

Regarding “Some” Evidential Claims For Islam

Critical Musings On Islamic Recourses and Christian Discourses

L. L. Morton, PhD
Professor Emeritus
University of Windsor

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Running Head: Islam and Evidence

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Abstract

If we would like to know if a religion is true or false, we should not depend on our emotions, feelings, or traditions. Rather, we should depend on our reason and intellect.” -- (Ibrahim, 1997, p. 4)

Hopefully in the near future Ibrahim might find his way to follow his own advice, the advice noted in the quote above. Unfortunately, from his “traditions,” and perhaps his “feelings,” he seems to have been catapulted into a [confirmation bias](#), at the very least. This is palpable in his booklet purporting to show supernatural knowledge in the Qur’an. Unfortunately, people are “predictably irrational” (Ariely, 2008) and Ibrahim is no exception. This present essay offers, respectfully, an introductory critique of Ibrahim’s (1997) booklet titled: *A Brief Illustrated Guide To Understanding Islam*. Ibrahim’s booklet claims to offer “some evidence” for Islamic truth claims, and he leans towards attempts to frame the evidence as scholarly evidence and scientific evidence. The evidence, however, is cataclysmically troublesome. The critique of Ibrahim’s evidential claims is developed by: (1) examining at a cursory level, the evidences he offered in his recourses to various evidential streams, (2) developing a conceptual context for the merits of the evidences offered, a context that leads to a cumulative case which diminishes the worth of the evidences he offered, (3) addressing comparative apologetic evidences in Christianity, (4) drawing upon resources that are critical of Ibrahim’s “scientific” evidential claims, and (5) advancing an abductive position—inference to the best explanation—that the evidences offered by Ibrahim are naive, at best. The abductive inference to the best explanation is as follows: the Islamic evidential case fails: (1) on its own merits, (2) when compared to relevant Christian evidences, (3) when considered philosophically, psychologically, and hermeneutically, and (4) when considered through a straightforward scientific lens.

The essay is structured to be read in a linear fashion and a parallel fashion electronically. The *recourses* are presented in a linear fashion from pages 7 through 28. The *discourses* follow. However, there are hyperlinks throughout the linear section (*recourses*) that permit branching to the *discourses* at relevant points. This parallel processing evident in branching to the *discourses* facilitates the availability of substantive challenges and Christian comparators for the reader.

On a positive note, two weeks ago all these claims were new to me. Now I find I have personally benefitted in gaining a broadened understanding of Islam, and Islamic underpinnings. The opportunities for comparative considerations with Christianity regarding prophecy, miracle, revelation, as well as firming up cognitive, critical thinking tools was beneficial. It was a good exploratory experience. Such effects are positive.

Introduction

The genesis of this report is rooted in water, curiosity, a conversation, and a booklet. On the first Tuesday in May (2013) I attended a “Reasons To Believe” chapter meeting in Toronto, having recently discovered they meet the first Tuesday of every month. The lecture was on *water* and was given by Iain Sommerville (PhD in Metallurgy). It was both a knowledge-building and a faith-building presentation that was tied to the amazing properties of *water*. There was a clear case made for aspects of *water* pointing to a designer!

Following the lecture a discussion with a few individuals ensued related to a booklet on Islam (Ibrahim, 1997). The booklet professed to offer evidence for miraculous underpinnings of the Qur’an and hence proof for Islamic claims. Curious I volunteered to have a look at the booklet and respond before the next month’s meeting. After working through the booklet I came to realize that the person who raised the issue of the booklet in the first place was likely focused on the topic of *water* as that was: (1) the focus of Sommerville’s presentation, and (2) one focus in part of Ibrahim’s booklet addressing science in the Qur’an. By the time I made that inference, however, I was already fully immersed in the much broader topic of evidence for Islamic claims.

The critical musings presented here, though seminal, grew slowly into a more formal essay simply from an evaluation of the many claims in the booklet. Ironically, the one area I didn’t address was the *water* issues and the related Qur’anic references. The reason was twofold. First, I had become so convinced that there was no merit in any of the evidences and arguments offered in the booklet that I ended my critical musings (and case-building) around the 100-page mark. Secondly, these critical musings had led to resources (i.e., Internet resources) that had already offered cogent arguments, evidences, and tests, against many Islamic claims, including the claims related to *water* (i.e., rivers, currents, streams, clouds, etc.).

Still, the critical musings offered in this report do have specific and general value, *recourses* and *discourses*. First, the musings address specifics: *recourses* addressing (1) the specifics that Ibrahim offers, (2) the specifics of the Qur’anic texts, (3) specific principles of interpretation, and (4) the critics’ specific criticisms and tests). Secondly the musings address *discourses*, general factors: addressing *discourses* about (1) broad apologetic issues, (2) epistemological issues, (3) comparatives with Christianity, and (4) psychological limitations. These musings diminish Ibrahim’s claims. Overall, the substantive focus shifts toward the general *discourses* within the broader apologetic context that acknowledges sound critical thinking and the central Christian framework for these musings.

An Evidential Stance

The evidential claims on the table here, with respect to Islam, are presented by Ibrahim (1997). In the first chapter, a key chapter, he claims to be offering “some evidence” for the truth of Islam. The problem posed then in the present essay is a critical evaluation of Ibrahim’s evidences purportedly offering supernatural support for the Qur’an and Islam.

His booklet is structured to address six kinds of evidence, or perhaps seven kinds of evidence upon closer inspection. He presents his information in the following order:

1. The Scientific Miracles of the Koran
2. The Great Challenge to Produce One Chapter Like the Chapters of the Qur'an
3. Biblical Prophecies on the Advent of Mohammed
4. The Prophecies in the Qur'an
5. Miracles Performed by Mohammed
6. The Simple Life of Mohammed
7. The Phenomenal Growth of Islam

The order seems important in that the lead evidential claim addresses science, scientific miracles, and hence scientific support for Islam. While people are generally familiar with the phrase “guilt by association,” they are less likely to sense the opposite fallacy: “acceptance by association,” or more formally, “affirming the consequent” fallacy. If a sense of scientific credibility can be sold to the reader then subsequent claims (prophecies, miracles, lifestyle and demographics) are more easily accepted; it’s a strategy that capitalizes on the [confirmation bias](#). If Ibrahim can sell the supposed scientific evidences then the less honourable evidences addressed secondarily are more likely to be accepted uncritically.

What to address in this booklet? That’s conceptually important! Equally important is the methodological issue: How to address the content in the booklet. Those two preliminary questions constitute the broad agenda. In terms of order, a workable strategy involves addressing the peripheral evidence claims first. The rationale for this reversed approach is as follows: If the peripheral claims are weak, then this is one way to help guard against bias [see the discourse on confirmation bias](#). Weak evidence claims tend to be viewed more favourably, as a function of the confirmation bias, given a prior commitment to the claims, or if apparent stronger evidence is presented first. In effect, there is wisdom in opting to consider the evidence claims reversing Ibrahim’s ordering.

Beyond the methodological issue of the order-of-addressing-claims, there is the issue of what-to-address—that is, the content. For apologetics, critique, and understanding, the focus should be on purported evidence and evidence claims, clearly. Hence, there is a focus on front-line epistemology. While many epistemologies could be relevant here (e.g., evidentialism, virtue epistemology, prudential epistemology, passionate epistemology, volitional epistemology, existential epistemology, Gethsemane epistemology, etc.) the preliminary focus is obviously straightforward evidentialism. Hence evidentialism is the first-line epistemological approach considered. For a broad framework for evidentialism see the [discourse on evidentialism below](#). What emerges later is additional attention to [virtue epistemology](#).

Proclaiming the pre-eminence for one’s theory, or paradigm, or research study, or scientific roots, or religious ideology as Ibrahim (1997) does is problematic. It is problematic given: (1) the issues with psychological thinking and biases (see Kahneman, 2003; Nickerson,

1998), (2) the [issues with scientific research](#) (Broad & Wade, 1985; Ioannidis, 2012, Tipler, 2003), and (3) the history of scientific and conceptual revolutions over the past few millennia (Feyerabend, 1975, 2011; Kuhn, 1970; van Fraassen, 2002, 2011). One is best positioned when one adopts a stance that is open to change (van Fraassen, 2002). Consider the issue: “So here is the problem for epistemology; we take ourselves to have knowledge and to know what it is to be rational. Yet we also look back and see that in our past our presumed knowledge went into crisis, and the crisis was resolved in ways that burst the very categories of our then-putative knowledge and reason. We could perhaps think of ourselves as so superior to our past that these reflections are now irrelevant—and maybe that is the natural epistemological attitude. But what if we acknowledge that we could be in that position again? ...There were times when epistemology itself needed to undergo radical changes and did so. Can we coherently acknowledge that we could be in that same position again? This problem is a touchstone for epistemology and a fortiori for empiricism, if an empiricist position is to include an epistemology in its stance (van Fraassen, 2002, p. 73-74).” One must be open to change! Hence one must be critical and tentative, proportioning belief as a function of evidences, arguments, and epistemological principles that reflect wisdom and common sense.

The approach in this report is designed to examine claims and encourage an openness to change. The approach is layered then in terms of addressing: (1) *recourses* to the *content specifics* from Ibrahim’s booklet, and (2) *discourses* with respect to *apologetic factors* that are relevant for diffusing, or challenging, Ibrahim’s claims. Change is seen as the reasonable move, when the warrant for such a move is clear!

RECOURSES TO CONTENT SPECIFICS IMPACTING IBRAHIM’S (1997) CLAIMS

Ibrahim’s (1997) objective is to present evidences for the Qur’an and Qur’anic support for Islam. His primary line of evidence is purportedly scientific, but he has *recourse* to various alternate lines of evidence as well. Reflections here on his “*recourses*” to other lines of evidence are considered in reverse order to the format presented in his booklet. This approach sets up a context and a mindset that prepares one to face the purported scientific miracles of the Qur’an, from an epistemologically prudent position. Context (both content and order of presentation) is important. Moreover, such a context will colour the quality of the evidence considered, whether it is evidence marshalled here, or evidence drawn from the resources already available on the Internet—resources addressing many of the scientific claims that align with Ibrahim’s focus.

First Recourse: “The Phenomenal Growth of Islam”

Is this growth of Islam evidence of epistemic support for Islam as a divinely inspired organization? I would pose a few points here that serve to raise some doubts at the very least.

1. Islam was spread throughout most of its history at the end of the sword (Holland, 2012). This would hardly serve as credible evidence of divine inspiration. Just think about comparable spreading kingdoms: Rome, Greece, Soviet Union, Ancient Persia, and so on.

Hardly an admirable methodology or outcome. And when contrasted with the spread of Christianity, at least in the first few centuries, the difference is striking.

2. Immigration from Muslim countries to the West is one reason for a dramatic increase in Muslim religious proportions in the West. It is not an ideology that the West is buying into for rational reasons. Rather, the West has espoused-compassionate-reasons (and economic reasons) for opening doors to Muslim immigrants.
3. The birthrate of Muslims in the West is dramatically higher than the birthrate of traditional non-Muslim cultural groups (e.g., Steyn, 2006).
4. The growth of Muslims in the West can be enhanced by covert polygamy. If immigrants to the West then bring over relatives who are really covert wives the birthrate could increase, logically. The more wives one has, the more children one is likely to have.
5. Apostasy, or converting to another religion, puts the Muslim under a death penalty. There is a strong incentive to remain a Muslim if in name only. It could serve to keep the numbers artificially high.
6. The power differential between males and females in Islam is likely to favour a male reproductive agenda.
7. Statistics are not readily available giving the numbers of Westerners who convert to Islam because of the arguments of its apologists. If anything, the converts to Islam in the West seem to be a sparse minority.

To claim that Islam is the fastest growing religion (worldwide, or in the West) may be true or false. But to offer this as evidence of truth itself, is suspect. It is suspect because of the possible mechanics driving growth as mentioned above. But it is also suspect because of the long periods of time in history, and diverse places geographically, when it was not fast-growing. Fast-growth is not particularly evidential.

Second Recourse: “The Simple Life” of Mohammed

How is a simple life evidence of the truth of an ideology or religion? A lifestyle change might serve as a signal of evidence but more is needed. Joseph Smith made a lifestyle change. Was that evidence of the truth of Mormonism? Jim Jones made a lifestyle change in the direction of a simple life. Was that evidence of the truth underpinning Jonestown? Charlie Manson made a lifestyle change in the direction of the simple hippie lifestyle. Was that evidence of the truth underpinning Manson’s horrors? I don’t think so!

In the taxonomy of [evidentialism discussed below](#) it is quite clear that Ibrahim is not offering substantive evidence in these first two evidences. Why is it not sufficient evidence? With respect to *Basic Evidentialism* there is no case for the empirical and rational demands an evidentialist requires. The *cons* outweigh the *pros*.

Faculty evidentialism could be in play here as well. There is not a clear collaboration across faculties or disciplines (e.g., language, history, comparative religions, psychology, logic, etc.) that would inspire confidence in Ibrahim’s claims. Ibrahim seems to lack the expertise to

make a fully reasoned judgment here. He is likely functioning under the influence of the [confirmation bias](#), at least in part.

Third Recourse: “Miracles Performed” by Mohammed

The two miracles listed in the pamphlet were: (1) the splitting of the moon (Qur’an 54:1-2), and (2) “...the flowing of water through Mohammed’s fingers when his companions got thirsty and had no water except in a little vessel (Ibrahim, 1997, p. 36).”

Splitting of the Moon

054.001

YUSUFALI: The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder.

PICKTHAL: The hour drew nigh and the moon was rent in twain.

SHAKIR: The hour drew nigh and the moon did rend asunder.

054.002

YUSUFALI: But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say, "This is (but) transient magic."

PICKTHAL: And if they behold a portent they turn away and say: Prolonged illusion.

SHAKIR: And if they see a miracle they turn aside and say: Transient magic.

Water Flowing from Mohammed’s Fingers

This miracle is in the hadith, not the Qur’an. The report is that water was flowing from the fingers of Mohammed.

When I read the Qur’anic verses, or the hadith reports, related to these two purported “miracles,” I have no sense of anything miraculous occurring. I have no sense of assigning any credibility to such claims. I look for natural explanations, like cloud cover on part of the moon, or exaggeration from those who wish to help God.

Admittedly, I had the same sense of suspicion with respect to miracles reported in the Bible. However, the Biblical miracles do warrant more credibility. See the [discourse on the resurrection](#) and the [discourse on miracles](#). These two discourses from a Christian perspective offer a striking contrast with the Islamic miracle claims from Ibrahim. While epistemological reservations are warranted these Biblical miracles seem substantially more reliable, more conceptually reasonable, more evidentially harmonious, and more historically rooted, than the two Islamic miracles reported by Ibrahim.

The two Islamic miracles seem to be what C. S. Lewis would term mythical miracles (Lewis, 1947/1974). As such, they carry negligible evidential weight. These miracles offered by Ibrahim as evidential are more conducive to supporting refutation of Islamic miracles rather than confirmation, unlike the Christian case for miracles in spite of limitations and caveats.

Fourth Recourse: Prophecies in Islamic Text

The particular prophecy noted by Ibrahim (1997) was related to conflict between Romans and Persians, particularly the victory of the Romans over the Persians.

“The Romans have been defeated in the nearest land (to the Arabian Peninsula), and they, after their defeat, will be victorious within three to nine years....” (Qur’an 30:2-4)

Ibrahim claims the Romans were defeated at Antioch in 613, and then the Romans defeated the Persians in 622, nine years later. This episode, and Qur’anic report, is projected by Ibrahim (1997) as a fulfilled prophecy.

But is this the case? Is this prediction or post-diction? The case for post-diction arises with respect to dating the Qur’an. Spencer (2012), and others (see Holland, 2012) make a significant case that the Qur’an was not in play this early arguing that the Qur’an was emerging considerably later than this prophecy. Spencer’s arguments and evidences lead him to state: “But in what are generally understood as the earliest days of Islam, when they conquered Syria in 637, Armenia and Egypt in 639, North Africa beginning in the 650s, and probably Cyprus in 654, there was no Qur’an for them to brandish. Nor is it even certain that they had one for many years after that. Recall that the Qur’an makes no appearance in the surviving documents and artifacts of the Muslims until around six decades after the Arab conquests began (Spencer, 2012, p. 192).” This later dating for the Qur’an makes post-diction a reasonable suspicion for the purported prophecy related to Roman and Persian battles in 613 and 622. The prophecy was quite possibly fudging—or, helping Allah! The human propensity to help hypotheses along is evident in the most honorable epistemological endeavours (e.g., science and religion).

Comparing this prophecy with the much richer Biblical prophecies shows the stark contrast. For reflections on a Christian approach to prophecy see the [Discourse on Prophecy](#).

Fifth Recourse: “Biblical Prophecies on the Advent” of Mohammed

Ibrahim (1997) refers to Deut 18:18-19 as a prophecy referring to Mohammed. The text reads as follows:

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”
--Deut 18:18-19, NIV

From this text Ibrahim makes some claims and some inferences that are suspect.

First, he interprets the reference to “their brothers” as pointing to an Ishmaelite heritage. That the prophet would be from some Ishmaelite line does not seem to be the immediately obvious interpretation, the logical interpretation, nor the interpretation that Jewish and Christian scholars have drawn from the text. He cites no authorities (historical or linguistic) to support such an interpretation. It just seems that the twelve tribes of Israel are the “brothers” he would be

referring to. In fact, the lineage in Matt. 1:2 points to Judah as the brother, among his brothers, that is the root. Likewise Luke traces the lineage back through Judah (Luke 3:33).

Secondly, he contends Ishmael is an ancestor of Mohammed. But is he? Apparently such a claim is based on a revelation, hence circular reasoning; it is not based on historical, archeological, or bio-genealogical evidences. Unlike Jesus, there are no lineages for Mohammed.

Regarding Arab roots in Ishmael see contrary claims evidentially argued at the two following locations:

(1): <http://www.bible.ca/islam/islam-myths-arabs-descendants-of-ishmael.htm>

The information at this location begins with a quote from the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "Arabian literature has its own version of prehistoric times, but it is entirely legendary." (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 2:176)

(2): <http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/cornelius/arabs.html>

Thirdly, Ibrahim uses the analogy between Moses and Mohammed as evidence that Mohammed is the prophet referred to in Deuteronomy. He claims the analogy is stronger than with any other Prophet, including Jesus.

But is it? Claims have been made, with comparators listed, that there are more similarities between Jesus and Moses. See here:

<http://www.wrestedscriptures.com/a08islam/deuteronomy18v18-19.html>

Regardless, the quantity of comparators should not be viewed as evidence. Analogical reasoning involves more than a list of comparators. See the [Discourse on Analogical Thinking](#).

Fourthly, Ibrahim points to John 1:19-21 contending it points to three distinct people Jews were anticipating: The Messiah, Elijah, and the Prophet. Elijah was named; but prophet and messiah are titles. There is no reason to suspect that the Messiah and the Prophet was not the same person. Many Jewish scholars at that time may have lacked the resources to recognize that titles like prophet, priest, king, messiah, suffering servant, Son of God, Son of Man, and so on, all referred to a single person. Their fragmented understanding was understandable. That Ibrahim uses the text in John as an argument is weak.

Fifthly, he fails to address the text in Acts 3:11-26. It is pretty clear there from Peter's discourse that the coming prophet spoken of by the prophets (including Moses in Deut 18:18-19) was manifest in "these days" (i.e., the days of Jesus and the early church). This text does major damage to any claim that Ibrahim has made, and his ignoring of the text again points to the [confirmation bias](#) he is subject to.

Overall, these are flimsy arguments from *heritage*, from a *confirmation bias*, from *analogy*, and from a limited view of *language*.

- The argument from *heritage* is already seen to be suspect. It is also a view from revelation, and revelation needs confirmation.
- The *confirmation bias* is evident in the failure to consider disconfirming facts, and options.
- The failure to consider *language use* with respect to multiple titles for a single person is consistent with a *confirmation bias*.
- What are the references that this Deut passage refers to Jesus? Acts 3:22.

Sixth Recourse: “Great Challenge to Produce One Chapter Like the Chapters” of the Qur’an

For me many Psalms would meet such a challenge. I think of Psalm 23. Many hymns would meet such a challenge. I think of Amazing Grace! Many poems would meet such a challenge. I liked Chesterton’s poem: The Convert.

After one moment when I bowed my head
And the whole world turned over and came upright,
And I came out where the old road shone white.
I walked the ways and heard what all men said,

Forests of tongues, like autumn leaves unshed,
Being not unlovable but strange and light;
Old riddles and new creeds, not in despite
But softly, as men smile about the dead

The sages have a hundred maps to give
That trace their crawling cosmos like a tree,
They rattle reason out through many a sieve
That stores the sand and lets the gold go free:

And all these things are less than dust to me
Because my name is Lazarus and I live.

Source: *The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton* (1927)

As an evidential claim, it seems that Ibrahim (1997) has no foundation when appealing to a single chapter in the Qur’an with respect to “...beauty, eloquence, splendor, wise legislation, and other perfect attributes (p. 32).” I find many texts to surpass various Qur’anic chapters.

Seventh Recourse: “The Scientific Miracles” in the Qur’an

The purported scientific miracles in the Qur’an are the kind of evidence that Ibrahim seems to appeal to as the primary evidential, apologetic, and polemical, base for Islam. How compelling are these purported scientific evidences? What are these purported scientific evidences? I see eight in the text: (1) embryonic development, (2) the mountains, (3) the origin of the universe, (4) the cerebrum, (5) seas and rivers, (6) deep seas and internal waves, (7)

clouds, and (8) the list of scientists who believe. For an initial approach I consider a few that interest me: the cerebrum, the origin of the universe, embryonic development, and the list of scientists who believe.

The Cerebrum

The Qur'anic text (sura 96:15-16) reported by Ibrahim (1997) reads as follows:

“No! If he does not stop, We will take him by the *naseyah* (front of the head), a lying, sinful *naseyah* (front of the head)! (p. 16).”

With respect to this text, Ibrahim asks the questions: “Why didn't the Qur'an say that the person was lying and sinful? What is the relationship between the front of the head and lying and sinfulness (1997, p. 16)?” What Ibrahim then does is draw upon the parallels between “front of the head” and frontal and prefrontal areas of the brain that are involved in motivation, planning, and aggression. Linking sinful behaviour like lying to planning and motivation the Qur'anic text is interpreted to be scientific and therefore indicative of evidence for Islam.

The “Reasonable Person Test”

Would a reasonable person make this inference? Not likely! A reasonable person is more likely to see sinful behaviour like lying in the “person” rather than a neurological substrate in the brain, here identified as “the front of the head.” Ibrahim's claim reads like special pleading.

The Language Test

Several language issues are relevant here. First, one wonders about the use of the term “front-of-the-head.” Is it used in other contexts in the 7th and 8th centuries? In fact, an alternate translation (Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, 2004) frames the issue differently. The sura is focused on the transgressor, the one who sees himself as self-sufficient, the one who interferes, and the one who denies truth. The injunction is:

“Let him beware! If he
Desist not, We will
Drag him by the forelock—
A lying and sinful forelock!
Then let him call
(For help) to his council
(Of comrades):
We will call
On the angels of punishment
(To deal with him)!
--Qur'an 96:15-18.

The interpretation for *naseyah* as “forelock” (which is on the head) makes sense. It would be logistically awkward to drag someone by their “forehead;” how would one grab the person? But dragging someone by their hair—their forelock—is conceivable. And, as ‘Ali (2004) points out in a footnote: “To be dragged by it is to suffer the lowest dregs of humiliation (p. 1674).”

Of course, Ibrahim’s preference for “forehead” as opposed to “forelock” better fits his narrative attempting to tie this Qur’anic statement to ancient supernatural knowledge of modern neuropsychology. It is the confirmation bias in full attire.

Even if one were to consider that “forehead” could be the preferred semantic interpretation, there is still a related language problem. Languages often use figurative structures to communicate something different. For example, we use a part to represent a whole (i.e., synecdoche), or one thing to stand for another related thing (i.e., metonymy). ‘Ali sees the forelock as “symbolic of the summit and crown of man’s power or dignity (p. 1674).” That makes sense being on the top of the head, the summit. Even so, the “forehead” as representative of *the self, the person, the cognitive, the spiritual, the point of submission* could be simple synecdoche. (Is the prostate position in Islamic prayer which sees the forehead on the ground a 7th century practice?). In fact, the more reasonable interpretation is anything but the neuropsychological interpretation attempting to root the text in the functioning of the frontal and prefrontal lobes of the brain.

The Informed Person Test

The informed person considers the language, the cultural context, the possibilities (i.e., hypotheses, alternate hypotheses, competing explanations, speculation, logical coherence, contradictory evidence, and so on). Still, Ibrahim’s hypothesis should be on-the-table. The philosophical preference is to permit all ideas onto the table. It is just that some hypotheses are more credible than others.

The informed person looks to authorities across various disciplines. The informed person in this case, however, is not the scientist—the neuropsychologist. Indeed, I opted to address “The Cerebrum” evidential claims first because I do have some background in neuropsychology having published in *Brain and Language* (1991), *Brain and Cognition* (1987), the *International Journal of Neuroscience* (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994, 1995, 1998), *Neuropsychologia* (1990), and the *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology* (1994). Ironically, for me to claim there is some connection between modern neuropsychology and the Islamic text addressed here would be either evidence of my lying, evidence of my brain damage, evidence of my [patternicity failure](#), or evidence of my [confirmation bias](#). None of these are the case. Rather, Ibrahim’s (1997) case fails as evidence.

The Scientific Research Test

For a discussion of the scientific research a perfect starting point is located here: http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Qur%27an_and_the_Lying_Prefrontal_Cerebrum .

Scientists Who Believe

Addressing this evidence secondly has a bearing on subsequent evidential claims. Ibrahim lists a number of scientists who comment apparently favourably on the Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an: Dr. T. V. N. Persaud, Dr. Joe Leigh Simpson, Dr. E. Marshall Johnson, Dr. William W. Hay, Dr. Gerald C. Goeringer, Dr. Yoshihide Kozai, and Prof. Tejatat Tejasen.

