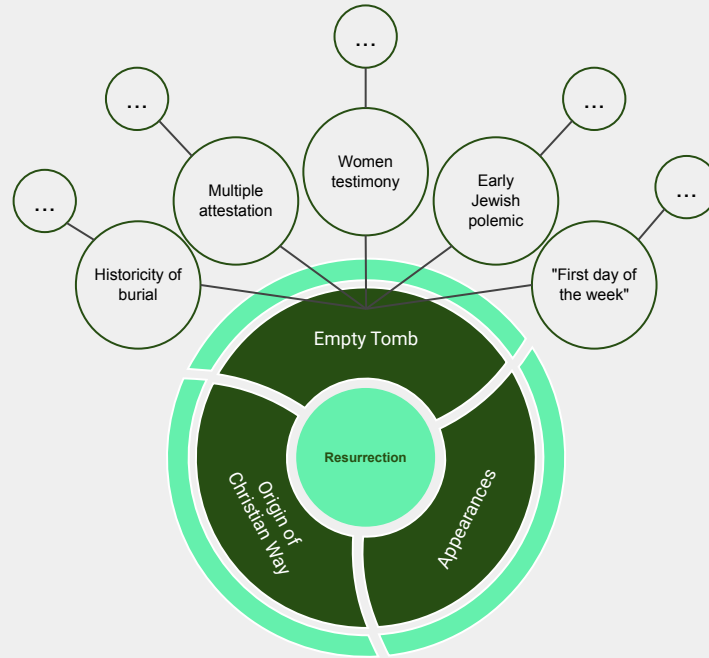
**THINK  
THEISM**

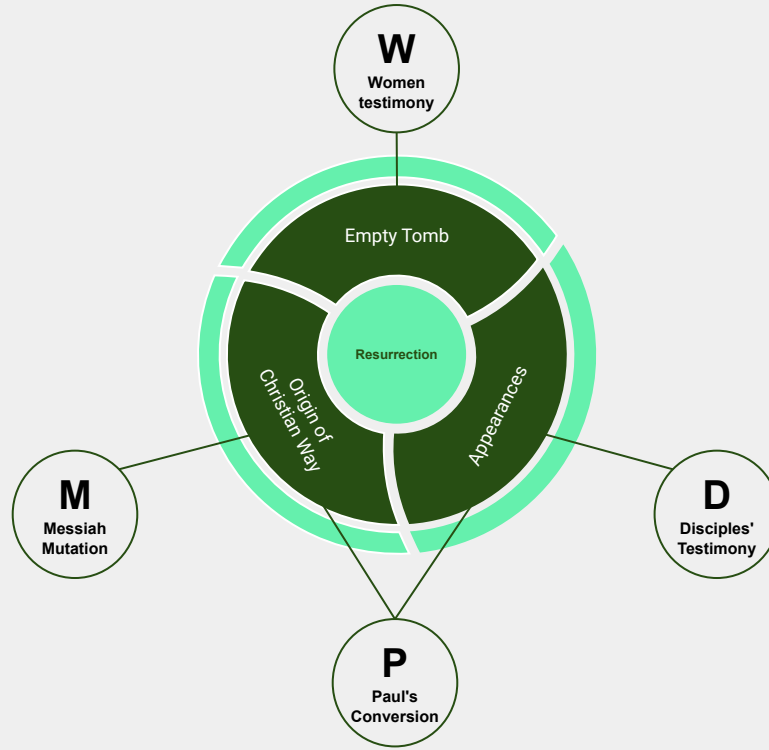




**Resurrection**

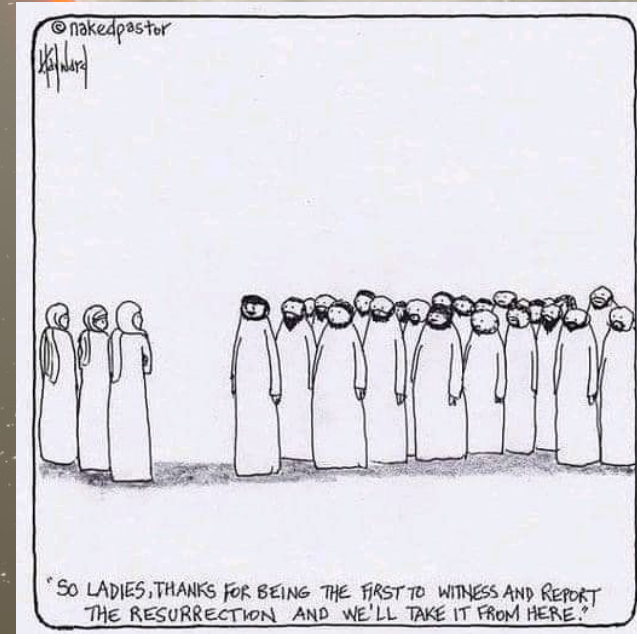






# (W) Women's Testimony

- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and a few other women testified to having seen the empty tomb.
- Multiply & independently attested: Mk. 16:1-8, Lk. 24:1-11, Mt. 28:1-7, Jn. 20:1-8
- Women as first witnesses is a story unlikely to have been fabricated
  - Women were (unfortunately) considered unreliable
  - 1 Cor. Creed and *Gos. of Peter* show the later de-emphasizing of the women's testimony.