Interestingly, he doesn't include in this list two others he draws upon at other points, namely: (1) Dr. Keith Moore (a co-author with Persaud on an anatomy textbook), and (2) Alfred Kröner whom he cites in the booklet. It is clear that Kröner's position was revised so he was not a supporter of such Islamic claims. Possibly Moore's position was revised as well; he did refuse to give an interview with Newsweek. If Ibrahim was aware of retractions he may have been reluctant to include them in his list here.

Ibrahim sees his list of scientists as evidential. But such a position involves a logical fallacy. It is an "appeal to authority fallacy." Assuming authority in one field (say anatomy) does not imply authority in another field (e.g., history, language, religion, psychology, etc.). Essentially, smart people can believe stupid things (see Sternberg, 2002). Smart people can be deceived, and self-deceived. Smart people can be led astray. What might cause scientists to adopt faulty thinking (in science)?

An Illusory Thinking Model

An illusory thinking model (Piattelli-Palmarini, 1994) can be tied to mistakes in knowing, or illusions about what we think we know, and thus bad beliefs. Piattelli-Palmarini argues for seven deadly sins, or dangers, that lead us to wrong conclusions and bad beliefs.

- The first danger is "**overconfidence.**" Many people show an unrealistic overconfidence in their answers to questions, even factual questions. Indeed, "...the discrepancy between correctness of response and overconfidence increases as the respondent is more knowledgeable" (p.119). The more you know, the more you need to guard against overconfidence.
- The second danger is "**illusory correlations**" or magical thinking. The person convinced of a "positive correlation...will always find new confirmations and justify why it should be so (p.122)." "We are naturally... verifiers rather than falsifiers... (p. 123)."
- The third danger is the "**Historian's Fallacy**" or "predictability in hindsight." In essence, "...we all honestly think we could have predicted what happened, as long as we know, or think we know, that it actually did happen (p. 124)."
- The fourth danger is "**anchoring.**" Our beliefs and opinions get arbitrarily "anchored" to such things as "first impressions," original opinions, contexts, propaganda, news reports, authorities, and emotions. These first impressions are quite resistant to change. It is almost as if pride gets in the way.

- The fifth danger is “**ease of representation.**” For example, when asked which is greater, death from suicide or death from homicide, homicide usually gets the nod. People typically report a greater death rate via homicide, as “...the more the occurrence impresses us emotionally, the more likely we are to think of it as also objectively frequent (p. 128).” Be wary of your imagination!
- The sixth danger is “**probability blindness.**” “Any probabilistic intuition by anyone not specifically tutored in probability calculus has a greater than 50 percent chance of being wrong (p. 132).” We are “blind not only to extremes of probabilities, but also to intermediate probabilities... (p. 131).” Is our reaction to genetic engineering, nuclear power, pharmaceutical test demands rational? We have a non-rational “...peremptory desire that there be no risk at all... (p. 131),” and thus small risks can gain greater proportions than warranted.
- The seventh danger is “**reconsideration under suitable scripts,**” or what Piattelli-Palmarini calls the “**Othello Effect.**” In essence, “...our judgment of probability allows itself to be influenced by fictions, including scenarios we know to be pure inventions (p. 134).” As Othello was influenced by the script, the fictitious script, offered by Iago, so we are vulnerable to alternate scripts.

In essence, the entire notion of illusory thinking reduces to bad beliefs, or faulty beliefs. What Piattelli-Palmarini offers, valuable offerings, are psychological sources of bad beliefs.

A Darkened-Mind Theory—Psychological

If a certain facet of the mind fails to function the subsequent actions are possibly flawed. This aligns with Plantinga’s (1993a, 1993b) notion of warrant requiring “proper function” to attain a level of adequacy for the support of belief. A cognitive architectural component that is not functioning, or not functioning properly, is not likely to provide a sound foundation for belief or confidence. For example, in states like sleep-walking, somnambulism, hypnotism, altered states like religious ecstasy or trance, drug-induced states, and so on, any beliefs advocated, or truth-claims made, would be suspect. In fact, many of the behaviours and beliefs would have the earmarks of irrationality, or “stupidity.” If important critical functions are suspended a part of the mind is “missing in action.” Such dispositional atrophy would “darken” judgment, and support an inference of a darkened mind.

Less striking, but equally important, examples emerge in social influence research—research that addresses the power of situational factors as opposed to dispositional factors in the generation of “evil” behaviour (Zimbardo, 2004). Zimbardo lists a number of situational factors that one would be well advised to consider: “...role playing, rules, presence of others, emergent group norms, group identity, uniforms, anonymity, social modeling, authority presence, symbols of power, time pressures, semantic framing, stereotypical images, and labels, among others (p. 47).” These all have the power to push one in a particular direction. If they push one into faulty constructions, flawed inferences, premature conclusions, bad behaviour, and so on, it is a condition easily characterized as a “darken mind.”

Something as simple as inducing a *small first step* can be quite powerful. Zimbardo (2004) lists ten ingredients in a recipe for apparent evil compliance in Milgram's (1974) classical studies of obedience to authority where subjects were induced to commit to serious levels of electric shock to their fellow human beings. Ingredient #7 is: "Starting the path toward the ultimate evil act with a small, insignificant first step (only 15 volts) (p. 29)." People easily agree to a small initial step like a mild shock. Similarly, a few puffs on a cigarette, or one or two cigarettes, an innocent office flirtation, or a look at a pornographic image are small first steps. But small steps, like multiplier effects, can cascade.

People agree to minor things, which then seems to draw them more easily in to subsequent commitments to major things. Wegner (2002) uses such research to explain compliance even in such a phenomenon as hypnotism. He refers to the early study of compliance by Freedman and Fraser (1966) where researchers ask home owners for permission to place a large "Drive Carefully" sign on their lawns. Most home owners refuse. However, those who were first asked to display a small "Be a Safe Driver" sign in their windows, and agreed to do so, were more likely to agree to the large lawn sign when asked later. Progressive sequential involvement is the proverbial story of the camel getting his nose in the tent. The first cigarette is a small step into a big tent. The first sexually curious activity is a small step that can lead to the darker side of curiosity (Kashdan, 2009).

Even an organization as sinister as the Ku Klux Klan seems to have had innocuous roots neither political nor racial. It was rooted in "fun," initially. "At first they played jokes on one another and then on members of the public in general. Then gradually they began to aim their pranks at black people (Baumeister, 1997, p. 239-240)." Baumeister's speculations are a reasonable reconstruction of how pranks escalate to cruelty as a function of small step-by-step social interactions. Seemingly decent people can be led to do indecent things by *small steps* (Freedman & Fraser, 1966) by *authority figures* (Milgram, 1974), by *rewards*, by *good intentions*, by *egotism*, by *curiosity* (Kashdan, 2009), by *simple fun* (Baumeister, 1997), by *time pressures* (Zimbardo, 2004), and by a host of *other innocuous situational factors*.

The social influence research does seem to offer a mechanism to explain the progress from "commitment to do the innocent small things" to "commitment to do the stupid" or evil things. Of interest, the ten ingredients for change that Zimbardo (2004) lists in discussing Milgram's research may have implications for dispositions related to behaviours as simple as smoking, religious-positioning and scientific-positioning. Consider the information in Table 1.

| Milgram | Smoking | Religious-positioning | Scientific-positioning |
|---|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <u>Cover Story</u> -Present an acceptable rationale or justification -An Ideology | -artist -rebel / radical | -Qur'anic revelation -religion of peace -models | -modern science -Qur'an confirmed by modern science |
| <u>Contract obligation</u> | -peer acceptance | -Sharia law | -Qur'an takes precedence over science -Hadiths take precedence over science -Islamic authorities take |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | | | precedence over science |
| <u>Meaningful roles</u> | -artist -rebel / radical | -worshipper, servant -imam -martyr , jihadist | -scientist, researcher -apologist |
| <u>Basic rules</u> -Justify mindless compliance | -peer-related badge -habit -addiction | -environmental influence -parental influence -peer influence | -Qur'an is the hermeneutical principle for interpreting science; it trumps science |
| <u>Alter semantics of act</u> -hurt to help | -claim: calming -claim: image-enhancing | -claim: religion of peace (yet via the sword) | -claim: nasyeth refers to “forehead” rather than “forelock” |
| <u>Diffuse responsibility</u> -authorities | -to advertisers -to peers / parents | -radical sub-groups -Qur'an responsible -Imams responsible | -scientists offering support |
| <u>Small innocuous first step</u> -start | -a few drags -a butt -just one cigarette | -listen to lectures -attend mosque -read a booklet -follow an admired Imam | - find a weak analogy as with the cerebrum |
| Gradual steps -progress | -1, 5, 10, a pack -two packs | -indoctrination -listen to propaganda -join a supportive group | -neuropsychology -embryology -geology -hydrology -cosmology |
| <u>Gradual shift of image</u> -good to bad | -health damage -loss of stamina -social ostracism | -interested -seeker -follower -radical | -scientific community -multi-disciplinary |
| <u>Exits costs</u> -high | -physical and psychological addiction -social networks | -social isolation -parental rejection -death penalty | -forego science!! -social ostracism -reject the Qur'an |

The line of progress from small first step in Islamic religious-positioning to entrenchment is evident. Similarly the line of progress from a small first step in Islamic science-positioning to entrenchment is evident. The darkening of the mind is unfolding psychologically in Zimbardo's ten ingredients.

A Darkened-Mind Theory—Religious

In a Christian worldview there are arguably three sources proposed for the darkened mind: (1) the human self, (2) Satan, or the god of this world along with principalities and powers, or (3) God. The biblical case attributes causality to all three sources with God being the more prominent source. A fourth option—considering various influences in combination from the three key sources—would be a prudent consideration in this worldview. Again, drawing upon various components of causality (i.e., material cause, final cause, formal cause, efficient cause, proximate cause, sufficient cause, direct cause, and so on) can facilitate coherence.

God blinds certain people. God can be the direct cause of a darkened mind (i.e., that God is the final cause, and perhaps involved in the formal cause) (for biblical examples see Isaiah 6:9-10; Rom 11:7-15).

Satan, or various principalities and powers can blind the mind. Whether blinding from the god of this world (II Cor 4:3-4) is a direct cause from a malevolent source, or a permitted cause, or material cause, to mediate God's intent either directly, or confluent, is not clear. Seeing God as the final cause, however, and in fact as "the god of this world," has been argued richly by Hartley (2005).

People are blinded as a result of their acts. As evident in Paul's argument in Romans (Rom 1:18-25), people are viewed as instrumental in the darkening of their minds, even if God is the final cause. Conversely, people seem to be viewed as instrumental in the removal of the blindness—they have a veil removed as a result of their actions (II Cor 4:14-16).¹

Regardless of the cause of the darkened mind, it seems fair to root it biblically in beliefs. In Romans 1:18-32 Paul sees certain individuals with a darkened mind opting for beliefs they "know" are inferior, positions they "know" are wrong. Such beliefs interfere with belief shifts. In fact, the religious call to repentance (metanoia) is a call to a belief shift—a changed mind.

Self-deception

Addressing self-deception may be an important key to understand the propensity to see the supernatural in the Qur'an that purports to presage modern science. We saw it didn't with respect to the cerebrum. We also saw the propensity for smart people to get off track with respect to the sciences. It can happen via a confirmation bias, the trap of illusory thinking Piattelli-Palmarini (1994), Zimbardo's (2004) ten ingredients for cognitive seducing, and other mechanisms. One particular line of thinking worth pursuing here is the human propensity to self-deception. It seems there may be an argument that Islamic claims for linking supernatural science revelations in the Qur'an are a form of self-deception

See the [discourse on self-deception](#) reported below. There are key points there that help explain this human propensity to self-deception.

The Origin of The Universe

Ibrahim is making the point that early in cosmological development there was a "cloud of 'smoke'" and that was the source of future stars, planets, moons, and so on. He seems careful to limit it to "one point in time" rather than the "singularity."

The "Reasonable Person Test"

Ibrahim is equating 'smoke' with a "highly dense and hot gaseous composition (p. 14)." Is this justified conceptually? It does seem to be a cosmological stretch!

¹ A point of interest here is the comment from Jesus that "if they were blind they would have no sin." It seems to be a stretch to assume that God could blind people as an act of grace so that they would have no sin, and thus less judgment to face. Moreover, the blinding by God might be somewhat congruent with the gracious Divine hiding of God (Moser, 2008).

The text as cited by Ibrahim (1997, p. 14) is reported as follows:

“Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke...” Qur’an 41:11

Depending on what “smoke” means I suppose one could say there was a period in the history of the cosmos when things were without form and void. But how does “the reasonable person test” fare here? The “reasonable person test” ought to consider context. The full text for Sura 41:11 reads as follows:

“Moreover, He Comprehended
In His design the sky,
And it had been (as) smoke:
He said to it
And to the earth:
‘Come ye together,
Willingly or unwillingly.’
They said: ‘We do come
(Together), in willing obedience.’”

First then, the context is poetry; is poetry a vehicle for scientific revelations? Second, here the sky (smoke) and the earth are co-existent. If the “smoke” was the primordial “highly dense and hot gaseous composition,” prior to the formation of stars, galaxies, planets, etc. how could this smoke and earth coexist? This is not consistent with the cosmological unfolding that Ibrahim attempts to imply in an effort to find evidence of supernatural knowledge of modern cosmological development in this text. Thirdly, the previous verse has placed the focus on the earth and then the focus in verse 12 is on bringing the earth and sky (perhaps “heavens” or “smoke”) together. The vagueness regarding the extent of the various terms, and the meaning of the various terms—the meaning of “sky,” “heaven,” “heavens,” and “smoke”—if anything, seems to open one to: (1) the hermeneutical language problem of denotative and connotative word meanings, (2) the logical fallacy problems (e.g., equivocation fallacy, the figure-of-speech fallacy, and so on). The “reasonable person test” is going to support caution, suspicion, and far more doubt than credibility about Ibrahim’s claim.

Ibrahim amplifies on his claim by quoting from Sura 21:30. That text he reports as:

“Have not those who disbelieved known that the heavens and the earth were one connected entity, then We separated them... (Qur’an 21:30) (Ibrahim, 1997, p. 14).”

The text as Ibrahim presents it here is selective. An alternate version of the text and a fuller version is more informative, and creates a major problem with respect to the “reasonable person test.”

Do not the Unbelievers see
That the heavens and the earth
Were joined together (as one
Unit of Creation), before
We clove them asunder?

We made from water
Every living thing. Will they
Not then believe?

The last two sentences of this Sura are omitted by Ibrahim. Why? Is it because we are quite certain that not “every living thing” was “made from water?” This watery genesis claim does not align with the narrative of evolutionary biology nor with the Christian narratives of creation. Hence, ignore it! Also, the text does not align with Ibrahim’s earlier narrative of “smoke” being the prior cosmological source. The [confirmation bias](#) seems clearly operative in Ibrahim.

The Kröner Problem

Ibrahim draws upon Alfred Kröner (a professor of Geology) to bolster his case for supernatural knowledge in the Qur’an. After listing Kröner’s role and affiliation he writes: “He said, ‘Thinking where Muhammad came from ... I think it is almost impossible that he could have known about things like the common origin of the universe, because scientists have only found out within the last few years, with very complicated and advanced technological methods, that this is the case.’ Also he said, ‘ Somebody who did not know something about nuclear physics fourteen hundred years ago could not, I think, be in a position to find out from his own mind, for instance, that the earth and the heavens had the same origin’ (Ibrahim, 1997, pp. 15-16).”

On the one hand, it seems that neither Kröner, nor Ibrahim, allows for just such a claim in the earlier Hebrew account. Also, as discussed earlier, there are concerns about the language, the hermeneutical principles utilized, and the psychological confirmation bias that colours what one sees, or thinks one sees. But the really critical rebuff comes from Kröner himself in a much later interview. “The Rationalizer” interviewed Alfred Kröner and this is what he said about the matter: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiHuG880pqU>

The comment from the interviewer: “Alfred wanted me to make sure as many people as possible saw this video in the hope that it would stop people from sending him emails asking about it, so if you can help that would be great!”-- TheRationalizer

So it seems that the comments from scientists when interviewed can be taken out of context, and used selectively to promote a particular argument about the supernatural underpinning of the Qur’an. Alfred Kröner, the young Alfred Kröner, was apparently one of those scientists. From the looks of the video quality of comparable interviews with scientists, the interviews were likely decades ago.

The Scientific Research Test

For scientific reflection on Islamic cosmology a good place to start is here: http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Islam_and_Science#The_Universe_According_to_Islam
The information presented is striking.

Embryology

The surprising thing here is the fact that two respected anatomists (Moore, 1986; Moore and Persaud, 1993) are linked to his claim. The point is that the Qur'an describes stages of embryonic development, and Moore and Persaud, along with Ibrahim, infer that this textual content from the Qur'an indicates a supernatural source for such information.

What is the Qur'anic text that Ibrahim draws upon?

“We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him as a drop in a place of settlement, firmly fixed. Then We made the drop into an *alaqah* (leech, suspended thing, and blood clot), then We made the *alaqah* into a *mudghah* (chewed-like substance)...Qur'an 23:12-14.”

From a superficial reading of the text it would seem the stages are: (1) bit of clay, (2) a drop of some sort, (3) an *alaqah* which according to Ibrahim has three meanings (leech-like, suspended-thing-like, and blood-clot-like), and (4) *mudghah* (chewed-like substance).

The “Reasonable Person Test”

Thinking in terms of stages would not be unusual for ancients. One watches the tree from seed, to sprout, to sapling, to adult, to agedness. One watches the stages of the child: neonate, crawler, walker, language-user, creator, reasonable thinker, and adult. A reasonable person could assume the prenatal state was growth-oriented and thus stage-oriented merely by analogy. Moreover, there is a long pre-Islamic history of embryology and embryonic stages (http://wikiislam.net/wiki/History_of_Embryology)

The stages that Ibrahim points to do not appear to be unreasonable speculations of observers in that time period. Such observers knew about prenatal growth. They would have seen miscarriages; they could have seen animal remains that were conducive to stage formulations. They could draw upon historical writings. Nevertheless, the Qur'an stages are vague and really nondescript. That Moore and Persaud (1993) see something more in the text is surprising given their level of expertise, but unsurprising given their apparent prior commitment to Islam and subsequently to a confirmation bias. The “reasonable person test” here is likely to see the text as trivial as embryology and meaningless theologically.

A further challenge along the lines of the “reasonable person test” emerges from a fuller consideration of the text. Consider the text from Ali (2004):

Man we did create
 From a quintessence (of clay)
 Then We placed him
 As (a drop of) sperm
 In a place of rest
 Firmly fixed;
 Then We made the sperm
 Into a clot of congealed blood

Then of that clot We made
 A (foetus) lump; then We
 Made out of that lump
 Bones and clothed the bones
 With flesh; then We developed
 Out of it another creature.
 So blessed by Allah,
 The Best to create.
 (Qur'an 23:12-14)

The stages listed here are: (1) “quintessence” (bit of clay?), (2) sperm (equated with Man?), (3) sperm-placed (in a place of rest) a drop of some sort, (4) sperm (made into a clot of blood) (5) clot (made into a lump), (6) lump (made into bones), (7) bones-clothed (with flesh), (8) out-of-it developed “another creature.” So here there seems to be eight stages. The sperm is equated with the human being (stages 2 and 3). This would set off alarm bells for any modern with a minimal acquaintance with modern biology. The reasonable person test is going to gravitate towards doubt rather than credibility with respect to Ibrahim’s claims.

Bad Thinking of Scientists

It is puzzling initially that respectable academics like Moore and Persaud would be supportive of such suspect claims. Moore’s refusal to give an interview to Newsweek (around 2002) may be indicative of his rethinking his position. Moore’s (1986) article uses words like “seems to,” “implies,” and “may” repeatedly. This reflects his tentativeness. Moreover, he comments on stages of embryonic development related to Galen (2nd century) and Aristotle (4th century B.C.) so the notion of stages was not new with Mohammed. Yet Moore buys into the Islamic claims. Arguably his position is irrational.

What might drive bad thinking for smart academics? In addition to the problems with illusory thinking, the Darkened-Mind theorizing, and the propensity to self-deception [noted above](#) and the [confirmation bias noted below](#), there are numerous cognitive and religious constraints.

Religious Narratives Constrain Belief

The manner in which religious narratives can serve to constrain belief could be viewed as threefold: (1) situating people into a system, (2) pushing people away from a system, and (3) dismantling a system.

Religious Narrative Beliefs That Situate One In A System And Constrain Belief

Certain religious narratives are typically seen as the source of religious beliefs, and such beliefs are usually construed in contemporary society as bad beliefs, ill-conceived beliefs, or poorly-based beliefs. Such a position is not unreasonable. Such a position could very well lead to

the possibility of precluding correct beliefs. The following list is typical of how many see the source of beliefs as a function of one's religious narrative context.

- Beliefs of one's Parents
- Beliefs of one's Culture
- Beliefs triggering the confirmation bias, and "confirming" the beliefs
- Beliefs offering material rewards
- Beliefs offering ego rewards
- Beliefs offering ideological rewards
- Beliefs offering emotive rewards (schadenfreude, vigilante justice, humour, vengeance, venting, gloating, ...)

Indeed, context situates one in a belief system, and drives beliefs, good and bad beliefs.

Religious Narrative Beliefs That Push One Away And Thereby Constrain Belief

Certain religious narratives are typically seen as the source of theistic misunderstanding. They inadvertently are dysfunctional. They can lead to possibly precluding correct beliefs.

Consider the following push-narratives:

- A narrative that there is a prominent, singular, interpretive principle (e.g., literalism, allegory, myth, blind faith, "warming in the bosom," Qur'an, Bible, reason, science, etc.),
- A narrative that there is a singular interpretive institution (Roman Catholic Magisterium, Papacy, Watchtower society, etc.).
- A narrative with egregious problems (e.g., silliness, fantasy, imaginings, illogical claims, refuted claims, etc.)
- A narrative with philosophical problems (e.g., problem of evil, myth-type miracles, textual errors, etc.)
- Methodological narratives like Prioritizing
 - The priority of reason and absolute evidentialism
 - The priority of science, and scientific methodology
 - The priority of a magisterial authority criterion (e.g., Nihil Obstat, Imprimatur, ...papal infallibility, etc.)
 - The priority approach to scriptural revelation involving full plenary inspiration, error-free status, the priority of special revelation over natural revelation, etc.)

Religious Narrative Beliefs That Don't Make Immediate Sense

There are some religious narrative beliefs that seem particularly troubling. Deconstructing such beliefs shows problems with coherence, logic, reasoning, and consistency. As such, it seems reasonable to suspect these problematic narrative beliefs are thereby possibly precluding correct beliefs. Consider the following sample candidates:

- Transubstantiation
- The Immaculate Conception

- The Position of Mary
- Icons
- Polygamy
- Predestination
- Indulgences
- Slavery
- Role of Women
- Genocide
- And more

Of course some of these beliefs might find cogent and reasonable supporting arguments. That takes work. Initial reactions, initial deconstructions, could serve to push one away from a correct belief. The problem then is the fact that a religious belief can undermine theistic understanding; it can constrain belief. Ultimately, however, the one who has the better argument should win. The one with the better argument is in a position to support correct understanding.

Religious Narrative Beliefs That If True Are Conducive To Correct Belief

In Christianity there is a somewhat different narrative, a God-prescribed, and God-powered narrative. It could be viewed as a para-natural narrative! The sequential components of this narrative could be itemized as follows:

- First: There is a *natural revelation* of God. The God above the gods is part and parcel of this revelation. This form of monotheism (one God, or highest God) seems to be universal as argued by Varghese (2011).
- Second: There is a *sensus divinitatis*. We have a sense of the divine (Plantinga, 2000). It is hard-wired in a sense. It is properly basic knowledge.
- Third: There is the *conscience* seen in the law written on the heart (Jer 31:33); seen in the honouring of prayer and alms (see Cornelius in Acts 10:1-4); and seen in the good response of some generated from an inner nature (see Rom 2:14-15).
- Fourth: There is the *divine draw*, or draws. The draw: (1) of the Father (Jn 6:44), (2) the draw of Jesus (Jn 12:32-33) (Jesus indicated that if he was lifted up he would draw all men unto himself), and (3) the reciprocal drawing (Jas 4:8) where a step towards God draws God towards oneself.
- Fifth: There is the *work of the Holy Spirit*—leading, teaching, convicting, comforting, and so on.
- Sixth: There is the *fruit of the Holy Spirit*. One key fruit here being faith. He produces faith—that is, He would be producing knowledge, assent, and trust.
- Seventh: There is the *discipleship* offered by the church. The charge to the church was to make disciples. The church then is a repository of knowledge building. The gifted authorities, the epistemological authorities, the scientific authorities, and so on are emergent from the church. That the monasteries were church-driven disciple-makers is informative. That the universities were church-driven disciple-makers is informative.

That pretty much all early universities in the United States were church-driven discipline-makers is informative. Academic disciplines, and the knowledge generated there, are for building Christians.

In Christianity we see a religious narrative where God is the operative agent for the most part. If true, this para-natural narrative offers forces that circumvent the constraints of mere religious narratives. These basic drawing forces exist in “mere Christianity” and hence cross denominational boundaries—religious narrative boundaries. In Christianity this is a major difference from traditional religions. Of course, in many religious narratives (although not all) one could resist the drawing forces that are offered.

The Scientific Context Test

A view of Islamic cosmology is presented here:
http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Islam_and_Science#Science_in_the_Qur.27an

It is clear that Islamic claims, like those made by Ibrahim regarding cosmology, are not just suspect; they are unequivocally flawed when the surface is broadened and scraped ever so slightly.

Additional Science-Based Claims (Mountains, Seas, Rivers, and Clouds)

Additional claims for the miraculous offered by Ibrahim are related to: (1) on Mountains, (2) on Seas and Rivers, (3) on Deep Seas and Internal Rivers, and (4) On Clouds.

The Personal Experience Test

Given all the problems in the Ibrahim text reflected upon to this point, it is this personal experience history that leads one to believe that nothing of value will be found in subsequent claims. It’s a “Personal Experience Test.” In all of the claims there are problems: word games, equivocation fallacies, misuse of language, confirmation bias, shallow thinking, ignoring of context (immediate and historical), ignoring competing possibilities, adoption of simple explanations, selective use of texts, and so on. Ironically, the arguments purporting to see science in the Qur’an are the most unscientific imaginable.

Rather than explore each I would point the reader to a website that contains cogent arguments against such claims. See: http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Islam_and_Science . The evidences and arguments offered there are foundational, a valuable substantive effort that provides the seeker and the critic with perspective. There one finds, as well, articles with far more detailed information regarding embryology, the cerebrum, and the origin of the universe. The Islamic claims by Ibrahim (1997) simply crumble under the evidence.

The one comment I would draw from the website relates to the methodology advocated there. I have been using the “reasonable person test,” “the language test,” “the comparative test” with Christianity (Discourses), the “comparative test” with science, “the hermeneutical principles test,” the philosophical tests (Discourses), and the psychological tests (Discourses). The Wiki Test offers an appropriate mindset for considering the claims of those like Ibrahim who argue for supernatural Qur’anic claims.

The Wiki Test

An alternate and compelling range of tests is advocated on the wiki site: http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Islam_and_Science#The_Four_Part_Test. There a four part test is presented. I quote the tests there proposed with respect to examining Islamic claims for supernatural scientific knowledge. I quote the four tests in full below as follows:

1. It must be an unambiguous statement of scientific fact requiring no elaborate interpretation to discern its factual meaning.

This point cannot be stressed too intensely. For the scientific information in question must actually be in the Qur’an itself, and not something added later as part of a commentary. If the critical information that distinguishes a “scientific miracle” from a casual statement of obvious fact is not explicitly in the clear words and meaning of the Qur’an, we cannot trust it as even being there.

If the verse has to be “interpreted” to extract hidden meaning that is not obviously there, the claim of a miracle has been “corrupted” by the commentary, and cannot be considered valid.

2. The fact must have been previously unknown to every other non-Islamic civilization that had contact with the Arabian Peninsula.

Key to the claim of “scientific miracles” in the Qur’an is the contention that the information included was unknown until recently, or at least until many years after the death of Muhammad. So, of course, if it can be shown that the information was already available to other peoples or cultures with whom the Arabs were in contact, this claim is shown to be simply false.

It does not matter the source of that other culture’s information. It may have been a lucky guess, it may have been the result of precocious scientific achievement... in fact it may even potentially have been a miracle the other culture had experienced years before.

But if that information was available before the Qur’an was written down, there can be no credit to the claim of a “Qur’anic miracle.”

3. It must not be obvious to any casual observer.

This may sound like an obvious point, but given the nature of many of the stock “miracles” claimed by Muslim apologists, it still must be discussed explicitly. For often, what is claimed to be a miracle of the Qur’an is something of which any individual with his or her eyes open would have been aware.

If the information in question is available to anyone who simply looks at the phenomenon, requiring no sophisticated instruments, tools or interpretation, then it cannot be considered miraculous.

4. It must be true.

As with the previous point, this one sounds intuitively obvious. But it too requires explicit mention as occasionally the claims of Qur’anic “miracles” depend on misunderstandings or misstatements about reality and science. If the information in question is not actually true, then certainly it cannot be a miraculous revelation from God, as God should be expected to know what is or is not true.

Summary

The claims made by Ibrahim (1997), if typical of Muslim scholarship, cast Islamic claims in a light (or darkness) comparable to the problems encountered when considering Mormon documents and claims, Scientologist's roots, Cargo Cults, Halle-Bopp suicides, Jim Jones and Jonestown, Spiritualist Table Rappers, Steiner's Readers of the Akashic Records, and more. There is no case! There is no case where a modicum of credibility surpasses monumental doubt!

Though there is no case, there is an opportunity—an opportunity for rethinking the claims, changing one's mind (metanoia), and developing epistemologies that are valid and reliable. Ibrahim made an appeal to “reason and intellect” in the beginning of his booklet. Should he follow his own advice and attend to reason (Edens 2012) he ought to make the mind-change—the metanoia!

DISCOURSES ON APOLOGETIC FACTORS IMPACTING IBRAHIM'S (1997) CLAIMS

Discourse on Evidentialism

We make choices for reasons. We make deductions, inductions, and abductions for reasons. We form beliefs for reasons. We accept hypotheses, opinions, models, and theories for reasons. Underpinning our reasons are: (1) basic beliefs, arguments, and evidence on the positive side, and (2) desires, emotions, biases, heuristics, and faulty beliefs on the negative side. Yet the appeal is primarily for evidence. Clifford's (1876/1999) dramatic appeal to evidence, solid evidence, as the underpinning of belief, resonates. Clifford held that it was wrong “always, everywhere, and for anyone” to believe something without adequate evidence. But, if it is wrong to believe anything upon insufficient evidence, one needs to ask: what is sufficient evidence? And what about probabilities (subjective judgments, opinions, and statistical probabilities), what is a sufficient probability? Inducements to accept a proposition as credible are varied—for example, sensations, intuitions, authorities, memories, logic, common sense, even hope and love can be inducements. Inducements are sometimes unconscious or automatic, and sometimes inducements are practical or pragmatic. Such factors do serve to broaden the scope of evidence, and thus, evidentialism. But again, what is sufficient evidence?

As one who has pursued and published research in the areas of science, psychology and education, evidentialism is a methodological-given. It is a given as methodologically important. Yet, upon subsequent reading and reflection one sees an automatic response regarding evidence is cognitively narrowing to a dangerous point; it is not prudent to ignore (1) the alternate and varied epistemologies on the scene, and (2) the cogent critiques of evidentialism on the scene (e.g., Dougherty, 2011; Jordan, 2006; Wainwright, 1995).

Drawing upon Locke (1690/1952), Dougherty (2011), Jordan (2006), and Wainwright (1995), a workable approach to evidentialism, or framework for evidentialism, can be constructed—an approach that improves on Clifford's narrow view by broadening the basic view offered by Clifford. Such views, albeit often overlapping, can be offered as contributing to a

broadened view. They are here labelled as: Basic, Core Broad Empiricism (CBE), Faculty Evidentialism, Ethical Evidentialism, Epistemic Evidentialism, Absolute Evidentialism, Defeasible Evidentialism, and Dutiful Evidentialism.

Basic Evidentialism. First, then, Locke gets the *Basic* label being historically first. He makes the case for the empirical and rational demands of evidentialism. In his essay *Concerning Human Understanding* Locke addresses degrees of assent from high to low—ranging from certainty, through degrees of probability, to improbability, to impossibility. There are “...degrees of assent from full assurance and confidence, quite down to conjecture, doubt, and distrust... (Book IV, Ch. 15, Sec 2).” Where one is on this continuum depends upon two evidential grounds: personal experience or the reported experience of others. “Probability then, being to supply the defect of our knowledge and to guide us where that fails, is always conversant about propositions whereof we have no certainty, but only some inducements to receive them for true. The grounds of it are, in short, these two following: -- First, The conformity of anything with our own knowledge, observation, and experience. Secondly, The testimony of others vouching their observation and experience. In the testimony of others is to be considered: 1. The number [of witnesses]. 2. The integrity [of the witnesses]. 3. The skill of the witnesses. 4. The design of the author, where it is a testimony out of a book cited. 5. The consistency of the parts, and circumstances of the relation. 6. Contrary testimonies. (Book IV, Ch. 15, Sec 4).” And Locke further stresses that before one comes to make a judgment, the pros and cons of all the arguments “ought to be examined (Book IV, Ch. 15, Sec 5).” Amen!

Such an examination leads to a weighted judgment proportional to the evidence: quality and quantity, sources and critics, intentionality and integrity, and pros and cons. While this is *basic* evidentialism, Locke does keep the evidential door open for context, history, charity, disagreements, time, analogy, and divine revelation, albeit secondary to right understanding of such revelation.

In a more contemporary setting the *basic view* would be expressed as Jordan’s (2006) “first stab” where he frames it as:

“EV. For all persons S and propositions p at times t , it is permissible for S to believe that p at t if and only if believing p is supported by S ’s evidence at t (p. 42).”

With respect to this assertion Jordan adds: “The notion of support encapsulated in (EV) is that of a preponderance of evidence: a person may believe a proposition p just in case p is more likely than not on S ’s evidence.what we might call ‘the evidentialist imperative’ (Jordan, 2006, p. 42).”

Core Broad Empiricism (CBE). Adding a little to the basic view, Dougherty (2011) broadens the evidential sources somewhat to include internal experiences. He writes: “The only indications of how the world might be are ultimately derived from experiences of some kind (including memory impressions, apparent logical insights, introspection, and other traditional sources of evidence) (p. 6).” Obviously evidence is more than sense data in this formulation.

Faculty Evidentialism. Knowing, or true belief, occurs when one is appropriately responsive to the evidence. One's faculty for knowing (i.e., perception, *perceptual knowledge*; memory, *memory knowledge*; insight, *a priori knowledge*) aligns with one's appropriate evidences. Dougherty expresses it as: "The conceptual core is that when one forms a true belief because they were appropriately responsive to their evidence, then they know. Perceptual knowledge is true perceptual belief appropriately responsive to perceptual evidence, the 'testimony of the senses'. Memory knowledge is true belief appropriately responsive to memory impressions, what we might call 'the testimony of memory.' A priori knowledge is true belief about a priori matters appropriately responsive to apparent insights (2011, p. 12)." One quantifies across basic faculties like those identified. The process seems to have elements of a cumulative case weighing not just the single line of evidence, but the evidence across faculties, and then the total case. "One then has knowledge that p when the balance of one's reasons is sufficiently heavily tipped in favour of the true belief that p , and the main reason one holds that belief is because of those reasons (Dougherty, 2011, p. 12)."

Why then do people differ with respect to their beliefs? The faculty evidentialist might answer: "total experience." As an illustration: "An expert's visual faculty could deliver the report 'That's an elm.' where the novice's could not. Though the expert and the novice might have the same *sensuous* experience, they would not have the same *total* experience, because something in the expert's past experiences causes him to have a different experience in the present observation. When the expert hosts the exact same sensuous qualia there is an additional experience. The expert sees the object as an elm. This difference in total experiential/evidential profile explains the difference in their justification regarding the thing they both see and have the same *visual* experience of (Dougherty, 2011, p. 12)." For Dougherty the theory aligns with common sense, "paradigm cases of knowledge," and explanations for problematic cases.

When applied to a situation like that presented by Ibrahim (1997), it is quite likely Ibrahim is best seen as residing in the novice camp. His cross-faculty case is lacking. He lacks the adequate experience.

Ethical Evidentialism. Jordan (2006) uses this terminology and attributes it conceptually, at least, to Clifford. Since Clifford held that it was wrong "always, everywhere, and for anyone" to believe something without adequate evidence, his appeal was moral. There are detrimental effects of such inappropriate beliefs for both individuals and society; thus harm links to the moral aspect. Jordan (2006) elaborates on the ethical framing: "The most plausible construction of ethical evidentialism is an indirect consequentialist one (p. 43)." Such a construction grounds the normative import of the evidentialist assertion "... on the claim that one should obey any rule that is such that, if everyone were to follow it, collective utility would be maximized (p. 43)." In effect, there is an *ethical evidential imperative*.

When applied to a situation like that presented by Ibrahim (1997), it is quite likely Clifford would see Ibrahim's claims as a moral failure. Ibrahim clearly lacks adequate evidence for the claims he advances.

Epistemic Evidentialism. Beyond the moral sense addressed above there is an intellectual sense, and justification. Essentially, "...it is unreasonable to believe something without adequate evidence (Jordan, 2006, p.43)." To pursue a course that is unreasonable is a violation of epistemic evidentialism. In effect, there is an *intellectual imperative*.

Here too Ibrahim fails with respect to adhering to an *intellectual imperative*. Ibrahim clearly lacks adequate evidence for the claims he advances.

Absolute Evidentialism. "If the evidence is balanced, or one finds oneself in a state of radical uncertainty, then one should neither believe nor disbelieve. One should withhold belief (Jordan, 2006, p.45)." Withholding belief, or suspending belief, is viewed as the wise choice in the absence of evidence, in the presence of balanced evidence, and perhaps for the sceptic-in-principle, the experimental researcher, and the personality type that demands absolute certainty. In effect, there is an *agnostic imperative*.

Defeasible Evidentialism. "Defeasible evidentialism allows exceptions. Not every proposition falls under its purview, since it assigns the evidentialist imperative a limited scope, allowing the possibility that some propositions reside outside its jurisdiction. ...it leaves open the possibility that one may have grounds other than the evidential from which to believe (Jordan, 2006, p. 45)." What would these other grounds look like? Duties!

Moral duty can push one to adopt a proposition that seems inadequately supported, or push one to reject a proposition that seems adequately supported. This is rationally permitted as no one is irrational pursuing moral duty.

When applied to a situation like that presented by Ibrahim (1997), it is quite likely Ibrahim has a prior commitment to Allah and therefore a moral duty to advance the cause of Allah. He is Allah's helper. He has a "moral duty" to advance the cause of Allah. Ibrahim clearly lacks adequate evidence for the claims he advances but responds apparently from a sense of "moral duty."

Intellectual duty, particularly as a research protocol, is a strategy to force consideration of alternatives. It is a planned scepticism or a defensive rally (see Lakatos, 1970). It can make scientific sense, in that one has a duty to consider all sides of an issue or argument. It is rational, responsible, scientific, scholarly, and defensible. No one is irrational for pursuing intellectual duty, although the pursuit may have irrational aspects. It is these irrational aspects that require further rational considerations. What might be truly irrational is placing all of one's eggs in the absolute evidentialist basket, or the tattered and frayed religious basket, or the bloody ideological basket.

One has an intellectual duty to broaden perspective, consider alternatives, adopt a critical tentativeness, test hypotheses, revise positions, reject fallacies, and change-one's-mind in line with evidences, arguments, and epistemologies that make sense.

There are problems with evidentialism (Dougherty, 2011, Jordan, 2011, Wainwright, 1995). Jordan notes: "...if one wants to hold that evidentialism is obligatory, it is at most a defeasible obligation. If the evidentialist imperative is defeasible, it can be overridden if there are occasions in which it is morally or rationally obligatory to believe a proposition that lacks adequate evidence. So, it is possible that a use of pragmatic arguments is compatible with the evidentialist imperative, understood as a defeasible obligation (Jordan, 2006, p. 46)." The tilt here is towards a case for a broadened evidentialism, an evidentialism that permits the pragmatic, and thus the choice to include views beyond naturalism. There are permissible, rational, evidential tilts towards a sound theism!

Discourse on The Confirmation Bias

Cognitively, we are prone in our human tendencies: (1) to *look for information* in support of our current beliefs, our favoured beliefs, and our chosen beliefs, (2) to *interpret information* as supportive of our current beliefs, our favoured beliefs, and our chosen beliefs, and (3) to *avoid information* (i.e., facts, models, hypotheses, and theories) not supportive of our current beliefs, our favoured beliefs, and our chosen beliefs. These tendencies fold into a bias favouring our *active position*. The *active position* we hold can be our preferred position, or just our current position. It can even be our imagined position, our initial position when considering pros and cons, our selected position for a debate or position paper, or even our peers' position. The *active position* leads to a bias—a "confirmation bias." For the most part the confirmation bias propensity is viewed in a negative light and as a major problem for thinking clearly, although there can be some positive benefits as well (Nickerson, 1998).

Mechanics. Nickerson (1998) notes a number of specific mechanics which can be operative in the confirmation bias, actions which restrict understanding, actions such as:

- Restriction: "...restriction of attention to a favored hypothesis (p. 177)"
- Restriction: "...restricting attention to a single hypothesis (p. 177)"
- Restriction: "...preferential treatment of evidence supporting existing beliefs (p. 178)"
- Restriction: "...looking only or primarily for positive cases (p. 178)"
- Restriction: "...overweighting positive confirmatory instances (p. 180)"
- Restriction: "...seeing what one is looking for regardless of whether the patterns are really there (p. 181)"
- Restriction: by seeing "illusory correlation (p. 183)"
- Restriction: by being subject to a "primacy effect... information acquired early in the process is likely to carry more weight than that acquired later (p. 187)"
- Restriction: by being vulnerable to our "Own-judgment evaluation.... studies have typically shown overconfidence to be more common than underconfidence (p. 188)"
- Restriction: by being subject to "the illusion of validity.... experts are not immune (p. 189)" Attorneys, physicians, psychologists, engineers, and clinicians have been found to

be overconfident with respect to their judgments and beliefs (a form of professional blindness).

Societal Implications. Confirmation bias has societal implications noted by Nickerson (1998) with respect to understanding in various areas. It has been implicated in number mysticism; Nickerson (1998) links the confirmation bias to the preoccupation with numerology over millennia. One example he discusses is the numerology associated with the Great Pyramid and the mathematical relations “hidden” therein—a form of mysticism.

The confirmation bias was also seen in the judgments of apparently “decent people,” people who were nevertheless involved in indecent witch hunts. Confirmations of witchcraft were found to be easier than exonerations.

Confirmation bias is seen in the rationalizations advanced for various political policies. For example, “Obamacare” for the Obama administration, is prone to confirmation influences via supportive evidences, arguments, and even political manipulation and deceptions. On the other side of the political coin, seeing “Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq” was prone to confirmation via supportive evidences and arguments for the Bush administration. The downside is not seen, or suppressed.

The confirmation bias has a long history in various medical treatments (e.g., bleeding, purging, homeopathy, etc.). Rigorous drug testing protocols, and medical treatment studies, are the standards now in order to deal with the confirmation bias. Still, it is likely that some procedures do slip through because of a confirmation bias on the part of the author, the drug companies, the research team members, the universities, and so on.

The confirmation bias is potentially quite damaging in judicial reasoning by jurors tainted by primacy effects. The initial judgments jurors make in a trial process tend to entrenchment, and then a confirmation bias. This is a difficult bias to address. Judges give jury instructions and guidelines but the bias likely still exists. Hopefully the jury experience (cross examinations, expert testimonies, jury deliberation, etc.) counteracts a number of these biases.

In science the confirmation bias can be counterproductive in that it leads to theory persistence and change resistance (see Kuhn, 1970; Lakatos, 1970). This is a problem when such theories are wrong and misleading.

Causes of the Confirmation Bias. What are the causes of such a bias? Nickerson (1998) offers a few reasons to help elucidate the possible drivers of the confirmation bias.

- *Wanting to Believe:* “The Desire to Believe ... dubbed the Pollyanna principle (Nickerson (1998, p. 197)” The desire might be rooted in rewards; one envisions substantial

rewards (material rewards, ego rewards, ideological rewards in the form of triumphalism, or the manifestation of ultimate justice associated with being right).

- With respect to Ibrahim it is certainly conceivable that he “wants to believe.” Furthermore, the rewards Islam claims to offer (material rewards, ego rewards, ideological rewards in the form of triumphalism, or the manifestation of ultimate justice associated with being right) are motivational.
- A variant of the “desire to believe” is the propensity to believe; it is called “*a principle of credulity*” by both Reid (1818/2011), and more recently Swinburne (2013). Belief is basic.
 - With respect to Ibrahim it is certainly conceivable that he has his propensity to believe, his *principle of credulity*, nurtured by his authorities (i.e., parents, teachers, peers, Imams, apologists, and so on).
- *Cognitive Restrictions*: “Information-Processing Bases for Confirmation Bias.... tendency of people to gather information about only one hypothesis at a time.... people are fundamentally limited to think of only one thing at a time (Nickerson, 1998, p. 198).” Also in play here should be, arguably, *virtue epistemology*. Nickerson (1998) notes: “Another explanation of why people fail to consider alternatives to a hypothesis in hand is that they simply do not think to do so. Plausible alternatives do not come to mind. This is seen by some investigators to be, at least in part, a matter of inadequate effort, a failure to do a sufficiently extensive search for possibilities ... (p. 200).” This is a classic failure related to *virtue epistemology*!
 - With respect to Ibrahim it is certainly conceivable that his thinking is restricted; he thinks narrowly of “one thing at a time.” He doesn’t adopt a more scientific virtue epistemology.
- *Reference Frames*: “Conditional Reference Frames.... when people are asked to explain or imagine why a hypothesis might be true or why a possible event might occur, they tend to become more convinced that the hypothesis is true or that the event will occur, especially if they have not given much thought to the hypothesis or event before being asked to do so (Nickerson, 1998, p. 203).” This fascinating phenomenon seems to parallel somewhat “ideomotor action theory” where simply thinking about an act sets the human being into motoric action. As a parallel here, we have what might be termed *ideo-ideological action theory*—thinking about a hypothesis as true sets a cognitive confirmation bias in cognitive motion. Also in play would be the order of considering

pros and cons; to consider the pro reasons first is conducive to a bias to the pro side of the argument.

- With respect to Ibrahim it is certainly conceivable that his “reference frames” are predisposing him to a strong confirmation bias.
- *Error Avoidance*: “Pragmatism and Error Avoidance.... some ways of being wrong are more likely to be regrettable than others (Nickerson, 1998, pp. 203-204).” Type 1 Errors (i.e., rejecting the null hypothesis inappropriately) and Type 2 Errors (i.e., accepting the null hypothesis inappropriately) are considerations for the pragmatic decision makers. “In general, the objective of avoiding disastrous errors may be more conducive to survival than is that of truth determination (p. 204).” Is one side of Pascal’s Wager the classic example of “avoiding disastrous errors?” That is: One ought to believe in God because if there is a God, and one bets against this possibility, the loss is infinite. If there is no God, and one bets that there is a God, the loss is finite and minimal. The errors, and the route to “avoiding disastrous errors,” are clear for Pascal.

Problems of the Confirmation Bias. The problems can be cast as *methodological* or *moral*. The confirmation bias is a *methodological* problem addressed by those who see attempts at refutation as the hallmark of scientific progress (e.g., Popper, 1965). Popper’s solution is to work intentionally to refute hypotheses rather than seek to confirm them. The objective is verisimilitude which is viewed as more reasonable than truth-finding.

The confirmation bias is a *philosophical/methodological* problem for epistemologists oriented towards truth-seeking. Virtue epistemologists argue for understanding the bias and guarding against it methodologically. They broaden perspective; they set up safeguards; they experiment; they weigh alternatives; they apply rigour; and they remain open-minded to various hypotheses and theories. The characteristics of the virtue epistemologists are broadly scientific.

The confirmation bias is a *moral* problem for the evidentialist epistemologists like Clifford—those who call for more evidence before belief. In one’s cognitive processing when facing the threat of confirmation biases, rigour, perspective, and effort, are possible, but such safeguards that are needed require work.

The Problem for the Believer—Theist or Atheist. Here the issue is the clear and present danger for the atheist who finds herself unwittingly distracted by a propensity to the confirmation bias. Of course, the same problem exists for the theist. At this point however, the confirmation bias is placed on the table as a constraint that the atheist faces, a constraint that can help with respect to understanding theistic misunderstanding. The atheist, whether (1) *committed to atheism*, (2) *merely considering the pro side of atheism*, (3) *exposed to atheism*, or (4) *imagining*

atheism, is vulnerable to a confirmation bias. The confirmation bias acts as a constraint against theism.

That the theist is vulnerable to the same mechanisms is a fair observation. If we don't know which side is right, however, it is fitting that we consider: (1) which side has the better arguments, (2) which side has the better defense mechanisms in place, (3) which side can withstand better the proposed defeaters, (4) which side has abduction and the cumulative case effect working for it, and (4) which side has the more prudential outcomes.

The same mechanics are in play when we are considering competing theistic claims. We examine the evidences and arguments to see: (1) which side has the better arguments, (2) which side has the better defense mechanisms in place, (3) which side can withstand better the proposed defeaters, (4) which side has abduction and the cumulative case effect working for it, and (4) which side has the more prudential outcomes.

Confirmation Bias—A Good Thing? Is the confirmation bias in any way a good thing? The simple answer is yes, if one's belief is true. That the confirmation bias can be a good thing, pushing one to stick with a scientific theory in spite of troubling facts (see, for example, Lakatos, 1970), would be part and parcel of the scientific process. That the confirmation bias can be a good thing pushing one to stick with the legal principle "innocent until proven guilty," can serve justice well, and the innocent person well. That the confirmation bias can be a good thing pushing one to stick with a friend or spouse surrounded by the likes of Iago, is a good thing (see Lewis, 1960b on the obstinacy of belief). The confirmation bias can be a good thing when survival is the goal; it is a better thing when truth is at the end.

Confirmation Bias And Choice. Is there a role for choice in the confirmation bias? Yes, there is a role for choice at least at two levels. First, at a *seminal level* one's choices can set the confirmation bias in motion. Setting the confirmation bias in motion can be achieved by choosing to entertain, by choosing to explore the pro side of an issue, or by choosing a peer group espousing an idea. Many of our initial choices have confirmation bias effects. The effects are inadvertent, but they are contingent on choices.

Secondly, at a *critical level*, when one understands the nature of the confirmation bias one is in a position to apply strategies to address the bias. Implementing a virtue epistemology, using multiple-perspective-taking, and considering suspect motivational rewards of confirmation, does indicate a role for choice. This role for choice can be post hoc, but it is still critical.

Discourse on Academic Fraud

Rigging, fudging, fabrication, altering data, intentional misinterpretation, are not unknowns even in science. I recall reading an eye-opening article surveying readers of New

Scientist (i.e., a group of scientists re knowledge of fraud). They reported over 90% knew of, or suspected, fraud amongst their science colleagues.