# (D) Disciples' Testimony

---

- Eleven (11) disciples are named as having seen the risen Jesus
  - Peter, John, James, Andrew, Phillip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James bar Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas bar James. (Acts 1:13)
- Additional witnesses listed by Paul (1 Cor. 15)
  - Peter, Big 12, 500; James, "all the apostles", Saul of Tarsus
- Martyrdom and willingness to die
  - Stephen (Acts 5), Peter, James the brother of Jesus, James bar Zebedee

# Origin of the Christian Way

---

The first disciples came sincerely to believe in Jesus's resurrection in the absence of sufficient antecedent historical influences from either Judaism or pagan religions.

# 7 Mutations of Jewish Belief Caused by Jesus's Resurrection

## Second Temple Judaism

- Wide spectrum of belief (e.g. Sadducees vs Pharisees)
- Resurrection belief peripheral
- Vague notion of resurrection body
  
- General resurrection at the eschaton
- -
  
- Resurrection metaphor for “return from exile”
- \*Messiah was to bring political liberation, not die

## Earliest Christianity

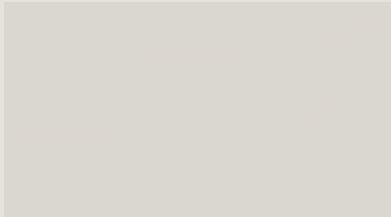
- Homogenous belief in physical resurrection
- Resurrection belief central
- Definitive view of incorruptible, transformed resurrection body
  
- Particular resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth
- Collaborating with God is continuing the work of Jesus who redeemed the world in resurrection
  
- Resurrection metaphor for “born again”
- \*Messiah was destined to suffer, die, & resurrect





# Messianic Mutation

---



1. Early Christianity was thoroughly messianic, shaping itself around the belief that Jesus was God's messiah, Israel's messiah.
2. Messiahship in Judaism never envisaged someone doing the sort of things Jesus had done, in particular, suffering the deadly fate he suffered.
3. Therefore, there must be an historical explanation as to why the early Christians made this claim about Jesus and why they reordered their lives accordingly.

# Explaining the Facts

---

**Explanatory Power** → *How well does the theory explain the data*

**Explanatory Scope** → *How much of the data does the theory explain*

**Plausibility** → *Given prior information does the theory make sense*

**Ad Hoc** → *Is the theory arbitrarily contrived to fit the data as to become meaningless?*

# Bayesian Analysis

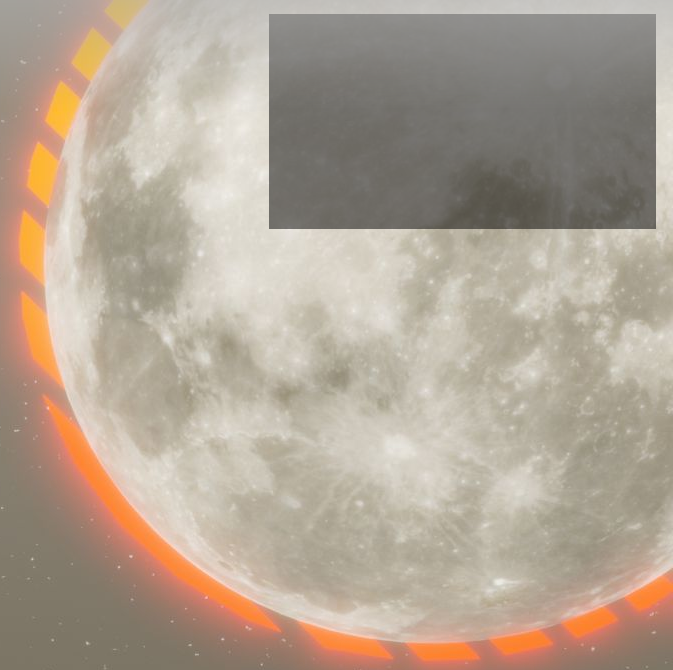
- What is the evidential force of **W**, **D**, & **P**?
- Let **R** represent Resurrection

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

# Alternative Hypotheses

---

- Swoon
- Hallucination
- Bereavement Visions



# Loose Threads & Miscellanea

- Doesn't saying that the Jewish Messiah was not expected to die undermine predictive prophecy?
- If resurrection wasn't expected, why the guard at the tomb?

Predictive  
Prophecy



Messiah  
Mutation

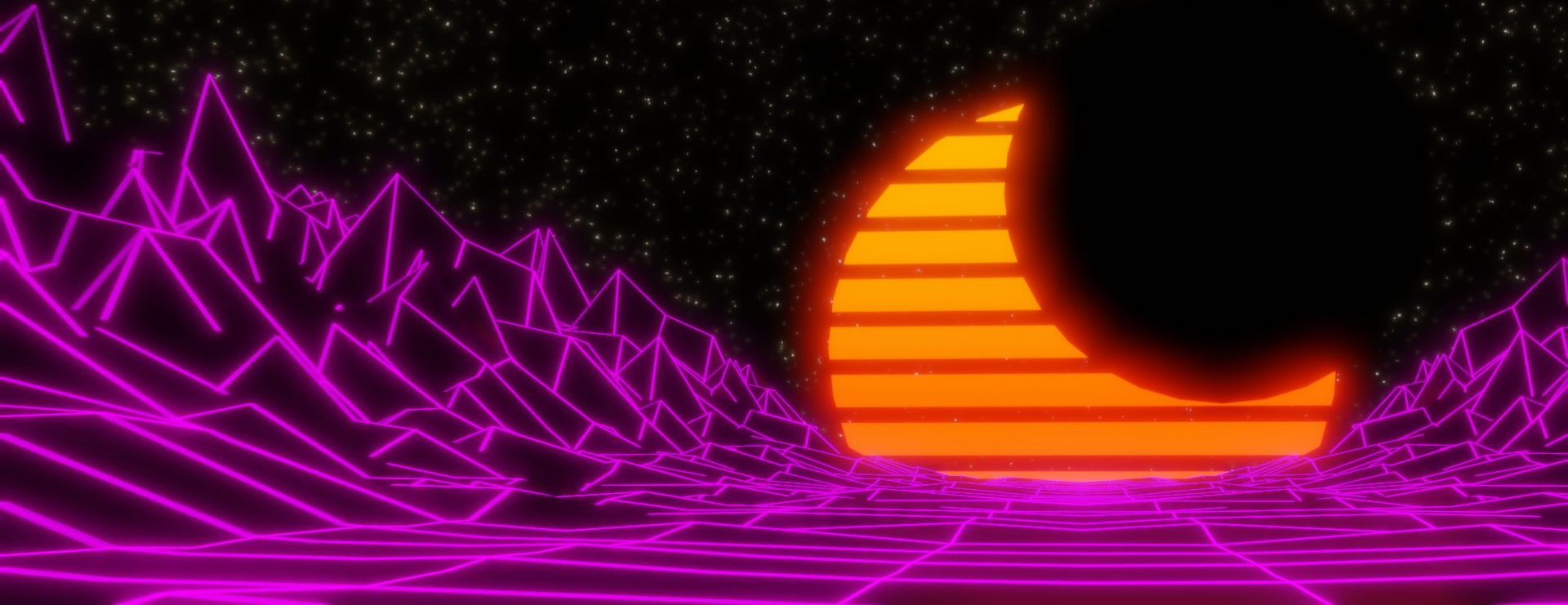
# Further Reading

---

1. **Surprised by Hope** by N.T. Wright
2. **The Historical Jesus: Five Views** ed. James Beilby
3. **Did Jesus Exist?** By Bart Ehrman
4. **The Resurrection of Jesus: a New Historiographical Approach** by Mike Licona
5. **The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus** by Mike Licona and Gary Habermas
6. **The Resurrection of God Incarnate** by Richard Swinburne
7. “The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth” in the **Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology** by Tim & Lydia McGrew
8. **The Resurrection of the Son of God** by N.T. Wright
9. **The Historical Argument from the Resurrection During the Deist Controversy** by W.L. Craig
10. **Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus** by W.L. Craig
11. **Reasonable Faith** by W.L. Craig