A recent meta-analysis of research fraud revealed interesting rates for fraud <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0005738> In effect, there was about a 2% rate for admission of fraud and a 33% rate for admission of questionable research practices. Regarding perception of fraud amongst colleagues it was up to 72%.

Such findings indicate that there is element of fraud that exists in the sciences. The data, and research findings, are best considered as suspect until further notice. The idealistic belief that peer review and replication studies will protect the science community against such fraudulent behaviour is misplaced. Replication studies are not particularly appealing to journal editors. Peer review is a policing mechanism that itself needs review (e.g., Ioannides, 2012; Tipler, 2003).

The following list of resources capture the tip of the iceberg of the wide ranging and pervasive academic deceptions that plague: (1) the academic community, (2) the knowledge-building that humans value, (3) human cultural progress, and (4) hope.

- Broad, W. & Wade, N. (1982). *Betrayers of the Truth, Fraud and Deceit in Science*. London: Oxford University Press. (even Newton makes the list!)
- Russell, J. B. (1997). *Inventing The Flat Earth*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.
- Grafton, A. (1990). *Forgers and Critics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Katsoulis, M. (2009). *Literary Hoaxes*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.
- Carlson, S. C. (2005). *The Gospel Hoax, Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Gross, Levitt & Lewis (1996). *The Flight From Science and Reason*. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol 775.
- Hamilton, R. F. (1996). *The Social Misconstruction of Reality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Altman, E. & Heron, P. (1997). *Research Misconduct*. Greenwich, England: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Hearnshaw, L. S. (1979). *Cyril Burt: Psychologist*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sommers, C. H. (1994). *Who Stole Feminism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Phillips, M. (2010). *The World Turned Upside Down*. New York: Encounter Books.
- Jonathan Wells, (1999) Second thoughts about peppered moths. *The Scientist*, 13 (11):13

If academic fraud pervades the sciences (hard and soft) as well as the humanities, religion and the arts, it is clear that the proper epistemic stance requires a virtue epistemology.

Discourse on Virtue Epistemology

Virtue epistemology refers to an approach to evidence-establishment that involves: (1) virtues like "...carefulness and thoroughness in inquiry, inquisitiveness, attentiveness, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual honesty, and intellectual integrity (Baehr, 2011, p. 98)," and (2) attention to effects or vices such as "... intellectual laziness, inattentiveness, lack of

intellectual discrimination, gullibility, carelessness, disregard for truth, ignoring and distorting counterevidence, self-deception, and the like (Baehr, 2011, p. 98).” At least for one formulation or framework, virtue epistemology focuses on persons, or agents, and their properties, rather than the properties of beliefs. There are cases of “defective inquiry” and cases of “defective ‘doxastic handling’ of evidence” that Baehr addresses.

Earlier, Baehr (2008) advanced four frameworks or approaches for character-based virtue epistemology. The table below presents a graphic representation.

| Table 2. Baehr’s Four Framings of Varieties of Virtue Epistemology (VE) | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Conservative | | Autonomous | |
| Strong | Weak | Moderate | Radical |
| “Strong Conservative VE is the view that there are major, substantive connections between intellectual virtue and traditional epistemology, that the concept of intellectual virtue stands to “save the day” within or to transform traditional epistemology (Baehr, 2008, p. 475).” | “Weak Conservative VE is the view that the conceptual connections between intellectual virtue and traditional epistemology, while genuine, are more secondary or less central (Baehr, 2008, p. 475).” | “...defenders of Moderate Autonomous VE insist merely that epistemology proper is not <i>reducible to or exhausted by</i> traditional epistemology, and that the borders of traditional epistemology ought to be <i>expanded</i> to make room for a more immediate or independent concern with intellectual virtues. One representative sample of Moderate Autonomous VE is Lorraine Code’s <i>Epistemic Responsibility</i> (1987) (Baehr, 2008, p. 475).” | “Kvanvig argues that the notion of intellectual virtue should be the focus of epistemology, but that the belief-based, synchronic framework of traditional epistemology cannot accommodate such a focus (more on this argument below); consequently, he calls for a rejection of the traditional framework and the issues and questions central to it. Kvanvig’s preferred, more diachronic and socially oriented framework begins with a conception of “human beings in terms of potentialities in need of socialization in order to participate in communal efforts to incorporate bodies of knowledge into corporate plans, practices, rituals, and the like for those practical and theoretical purposes that ordinarily characterize human beings” (1992, 169) (Baehr, 2008, p. 474).” |
| Formidable challenge: “...on account of its commitment to the idea that something like an exercise of intellectual virtue is an essential feature of knowledge (Baehr, 2008, p. 493).” | Favourable rating. | Favourable rating: “...according to which an independent concern with intellectual virtues and their role in the intellectual life offers a suitable <i>complement</i> to traditional epistemology (Baehr, 2008, p. 493).” | Formidable challenge: “...on account of its contention that traditional epistemology should be <i>repudiated</i> in favor of an autonomous, virtue-based approach (Baehr, 2008, p. 493).” |

“While the approaches of Weak Conservative VE and Moderate Autonomous VE are still largely undeveloped, they seem likely to represent the way of the future within character-based virtue epistemology (Baehr, 2008, p. 493).” While the Weak Conservative and Moderate Autonomous

views are intellectually appealing, I would be reluctant to shelve the Strong Conservative view at this time. I find myself leaning to the Strong Conservative view.

Note that Baehr, while distinguishing between *character-based* qualities (e.g., openness, fair-mindedness, carefulness, and so on) and *faculty-based* approaches (e.g., memory, perception, and so on), limits his four-group analysis to character-based approaches. Reasonably, merit is assumed for both character-based and faculty-based approaches. Moreover, “proper function” is arguably critical for both character-based and faculty-based approaches. Essentially, then, Plantinga’s (1993a, 1993b) notion of a requirement of “proper function” could apply to a range of substrates—neurological and cognitive on the one hand, and moral, dispositional, and character-qualities on the other hand.

Discourse on Analogical Thinking

Analogical thinking can be viewed as: (1) a form of inductive thinking (Moore & Parker, 2001), (2) a “bridging” strategy to facilitate understanding of a complex concept by means of a simpler concept, or (3) a form of reasoning and problem solving requiring theoretical and empirical analysis (Gentner & Markman, 1997; Holyoak & Thagard, 1997) and/or neuropsychological considerations (Ashcraft, 2002). Each of these three views is amenable to thinking via the instrumental use of an analogical base like *the life of Moses* applied to various target analogies like *the life of Jesus*, *the life of Mohammed*, *the life of John the Baptist*, and so on. Inductively, as the analogical thinking unfolds, more and more facts, perceptions, elements and relations can be laid out which serve to facilitate induction, and abduction. Secondly, with respect to “bridging,” *the life of Moses* does serve as a bridge to a future prophet that the author intended as a parallel. Then, thirdly, theoretical and empirical considerations add merit to the reasoning and problem solving.

In terms of theoretical underpinnings, the multiple-constraints theory (Holyoak & Thagard, 1997) and the structure-mapping theory (Gentner & Markam, 1997) offer two frameworks to draw upon when considering what can be learned from the use of analogical thinking, and what has been learned from particular analogies. Together, the two theories enrich the infrastructure for thinking, and give direction for a range of considerations.

Multiple-Constraints Theory

In the multiple-constraints theory approach, Holyoak and Thagard (1997) present three types of constraints: similarity, structure, and goals. With respect to similarity, the analogy is driven by, and dependent on, similarities in key *elements* and key *relations*. With respect to structure, *elements* and *relations* are mapped from the source to the target to identify consistent structural parallels. With respect to goals, the question of what the thinker’s intent might be is developed to guide the thinking.

On another axis, the authors address a “mapping step,” an “inference step,” and a “learning step.” Essentially, in the “mapping step” the logician (or the “analogician”) identifies similarities with respect to *elements*, *relations*, and coherent structural parallels. In the “inference step” new information is formulated, hypothesized, and considered. Likely, there is a tentative

acceptance or rejection process active at this point as well. In the final step, the “learning step,” one acquires a broader perspective and perhaps a more-informed opinion or better understanding of the target analogy. In essence, then, knowledge grows in a manner that corresponds with reason and reality.

Structure-Mapping Theory

In structure-mapping theory (Gentner & Markam, 1997) the emphasis is on the knowledge which emerges from comparison processes (of similarities, metaphors, analogies, and anomalies) targeting commonalities (systematic, parallel, connected) and differences (alignable differences and non-alignable differences) in the source and target. The alignment of the structures is the defining characteristic but there are three psychological constraints on this alignment that the authors argue for: (1) structural consistency, (2) a relational focus, and (3) systematicity. Generally, the parallels with multiple-constraints theory are clear given the constraints related to structure and relations. The notion of systematicity, however, is less clear. In view of the notion that analogies “tend to match connected systems of relations” Gentner and Markam (1997) describe systematicity as follows: “A matching set of relations interconnected by higher order constraining relations makes a better analogical match than an equal number of matching relations that are unconnected to each other. The systematicity principle captures a tacit preference for coherence and causal predictive power in analogical processing (p. 47).” Drawing on the two theoretical approaches to analogical thinking there would be a series of questions one could generate as a guide for evaluating the components in the analogies considered, and, subsequently, the merits of the investigation. Such questions could be addressed initially and subsequent to a consideration of the various analogies.

- What are the goals in formulating the analogy?
- What are the elemental similarities?
- What are the relational similarities?
- What are the differences (non-alignable)?
- What are the differences (alignable)?
- Is the mapping coherent (showing systematicity and parallel connectedness)?
- What is the “inference step?”
- What is the “learning step?”

To illustrate reflection on these questions the following table represents an initial consideration using *the life of Moses* as the analogical base and *the life of Jesus* as the target. The suggestions are preliminary at this initial point.

| Table 3. Focus questions to address when using analogical thinking, and suggested answers for comparing <i>the life of Moses</i> and <i>the life of Jesus</i> analogically. | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| | Focus Questions | Suggestions | |
| 1 | What are the goals in formulating the analogy? | - <u>Generally</u> : knowledge, understanding, truth seeking, theory-building, thinking, gaining tools for assisting thinking, conceptual analysis, comparative analysis, critiquing alternatives, ... - <u>Specifically</u> : To consider historical parallels, to consider environmental parallels, to consider psychological parallels, to consider theological parallels, to develop apologetics, to develop a theology, to critique Islamic claims... . | |
| 2 | What are the elemental | -see next table | |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| | similarities? | | |
| 3 | What are the relational similarities? | -see next table | |
| 4 | What are the differences (non-alignable)? | -Lineage: -Sacrifice for sin -Divinity of the Son | |
| 5 | What are the differences (alignable)? | -Lineage: Remains to be seen if the non-alignable can be moved to this alignable category | |
| 6 | Is the mapping coherent (showing systematicity and parallel connectedness)? | Yes | |
| 7 | What is the “inference step?” | -Jesus is the prophet comparable to Moses (Acts 3:19-26) | |
| 8 | What is the “learning step?” | -Beliefs are a key focus -Beliefs are foundational for choice -Thinking must be addressed -Change is credible -Education must be brought back to the front | |

When considering analogies, as Gentner and Markam (1997) point out, inferences are drawn from the base case to the particular target scenario. Given this directionality it makes sense that the base is constructed from the more information-rich, coherent, and systematic formulation. This facilitates mapping a maximal amount of information to the target scenario.

Analogical reasoning does support at least two candidates for the prophet; but, which is the better candidate? I find the analogical reasoning consistent with Jesus as the analogical target.

Table 4. Focus questions to address when using analogical thinking, and suggested answers for comparing *the life of Moses*, as the analogical base and the two targets: *the life of Mohammed* and *the life of Jesus*, with respect to Deut 18:18-19

| | Focus Questions | <i>Life of Mohammed</i> From Ibrahim (1997) | <i>Life of Jesus</i> |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | What are the elemental similarities? | -Lineage: From Ishmael -Lawgiver: Moses and Mohammed -Conflict: both “encountered enemies and were victorious in miraculous ways” Offices: “both accepted as prophets and statesmen” Migration (adult): “both migrated following conspiracies to assassinate them.” Nature: “the natural birth, the family life, and death...” But wasn’t Mohammed an orphan? | -Lineage: From Israel -Lawgiver: Moses and Jesus “...but I say unto you...” “...a new commandment...” -Conflict: both “encountered enemies and were victorious in miraculous ways” Offices: “both accepted as prophets and statesmen” but Jesus was more “prophet, king, ...and priest” Migration (adult): “both migrated following conspiracies to assassinate them.” Migration (infant): “both migrated to Egypt following conspiracies to assassinate them.” Both rescued as babies. Nature: “the natural birth, the family life, and death...” -Teleology (God’s redemptive purposes, Law (giver of a code, explainer of the code, law of Love...)) |
| 2 | What are the relational similarities? | -Remains to be seen if the elemental similarities can be moved to this relational category | -Moses offered to bear the sins of Israel himself (Exodus 32:30-32) -Jesus fulfilled multiple prophecies (see discourse on prophecy for a single day) |
| 3 | What are the differences | -Lineage: Ishmael (not Israel) | -supernatural conception |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| | (non-alignable)? | -Mohammed was an Orphan -Moses went to Egypt and came out -Moses was transfigured on Mt Sinai -Moses received a confluent revelation; Mohammed offers a dictated Qur'an | -Jesus had a priestly role as well as role of prophet and king -divinity of Jesus -unique son of God -Jesus was the sacrifice for sin -Jesus was slain and resurrected |
| 4 | What are the differences (alignable)? | -Lineage: Remains to be seen if the non-alignable can be moved to this alignable category | |
| 5 | Is the mapping coherent (showing systematicity and parallel connectedness)? | No | -Yes. The elements and relations map quite neatly. |
| 6 | What is the "inference step?" | -Mohammed does not comport with the strongest form of the analogy | -Jesus is the prophet comparable to Moses (Acts 3:11-26) The context implies the time referred to is those apostolic times (vs 24) |
| 7 | What is the "learning step?" | -The Islamic claim is weak. | -The Christian claim is strong. |

Discourse on The Christian Miracles

Do miracles give a preferential tilt towards a particular version of theism (Islam vs Christianity)? Personally, miracles—the reports of the miracles in the Bible—for a long time did not reinforce theistic belief for me. The one exception was the resurrection of Jesus (see [Discourse on the Resurrection](#)). That one, the resurrection, was crucial and compelling; it was central; it was, and is, the seminal point and the doorway. The other miracles may have had some evidential thrust for those who experienced them, or for those who witnessed them, but most of us are too far removed—either by time or appropriate cognitive structures—to benefit evidentially. I considered them tentatively. I accepted them, at best, with the caveat: “possibly.” Initially, though, there was no tilt in the miracles either for or against Christianity.

Nevertheless, it seemed incumbent that I revisit miracles here as an aspect of belief determinants with respect to Islam vs Christianity. In this comparison the Christian miracles gained with respect to evidential weight for belief; the Islamic miracles diminished in evidential weight. Applying a triangulation methodology to miracle report is appropriate. Using the triangulation methodology one attends to three legs of investigation equally: to *revelation*, to *reason*, and to *reflections* (i.e., authorities).

I started with the *reflections* leg and looked to a few key authorities. I reread *Miracles* by C. S. Lewis (1947/1974). Next, I read Lennox’s (2011) recent book intentionally attending to his comments on miracles. Then thirdly, I read sections of the two volume work on miracles by Keener (2011). With such authorities the evidential value of Christian miracles gains ground.

For the *reason* leg of the approach I drew initially upon Lewis, Lennox and Keener. But I also extended the historical, dialectical, analogical, and philosophical thinking by drawing upon Earman’s (2000) detailed analyses of the one person considered to have offered the classic, or definitive, reasoned argument against miracles, that is, David Hume.

Moving then to the third leg, with respect to the *revelation* component, I was attending primarily to the various resurrection miracles (not the resurrection of Jesus) reported in the New Testament. The triangulation method led me to conclude the miracles, at least, can function as post-hoc charisms that carry some meaningful evidential weight. And, there was an additional step: the triangulation experience allowed one to see there was a cumulative case building related particularly to healings. This cumulative case generated the tilt to one particular side of the ledger, the Christian side.

The First Leg--*Reflections* (Authorities)

C.S. Lewis's Categorizations. Lewis offers a few systems for categorizing miracles that served initially as working frameworks. One system was simply contrasting the mythical (e.g., talking trees) with the Biblical (e.g., healing a leper). The Biblical miracles considered are of a qualitative difference from the mythical miracles (like those reported in Islam). The focus on the Biblical miracles provides a stark contrast—conceptually, theologically and practically—with Islamic miracles.

At the Biblical level, Lewis offers classification on two axes. The first axis is a two-category classification system where miracles are of two major types—miracles of “the Old Creation” and miracles of “the New Creation.” The second axis is a categorization system as follows: “(1) Miracles of Fertility (2) Miracles of Healing (3) Miracles of Destruction (4) Miracles of Dominion (5) Miracles of Reversal (6) Miracles of Perfecting or Glorification (Lewis, 1947/1974, p. 421).” These two axes offer frameworks, or lenses, for considering Biblical miracles, but not just Biblical miracles.

Lewis seems to see the “Old Creation” miracles of “the incarnate God” as alternate configurations (sort of, on a downsized scale, or time-compressed scale) of what God is responsible for doing naturally (on a large scale, and by design). So, for example, converting water into wine is something God does naturally in the larger scheme of things, albeit with a few intermediate steps; the miracle at Cana constricts the time, and steps. Another example is turning a few fish into a lot of fish, or turning a bit of wheat into a lot of wheat; these too are things God does naturally in the larger scheme of things. The miracle of feeding the crowds (the 4000 and the 5000) is another time constriction of a natural process and phenomenon.¹

In addition to these “Miracles of Fertility” there are the “Miracles of Healing.” What they seem to offer also is a stimulation, or simulation, of Natural function. God has gifted his creation with natural recuperative processes. In some supernatural healings certain blockages have been removed, or processes speeded up, but these too are congruent with the natural, larger scheme of things. Picturesquely, Lewis phrases it as: “The Power that always was behind all healings puts on a face and hands (Lewis, 1947/1974, p. 426).”

¹ Admittedly, the purported Islamic miracle of water flowing from the fingers of Mohammed could fit in this category. To accept it as evidential from our current historical distance seems to be too much of a stretch. I would hold the same is true for Jesus miracles of water into wine, and feeding the 5000. Any evidential merit is found in the cumulative case.

Then there is the “Miracle of Destruction”—the fig tree. It too is the time constriction of a natural process; trees die. While there may be a moral in the destruction, these miracles—Fertility, Healing, and Destruction—are miracles of the Old Creation, rooted in Natural process.

In an intermediate category are the “Miracles of Dominion.” Some of them are of the Old Creation (e.g., calming the storm, which happens naturally in the larger scheme of things), some are of the New Creation (e.g., walking on water, which does not happen naturally). Although Lewis does not extend intermediacy to “Miracles of Reversal,” seen in the raising of the dead, this may be questioned. Actually, some “Miracles of Reversal” may be of the Old Creation, and some of the New Creation.

The clear miracles of the New Creation are striking. There is no linkage to natural processes as we know them. Walking on water is not natural. In the “Miracles of Reversal” the dead are raised. In the “Miracles of Perfecting or of Glory” we encounter the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. Perhaps even the descent and indwelling of the Holy Spirit would fit here. These are arguably new!

John Lennox (2011). Lennox (2011) has a chapter on “Are Miracles Pure Fantasy?” as an initial means to address the weight given to Hume in the modern approach to miracles. Lennox diffuses Hume (along with Hitchens, 2007, and Dawkins, 2006) quite nicely. The arguments and analogies offered by Lennox are easily readable, smooth, illustrated, and confident. Hume is seen to be caught up in circular argumentation and the “begging the question fallacy.” Lennox’s (2011) conclusion with respect to Hume is quite convincing: “The New Atheists follow him like sheep. But, on this issue, he is a blind guide (p. 177).” So there is reason to challenge Hume. Both Lewis (1947/1974, particularly Chapters 13 and 15) and Keener (2011, particularly chapters 5 and 6) also address the flaws in Hume’s reasoning.

Craig Keener (2011). Following the process of building the case for dismissing Hume Keener (2011) offers an abstracted argument. At a summary level a few key points can be offered here. First, for example, Keener points to the fact that antisupernaturalism is just a presupposition that Hume holds. Hume is presupposing perhaps atheism, but definitely antisupernaturalism. Hence, miracles are out of the question on principle. Second, Hume assumes determinism with respect to natural law. Third, Hume reasons deductively (in a “deductive circle”), while claiming to reason inductively. As Keener notes: “He argues, based on ‘experience,’ that miracles do not happen, yet dismisses credible eyewitness testimony for miracles (i.e., others’ experience) on his assumption that miracles do not happen (2011, p. 108).”

A focus on the examples of miracles offered by Keener is enriching. Reading a number of the examples he offers shows he is tentative as one would expect from someone applying a “virtue epistemology.” He also shows breadth; the two-volume work covers a massive amount of terrain. Given human nature’s propensity to curiosity, the sensational, and the truth, one gravitates towards the more dramatic miracles and those that are well documented. Reading through those cases can be a faith-increasing experience in spite of a proclivity to look for

natural causes. Many of the miracles Keener documents seem to be examples of Lewis's Old Creation Miracles; the natural processes were time-compressed, speeded up, or unblocked. Still, the edification was there. The tilt towards Christian faith was stronger after this endeavour.

The Second Leg--*Reason*

While Lewis, Lennox and Keener offer an adequate case against Hume, it is the critique offered by Earman (2000) that offers the most depth with respect to the *reason* leg of the triangulation. The thorough critique of Hume offered by Earman addressed the issue historically and philosophically. Earman presents a great deal of the historical context including Hume's textual changes over time, the responses of Hume's contemporary critics over time, and the development of probability thinking (and theory) subsequent to Hume. His conclusion following a dramatically thorough critique is that Hume ends with an "abject failure."

Hume fails with his view of inductive reasoning in his work "On Miracles." Earman contends Hume's goals there are "ambiguous and confused." Then he adds: "Worse still, the essay reveals the weakness and the poverty of Hume's own account of induction and probabilistic reasoning (Earman, 2000, Loc 60)." Earman reasonably notes: "Any epistemology that does not allow for the possibility that evidence, whether from eyewitness testimony or from some other source, can establish the credibility of a UFO landing, a walking on water, or a resurrection is inadequate. At the same time, of course, an adequate epistemology should deliver the conclusion that in most (all?) actual cases, when all the evidence is weighed up, little credibility should be given to such events. Hume's account of inductive reasoning is incapable of satisfying these dual demands (2000, Loc 76)." As Earman sees it Hume was blind to this problem and perhaps the blindness was a consequence of his agenda to unseat miracles (Loc 99).

Earman also sees problems with Hume's definition, or rather definitions, of a miracle: (1) "a violation of a law of nature," and (2) "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by interposition of some invisible agent (Loc 138)." The assumption here is that a "law of nature" is an "exceptionless regularity." Hence miracles are impossible! The logical fallacy is: begging the question. Of course this fits with the Naturalist's worldview.

The analogy with Locke's King of Siam story, and Hume's Indian Prince version of the story, is instructive. Basically, the story unfolds to the King that the Dutch ambassador reports a situation where men and horses can walk and ride on rivers when it is cold enough. "No way!" says the King; "everyone knows people sink in the river." Water is not hard. In Siam every observer concurs. The Dutch ambassador, must be lying, deceived, delusional, a sorcerer, or whatever. The inductive experience of everyone in Siam confirms the King. As an analogy one should be encouraged to see the point of keeping possibilities open. The testimony of a few others can be truthful, even though our inductive experiences, and the testimony of all our acquaintances in Siam, say otherwise. The implication is crystal clear, like water!

A strength of Earman's analysis is his attention to probability and Bayesian analyses. For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were new sets of questions emerging, with a

second set, particularly interesting for Earman. For example: Earman, quoting Wootton, notes questions like the following two types: (1) “Is it likely that the Gospel narrative is accurate?” and (2) “How good is the evidence for God’s existence?” These questions are indicative of a shift. This shift is interesting as a branch of reasoning diminishing Hume in that “...the most subtle and interesting arguments offered by theists of this era relied on the emergence of probability and that the irreligion promoted by Hume’s attempts to answer the second set of questions is, in a word, sophomoric when examined under the lens of Bayesianism (Earman, 2000, Loc 446).” For Earman, and sound reasoning, “...epistemology is most fruitfully discussed not in terms of all-or-nothing belief but in terms of degrees of belief (Earman, 2000, Loc 449).”

The Bayesian calculus takes into consideration prior probability, $\Pr(H/K)$, and posterior probability, $\Pr(H/K\&E)$. H is the hypothesis, K is the background knowledge, and E is the new evidence. Reconfigured $\Pr(E/K)$ is the prior likelihood of E (addressing how surprising the new evidence E is); $\Pr(E/K\&H)$ is the likelihood of H (addressing how well H explains E).¹ The important points here are: (1) the role of probabilities, (2) the time (prior and posterior) and (3) background knowledge. The outcome: a particular degree of belief properly contextualized!

The cumulative case effect is a dramatic outcome. Getting there is straightforward. Earman notes a distinction between logical positivism and logical empiricism. “As a representative of the latter camp, Hans Reichenbach rejected the verifiability and falsifiability criteria of meaningfulness, which would have relegated not only religion but large portions of science as well to the limbo reserved for gibberish. Instead, he opted for a confirmability criterion which required cognitively meaningful hypotheses to admit of proflification by the evidence of observation and experiment (Earman, 2000, Loc 1176).” A probability theory of meaning! Such a theory permits facts and propositions—onto the knowledge table—facts and propositions that are not immediately givens or verified, or even verifiable. Degrees of belief can be allocated. Earman sees the consequence as follows: “Belief formation in natural religion can proceed inductively as it does in science and everyday life on the basis of observation and eyewitness testimony. And the resulting degrees of belief are to be deemed rational as long as they satisfy the strictures of Bayesianism (2000, Loc 1184).”