# Appendix

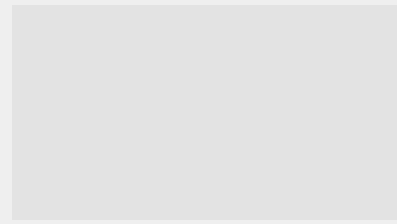
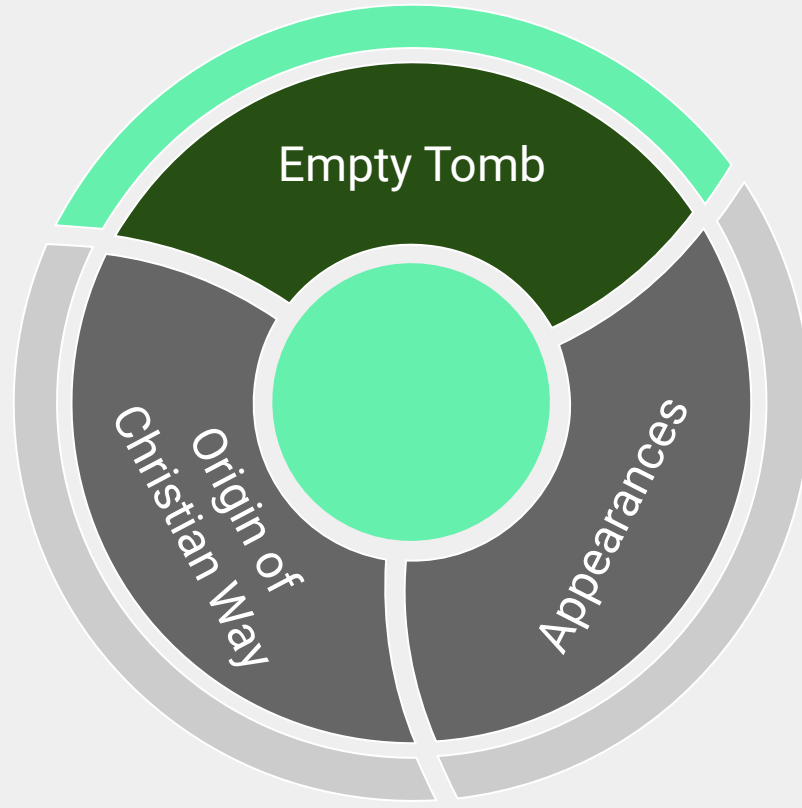


# The Empty Tomb

---

- The historical reliability of the story of Jesus's burial supports the empty tomb.
- The discovery of the empty tomb is multiply attested in very early, independent sources
- The earliest Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb
- The phrase “first day of the week” reflects ancient tradition
- The tomb was probably discovered by women





# The Empty Tomb - Subargument 1

---

- **The historical reliability of the story of Jesus's burial supports the empty tomb.**
  - Paul's testimony in 1 Cor 15 provides early evidence for the historicity of Jesus's burial.
    - Early (AD 30-36), so legendary accretion unlikely
    - Eyewitness testimony of women stand behind it
    - Paul's Jerusalem visit in AD 36 provides a source for his familiarity with the burial tradition
  - The burial story is in the Pre-Markan passion story
    - Same reasons above
  - No competing burial narrative

# The Empty Tomb

---

- The historical reliability of the story of Jesus's burial supports the empty tomb.
- The discovery of the empty tomb is multiply attested in very early, independent sources
- The earliest Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb
- The phrase “first day of the week” reflects ancient tradition
- The tomb was probably discovered by women

# The Empty Tomb - Subargument 2

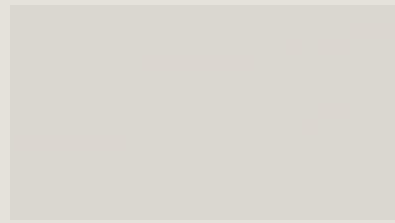
---

- The historical reliability of the story of Jesus's burial supports the empty tomb.
- The discovery of the empty tomb is multiply attested in very early, independent sources
  - PreMark probably didn't end in defeat/burial, but likely included women's discovery
  - The phrase "on the third day" corresponds to the discovery of the empty tomb
  - Matthew's guard tradition is a prior source (Mt 28:10ff.)
  - Luke's tomb verification tradition is a prior source (Lk 24:10ff)
  - Apostolic speeches independent empty tomb implication (Ac 2:29ff/13:36ff)
  - John's tradition independent of all the above

# The Empty Tomb

---

- The historical reliability of the story of Jesus's burial supports the empty tomb.
- The discovery of the empty tomb is multiply attested in very early, independent sources
- The earliest Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb
- The phrase “first day of the week” reflects ancient tradition
- The tomb was probably discovered by women



# The Empty Tomb - Subargument 3

---

- The historical reliability of the story of Jesus's burial supports the empty tomb.
- The discovery of the empty tomb is multiply attested in very early, independent sources
- The earliest Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb
  - Matthew 28:11-15 relates a tradition of the earliest Jewish apologetics, namely that the disciples stole the body.

# The Guard at the Tomb

---

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the high priests everything that had happened. So they met with the elders and agreed on a plan to give the soldiers a large amount of money. They said, “Say that Jesus’ disciples came at night and stole him while you were sleeping. If this is reported to the governor, we’ll personally persuade him to keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money, did as they were instructed, and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

- Matthew 28:11-15 (ISV)

# Potential Christian-Jewish Dialogue

---

Jesus has risen from the dead!

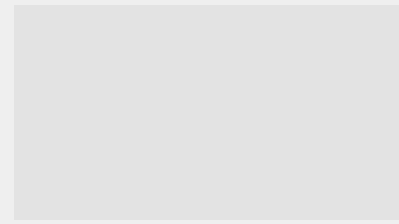
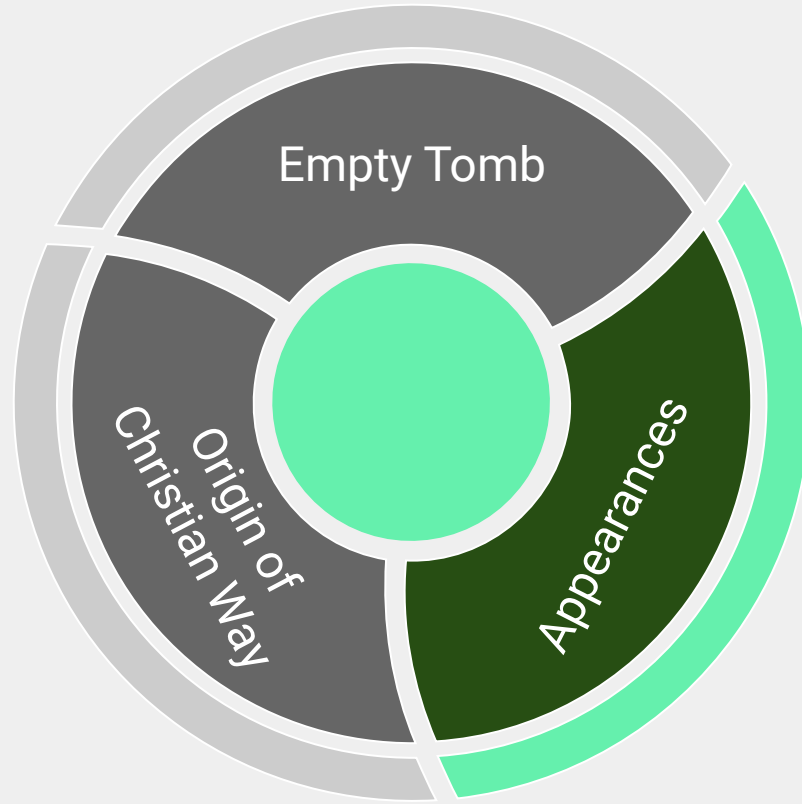
No, he didn't. His followers stole the body.

The guard at the tomb would prevent theft.

The guard fell asleep, then the theft happened.

Priests bribed the guard to say he fell asleep.





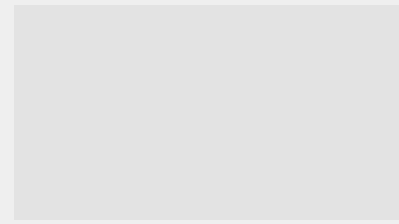
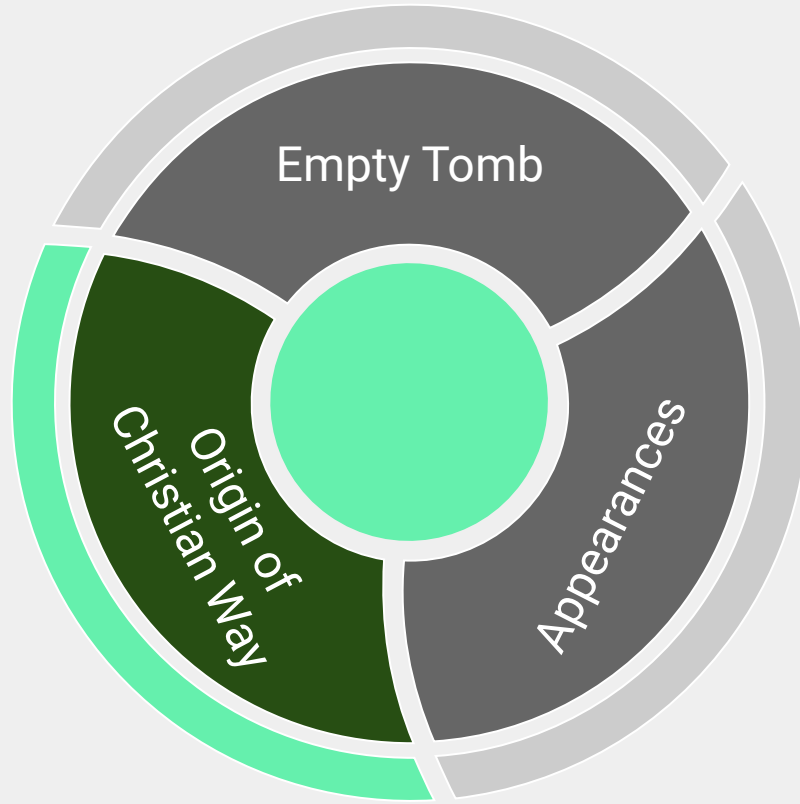
# The Post-Death Appearances