Objectivity is then achieved in two ways. First, one can look to “incremental confirmation of hypotheses about miracles and religious doctrines (Earman, 2000, Loc 1184);” second “...given minimal assumptions about the reliability of witnesses, convergence to certainty, as the number of witnesses increases, about the occurrence of miraculous events can be proven again as theorems of probability (Earman, 2000, Loc 1184).” Incremental confirmation, increasing number of witnesses, and convergence to certainty, support a cumulative case effect.

Reason is on the side of the angels here. There is a case for considering miracles, eyewitness testimonies, and degrees of belief allocation. The position is consistent with a belief allocation protocol (described and used in a previous essay), and the cumulative case scenarios utilized by Swinburne (2004), also described and used in the previous essay (Entrenched

¹ Earman (2000) notes that *subjectivist* Bayesians hold that there are no constraints on priors; *objectivist* Bayesians hold there are additional constraints.

Learnings –Vol. I–Understanding Disbelief and Belief). It is the cumulative case (past, present and future) that gives miracles any credible evidential standing.

The Third Leg--Revelation

Two of Lewis’s categories of miracle are explored here. They are the evidential “Miracles of Reversal” and the evidential “Miracles of Healing.” The purpose of such miracles is not immediately clear. The purpose may be the offer of evidence. The purpose may be prophetic signs linked to history and prophecy. The purpose may be simple compassion. The purpose may be restoration of individuals. There may be no primary purpose but rather the simple consequence of an interpersonal encounter with the “incarnate God.” Whatever, the “Miracles of Reversal” are dramatic for individual witnesses, but it is the “Miracles of Healing” that gain more evidential weight over time.

On the Miracles of Reversal

Back-to-life Phenomena. Questions arise with respect to the “Miracles of Reversal.” First, there is the human propensity for confusion with respect to appearance/reality distinctions. In the back-to-life reversal how does one distinguish the appearance from the reality? Secondly, using Lewis’s two category axis: are these Old Creation Miracles (utilizing Natural laws albeit in a time constricted fashion) or New Creation Miracles (something totally new)? Such questions reflect an honest critical disposition. Do I believe there could be Miracles of Reversal? Yes. But, there are different levels of credibility, doubt, and caveats. My initial belief allocation chart for the New Testament accounts of several back-to-life reports follows (Figure 1).

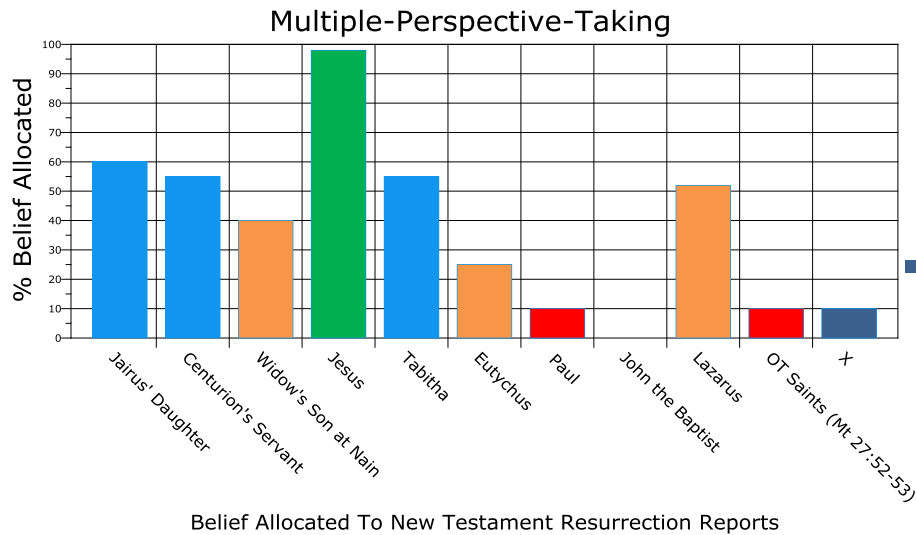


Figure 1. Belief allocated to various resurrection reports in the New Testament. The green coding indicates exceptionally high credibility. The light blue coding indicates greater likelihood than not. The orange coding indicates some substantive reservations. The red coding indicates major reservations. The white coding for John the Baptist indicates no credibility.

In the “Belief Allocation Chart” (Figure 1) with respect to the people for whom back-to-life claims or statements are made, there are degrees of credibility. The *colour coding* reflects differing broad degrees of credibility: Green = next to certainty (e.g., Jesus), Blue = highly credible (e.g., Jairus’s daughter), Orange = credible but with substantive doubts (e.g., Eutychus), Red = it stays on the belief-table but there is more dramatic weight on the doubt side of the balance (e.g., OT saints raised at the time of the crucifixion, Mt 27:52-53), and White = total doubt (e.g., Herod’s postulate regarding John the Baptist being raised). The *number coding*, the use of numbers (percentages ranging between 0 and 100) simply offers a more fine-grained weighting system helping to capture differences within categories. While these are subjective weightings, they have a base in informed thought, and in a Bayesian prospect.

Some preliminary points to consider when focusing on the New Testament stories of being brought “back-to-life” are: (1) some hermeneutical principles, (2) the nature of death, (3) the nature of recovery, (4) the context of others experiencing back-to-life phenomena, that is, the context of diversity of experience, and (5) the broad stance of science.

An intriguing question is: Are some “back-to-life” experiences Old Creation Miracles while others are New Creation Miracles? Where does Lazarus fit? Is he the prime exemplar of the New Creation Miracle? Certainly his resurrection was not comparable to the resurrection of Jesus. But the resurrection of Lazarus does seem more compelling than that of Eutychus.

Some Hermeneutical Principles

- *Multiple Attestation.* The story of Lazarus, for example, only occurs in the Gospel of John. This raises a hermeneutical issue regarding whether this text rises to the level of history. Historians like multiple attestation, and the case of Lazarus lacks multiple attestation. It is interesting narrative though! Do I believe it? Yes, but with some reservations which could be mitigated with future *reflections* and future *reasoning*.
- *Types of genre.* Given such genre as history, metaphor, hymns, letters, anecdotes, invention, speculation, redaction, etc. it is wise to remain open, and tentative. Are back-to-life stories history or figurative genre? Is the back-to-life story of Lazarus history? Or is it a genre different from the type of history one sees in the Synoptic Gospels?
- *Authorship.* Another genre issue relates to authorship. While there is pretty much a consensus that the apostle John is the author of the Gospel, there is some question about Lazarus (the beloved disciple) possibly being the author of this fourth Gospel. If so, this would cast this resurrection report as a report of a personal experience. While not a particularly compelling argument, it is a piece of information on the table.

The Nature of Death

- There is text in John that raises questions about levels of death (i.e., “sleeping”). With respect to Lazarus it seems like he was dead given the time entombed. But what constitutes death? There are cases of people reviving after burial. Furthermore, “sleep”

can be a metaphor for death (Dan 12:2-3), and Jesus refers to it as such, although he also says clearly that Lazarus was dead (John 11:11-14).

- Also, “paradise” adds a dimension possibly related to an intermediate state of death. Jesus refers to it (e.g., the thief on the cross being with Him in paradise that very day). Wright (2003) sees the “many mansions” as referencing this intermediate state. In fact, the term for “mansions” is the term for the tents Roman soldiers pitched on their travels; they were temporary and transitional. Logically, the final state follows the final resurrection.
- One suspects, regarding Lazarus, that Jesus was referring to “bone-box death.” His death was real, actual death, even with the use of the term “sleeping.” We moderns have finer nuances for death.
- There are levels of death of increasing severity for modern taxonomies:
 - Breath-Death (no breathing)
 - Heart-Death (no pulse)
 - Brain-Death (no brain activity)
 - Near-Death-Experienced (NDEd) (out-of-body death)
 - Silver-Cord-Death (the “cord” attaching the body to the spirit or soul is broken-- Eccl 12:5-7)
 - Bone-Box-Death (in ancient Israel, after a year or so, the bones of the dead person are collected and placed in a bone-box).

These levels of death and dying could be factors in the back-to-life experiences of those reported in the New Testament. We spectators are unsure of the nature of the death phenomenon in the case of each miracle reported. There can be a problem with appearance/reality distinctions. With the exception of Lazarus we are on precarious grounds.

The Nature of Recovery

Types of “back-to-life” phenomena to consider are:

- Spontaneous Resuscitation (A naturalist explanation). There are accounts of people reviving after being pronounced dead. (This has occurred in morgues, and there are reports of such resuscitations throughout history for burials prior to current embalming procedures <http://www.snopes.com/horrors/gruesome/buried.asp> . It offers some evidence of spontaneous resuscitation even after funeral procedures).¹ This has some credibility.
- Resuscitated –Spontaneous –But Known via Omniscience (A naturalist explanation, but Jesus had knowledge that certain “dead” individuals, like Jairus’s daughter, were not truly dead and would, or could, revive. The foreknowledge would also be evidence of the miraculous). It seems to have some merit, so belief allocated to this view is higher.

¹ The more suspect back-to-life events are coloured orange in the chart (e.g., the son of the widow of Nain, and Eutychus) as being more suspect (lacking multiple attestation), or the equally compelling possibility (e.g., merely being knocked out from a fall, as in the case of Eutychus). The case of Paul is also suspect given the limited textual claims. These carry less credibility, so, less belief allocation.

- Resurrection (re-embodiment)—(The seemingly “dead” person is brought back to life).¹ Belief allocated to this view is moderately high. I’m actually at the 50/50 point on this one, as I opt to give the benefit of the doubt to biblical reports with respect to Lazarus, the Centurion’s servant, and Tabitha. Although Lazarus should be the strongest, the case is weakened a little by: (1) lack of multiple attestation and (2) the different genre of John’s Gospel when compared to the Synoptic Gospels.
- Reappearance (though dis-embodied). This could not be the case for Lazarus as he was reportedly around subsequently and participated in daily life bodily. I see little merit in this view and wouldn’t allocate belief to this view for any of the back-to-life accounts.
- Resurrection (a new body)—This would be paralleling Jesus’ resurrection which was different and unique (cf N. T. Wright, 2003). I see no grounds for belief allocated to this view for any of the New Testament “back-to-life” reports with the exception of Jesus. Jesus is the one and only person at this point in history to have experienced this new phase of God’s re-creative activity, as I see it.
- A metaphorical story presented to illustrate a point. There may be a case that the Lazarus story is metaphorical or genre-based. Why?
 - (a) There is only one report of the raising of Lazarus in the four gospels, and lack of multiple attestation, within the Bible, weakens the historical claim.
 - (b) Such a remarkable miracle seems to warrant highlighting; one would think it would be in more than one Gospel account,
 - (c) Why doesn’t Paul report, or allude to, these “resurrection” events (Lazarus and others) in his letters? His arguments do not seem to appeal to the miraculous, with the exception of the resurrection of Jesus. Why not?
 - (d) There may be other reasons.
- A genre The resurrection of some Old Testament saints at the time of the crucifixion (Matt 27:52-53) may be a genre, rather than a historical actuality. See N T. Wright (2003) on the correlates of the crucifixion event.² Note that the belief allocated to this view—as a historical event—in the belief allocation chart is small.

¹ Back-to-life phenomena in the blue range are somewhat credible give the multiple attestation (e.g., daughter of Jairus, and the Centurion’s servant), the apparent historical intent of Luke (reporting on Tabitha), and the events reported surrounding the deaths (timelines, etc.). Whether they are resuscitations (somewhat natural) or re-embodiments (NDEs where the spirit is separated from the body but drawn back), or re-embodiments (where the person was actually dead but God reanimates the body) I have no best guess. I nevertheless find they lead me to a mild tilt towards faith in God.

² The most troubling back-to-life account is the reported resurrections of OT saints at the time of the crucifixion (Mt 27:52-53).

- Arguably this account could reflect Matthew’s use of a genre. Wright puts on the table the possibility of Matthew drawing upon a “vivid way of speaking” or a “dramatic metaphor (2003, p. 634).”
- It could reflect Matthew reporting from existing source documents, and anecdotal accounts circulating at that time, accounts that report such events. As Wright expresses it: “He may know a tradition which speaks of these strange happenings, and is retelling it in such a way as to give a biblically alert reader a sense of their meaning: this is the real return from exile, the dawn of the new age, and perhaps even the harrowing of hell (2003, p. 633-634).”
- It could reflect Matthew attempting to incorporate OT prophetic texts (Ez 37:12-13; Is 26:19; Zech 14; and Dan 12:2), consciously or unconsciously. Links to the OT are a characteristic feature of Matthew’s Gospel. The OT texts may be driving expectations consciously. As Wright acknowledges, Matthew may have “invented a story to fit with, and fulfil” biblical texts and “other subsequent Jewish texts (2003, p. 634).”

- A fraudulent report, 1st Century. With respect to Lazarus, I lean towards the credibility (and validity) of the report in John more so than to any fraud. So, belief allocated to the Lazarus back-to-life phenomenon is still moderate.
- A fraudulent report, 2nd-4th Century. Not too believable!
- A Cognitive Hyperactive Agency Detection Device (HADD) (+confabulation). This could explain the saints resurrected in Matthew 27. It might even be in play with respect to back-to-life phenomena related to Paul, Eutychus, and the others. We do have a propensity to posit agency for certain puzzling natural phenomena. I still lean more heavily towards true miracles—“Miracles of Reversibility.” But I’m not sure whether they are of the Old Creation (and therefore linked to the “incarnate God” utilizing natural processes) or the New Creation (and therefore something totally new). Lazarus, at best, may be a new creation Miracle of Reversibility.
- Hallucination This is different from HADD in that the triggers are internal. It doesn’t carry much credibility with respect to the New Testament miracles.

Diversity—The Context of Others Experiencing Back-to-Live Phenomena

In Figure 1 above I apply subjective weightings to the various reports of back-to-life events reported in the New Testament. While I lean towards accepting them as Miracles, the caveats related to diversity—diversity of experiences, diversity related to the type of death, diversity related to the type of recovery, and diversity related to the types of reports—suggest caution is warranted as coexistent with any belief allocation. Hence the science stance!

The Science Stance

The various epistemologies described in an earlier essay (Entrenched Learnings –Vol. I – Understanding Disbelief and Belief) when brought to bear on the issue of back-to-life

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- Alternatively, with such a prophetic mindset one might unconsciously activate two cognitive mechanisms that can facilitate seeing things that are not really there. The two cognitive devices are the “Hyperactive Agency Detection Device” (HADD) and the left hemisphere ability or propensity to confabulate missing data in order to achieve coherence, explanation, and closure. These psychological processes could factor in to the surface level activity in this biblical report. Wright favours the notion that “Matthew knows a story of strange goings-on around the time of the crucifixion, and is struggling to tell it so that (1) it includes the biblical allusions, (2) it makes at least some minimal historical sense (the earthquake explains the tearing of the Temple veil, the opening of the tombs, and particularly the centurion’s comment), and (3) it at least points towards, even if it does not exactly express, the theological meaning Matthew is working towards...(2003, p. 635).”
 - Of interest to me are the other reports that there were strange goings-on around the crucifixion. It is not limited to biblical reports only. In Jewish and Roman literature there is much intriguing commentary about the strange goings-on in the period identified as “40-years prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD,” that is, at the time of the crucifixion (see Plummer, 2005 p.s., if you are intrigued by Plummer’s article, and these “strange goings-on” let me know. I have it as a pdf file. It is interesting and heavily referenced. I read it on two levels—once reading just the text; a second time reading the footnotes. Both levels are rich.)
 - I note also that Wright adds: “Some stories are so odd that they may just have happened. This may be one of them, but in historical terms there is no way of finding out (Wright, 2003, p. 636).” That he keeps the possibility on the table is admirable, and scholarly. However, if he is right that it happened it is more likely that people there were seeing disembodied spirits (a la Samuel confronting Saul) rather than re-embodied spirits. The new body which Jesus manifests as the first-fruits, is to come at the end of the age.

phenomena are conducive to a faith that continues to tilt towards theism. This holds for the dozen or so epistemological approaches discussed earlier.

Particularly relevant would be Virtue epistemology, Existential epistemology, Prudential epistemology, Passional epistemology, Light epistemology, and Death-Signs epistemology. One brings to the task of analysis, in any knowledge building domain, such virtues as diligence, breadth of perspective, consideration of other arguments, and so on. For a fuller discussion of such virtues and vices see Virtue Epistemology, and the related epistemologies, in the earlier essay. Such epistemological openness is a science stance.

So what is the evidential tilt with respect to the Miracles of Reversal revealed by resurrection reports? Strong views on the resurrection of Jesus, as discussed in [here](#) are warranted. I find compelling evidential tilt there. On these biblical stories of other resurrection stories the evidential tilt is mitigated. With respect to a Triangulation Approach, a satisfactory level of harmony exists between *revelation, reason, and reflections*. The miracles gain in credibility because: (1) there are a number reported which serves to offer support for a cumulative case, (2) they are connected to Jesus as a credible authority given the evidence for His resurrection, (3) there is a broad historical base of authorities arguing for acceptance, and (4) the critics, like Hume, are defanged or “abject failures” (Earman, 2000). I can accept something miraculous was happening. But the evidential tilt for the back-to-life miracles is still minor.

On the Miracles of Healing

Similarly, the evidential tilt for the stories of healing in the Bible was also minor. I can accept them at some level. I can triangulate the sources *revelation, reason, and reflections* and find more reason for belief than doubt. Still the tilt is minor for the Biblical cases. Nevertheless, Miracles of Healing continue across history, and it is this continuance that potentially increases the evidential tilt. There is support from *reflections* (authorities, for example, Keener, 2011), and there is support from *reason* (e.g., the cumulative case phenomenon described by Bayesians like Earman, 2000, and Swinburne, 2004). While *reason* is amenable to the miraculous, empirical issues complicate conclusions. There are two levels of Miracles of Healing that illustrate the continuance over time of examples and eyewitness reports: those with problematic credentials and those with good credentials.

Problematic Credentials. The reason for questions arising here with respect to the “Miracles of Healing” is multifold. First, there are the problems of the *person*: charlatans, the greedy, fraudsters, charismatic personalities, God-helpers, and so on. These characters feed suspicion. Secondly, there are the problems of *context*: healing crusades, emotional frenzy, crowd psychology, subcultures, cultural styles, and so on. These environments feed suspicion. Thirdly, there are the problems of the *nature of the healing*: imagined, temporary, exaggeration, reality-denying, and so on. This sub-typing feeds caution. Fourth, there are the problems related to *psychology*: psychosomatic effects, placebo effects, confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance,

and so on. Such effects advise caution. Fifth, there are problems related to *theology*: Why are only a few healed? Why is that person healed rather than this person? The paucity of healings raises troubling questions. Why healing at all at this time in God's history? These problems, or some of them, may be mitigated somewhat with analysis, and theodicy, but the evidence for a tilt towards theism is currently not evident from all purported miracles of healing.

Good Credentials. The reason for a shift to evidential value here are the credentials offered for a number of healing episodes. Keener (2011) reports on numerous healing stories (see his chapter 11), that seem to have better documentation, and eyewitness caliber, than others. Those with the better documentation carry more weight. Two examples selected at random:

Example 1. There is the story of Ed Wilkinson. His son (aged 8 years) had two holes in his heart—atrial septic defect. Surgery was scheduled, but his son started giving away his toys, expecting to die. The father did take his son to a healing service in the church and urged his son to go forward when a request was made. The following week the journey is made to the hospital for further tests which confirmed nothing had changed. The next day the six-hour surgery is set in motion. An hour later several members of the team call the father into a consulting room. Showing him the films from the previous day and now immediately prior to the surgery it was clear the holes had walled over. Miracle? Apparently such spontaneous closure can happen in infants, ...but an eight-year-old? The surgeon explained: “You can count this as a miracle (Keener, 2011, p. 432).” And so it seems!

Example 2. A nine-year-old girl—deaf without her hearing aid—is prayed for. The audiologist was amazed. Tests the following day revealed normal hearing. “The doctor's report admitted, ‘Her hearing returned completely to normal... I was completely unable to explain this phenomenon ... I can think of no rational explanation as to why her hearing returned to normal, there being a severe bilateral sensorineural loss’ (Keener, 2011, p. 434).” Is this as a miracle?

Keener offers a collection of similar reports along with potentially suspect and weak reports. It is the more credible reports, however, that serve to help build a cumulative case. Using Bayesian statistics, $\Pr(H/E\&K)$ will build cumulatively over time as K (background knowledge of more and more cases) builds. As noted under the *reason* leg: Objectivity is then achieved in two ways. First, one can look to “incremental confirmation of hypotheses about miracles and religious doctrines (Earman, 2000, Loc 1184);” second “...given minimal assumptions about the reliability of witnesses, convergence to certainty, as the number of witnesses increases, about the occurrence of miraculous events can be proven again as theorems of probability (Earman, 2000, Loc 1184).” Incremental confirmation, increasing number of witnesses, and convergence to certainty, support the cumulative case effect.

Given the two type of miracles—resurrection and healing—which carries the more substantive evidential weight? Some, if not most, modern *back-to-life miracles* are in the red zone on my belief allocation chart. Why? Because there are grounds for increased suspicion of such miracles evidentially! Natural causes! Concurrent problems like fraud, charlatans, crusade scenarios, lack of evidence, and so on. The *healing miracles*, however, are more compelling. Orange zone! Even the blue zone! Why? Because evidence reported in the form of medical

records for current healing narratives is compelling! They are likely still in the category Lewis calls Old Creation Miracles; the natural healing process is time-compressed. The major problem is the low frequency of those restored, and the masses not so fortunate.

The Problem of Those Not Healed. This is a major problem theologically. How does one understand this phenomenon from a theological perspective? Questions to ask: (1) Is there a sign purpose in miracles? (2) Is there an individual healing purpose in miracles? (3) Is there an edification-of-the-church purpose in miracles? (4) Is there a “clocks problem” in understanding miracles (i.e., healing for some in compressed time, for others in chronological time, and for most who pray for healing in dilated time—that is, the future)? (5) Are miracles purely natural phenomena? (6) Are miracles purely contingent on faith? (7) Are miracles contingent on social context (e.g., “Jesus could work no miracles there”)? (8) Are miracles culturally coloured? (9) Are miracles, or some miracles, originating from “principalities and powers?” (10) Are miracles secondary phenomena, contingent phenomena? (11) Are miracles functional veils? (12) Where do miracles fit in epistemology? (13) How do miracles align with anthropological studies? (14) Do miracles upset paradigms and worldviews, humbling the worldly-wise? (15) Do miracles trigger curiosity opening deeper insights for saintly sages? (16) Are miracles comparable to the dangerous “spectator evidence” that Moser (2008, 2010) questions as contrary to God’s intentions for a purposively volitional epistemology, a Gethsemane epistemology (see Moser’s epistemology)? The problem of those not healed is complicated.

In the miracle-mess there is both chaos and order. Along the lines of “The Privileged Planet” (Gonzalez & Richards, 2004) and the question of Epistemic Privilege (Wray, 2012; van Fraassen, 1989, 2002) one wonders if what could be called the “Miracle Mess” is something of a gift—giving humans another “privileged position” to understand some things important for human knowledge building, faith, and wisdom. Understanding power, powers, kenosis, authority, positioning, and so on, might be better understood because of the miracles-mess phenomena. What do I now see that I didn’t see before? Wheat versus chaff! The wheat is evidential! The paucity of miracles is informative, probative, provocative, and challenging. Looking for the deeper meaning can be invigorating, even enlightening.

What is abundantly clear, is that the two miracles purportedly performed by Mohammed (Ibrahim, 1997) when compared to the Biblical miracles, are more supportive of a refutation of Islamic claims rather than evidentially supportive.

Discourse on The Resurrection of Jesus

The resurrection, and the historical case for the resurrection, as developed by Craig (2008), Habermas and Licona (2004), Habermas (2006), Wright (2003), and Overman (2010) is evidentially, and argumentatively, strong. Not unqualified, but strong.

Craig (2008) focuses on three independently established facts as support for the resurrection as a historically authentic event. The facts are: (1) the empty tomb, (2) the post-mortem appearances, and (3) the origin of the Christian faith/church.

With respect to the empty tomb, Craig considers several lines of evidence, which could be grouped into a few categories.

1. *Historical reliability of the story of the burial.* Drawing upon multiple attestation, language analyses, Jewish beliefs regarding resurrection, the personal involvement of the Sanhedrist Joseph of Arimathea, all support the historical reliability of the narrative.
2. *The discovery of the empty tomb.* Again, drawing upon multiple attestation, logic, language usage, tradition, discovery of the empty tomb by women, contemporary Jewish opposition, and timelines, (evidenced by the Markan version which lacks legendary development), support the historical reliability of the narratives.
3. *Naturalistic explanatory hypotheses are considered and critiqued.* The conspiracy hypothesis, the apparent-death hypothesis, the wrong-tomb hypothesis, and the displaced-body hypothesis, are all diffused in Craig's critique. Again the tilt is toward something supernatural.

With respect to the post-mortem appearances Craig looks at: (1) *some of the facts* (e.g., appearance to Peter, to the twelve, to "five-hundred brethren," to James, and to Saul of Tarsus, (2) *the nature of the appearances* (physical, bodily, etc.), and (3) *the epistemological interface with the facts*.

Finally, Craig offers the origin of the Christian faith/church as evidence. On the one hand, this has some weight. It does seem unreasonable to expect such growth without a strong driver. On the other hand, there are other religious growth phenomena that are striking (e.g., Islam, and Mormonism). This may be the weakest, then, of Craig's evidential thrust.

Habermas (2006) narrows the focus, and analysis, to the post-mortem appearances, and the disciples' experiences of the risen Jesus. He presents eight pointers to the risen Jesus—four from Paul and four from other sources. The four pointers from Paul are: (1) his personal experience in meeting the risen Jesus, (2) his use of an oral tradition, (3) his two trips to Jerusalem for checking for confirmation with apostles who were witnesses, and (4) his narrative reports indicating he knew what the apostles were proclaiming regarding the resurrection. The other four pointers are: (1) the belief and testimony of James the skeptical unbeliever, Jesus' brother, prior to the crucifixion, (2) creedal traditions, as in the book of Acts, (3) critical scholars agree that the disciples believed they encountered the risen Jesus, and (4) critical scholarship where the majority (> 70%) agree the tomb was empty.

Further, Habermas lists three philosophical approaches to account for the facts: (1) naturalism, (2) agnosticism, and (3) an actual resurrection. As for the naturalistic explanations, Habermas cites scholars noting these are "gratuitous," "fail to provide more satisfactory explanations," and are "weaker." As for the agnostic plea, the position is rooted in a preferential option for scepticism. The third option is acceptance in some form or other. Habermas (2006) writes: "...by far the most popular option at present is that Jesus was actually raised in some form, either as an objective vision or in a transformed body. The former view was more popular a few decades ago, while the latter appears clearly to be the majority view at present (p. 294)."

Most thorough is the analysis of the resurrection by N. T. Wright (2003). Wright deals with the full context in terms of Paganism, The Old Testament, Post-Biblical Judaism, Paul, Early Christianity, Non-Canonical early Christian texts, and details (weird and wonderful) in the Easter story. Wright, the scholar, is convinced.

The analyses are historical. The history gives a tilt in favour of theism—a tilt in favour of belief rather than disbelief. This would be particularly the case with the historical data related to the resurrection of Jesus.

With respect to Islam which denies the death on the cross of Jesus, and hence the resurrection (Ibrahim, 1997, p. 58, referencing Qur'an 4:157), this historical evidence of a death and resurrection is more conducive to refuting Islam than supporting it.

Discourse On Christian Prophecy

Like miracles, the reference to prophecy as evidential, or as a resource for strengthening an evidentialist case, had never been a particularly compelling argument. For the most part, the prophecies were interesting, even individually striking (as in Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:24-27, Zechariah 12:10, and so on), yet, they were puzzling; they were pieces of a puzzle; they were puzzle pieces leaving more incomplete than complete in the emerging picture. They were enigmatic. There were enough pieces of the puzzle that clicked together so that one could see a picture forming; but the picture was obscured, partially veiled still.

A preferential approach was to just wait and see how subsequent thinking allowed pieces to fit together more graphically, or more coherently, or more interestingly. Consequently, prophecy would be rarely advanced as an argument, or apologetic, with compelling force. It offered a slight tilt toward Christian theism. That sufficed then! Now I'm wondering about the nature and direction of such evidential tilts! In terms of the present topic of prophecy in Islam (Ibrahim, 1997), of interest is how Biblical prophecy compares and contrasts.

Why did Biblical prophecy not rise to the level of compelling-belief, or even knowledge, in line with empirical science? After all, observation, artefacts, testimonies, explanatory power and scope, prediction, and theoretical coherence, were there for consideration. Indeed, there were many of the appropriate elements of a knowledge-based investigation with many of the fundamentals of the sciences. Of course, there was one science-exception—the exception of the experimental sciences. So, what were the constraints?

An initial downplaying of prophecy-as-evidence could reasonably be due to cognitive bias, immaturity, distraction, doubt, superficial consideration, laziness, or dispositional-naturalism. But also prophecies seemed so peculiar. Accordingly, evading of prophecy-as-evidence was due to an epistemological position out of tune with light epistemology (internal influence of the Holy Spirit), virtue epistemology (superficiality), and obstinacy epistemology (doggedness). Was prophecy an offer ignored by most, an offer of a post-hoc charism (“faith in

search of understanding”) rather than an evidential motivator? What would be the more precise constraints driving avoidance of prophecy-as-evidence?

Constraints when considering prophecy.

First Order Constraints.

1. *Loose connections.* Prophecies that were only loosely connected (e.g., the “called out of Egypt,” prophecy: Matt 2:15, Hos 11:1, Ex 4:22), were loosely evidential. Linking two events often seemed to be a stretch. Was Matthew looking for connections however oblique? Was he looking for patterns driven by patternicity? Were tenuous connections somehow permissible under the prophetic wing of a broader theology? Was prophecy ontologically and epistemologically fuzzy, intentionally?
2. *No Connections.* One has trouble seeing Zechariah 13:6 as a pattern applying to Jesus; yet some do (e.g., McDowell, 1972). It is certainly not evident on the surface that Zechariah 13 is referring to the Messiah. In fact, it seems relatively clear from the immediate context that the reference is not to Jesus as the prophet in focus.
3. *Double fulfillments.* That a particular historical prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 7:14), or event, is subsequently taken to link to the future Messiah seems to be open to a challenge of “confirmation bias.” For example, the prophecy of the virgin birth lacks the kind of precision that moderns call for, or hope for. Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of a young woman conceiving a son and his birth being a sign to the nation of Israel. Matthew sees this as a sign of a virgin bringing forth a child with a much larger application. Matthew may not be alone in this as the Septuagint translates “almah” with the Greek work for virgin (i.e., parthenos). Those of us removed from both events play with the puzzle pieces to see if there is a pattern that makes sense. Are these post-hoc patterns errors, impositions, or real insights? Traditionally, the prophecy is explained as double fulfillment; but this seemed potentially dubious, sort of double-dipping. (Compare also the historical events surrounding the 30 pieces of silver, from Zechariah 11). Is it double-dipping? It raises a suspicion, a hesitation, though not an outright rejection. Furthermore, it raises questions about the very nature of Biblical prophecy.
4. *Poetry as Prophecy.* Does prophecy comport with poetry? Many prophecies flagged in the New Testament, are rooted in Old Testament Poetry, and are oblique communications rather than clear evidential communiqués. Of course, if this aligns with divine intention, God’s method of communicating via prophecy, then one could delight in the study of such prophecy and prophetic poetry. Perhaps, there is an analogy in the following: one who expects all animals to navigate by sight could miss the beautiful, informative mystery of the navigational systems of the bat, the fly, the butterfly, and more. Moreover, there does seem to be some striking parallels in Poetry with respect to history and prophecy (e.g., Psalm 22). It raises a suspicion, a hesitation, but not outright rejection.
5. *Intentional Fulfillments.* Was there effort on the part of Jesus, and perhaps his disciples, to work to intentionally fulfil what were perceived as prophecies? The planning of the entry into Jerusalem on a donkey was designed and orchestrated. It raises a suspicion, a hesitation, though not an outright rejection. More troubling: there is the suggestion that

Matthew's account of anomalous supernatural events at the time of the crucifixion was an effort to find prophetic fulfillment¹ (Wright, 2003).

6. *Levels of Authoritative Confirmation.* Who authenticates the prophecy? In decreasing influence, a list of authorities might look like the following: (1) Jesus as authenticator which would carry the most weight, (2) Apostolic authority as of secondary importance, (3) Old Testament Prophet when the prophecy is more clearly direct (e.g., Isaiah 53), (4) OT Prophet when the prophecy is more indirect yet empirical (e.g., Amos 8:9), (5) History when the evidence is empirical confirmation (e.g., destruction of the temple, Matthew 24:2, the destruction of Tyre, Ezek 26), and (6) Patternicities where there are apparent connections between events that seem beyond meaningless coincidences (e.g., Ps 69:20-21 and Matt 27:34).

Second Order Constraints.

A second level of constraints would be principles for facilitating interpretation. What are the proper or possible approaches to help readers clarify prophecy, understand prophecy, and judge prophecy?

1. *Categorization.* One approach categorizes the prophecies. There are prophecies that relate to the Messiah. There are prophecies that relate to Israel. There are prophecies that relate to cities. There are prophecies that relate to individuals. Such categorization—typing and sub-typing—may be helpful in theological knowledge building.
2. *Hermeneutics.* In play are: Language (literal, figurative, allegorical,...), Genre (history, poetry, prophecy, parable, proverb, ...), Cultural context (concordance, biases, ...), Authorship (authorial intent, authorship/s, redaction, compilers,...), Worldviews

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- Alternatively, with such a prophetic mindset one might unconsciously activate two cognitive mechanisms that can facilitate seeing things that are not really there. The two cognitive devices are the "Hyperactive Agency Detection Device" (HADD) and the left hemisphere ability or propensity to confabulate missing data in order to achieve coherence, explanation, and closure. These psychological processes could factor in to the surface level activity in this biblical report. Wright favours the notion that "Matthew knows a story of strange goings-on around the time of the crucifixion, and is struggling to tell it so that (1) it includes the biblical allusions, (2) it makes at least some minimal historical sense (the earthquake explains the tearing of the Temple veil, the opening of the tombs, and particularly the centurion's comment), and (3) it at least points towards, even if it does not exactly express, the theological meaning Matthew is working towards...(2003, p. 635)."
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(Epicurean, Stoicism, naturalism, paganism, pantheism, ...), Theological systems (Torah, works, grace, gospel, righteousness,...), Time (prophecy vs fulfillment, Kairological vs chronological, single vs double fulfillment, ...), etc. Also in play are: (1) a Transcendence principle (the divine intent principle the big picture), and (2) a Concordance principle (accommodation by God to the hearers knowledge and their social context).

3. *Epistemologies.*

- a. *Evidentialism* (Giving the preferential or sole place to absolute evidentialism is a serious limitation). Prophecy may be more than evidence.
- b. *Virtue Epistemology* (Failing to engage epistemological virtues when considering prophecy is a major constraint). Understanding prophecy requires work.
- c. *Prudential Epistemologies* (Sometimes it is the better part of wisdom to say: “maybe,” “perhaps,” or “let’s see what happens.” Do the pieces of the puzzle fit together? That’s prudent!). Prophecy meshes with patient wisdom.
- d. *Obstinacy Epistemology* (Failing to stick with the task and push through the surface problems, and “flies in the ointment,” is a constraint. Failing to stick with the God who prophesies is a constraint).
- e. *Light Epistemology* (Failure to permit the working of the Light, Jesus and His Holy Spirit, is a catastrophic constraint).

These epistemologies may not be amenable to testing or experimentation, but they certainly invite exploration and abduction. Nevertheless, there may be an argument that various epistemologies—the volitional epistemology, the prudential epistemologies, the existential epistemology, and even virtue epistemology—invite experimenting. It may be the case that only pure experimental science forms (control groups, lab settings, double-blinds, etc.) are precluded.

Third Order Constraints -- The Cognitive Science Framing.

How does cognitive science act as a constraint, or a facilitator? Prophecies can be seen as patterns, patterns that correctly map onto reality, or patterns that are illusory. In the following analysis I take Shermer’s (2011) discussion of *patternicity* as a starting point. There is something in patterns that is cognitively intriguing. Shermer looks at *patternicity* as a source of sound beliefs (i.e., correctly mapping onto reality) and faulty beliefs (i.e., superstitious learning and magical thinking). Patternicity can also be advanced to explain the errors—Type 1 errors and Type 2 errors. Shermer’s analysis, however, benefits from further thought. Additional exploration argues for further development of the cognitive construct of *patternicity*.

1. *The Patternicity Principle.*

This principle draws upon Shermer’s (2011) urging to understand patternicity as the source of belief, whether accurate beliefs or faulty beliefs. Shermer (2011) contends that human beings are designed by natural selection to be good pattern detectors. Leaving aside criticisms of the power of natural selection¹ for the moment, for the sake of argument, we could agree that

¹ Re criticism: Consider the comment of Lennox (2011b) and his quote from William Provine who is a staunch atheist: “Biologist William Provine, in a remarkable afterword published in a new edition of a classic work, explains that his views have ‘changed dramatically’: ‘Natural selection does not act on anything, nor does it select (for, or against) force, maximize, create, modify,

good pattern detection would serve survival well. Those who see a pattern in the rustle of branches-in-bushes, a pattern that indicates a predator is present, are more likely to flee, and therefore survive, than those who see no such pattern. As an added benefit, those who think they see the predator pattern in the bushes are also likely to flee and survive. Thus, whether the pattern is real (true belief) or imaginary (false belief) both serve survival. In fact, there are four categories of response that situate pattern detection responses. As may be seen in the matrix below, as researchers have long held, and as Shermer notes, there are two types of errors. The Type 1 error, while a false belief, can have survival value, along the lines of “it’s better to be safe than sorry.” The Type 2 error, missing a true belief, puts one in a precarious position. In accord with natural selection arguments, the person predisposed to make the Type 2 error is less likely to be around to pass on the genes driving such a predisposition. He doesn’t survive as well.

| Matrix showing the four types of responses one can make for pattern detection in view of two dimensions: reality and belief. | | | |
|--|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | | Reality | |
| | | Real Predator | No Predator |
| Belief | Real Predator | Motivating Belief | Type 1 Error |
| | No Predator | Type 2 Error | Neutral Belief |

a. Hits

- i. Real patterns, authentic patterns, are detected (the rustle in the leaves is really due to a lion lurking).
- ii. Pseudo patterns are judged as meaningless (the rustle in the leaves is viewed as due to wind or a squirrel, etc. One believes there is no danger, and there isn’t any danger.).

b. Misses:

- i. Type 1 Errors (Assume a meaningful pattern, a predator, when there isn’t one. The rustled leaves are not due to a predator; one believes it is and runs away.)
- ii. Type 2 Errors (Assume no meaningful pattern when there is one. The rustle in the leaves is a predator; one believes it isn’t, continues along, and becomes dinner.)

Shermer (2011) correctly links patternicity to learning, particularly association learning. For him, *patternicity* is developed via natural selection. His discussion of the topic offers interesting examples. Examples of detecting patterns that are not really there are evident in the images people see in clouds, or the images (i.e., faces) some see in photographs of various formations on Mars photographs. That individuals may differ in susceptibility to seeing such

shape, operate, drive, favour, maintain, push, or adjust. Natural selection does nothing. Natural selection as a force belongs in the insubstantial category already populated by the Necker/Stahl phlogiston or Newton’s ether ... Having natural selection select is nifty because it excuses the necessity of talking about the actual causation of natural selection. Such talk was excusable for Darwin, but inexcusable for Darwinists now. Creationists have discovered our empty natural selection language, and the actions of natural selection make huge vulnerable targets (p. 180-181).”

patterns as a function of personality variables (e.g., locus of control), and anxiety levels, adds another layer. Arguably, there are many more layers to consider.

The association learning phenomenon, or *patternicity* as Shermer frames it, is not unique to humans. In the animal kingdom sign stimuli are patterns that can function to trigger behaviours. A critical period for imprinting, in some species, is a striking example of a response to patterns. The movie “Fly Away Home” shows the story of a young girl who has young geese imprint on her. She and her father then train the maturing geese to follow the girl in a light aircraft so that they can migrate south as winter approaches. This *patternicity* presented by Shermer, holds promise; but it would benefit from extension beyond types of errors, links to association learning, and examination in the animal kingdom.

Patternicity can be amplified as a construct that allows for branching: (1) branching more deeply into cognitive, psychological underpinnings, (2) branching more effectively to systems of cognitive processing, and (3) branching more widely into alternative framings that permit a positive approach to non-naturalist considerations as well as the naturalist worldview. It is the branching that builds a framing for considering prophecy as more than simple Type 1 Errors in pattern recognition. It is this branching that facilitates a prudent approach to prophecy.

2. *Proper Function and Patternicity.*

Here a comparison is made to Plantinga (1993a, 1993b) and his noted limits for warrant (see earlier essay: Entrenched learnings – Vol. I). Plantinga first points to the importance of the “proper function” of a system. Pattern recognition, pattern detection, and patternicity are amenable to being considered as cognitive processes one can view as showing “proper function” or improper function. Improper function, by implication, leads to functional limitations. Limitations could show up in the following:

- a. By-products
- b. Glitches
- c. Functional multiplicity
- d. Competing plans
- e. The optimal environment assumption

In terms of the earlier discussion functional limitations would be evident with Type 1 errors and Type 2 errors. The proper response is to see merit in “patternicity” and develop the notion further with respect to proper function. This would involve acknowledgement of functional problems; and it would involve addressing functional problems.

3. *Patternicity and Cognitive Psychology.*

Drawing upon cognitive psychology the roots of pattern recognition can be explored from a perceptual perspective, a developmental perspective, and theoretical perspectives. From the perceptual perspective we note several theories advanced to explain pattern recognition. The first model advanced is “*the template approach.*” The idea here is that humans have stored templates of patterns. They use these templates to judge patterns encountered. The problem is that the number of templates required would likely overwhelm our limited cognitive resources. A second

model is based on *feature detection*. Features like “straight line,” “diagonal line,” “curved line,” and so on, are used to form judgments. “In general feature theories claim that we recognize whole patterns by breaking them into the building-block features they contain. Rather than matching an entire template-like pattern for capital G, then, maybe we simply break down the G into its features.... Successful feature matches would be the necessary evidence of categorization, deciding that the pattern is indeed a G (Ashcraft, 2002, p. 91).”

An elaborative, yet succinct, discussion of the feature detection theorizing of Eleanor Gibson is presented by Farnham-Diggory (1992). Key points are listed here:

- Perception increases with development. “...picking up patterns is a hallmark of cognitive development...(p. 188)”
- People learn to perceive. “Gibson then realized that learning and development must be attributable to the child’s increasing ability to pick up progressively more complex information about what had always been there (p. 189).”
- “Differentiation.” Differentiation is the mechanism of perceptual growth. Gibson saw this as detecting three things not previously recognized: properties, patterns and features. “She didn’t think you ever integrated anything into a whole. If you perceived a part, you perceived some particular property, pattern, or feature. If you perceived a whole, you perceived a different property, pattern, or feature (p. 189).”
- Some perceptual abilities are inborn. Babies have an inborn understanding of “near and far checkerboard cues.” This is evident from the visual cliff studies.
- “Abstraction.” This is a learning process. Many properties and patterns must be learned via abstraction—detecting what is constant versus variable in experiences. This is a purposive process; constancies are sought to eliminate uncertainty.
- Development. Improvement over time is evident in three characteristics
 - *Increasing specificity of discrimination*. The older child is more cautious, considers more information (e.g., features), and narrows his focus to the important or salient features.
 - *Increasing optimization of attention*. There is more exploratory activity with age and it is a function of decisions.
 - *Progressive economy in the extraction of information*. For example, it is more economical to read the word “cat” as a unit than to read each letter and then compile the letters to form the perception “cat.”

4. *Patternicity and Top-down processing.*

In Ashcroft’s (2002) critique of feature detection theories a major element is flagged. There is a top-down processing component—one’s background knowledge and conceptual development—that assists the processing of lower level bottom-up features available. Patternicity is not simply a response (Hits, Type 1 errors, and Type 2 errors) to properties, patterns, and features encountered. The response is conceptually-driven as well. Executive functions are as important as the patterns. Patternicity, then, is analyzed in terms of features and properties but also involves developmental variables, background knowledge, learning, ability (innate and developed), decisions, skills related to attention, discrimination, and efficiency. Error responses, then, can be rooted in a variety of factors—bottom-up factors and top-down

factors. Overactive top-down factors are clearly instrumental in certain errors. For example, both “change blindness” and “inattention blindness” are based in top-down factors (Matlin, 2009). These occur concurrent with proper function. If there is improper function, perhaps due to brain damage or disorder, the errors (e.g., prosopagnosia) are categorically different.

5. *Patternicity and System 1/System 2 Thinking.*

Drawing upon Kahneman as he presented the two-processing system in 2003, there would be two types of patternicity processing to consider. First, in an Intuitive system—System 1—processing is characterized by: fast speed, parallel processing, automaticity, effortlessness, associativeness, slow-learning, and emotionality. The second system—System 2—is a Reasoning system and is characterized as: working at a slow speed, using serial processing, under executive control, requiring substantial effort, rule-governed, flexible, and showing emotional neutrality.

Patternicity processing in System 1 would be intuitive, automatic and effortless. This seems to align with Shermer’s (2011) approach to patternicity. The pattern of rustling in the bushes that triggers the flight response, whether an accurate perception or a Type 1 error, is more likely to activate automaticity and intuition, that is, System 1 level processing.

Patternicity processing in System 2 would be effortful, reflective, investigative, and rule-governed. This is characteristic of a deeper approach that would be aligned with: (1) Plantinga’s notion of proper function and warrant, and (2) theories addressing feature detection from a cognitive science perspective. System 2 level processing looks for the possible deeper meanings, and broader meanings.

6. *Patternicity -- A Deeper Framing.*

Shermer (2011) operates within a naturalistic paradigm, and consequently, the patterns he would address are natural patterns. However, there are psychological, physical, and theological positions that push beyond straightforward natural patterns. The Jungian notion of synchronicity (Jung, 1952/1960), for example, doesn’t align with conventional naturalism. Furthermore, theorizing in physics with respect to quantum mechanics opens doors to broader considerations related to time, space, clocks, causality, and so on. Theology introduces what could be termed a diachronicity principle, as well as epistemological factors related to types of evidence. Even naturalism itself is open to a wider range of considerations.

- a. Naturalistic variants (Natural, causally connected effects, though perhaps not fully understood:
 - i. *naive naturalism* (a normal causal connecting principle with connections ordered sequentially and immediately in time);
 - ii. *God-perceived naturalism* (God sees what is unfolding naturally over time and reveals the natural future);
 - iii. *God-released naturalism* (God enhances what is unfolding naturally over time, perhaps by constricting, dilating, or unblocking time factors. This would parallel Lewis’s notion of “Miracles of Fertility” (e.g., water into wine, or a few fish into

- many fish) where time was compressed. In effect, in the prophecy time could be compressed, dilated, or altered in some way);
- iv. *divergent-naturalism* (a causal connecting principle connected in time, but mysterious, or not yet understood). This could be seen, for example, in linkages (peculiarities or striking coincidences) that have been reported for: (1) identical twins raised apart <http://lornareiko.wordpress.com/2009/10/08/identical-twins-who-were-separated-at-birth-what-are-they-like/>, (2) eerie parallels such as (a) the story of “The Wreck of the Titan” written in 1898 yet with peculiar parallels to the reality of the maiden voyage of the Titanic in 1912, (b) the story of the cannibalism of Richard Parker on the high seas, and the striking presaging parallel from Poe (see Hutchinson, 2011); and
 - v. *parapsychological naturalism* (events and phenomena that have a natural cause yet to be understood).
- b. Diachronicity (Supernatural patterns, across time, with a clocks/time issue, and God as the causal connection, though perhaps with a varying typology:
- i. *naive prophecy* or direct propositional precise claims, that is, spectator evidence;
 - ii. *poetry-as-prophecy* or opaque, allegorical, and figurative prophecy;
 - iii. *conditionally-perceived-prophecy*, or information given to the volitionally prepared;
 - iv. *seed-prophecy* to start a chain of reasoning, thinking or investigating;
 - v. *motivational-prophecy* to engage curiosity, the will, and reasoning processes; and
 - vi. *prophetic-fragments*, opportunities to put the pieces together for those so inclined.).
- c. Synchronicity (Non-natural patterns, showing simultaneity, but neither naturalistic nor evident theistic causal connection).
- i. *coincidence with beneficial effects* (cf Jung, 1952/1960).
 - ii. *parapsychological trans-naturalism* (events and phenomena that have a non-natural cause yet to be understood).
 - iii. *cthoncity* (interference of malevolent forces)
 - iv. *autocthoncity* (self-deception, a form of the Type 2 error—failing to see a legitimate pattern that is there to be perceived).

Openness to the broader cognitive framing, and the possible deeper patterns, is a stance that, at the very least, offers broad possible benefits. Precluding such openness on the basis of an elementary worldview like *naive naturalism*, does not appear to be the better part of wisdom. Pattern detection is an area one needs to consider when patterns map onto Biblical events and such patterns are advanced as prophetic.

The Judicial Stance

What is the *judicial stance*, the wise stance? The *judicial stance* with respect to prophecy would involve attention to the following:

- Openness to the possibility of Type 1 errors.
- Attention to Patterns (detection of properties, patterns and features)
 - Acknowledging: Inborn predisposition to see some patterns.
 - Acknowledging: Developmentally increasing ability to detect patterns.

- Acknowledging: Learning involved in detecting patterns.
 - Differentiation –detecting things not previously recognized re properties, patterns and features, whether parts or wholes. Increasing caution, and narrowing of focus to relevant features.
 - Abstraction –learning what is invariant.
 - Attention optimized.
 - Decisions made about what to attend to.
 - Increased economy of resources.
- Acknowledging: Key role for executive processes, and top-down processing.
 - Concept-driven influences on perception of patterns.
 - Background knowledge influences on perception of patterns.
 - Overactive top-down processing errors are types of faulty perception.
- Acknowledgement of “Proper Function”
 - Awareness of normal error sources given proper function
 - Glitches, by-products, functional multiplicities, competing design plans, and so on.
 - Overactive top-down processing.
 - Awareness of improper function and hence abnormal error sources: brain damage, disease, disorder, functional imbalance, biochemical imbalance, toxins, drugs, medications,
- Acknowledgement of different processing systems engaged in a judicial stance (System 1 and System 2)
 - Pattern detection for system 1 is automatic, intuitive, associative, and fast.
 - Pattern detection for system 2 is reflective, thoughtful, effortful, and slow.
- Acknowledgement of philosophical issues:
 - The possibility of *naive naturalism* as the explanation for the pattern.
 - The possibility of a *God-perceived naturalism* as the explanation for the reported prophecy (a causal connecting principle connected in time)
 - The possibility of a *God-released naturalism* as the explanation for the reported prophecy (a causal connecting principle connected in time).
 - The possibility of a *divergent-naturalism* as the explanation for the reported prophecy
 - The possibility of transcending naturalism.
 - The possibility of *diachronicity* (a supernatural causal connecting principle across time) (The conventional view of prophecy).
 - The possibility of *divine hiddenness* (a supernatural causal, yet variable, connecting principle across time) (Contingent on Divine sovereignty).
 - The possibility of *synchronicity* (an acausal, or covert-causal, connecting principle at the same time) (Jung, 1952/1960).
- The implementation of a belief-allocation protocol for various hypotheses.
- The implementation of a triangulation protocol involving *revelation*, *reasoning*, and *reflections* (of authorities¹).