---

- Various individuals and groups thereafter experienced on different occasions and under varying circumstances **appearances** of Jesus alive
  - Paul's list of eyewitnesses guarantees that such appearances occurred
    - Peter, Big 12, 500, James, all the apostles, Saul of Tarsus
  - The Gospel accounts provide multiple, independent attestation of the appearances
  - The resurrection appearances were physical
    - Paul implies physicality, Gospels show physicality

Appearances

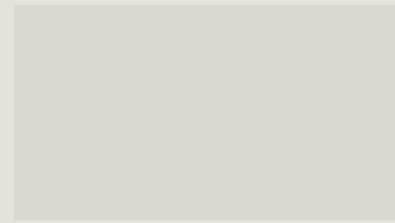




# Origin of the Christian Way

---

The first disciples came sincerely to believe in Jesus's resurrection in the absence of sufficient antecedent historical influences from either Judaism or pagan religions.



# 7 Mutations of Jewish Belief Caused by Jesus's Resurrection

## Second Temple Judaism

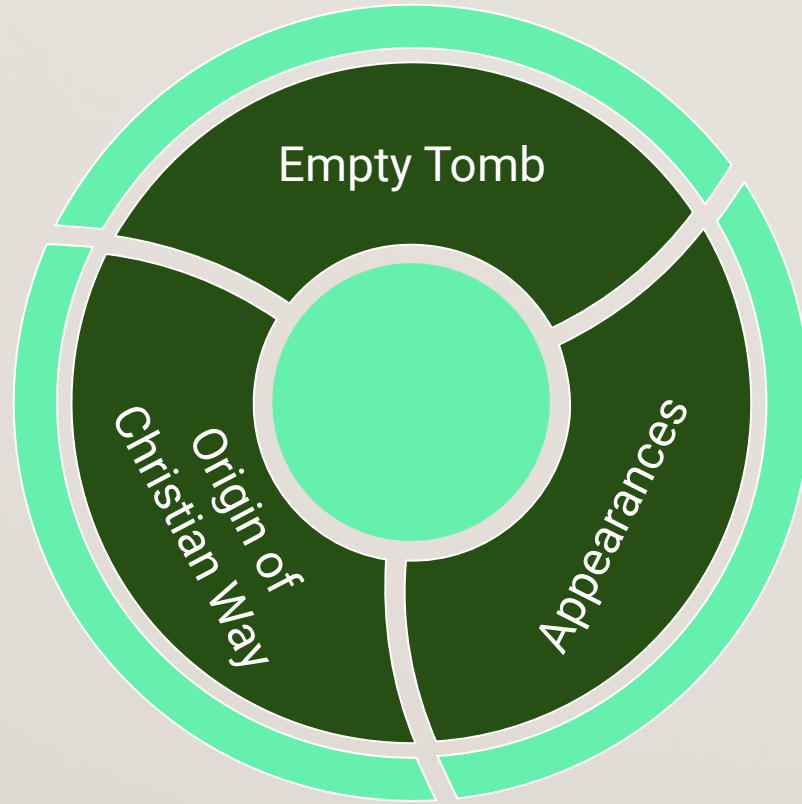
- Wide spectrum of belief (e.g. Sadducees vs Pharisees)
- Resurrection belief peripheral
- Vague notion of resurrection body
  
- General resurrection at the eschaton
- -
  
- Resurrection metaphor for “return from exile”
- \*Messiah was to bring political liberation, not die

## Earliest Christianity

- Homogenous belief in physical resurrection
- Resurrection belief central
- Definitive view of incorruptible, transformed resurrection body
  
- Particular resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth
- Collaborating with God is continuing the work of Jesus who redeemed the world in resurrection
  
- Resurrection metaphor for “born again”
- \*Messiah was destined to suffer, die, & resurrect