¹ Reading Michael Brown’s three volume work “Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus” (2000a, 2000b, 2003) served as an authority. Brown is Jewish, well versed in Jewish history and rabbinical thought, and the original languages holding a PhD in

Given this *judicial stance* how does one best approach certain prophecies? My initial shallow approach to prophecy was a failure of virtue epistemology. Originally, my intuitive sense that the evidence was compromised and weak was impulsive and shallow processing. As a similarity, I see Shermer's approach of attribution to *patternicity* (a Type 1 error given naturalism) weak as well. There are patterns in espoused prophecies. But what is the nature of these patterns? Yes, these prophetic patternicities, in some prophecies, may be in the reader's psyche only—Type 1 errors. Yes, one wonders if this was the case for some prophecies flagged by Matthew's psyche, for example. Type 1 errors for Matthew? Yes, there are legitimate questions about the mind of the prophet. Any type of reasonable position in line with a virtue epistemology would require an investigation of some prophecies, at least. A good principle would be to start small, but not too small. Focusing on a single prophecy can be too small, especially if one looks at one of the more problematic prophecies first. Focusing on a small group would be more informative. Considering various groupings there are three that I would consider as candidates from McDowell (1972): (1) Prophecies For a Single Day (i.e., the 24-hour period surrounding the crucifixion, N=29), (2) Prophecies Related to the Messiah (N=332), or (3) Prophecies General (Historic and Geographic). The 29 espoused prophecies surrounding the crucifixion seem manageable for an initial study.

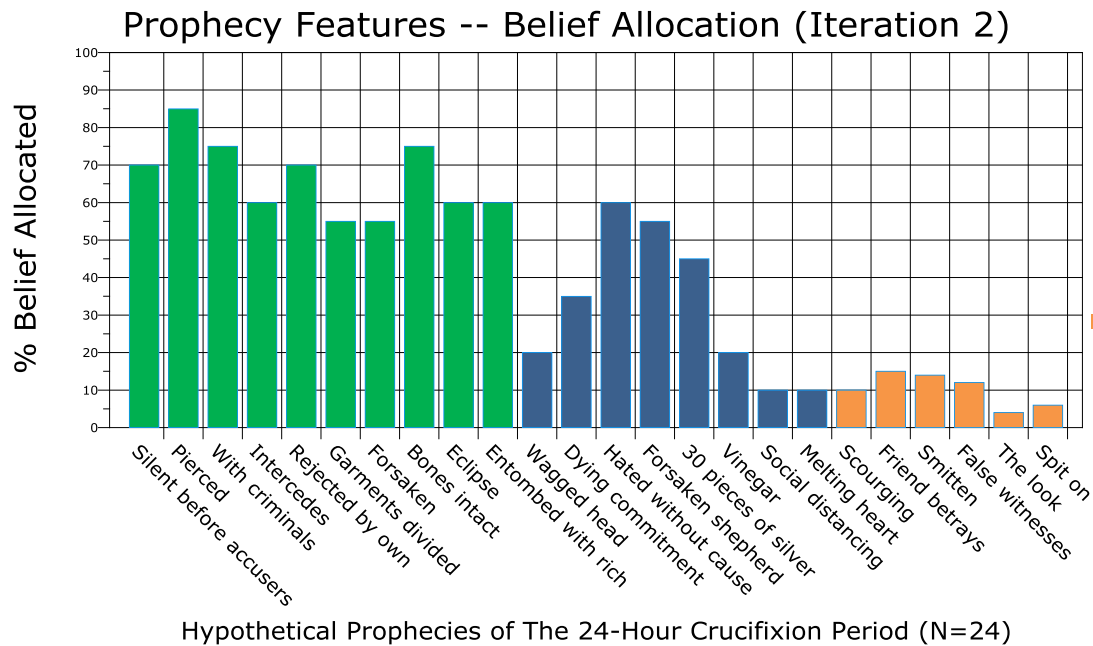
Applying a virtue epistemology now, and a judicial stance, would involve exploration in some depth, showing openness to possibilities, applying diligence in considerations, drawing upon various authorities, and probably adopting a tentativeness where warranted. Hence, I opt to examine a small group of prophecies, the "Prophecies For a Single Day" (i.e., the 24-hour period at the time of the crucifixion) ([see here](#)).

Discourse on Prophecies For a Single Day

In this first foray here into the study of subset of prophecies, there is the possibility of learning something about: (1) the theology of prophecy, (2) the mechanics of prophecy, (3) the cognitive context of prophecies, (4) the meaning of specific prophecies, (5) the value of clusters of prophecy, (6) evidential merits of prophecy, and (7) God himself.

McDowell (1972) has the number of such prophecies set at 29. My regrouping is less but allows for a chart with the espoused prophecies reordered somewhat into clusters of varying credibility. In the following chart the green colour signals "high credibility;" the blue signals "substantial credibility;" and the orange signals "weakened credibility." The percentages of belief allocation to each prophecy are subjective refinements on the colour-categories.

Near Eastern Languages and Literatures. As a messianic Jew he opens evidential windows. Pieces click together as the jigsaw puzzle fills in. Prophecy can give me a dramatic tilt towards theism, specifically, Judeo-Christian theism. Other authorities used are Sandoval (2010) for the critical side, and the edited collection by Newman (2001) for the Christian orthodox side.



Gaining prophetic credibility. The green level prophecies gain that weighting for various reasons. First, a clear Old Testament prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 53 or Amos 8:9) where the prophetic intent is specified serves credibility. Secondly, authentication by Jesus that a certain event or text is prophetic gives credibility. Thirdly, apostolic authority carries some weight in building credibility. Fourthly, multiple attestation builds credibility. Fifthly, patternicities that are not clear errors, or possible errors, can carry some weight in building credibility.

Given the pointers to credibility it is also possible to consider a prophecy in terms of the three major typologies addressed above: naturalistic, diachronistic, and synchronistic. Some prophecies are possibly best seen in this more fine grained light.

Challenging prophetic credibility. Prophecies at less than the green level may have some problems or possible limitations. First, one could ask: can poetry be prophecy? Arguing that poetry is prophecy seems to be a stretch. Or, are there various vehicles for prophecy with adjusted evidential weights as a function of the vehicle? Secondly, there are situations where the prophecy was fulfilled earlier leaving the notion of double fulfillment as an add-on which gives the appearance, on the surface, of being in a suspect position. Thirdly, the original Old Testament text doesn't seem to be pointing to the future event it gets attached to subsequently. This weakens a prophetic claim for 21st century types who look for linguistic precision. Fourthly, the Old Testament text seems contrary to its future application. Fifthly, patternicities can be examples of errors, Type 1 errors. Sixthly, there are challenges from authorities that raise significant questions; and often the prophetic interpretations seem confusing, fuzzy, messy, and hopelessly irresolvable. The proper approach seems to align with the following: be tentative, go

slowly, and develop a belief allocation protocol¹ considering multiple sides (hypotheses) of an issue or argument.

Given these concerns prophecies may best be seen to fall on a continuous scale (with varying degrees of belief or credibility) rather than a categorical scale (with a Yes/No response). This makes some sense if prophecy is viewed as producing belief rather than knowledge. Hence, contrary evidence does not refute the prophecy; rather, contrary evidence mitigates the belief allocated to the prophecy. The move from belief to knowledge is a cumulative case phenomenon much like the cumulative case for belief in God (Swinburne, 2004). It builds over time.

Some Conclusions

1. Prophecy is likely a post-hoc evidential-charism. Prophecies are for insiders not outsiders, as a rule. Prophecy is more likely informing for those purposively available (Moser, 2008, 2010) rather than those seeking spectator evidence. Yes, there are times when a prophecy is directed towards an outsider, but that is usually in the form of a judgment or enticement². If prophecies are gifts to the church this may explain partially the paucity problem. The gifts are distributed with a purpose.
2. Prophecies serve to build belief framed as both faith (trust) and knowledge (understanding). Standing in the presence of a prophecy cluster is a privileged position; one sees something about God, His activity in history, His power, His purpose, His concern, and His gifting. And, one sees something about God's creation.
3. Reflection on prophecies encountered does lead to a tilt towards theism. Study of prophecy clusters leads to a stronger tilt. There is a cumulative case effect (Swinburne, 2004) that builds across the accretion of prophecies examined.
4. Prophecies contribute to the cumulative case that builds across the accretion of all evidences (see Swinburne, 2004).
5. Biblical prophecies do seem more impressive than prophecies from Islam.

Discourse on Self-Deception

Self-deception is a form of blindness. Self-deception is one possibility to explain how or why someone might abandon a belief, even a properly basic belief (Plantinga, 1983, 2000), or what Barrett (2004, 2009, 2011) terms a non-reflective belief. Self-deception is a possibility to explain how a person can come to hold a belief that is unreasonable, immature, logically fallacious, or superficial.

¹ There are types of authorities approaching prophecy: (1) those out to refute all prophecy (a confirmation bias), (2) those out to confirm all prophecies (a confirmation bias), and (3) those out to consider some (or all) prophecies to see which ones warrant varying levels of credibility, and how much credibility. It is this latter approach which aligns with virtue epistemology.

² Prophecy can serve as data at some levels: (1) seed-evidence, that is, curiosity-inducing evidence, (2) evidential-charism, that is, gifting for certain individuals, with the purpose of edifying (informing, and wisdom-generating), (3) semiotic, that is signaling of transcendence and direction, or (4) knowledge-building, that is, knowing God at a deeper level.

Self-deception has many access routes. It is curiously strange that self-deception would saturate human nature, but it does seem pervasive. Self-deception is a prominent aspect in the psychological literature; human beings can fall prey to a range of defense mechanisms like denial, rationalization, suppression, repression, and projection. Self-deception can be formulated such that it makes psychological and theological sense. As applied to belief in God, belief in the wrong god, and the absence of any theistic belief, several frameworks are of interest here.

Bahnsen's View -- Reformed-Based Presuppositionalism

Bahnsen wrote his doctoral dissertation on self-deception. His dissertation is available as a pdf with a Google search. As an alternative, and also a shorter read, one can access his article in the Westminster Theological Journal (1995) based on his dissertation: <http://www.cmfnow.com/articles/PA207.htm>

Self deception is framed by Bahnsen as a critically important consideration to understand the human situation. Bahnsen's call to focus on self-deception is based in: (1) his research examining the nature and existence of self-deception, (2) the theology of self-deception one sees in Paul (Romans chapter 1), and (3) the arguments of Van Til related to his transcendental argument for God. Quoting Bahnsen (1995) here:

“So then, far from being a species of ‘fideism,’ as it is so often misconstrued by writers like Montgomery, Geisler or Sproul, Van Til's approach to the question of God's existence offers, I believe, the strongest form of proof and rational demonstration - namely, a ‘transcendental’ form of argument. He writes, ‘Now the only argument for an absolute God that holds water is a transcendental argument... [which] seeks to discover what sort of foundations the house of human knowledge must have, in order to be what it is.’ To put it briefly, using Van Til's words, ‘we reason from the impossibility of the contrary.’

In *The Defense of the Faith*, Van Til explains that this is an indirect method of proof, whereby the believer and the unbeliever together think through the implications of each other's most basic assumptions so that the Christian may show the non-Christian how the intelligibility of his experience, the meaningfulness of logic, and the possibility of science, proof or interpretation can be maintained only on the basis of the Christian worldview (i.e., on the basis of Christian theism taken as a unit, rather than piecemeal).”

The self-deception then emerges with respect to espoused-beliefs and beliefs-in-use. The argument is that one's “beliefs-in-use” presuppose theism. When espoused-beliefs conflict with beliefs-in-use self deception must be in play. Bahnsen (1995) expresses it as:

“The charge is made, you see, that presuppositionalism implies that unbelievers can know nothing at all and can make no contribution to science and scholarship since belief in God is epistemologically indispensable according to the presuppositionalist. And it is right here,

right at this crucial point in the analysis, that the notion of self-deception by the unbeliever enters the picture.

Van Til always taught that ‘the absolute contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian in the field of knowledge is said to be that of principle.’ He draws ‘the distinction... between the regenerated consciousness which in principle sees the truth and the unregenerate consciousness which by its principle cannot see the truth.’ If unbelievers were totally true to their espoused assumptions, then knowledge would indeed be impossible for them since they deny God. However the Christian can challenge the non-Christian approach to interpreting human experience ‘only if he shows the non-Christian that even in his virtual negation of God, he is still really presupposing God.’ He puts the point succinctly in saying: ‘Anti-theism presupposes theism.’ The intellectual achievements of the unbeliever, as explained in *The Defense of the Faith*, are possible only because he is ‘borrowing, without recognizing it, the Christian ideas of creation and providence.’ The non-Christian thus ‘makes positive contributions to science in spite of his principles’ - because he is inconsistent.”

The self-deception is a given. The atheist functions with a fundamental conflict between beliefs-in-use and espoused-beliefs. The non-Christian theist (e.g., the Islamist) functions with fundamental conflicts at the level of espoused-beliefs. The task of the apologist, with respect to the Islamist, is to present arguments showing why, and where, the espoused-beliefs of the Islamist are faulty.

Garver’s Elaborating View -- Working With Working Hypotheses

Garver offers a critique of Bahnsen and presents a richer elaboration on self-deception which springs from Bahnsen’s original formulation. Garver’s critique may be found here: <http://www.joelgarver.com/writ/phil/bahnsen.htm>

For one thing Garver finds Bahnsen *too rationalistic*. He asks: “Why not just come out and say that sometimes people believe contradictory propositions? His analysis seems to me to be caught in the same kind of dynamics that prevented Plato's Socrates from seeing the possibility of a person knowingly doing what she believes to be wrong.” A possible sequence is: (1) knowingly doing wrong, (2) suppressing the knowledge of wrongdoing, and (3) living with the repression in an unconscious state. The first two steps involve choice. It is at the second and third steps that the self-deception solidifies.

The point Garver makes is consistent with the contrast between beliefs-in-use and espoused-beliefs. This framing is useful. People, especially postmodern academics, frequently advance a set of espoused-beliefs. Yet, somewhat ironically, you often catch them doing things, and saying things, that indicate they do not use their espoused-beliefs, or truly believe their espoused-beliefs. Their cognitive surface structure (i.e., espoused-beliefs) does not align with their noetic deep structure, their real beliefs (beliefs-in-use). It is a form of self-deception. This self-deception doesn’t need to be of the profound calibre. Such self-deception can be a product of one’s working-worldview, one’s game-playing, one’s appetites, one’s preferences, and so on.

The elaborating suggestion in Garver relates to the notion of working with a *working hypothesis*. It is common practice in science and research to adopt a working hypothesis. Garver expresses the notion of a *working hypothesis* in several ways, seen as follows:

- “Cases of accepting not-*p* as a working hypothesis by resolving to act as if not-*p* were true.” (See where it leads! Is this hypothetical self-deception?)
- “Cases of taking a policy of action to bring oneself to believe that not-*p*.” (See if it works, and has pragmatic value! Is this functional self-deception?)
- “Simply asserting that not-*p*, despite underlying belief to the contrary.” (Is this malevolent, prideful, or foolish self-deception?)
- “Aligning oneself with others who are committed to not-*p*.” (Is this socialized self-deception? Or group-think self-deception?)

Then, as Garver notes: “None of these cases would count as full-blown belief that not-*p* (and thus would not count as cases of holding contradictory beliefs), but they might look very much like it.” It is conceivable, however, that a process could be operative here; in effect, working hypotheses could morph into actual beliefs as a function of habit, lack of self-examination, simple preference, or the operation of confirmation bias. Self-deception would be a product of earlier choices—a choice history.

A third proposal offered by Garver is related to *existential awareness* as opposed to propositional knowledge. Garver notes that there are “forms of knowledge” that one must consider when flagging self-deception. He writes: “...according to Bahnsen, unbelievers ignore and deny through a process of rationalization” but this “... is not always best analyzed in terms of the subject's *propositional* knowledge--a belief in certain propositions. There are forms of knowledge (personal awareness or acquaintance, practical know-how, intuition, etc.) which are not exhausted by propositional knowledge. For example, can a couple's knowledge of how to dance the Lindy Hop be best analyzed in terms of a set of beliefs about the dance? Or does it involve some kind of practical feel for the steps, an embodied awareness of the movements that cannot be fully exhausted propositionally? If so, then there may be kinds or instances of knowledge that do not in any way involve the subjects believing certain propositions. Thus, rather than knowledge ‘*that* God exists,’ the knowledge of God may sometimes be better theorized in terms of an existential awareness of the divine presence, a fundamental openness of the human person to the Person of God, or the like.” Existential awareness (via emotional sense, intuition, *sensus divinitatis*, synchronicity, experience, and so on) requires epistemological expertise in distinguishing sound beliefs, reasonable beliefs, better beliefs, and true-beliefs, from self-deception. Critical thinking in this area involves knowledge, strategies, skills, and a disposition.

Then there is the issue of *trust*, a key feature of the Reformation view of faith as “knowledge, assent, and trust.” Garver writes: “There may also be unbelievers who quite consciously believe that God exists and assent to that proposition, but still lack the requisite faith

in God--a trusting reliance upon God, working itself out in love. According to James, the demons have such a faithless belief in God.”

Consider also that there are self-deception drivers like *levels of consciousness*. Garver asks: “What about unconscious beliefs? Levels of consciousness? A multiplicity of competing wills? Compartmentalization? Sure, these are complicated, but so are people in the image of an infinite God.” Psychological states like altered levels of consciousness could be important drivers of self-deception. Consider somnambulism, hypnotism, hypoxia, drug-induced states, split-brain/split-consciousness effects, the confabulations of the left hemisphere, heuristic strategies, the confirmation bias, and so on. One needs to be vigilant with respect to propensities to self-deception in self, and in the others one considers as authorities.

The *messy side of things* is also flagged by Garver: “Rather, not to put too fine a point on it, we are pulsing, hot, smelly bodies, whose hearts are revealed in emotions, desires, gestures, positions, poetry, music-making, and relationships and who are equipped with conceptual, linguistic, and symbol-transforming capacities that are thoroughly embedded and enmeshed within habits, family, society, and culture. Epistemological analyses that don't make room for these kinds of considerations, it seems to me, either falsely portray experience or provide accounts so general as to be vacuous.” Again, one needs to be vigilant with respect to the shallow side of human beings, the dark side of human being and the immature side of human beings which are conducive to faulty beliefs which then serve as sources of self-deception in self, and in the others one considers as authorities.

The “*heart has reasons*” that reason knows not of, is a flag alluding to Pascal. Garver writes: “The question is, given Bahnsen's emphases and the overall shape of his apologetic, what do you do with a person who basically offers no intellectual reason why he rejects Christ? In such cases it is often a far more complex matter of desires, personal identifications, emotional configurations, past experiences, idols, unrighteousness in lifestyle, and so on. Even when intellectual reasons are given, they are more often than not, I think, less intellectual rationalizations and more the epiphenomena of practical rationalizations that arise from the heart.”

So what is happening in this area of self-deception? Rationalization, denial, projection, suppression, and so forth, lead to self-deception; this is a dangerous self-deception. The fact of the existence of self-deception, and the case for self-deception, calls for careful consideration of beliefs. Clearly, such self-deception factors do indeed influence rejection of properly basic beliefs, fundamental beliefs, epistemologically sound beliefs, common sense beliefs, and prudential beliefs. Self-deception is a darkness, a blindness, a state in need of light. Evidence, critique, and argument, offer light to both the anti-theist and the non-Christian theist. The anti-Christian theist, for example the Islamist (e.g., Ibrahim, 1997), would be well advised to consider critique, argument and evidence that challenges a personal position. Does that position stand up to critical evaluation? That critical disposition and evaluation would be scientifically sound and epistemologically sound.

Trivers' View -- Evolutionary Selection Principles

Does an evolutionary psychology approach to self-deception offer any tools for a consideration of the Islamic self-deception that seems to characterize Ibrahim (1997) with respect to the quality of his arguments? For Trivers (2011) self-deception is viewed as preferentially excluding from consciousness true information, yet including false information. Why would one do this? Adaptive advantage! Trivers' hypothesis is as follows: "...this entire counterintuitive arrangement exists for the benefit of manipulating others. We hide reality from our conscious minds the better to hide it from onlookers (2011, p.9)." The self-deceived person has an advantage in the deception of others.

Trivers posits a threefold advantage to this self-deception.

- (1) First, a self-deceived person, being unconscious of their deception, does not give off tells or cues that signal deception.
- (2) Second, the self-deceived person does not have an increased conscious cognitive load to maintain the deception, and consequently the brain has more access to resources for other tasks.
- (3) Third, if the deception is revealed, the self-deceived person has an excuse, an escape hatch—they can blame it on something other than the self, the willful self.

In effect then, the self-deceived person potentially has an advantage over others in manipulation. This, in accord with his Darwinian view, serves to propagate one's genes. This is an interesting evolutionary take! Natural selection selects for deception, and ultimately self-deception. If there is a natural selection process in play here, independent of the creation/evolution conflicts, the "deficient-person outcome," that is, from an epistemological and moral perspective, is alarming. But also the "successful-person outcome," that is, from a gene-propagator perspective, is alarming. Either route to self-deception is potentially quite important. The self-deception we are dealing with would be quite entrenched. Overcoming such self-deception would require some dramatic precursors: time, effort, openness, education, authorities, models, evidences, arguments, virtue, power, and perhaps even the miraculous, driving a desire for truth.

Indeed, Trivers' view is not particularly truth-friendly! As it is certainly consistent with Darwinian notions of development, and current variants of the principle of natural selection, those wishing to advance knowledge and truth (as correspondence with reality) have a major battle ahead of them in dealing with deception and self-deception. Trivers frames the issue in a bleak light: humans are not truth-seeking, nor truth oriented. The lesson seems to be that we should not look to humans for truth; and that would hold for the naturalists, the scientists, the evolutionary biologists, as well as the politicians, theologians, atheists, and moralists we encounter.

Several challenges to Trivers' thesis parallel challenges to naturalism. First, Trivers' position is somewhat consistent with the naturalism that Plantinga (1993b, 2002) challenges as self-refuting. Plantinga would agree that: on naturalism, humans are not truth seeking. See the discussion on Plantinga's contention that naturalism is self refuting.

Second, naturalism as presented by Rea (2002) argues that there are ontological consequences of adopting naturalism, “unpalatable consequences” as he labels them. Particularly, naturalism fails at saving two key ontological views: the realism of material objects (RMO), and the realism of other minds (ROM). That people believe in the realism of material objects and the realism of other minds points to beliefs-in-use that do not align with a particular espoused belief, an espoused belief in naturalism, as Rea (2002) sees it. An aspect of the blindness, it seems, is partly in not seeing the problems!

Thirdly, leaving aside for the moment the fact that Triver’s natural selection predisposes one to be deceived about natural selection, there are other substantive challenges. Behe’s (2007) challenge to the mechanism of natural selection gives one pause here. If Behe is right, and given the empirical data he examines he seems to have a case one should consider, then natural selection apparently can get one only a few steps along the way to creating the phylogenetically new (Behe, 2007, 2010). Natural selection might work well within species but the construction of new structures is a bridge too far at the moment (see also Mazur, 2009)). Even someone like William Provine questions natural selection. Natural selection for deception, even self-deception, may work very well within species, but if natural selection fails to generate new structures additional bases should be on the table for understanding self-deception. If so, then self-deception is open to other roots; those roots are sin, evil, self-preservation, malfeasance, and “principalities and powers.” These may be stronger roots than self-propagation driven by natural selection.

Fourth, Smith (2009) offers a challenge linked to rights. He asks: “Does moral belief in universal benevolence and human rights fit well with and flow naturally from the facts of a naturalistic universe (2009, p. 294).” He then adds: “The answer I will consider is: No, if we are intellectually honest we will see that a belief in universal benevolence and human rights as a moral fact and obligation does not make particular sense, fit well with, or naturally flow from the realities of a naturalistic universe (p. 294).” While not a refutation of Trivers’ position, Smith puts more information onto the table for consideration. In the broad context of these challenges suggested here, the issue of self-deception, human misunderstanding, is elaborated.

Fifth, common sense acknowledges the deceptive side of human nature, and common sense accesses the position that humans are indeed truth-seeking at a transcendent level, in spite of the deception. On the one hand, there is the override of the sciences pushing for truth. Further, there is the theological override, the call of truth. Strikingly, Reid makes the common sense case, the case that humans are basically truth-seeking. I tilt towards the Reidian position, hence truth, hence theism, and hence Christian theism.

What then of Trivers’ claim? It is a rich resource for the study of our current state, a state of self-deception. Even if Trivers is wrong regarding the evolutionary source as the sole source, he is often quite right in elaborating on the blight of self-deception. The blindness! His nine categories (see Trivers, 2011, pp. 15-27) of self-deception offer various sources of blindness that ironically open Christian-theistic-eyes: (1) self-inflation, which has as an intention the blinding

of others, is consistent with a type of self-blinding, (2) derogation of others, is a blinding to others, and reflective of blindness-seeking, (3) “out-group” derogation and targeted hostility is a type of blindness, (4) power blinds, it blinds the self as seen in cognitive studies using power primes, (5) a sense of, or positioning of, moral superiority shows the judging of others more harshly than the judging of self, signalling our blindness to both others and the self, (6) the illusion of control, (7) biased social theory construction: here our theories of marriage, employment, society, and so on, are such that we are then able “...to persuade self and others of false reality, the better to benefit ourselves (p. 24),” that theories might be adopted, or constructed to self-blind is a challenge to science, (8) the creation of false personal narratives and histories are designed to make one more attractive (with regard to power, physicality, morality, intelligence, etc.) which is a deception of others, and self, and (9) personal psychological modules that are unconscious and deceptive, such as, the module Trivers confesses to: a mild kleptomania. Blindnesses ironically can be seen. But the blindnesses that are seen, along with their drivers, speak more to a broken, sinful, malevolent, and untrustworthy human nature. Trivers’ side! Also in the background are the blindnesses to the other side: (1) the historical aspect for humans of benevolence, creativity, service, knowledge-building of mankind, and the noble, honourable, self-sacrificing, loving side, (2) the relational aspect for humans with others, God, animals, ancestors, and nature, and (3) the teleological aspect for mankind, with respect to the redemption of human being and nature, forgiveness and the grace available.