Origin of  
Christian Way





---

# Theology of the Resurrection

Correcting common misconceptions of the Christian hope

 **THINK  
THEISM**





**If you die tonight?**

**Heaven**

**OR**

**Hell**

**855-FOR-TRUTH**

**John 3:36**





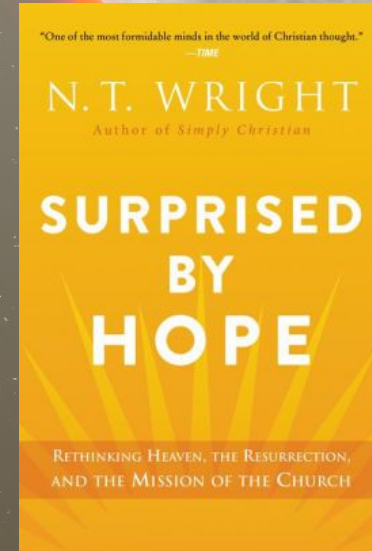
# THE NEW HEAVEN & EARTH



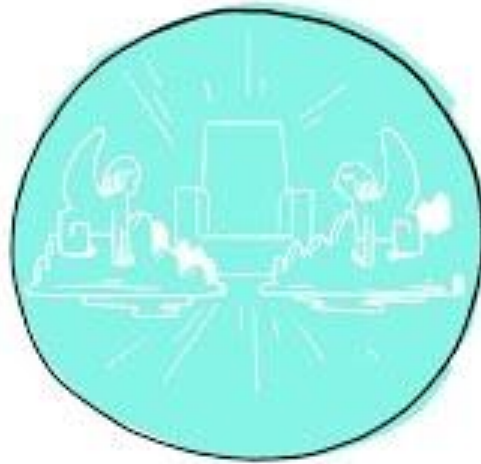
# Resurrection as Life After “Life-After-Death”

“Heaven is the place where God’s purposes for the future are stored up. It isn’t where they are meant to stay so that one would need to go to heaven to enjoy them; it is where they are kept safe against the day when they will become a reality on earth. If I say to a friend, “I’ve kept some beer in the fridge for you,” that doesn’t mean that he has to climb into the fridge in order to drink the beer.

- N.T. Wright



THEME



# HEAVEN & EARTH

---

# The Argument Proper

A survey of the historical  
argument for the resurrection of  
Jesus



**THINK  
THEISM**



# Basic Structure of the Argument

**List of  
Historical  
Facts**



**Epistemic  
Framework**



**Therefore, Jesus  
rose from the dead**

# Minimal Facts Approach

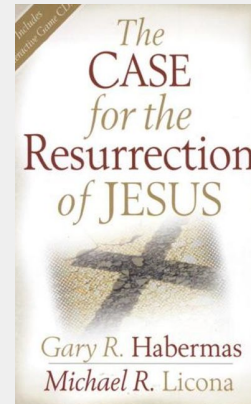
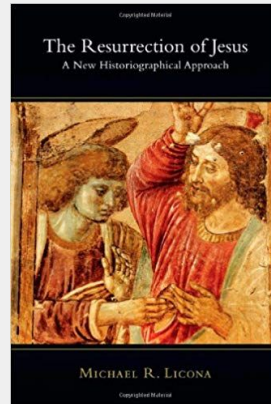
Developed and popularized by Dr. Gary Habermas & Dr. Mike Licona, the “minimal facts” approach only employs the historical facts agreed to by the overwhelming majority (> 90%) of New Testament scholars. The next step is to offer the resurrection hypothesis as the best explanation of those facts; most of the work in this argument is defeating alternative explanations to the resurrection (e.g. hallucinations).



Gary Habermas



Mike Licona

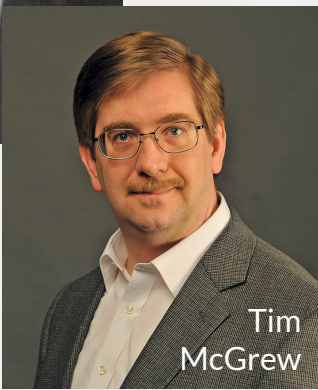


# Bayesian Approach

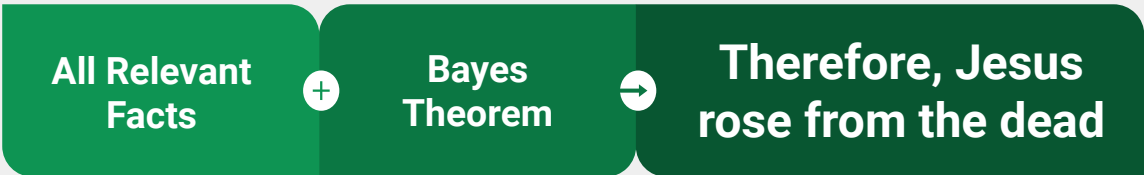
Whereas most historians use general methods of reasoning such as IBE, some epistemologists have become enthralled with formalizing everything using Bayes' Theorem. Swinburne in particular argues that the probability Jesus was God incarnate who rose from the dead is very high, somewhere around "97%". Establishing the prior probability of the resurrection is the bane of this approach.



Richard Swinburne



Tim McGrew



THE PROBABILITY OF "B" BEING TRUE GIVEN THAT "A" IS TRUE

↓

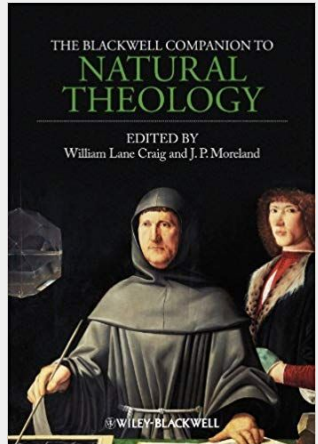
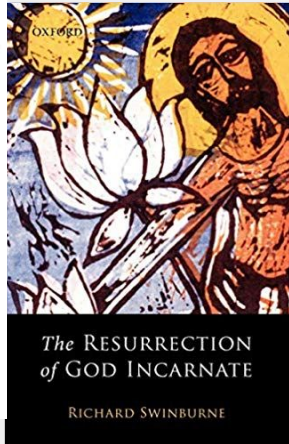
THE PROBABILITY OF "A" BEING TRUE

THE PROBABILITY OF "A" BEING TRUE GIVEN THAT "B" IS TRUE

THE PROBABILITY OF "B" BEING TRUE

$$P(A|B) = \frac{P(B|A) P(A)}{P(B)}$$

What is the prior probability of resurrection??



# Whatever N.T. Wright is doing

N.T. Wright's argument surveys beliefs about life, death, and the afterlife among ancient Hebrews, Second Temple Jews, and Greek pagans contemporary with Jesus. The resurrection belief of the Christian Way is characterized as a mutation within 2T Judaism that is inexplicable as either (i) a natural evolution of Jewish belief nor (ii) influence by external religious views. Thus, the rise of resurrection belief is inexplicable apart from an empty tomb + appearances.



N.T. Wright

Tim  
McGrew

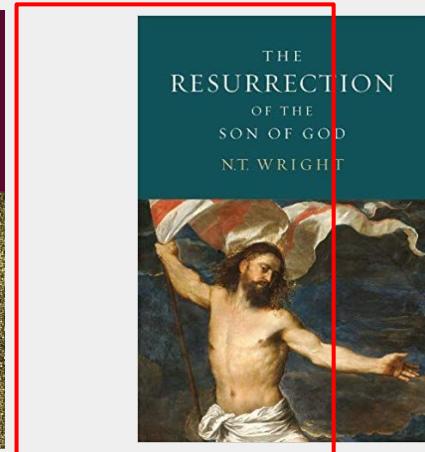
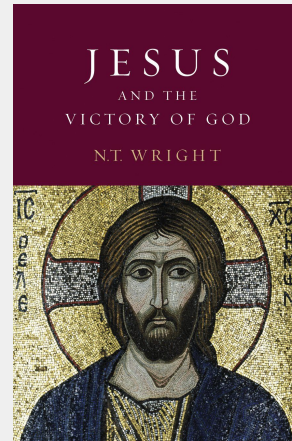
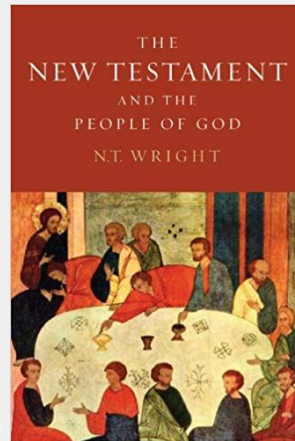
Jewish, pagan,  
etc perspectives  
on death and  
afterlife



Xian resurrection  
belief is a  
mutation best  
explained by  
resurrection



Therefore, Jesus  
rose from the dead





# All-the-Facts Approach

Most popularly championed by Dr. William Lane Craig, this is the standard method by which an argument for the resurrection proceeds. Step 1: establish all the relevant facts on the basis of independent argument (including N.T. Wright's facts!). Step 2: assess the explanations for the facts. Because Craig often summarizes his facts under three big headings, it is often confused with the minimal facts approach, but there are subtle differences.