Further insights from Trivers (2011) that flesh out the pandemic state of self-deception can be seen in his treatment of the rewriting of historical narratives (e.g., The Japanese travesties during World War II, the Armenian genocide, Zionism, etc.), the justifications of war, the practices of religions, the treatment of women, male-female relations, and more. Particularly fascinating are the biological links attempted to correlate religious diversity with parasitic load in a geographic area. Interesting, but likely one is still more inclined to see religious diversity linked to cognitive processing rather than the processing of parasites.

Mele’s View -- and Subsequent Cognitive Construals

For Mele (1997) self-deception is viewed as not intentional, not a by-product of evolutionary psychology, not a valuable thing; rather, it is largely the product of biases, particularly motivationally biased beliefs, desires, and wants. We can be biased to believe what we want to be true. For Mele, one cannot hold that a belief is true and false at the same time, at least in light of current cognitive research.

“In stock examples of self-deception, people typically believe something they *want* to be true: that their spouses are not involved in extramarital flings, that their children are not using drugs, and so on. It is a commonplace that self deception, in garden-variety cases, is *motivated* by wants such as these. (Mele, 1997, p. 93).”

Motivation influences cognitive behaviour selectively. Selective attention, biased hypothesis-generation, biased evidence-gathering, hypothesis-testing and acceptance criteria, types-of-inferences, selective memory search, beliefs placed on the table, theory consideration,

and theory construction are utilized in support of preferred beliefs, desires, and wants. Self-deception! The goal is to support a particular conclusion, a confirmation bias, and a conclusion that aligns with what one wants to be true, or hopes to be true. The overall case for not believing p is greater than the case for believing p yet one opts for believing p , or commits to believing p . This seems to be the case with Ibrahim (1997) and his commitment to believing purported evidential claims in spite of the overwhelming case against such belief.

“Should it turn out that the motivated nature of self-deception entails that self-deceivers intentionally deceive themselves and requires that those who deceive themselves into believing that p start by believing that $\sim p$, theorists who seek a tight fit between self-deception and stereotypical interpersonal deception would be vindicated. Whether self-deception can be motivated without being intentional – and without the self-deceiver’s starting with the relevant true belief – remains to be seen (Mele, 1997, p. 93).”

There are many who offer additional considerations for Mele, additional factors that when placed on the table seem to show that self-deception is a construct not yet fully formulated or grasped in psychology, philosophy, theology, or religious studies. For the present purposes, in addressing “understanding theistic misunderstanding,” or “understanding the choosing of the wrong god,” the fact of non-intentional self-deception is sufficient to make the case that the psychology of self-deception shows self-deception functions as a belief constraint.

Broadening the issue of constraint, one can draw upon the comments from the Open Peer Commentary on Mele’s arguments. These comments add cognitive construals that enrich the construct of self-deception, and the outcome of disbelief, or faulty belief. A few comments are added here as a list:

- “‘Self-deception’ usually occurs when a false belief would be more rewarding than an objective belief in the short run, but less rewarding in the long run. Given hyperbolic discounting of delayed events, people will be motivated in their long-range interest to create self-enforcing rules for testing reality, and in their long-range interest to evade these rules (Ainslie, 1997, p. 103).” (*Note the importance of rewards short term and long term.*)(James 4:3)
- “Mele views self-deception as belief sustained by motivationally biased treatment of evidence. This view overlooks something essential, for it does not reckon with the fact that in self-deception the truth is dangerously close at hand and must be repeatedly suppressed. Self-deception is not so much a matter of what one positively believes as what one manages not to think (Bach, 1997, p. 105).” (*Note the importance of proximity to truth, and apparently the intentional suppression of truth.*)(Rom 1:18)
- “Mele’s analysis of self-deception is persuasive but it might also be useful to consider the varieties of self-deception that occur in real world settings. Instances of self-deception can be classified along three dimensions: implicit versus explicit, motivated

versus process-based, and public versus private (Bornstein, 1997, p. 108).” (*Note the importance of a broadened perspective.*)(*Proverbs 18:17; 23:12*)

- “The simultaneous possession of conflicting beliefs is both possible and logical within current models of human cognition. Specifically, evidence of lateral inhibition and state-dependent memory suggests a means by which conflicting beliefs can coexist without requiring ‘mental exotica.’ We suggest that paradoxical self-deception enables the self deceiver to store important information for use at a later time (Brown & Kenrick, 1997, p. 109).” (*Note the importance of various models of cognitive processing that are supportive of self-deception.*)(*Rom 1:20-21*)
- “In an analysis of the role of emotion in self-deception is presented. It is argued that instances of emotional self-deception unproblematically meet Mele’s jointly sufficient criteria. It is further proposed that a consideration of different forms of mental representation allows the possibility of instances of self-deception in which contradictory beliefs (in the form p and $\sim p$) are held simultaneously with full awareness (Dagleish, 1997, p. 110).” (*Note the potential importance of emotional factors.*)
- “The mechanisms invoked to demonstrate how self-deception can occur without intention or awareness imply that self-deceptive beliefs are nevertheless the outcome of inappropriate and often egoistically driven processes. In contrast, models of pragmatic reasoning suggest that self-deception may well be the “reasonable” output of a more generalized, adaptive approach to hypothesis testing (Friedrich, 1997, p. 113).” (*Note the possible importance of reasoning and even types of reasoning.*)(*Isaiah 1:18*)
- “A major worry in self-deception research has been the implication that people can hold a belief that something is true and false at the same time: a logical as well as a psychological impossibility. However, if beliefs are held with imperfect confidence, voluntary self-deception in the sense of seeking evidence to reject an unpleasant belief becomes entirely plausible and demonstrably real (Gibbins, 1997, p. 115).” (*Note the importance of calibrating beliefs.*)(*John 20:30-31*)
- “As understood by neodissociation and sociocognitive theorists, hypnotic responses are instances of self-deception. Neodissociation theory matches the strict definition of Sackeim and Gur (1978) and sociocognitive theory matches Mele’s looser definition. Recent data indicate that many hypnotized individuals deceive themselves into holding conflicting beliefs without dissociating, but others convince themselves that the suggested state of affairs is true without simultaneously holding a contrary belief

(Kirsch, 1997, p. 118).” (*Note the insight from hypnotism, altered states of consciousness, unconscious motives, and so on.*)(Rom 7:15-23)

- “Contrary to Mele’s suggestion, not all garden-variety self deception reduces to bias-generated false beliefs (usually held contrary to the evidence). Many cases center around self-deceiving intentions to avoid painful topics, escape unpleasant truths, seek comfortable attitudes, and evade self-acknowledgment. These intentions do not imply paradoxical projects or contradictory belief states (Martin, 1997, p. 122).” (*Note the importance of functional ends or goals in self-deception.*)
- “An important way to become self-deceived, omitted by Mele, is by intentionally ignoring and avoiding the contemplation of evidence one has for an upsetting conclusion, knowing full well that one is giving priority to one’s present peace of mind over the search for truth. Such intentional self-deception may be especially hard to observe scientifically (Perring, 1997, p. 123).” (*Note the importance of peace of mind as motive for self-deceptive belief-selection.*)

The value of such Open Peer Commentary serves to keep self-deception in the forefront of belief constraints, disbelief, and faulty beliefs. Thus self-deception, as both an objective pursued and a methodology used, becomes an important source of disbelief, or faulty belief, in various forms, levels, and scenarios.

How might this self-deception be operative in the case of the claims advanced by someone like Ibrahim (1997)? From the Open Peer Commentary we might consider that *rewards* are in play (Ainslie, 1997, p. 103), the *intentional suppression of the truth* is in play (Bach, 1997, p. 105), and *narrowing of thought* is in play (Bornstein, 1997, p. 108; see also Vallacher and Wegner, 1985, 1987). For Mele, *beliefs, desires and wants* are in play (Mele, 1997, p. 93). With respect to Trivers there are nine factors in play (see Trivers, 2011, pp. 15-27): (1) *self-inflation*, (2) *derogation of others*, (3) “*out-group*” *derogation* and targeted hostility, (4) *power blinds*, (5) a sense of, or *positioning of, moral superiority*, (6) the *illusion of control*, (7) *biased social theory* construction, (8) the *creation of false personal narratives and histories* designed to make one more attractive (with regard to power, physicality, morality, intelligence, etc.), and (9) *personal psychological modules that are unconscious and deceptive* (Trivers confesses to a mild kleptomania, for example).

Asking if Ibrahim shows a vulnerability to any of these flags leads to a few potential vulnerabilities that come to mind. Particularly: rewards; intentional suppression of the truth; narrowing of thought; beliefs, desires, and wants; *self-inflation*; *derogation of others*; *positioning of moral superiority*; the *illusion of control*; *biased social theory* construction; and the *creation of false personal narratives and histories*.

Discourse on Science

The Scientific Skeptical Stance

I have argued earlier (see *Entrenched Learnings – Vol. 1*) that we need to be on guard with respect to the sciences. Is it possible that our most valued approach to knowledge, that is, the scientific methodology, can blind us, or contribute to our blinding? Yes. I have argued earlier the adoption of naturalism can blind us (see also Rea, 2002). I have argued earlier, System 2 processes (see also Kahneman, 2011)—where the sciences reside—can override System 1 processing which is a major problem when System 1 contributions to our cognitive mixing-pot are correct. I have argued earlier, the scientific “circling of the wagons” can blind those trying to break free (see also Feyerabend, 1975, 2011; Kuhn, 1970; Lakatos, 1970). I have argued earlier, the sciences are filled with fraud, fudging, rigging, gate-keeping abuses, self aggrandizement, ambitions, and so on) blinding the unsuspecting. I have argued earlier, the imprimatur of authorities can blind one. I have argued earlier, the professional can be primed to a blindness, which would blind others. I have argued earlier, learning theory can blind one. I have argued earlier, technology can blind one via shallowing-of-thinking and narrowing thinking as in action-identification theory. I have argued earlier, a broader epistemic scope is needed than the pure absolute evidentialism of the sciences. Sciences can blind! Look farther afield. There’s more! Love science, but love more!

Conclusions: The Abductive Claim

When considering the purported scientific claim for the Qur’an and its supernatural underpinnings, the cumulative case against such claims grows like an avalanche. Unstoppable! That some scientists can subscribe to such claims is puzzling, but only a little puzzling when considered from a psychological perspective. There are reasons for smart people to believe stupid things (see Sternberg, 2002).

Ibrahim would do we well to attend to some Moslem critics inside Islam; for example Fatah (2008) and Manji (2003). He would also do well to attend to critics who were former Moslems (e.g., Ali, 2007, 2010; Warraq, 2011). More important are the historically rooted critics that both Spencer (2012) and Holland (2012) draw upon. The critical attitude characteristic of a virtue epistemology (and the scientific method) would put Ibrahim on far firmer ground.

All things considered, so far, the abductive inference to the best explanation is as follows: the Islamic evidential case fails: (1) on its own merits, (2) when compared to relevant Christian evidences, (3) when considered philosophically, psychologically, and hermeneutically, and (4) when considered through a straightforward scientific lens involving contemporary evidences, arguments, theories, and accepted knowledge.

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Appendix 1: Belief Allocation To Biblical “Prophecies For a Single Day” Over Three Iterations

The multiple iterations are characteristic of a scholarly epistemology that revisits evidence and arguments for claims in order to proportion belief as a function of subsequent evidence, arguments, and critique. Prophecies for a single day (McDowell, 1972) are considered here in a first iteration and then in second and third iterations. The entire undertaking is basically a cursory examination of a unique cluster of purported prophecies. The Biblical texts noted in the chart are pointers only; their broader contexts were considered but are not included here in the interests of space. The approach indicates a more sophisticated approach to prophecy than that offered by Ibrahim.

Iteration 1

The question here is how much weight, or credibility, can be allocated to each prophecy under consideration. As can be seen in the next figure the weights are set at 50/50. In effect, the reasonable approach is to keep an open mind. There are three types of authorities approaching prophecy: (1) those out to refute all prophecy (e.g., the cynics and critics), (2) those out to confirm all prophecies (e.g., superficial polemicists and apologists), and (3) those out to consider some (or all) prophecies to see which ones might warrant varying levels of credibility, and how much credibility (e.g., disciples, and seekers). It is this latter approach which aligns with virtue epistemology.

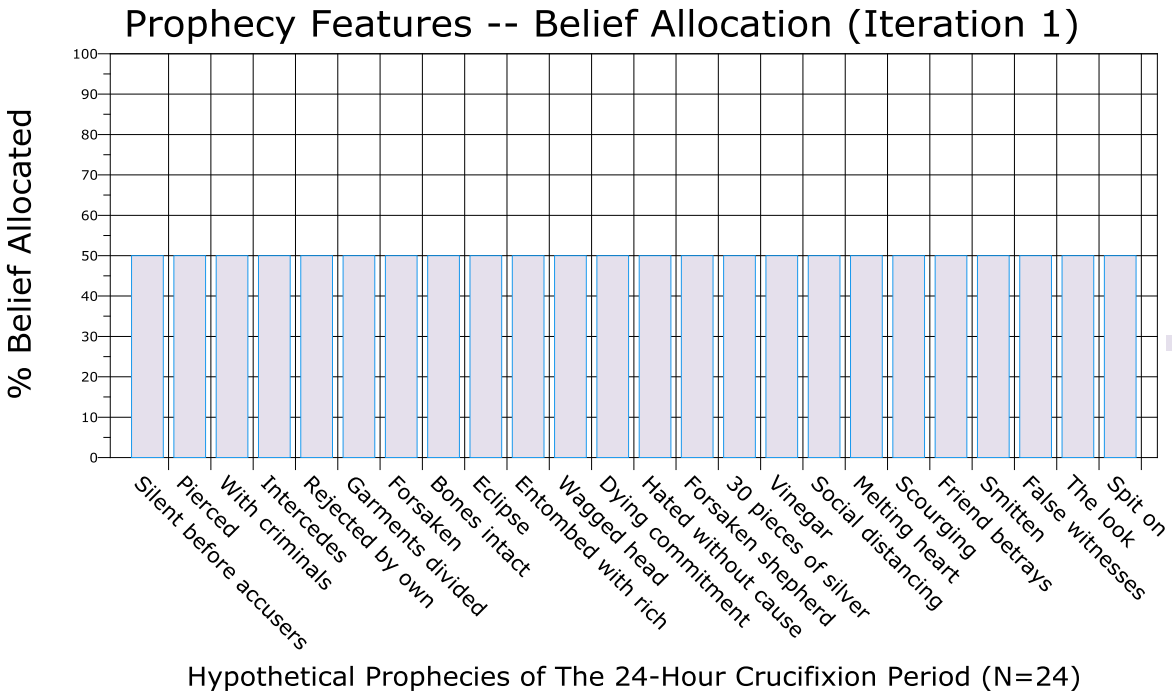


Figure 2. Initial belief allocation to various prophecies regarding the 24-hour period surrounding the crucifixion.

An examination of these purported prophecies and fulfillments follow in the next chart. Some problems, or concerns, are flagged. There is a subsequent judgment—seminal opinions—concerning the credibility levels of the various prophecies. The judgments are colour coded as: Green --Serious credibility; Blue --Substantial credibility to Moderate Credibility; and Orange --Weakened credibility. The prophecies also receive an initial judgment regarding the three types discussed earlier: [naturalistic](#), [diachronistic](#), or [synchronistic](#), along with their subtypes. In addition the likelihood of making the Type 1 error (seeing a meaningful real pattern when there isn't one) is noted.

| Prophecy | Fulfillment | Explanation | McDowell Number | Possible Type 1 Error |
|--|---|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <p>Silent before accusers Is 53:7</p> <p>7He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.</p> | <p>Mt 27:12-19 12And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. 13Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” 14And He did not answer him with regard to even a <i>single</i> charge, so the governor was quite amazed.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived</p> <p>Diachronicity</p> <p>Formal Prophecy in Isaiah</p> <p>Authenticated Prophecy: -In OT prophet -By apostle</p> <p>Problems: -Is the silence a big issue? -There are Jewish authorities who apply Isaiah 53 to Israel.</p> | 39 | Not Strong |
| <p>Pierced Ps 22:16, 16For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.</p> <p>Zech 12:10</p> <p>10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a</p> | <p>Lk 23:33; 33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.</p> <p>Jn 19:34; 34But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.</p> <p>35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived</p> <p>Diachronicity God intervenes</p> <p>Authenticated prophecy. -OT prophet -Apostolic authority -Multiple attesting -Jesus pointed to Psalm 22</p> <p>Problems:</p> | 40, 44, 59 | Not Strong |

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| <p>firstborn.</p> | <p>may believe.</p> <p>36For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.”</p> <p>37 And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED.”</p> <p>Jn 20:25</p> <p>25 So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”</p> <p>26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.”</p> <p>27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”</p> | <p>Poetry as Prophecy?</p> | | |
| <p><i>Punished with Criminals</i> Is 53:12 12Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.</p> | <p>Mt 27:38; 38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who <i>are going to</i> destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”</p> <p>Mk 15:27, 28</p> <p>Luke 23 33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u></p> <p>OT Prophetic authority</p> <p>Multiple attesting</p> | <p>45</p> | <p>Not Strong</p> |
| <p><i>Interceded for persecutors</i> Is 53:12 12Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out</p> | <p>Lk 23:34 34 But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.</p> | <p><u>Diachronicity</u> <u>God intervenes</u></p> <p>Authentic OT prophecy</p> <p>Apostolic</p> | <p>46</p> | <p>Not Strong</p> |

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| <p>Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.</p> | <p>(Heb 9:24; I Jn 2:1)</p> | <p>authority</p> | | |
| <p>Rejected by his own Is 53:3; 3He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.</p> <p>Ps 69:8; 8I have become estranged from my brothers And an alien to my mother's sons.</p> <p>Ps 118:22 22The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner <i>stone</i>.</p> | <p>Jn 7:5, 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him. Jn 7:48; 48 "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?" Jn 1:11, 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.</p> <p>Mt 21:42-43 42Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER <i>stone</i>;' THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?" 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.</p> | <p><u>Diachronicity</u> <u>God is actively involved</u></p> <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u></p> <p>Isaiah is authentic OT prophet</p> <p>Jesus points to a Psalm (118)</p> | <p>47</p> | <p>Not Strong</p> |
| <p>Garments divided Ps 22:17 18They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.</p> | <p>Jn 19:23-24 23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and <i>also</i> the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, <i>to decide</i> whose it shall be"; <i>this was</i> to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."</p> | <p><u>Naturalistic</u> <u>God-perceived</u> <u>naturalism</u></p> <p>Authentic prophecy</p> <p>Jesus pointed to Psalm 22</p> <p>Apostolic authority.</p> <p>The ring of pathos</p> | <p>52</p> | <p>Not Strong</p> |

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| | <p>25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the <i>wife</i> of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.</p> <p>Luke 23: 34 34 But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.</p> | | | |
| <p><u>Forsaken</u> <u>Ps 22:1</u></p> <p>1My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.</p> | <p>Mt 27:46 45Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u></p> <p><u>Diachronicity</u></p> <p>Authentic prophecy.</p> <p>Authority: -Jesus -Apostolic</p> | <p>55</p> | <p>?</p> |
| <p><u>Bones intact</u> <u>Ps 34:20</u></p> <p>19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all. 20 He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken.</p> <p><u>Ps 22:14</u> 14I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.</p> | <p>Jn 19:33 31 Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and <i>that</i> they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; 33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 36For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.” 37 And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED.”</p> | <p><u>Diachronicity</u></p> <p>Authentic prophecy.</p> <p>Apostolic authority</p> <p>Issue: Here poetry is a vehicle for prophecy</p> <p>Multiple attesting</p> | <p>57</p> | <p>Not Strong</p> |
| <p><u>Entombed with the rich</u> <u>Is 53:9</u></p> <p>9His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.</p> | <p>Mt 27:57-60 57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given <i>to him</i>. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,</p> | <p><u>Diachronicity</u></p> <p>Prophetic authority</p> | <p>61</p> | <p>Not Strong</p> |

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| | 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. | | | |
| <p><u>Eclipse</u> <u>Amos 8:9</u> 9 “It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight.</p> | <p>Mt 27:45 45Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u> Patternicity OT Prophetic authority Check eclipses</p> | 60 | Not Strong |
| <p><u>30 pieces of silver</u> <u>Zech 11:12</u> (sold) 12 I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give <i>me</i> my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty <i>shekels</i> of silver as my wages. Zech 11:13 (thrown) 13 Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter, <i>that</i> magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty <i>shekels</i> of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. Zech 11:13 (potter) 13 Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter, <i>that</i> magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty <i>shekels</i> of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. Jeremiah??</p> | <p>Mt 26:15; 27:3 (sold) “What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?” And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. Mt 27:5 (thrown) 5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. Mt 27:7 (potter) 7And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; 10 AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER’S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME.”</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>Divergent</u> <u>Patternicity</u> (A hit) Apostolic authority authenticating as prophecy. Problem: not identified as prophecy in Zechariah, rather it seems to be history, or story, or (Problem: attribution to Jeremiah)</p> | 34, 35, 36 | ? |
| <p><u>Forsaken Shepherd</u> <u>Zech 13:7</u> “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.</p> | <p>Mk 14:27 27And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’” Mark 14:50 49“Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but <i>this has taken place</i> to fulfill the Scriptures.” 50And they all left Him and</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u> <u>Patternicity</u> (A hit) Authenticated Prophecy: -By Jesus -By apostles Problem: Context of Zech 13?</p> | 37 | Not Strong |

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| | <p>fled. Mt 26:56, 31 56“But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled. Matt26:31 31 Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’”</p> | <p>Judgment. Against the sheep? One third refined, redeemed? Is it historical for Zechariah?</p> | | |
| <p>Hated without cause Ps 69:4; 4Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies; What I did not steal, I then have to restore. Is 49:7 7Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel <i>and</i> its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, “Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.”</p> | <p>Jn 15:25 25 “But <i>they have done this</i> to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.’”</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived Patternicity Psalm is authenticated by Jesus</p> | 48 | ? |
| <p>The dying commitment Ps 31:5 5Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.</p> | <p>Lk 23:46 46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” Having said this, He breathed His last.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived Patternicity. A hit.</p> | 56 | ? |
| <p>Mocked Ps 22:7-8 7All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, <i>saying</i>, 8 “Commit <i>yourself</i> to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him,</p> | <p>Mt 27:31 31 After they had mocked Him, they took the <i>scarlet</i> robe off Him and put His <i>own</i> garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived Patternicity But Psalm 22 was pointed to by Jesus</p> | 42 | ? |

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| because He delights in him.” | | | | |
| <p>The wagged head Ps 109:25: 25I also have become a reproach to them; When they see me, they wag their head.</p> <p>Ps 22:7</p> <p>6But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. 7 All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 8 “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”</p> | <p>Mt 27:39 38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who <i>are going to</i> destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking <i>Him</i> and saying, 42“He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived</p> <p>Patternicity</p> <p>Authenticated by Jesus pointing to Psalm 22.</p> | 50 | Yes |
| <p>Suffering thirst, vinegar offered Ps 69:21</p> <p>20Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, And for comforters, but I found none. 21 They also gave me gall for my food And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.</p> | <p>Mt 27:34; 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, 34 they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.</p> <p>Jn 19:28-29 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” 29A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a <i>branch of</i> hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived</p> <p>Patternicity</p> | 53, 54 | ? |
| <p>Melting heart Ps 22:14</p> <p>14I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.</p> | <p>Jn 19:34 34But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived</p> <p>Patternicity</p> <p>Poetry</p> <p>Jesus pointed to Psalm 22</p> | 58 | ? |
| <p>Social distancing Ps 38:11</p> <p>11My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;</p> | <p>Lk 23:49; 49And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived</p> <p>Patternicity</p> | 49 | Yes |

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| <p>And my kinsmen stand afar off.</p> | <p>standing at a distance, seeing these things.</p> <p>Mk 15:40, 40There were also <i>some</i> women looking on from a distance, among whom <i>were</i> Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome.</p> <p>41 When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and <i>there were</i> many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.</p> <p>Mt 27:55-56 55 Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him.</p> <p>56 Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.</p> | <p>Multiple attesting</p> | | |
| <p>Betrayed by a friend Ps 41:9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.</p> <p>Ps 55:12-14 12For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear <i>it</i>; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him.</p> <p>13 But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend;</p> <p>14 We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng.</p> | <p>Judas Mt 10:4; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.</p> <p>Mt 26:49-50 48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.”</p> <p>49 Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.</p> <p>50 And Jesus said to him, “Friend, <i>do</i> what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.</p> <p>Jn 13:21 21 When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u></p> <p>Patternicity</p> <p>Poetry as Prophecy?</p> | <p>33</p> | <p>Yes</p> |
| <p>False witnesses Ps 35:11 11Malicious witnesses rise up;</p> | <p>Mt 26:59-61 59Now the chief priests and the whole</p> | <p><u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u></p> | <p>38</p> | <p>Yes</p> |

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| <p>They ask me of things that I do not know. A general attack on the innocent, falsely! Returning evil for good.</p> | <p>Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60 They did not find <i>any</i>, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61 and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’ ”</p> | <p>Patternicity Poetry Descriptive of a general human nature? General nature. Poetry as prophecy?</p> | | |
| <p>Scouring Is 53:5: 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being <i>fell</i> upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. Zech 13:6 6 “And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘<i>Those</i> with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’ ”</p> | <p>Mt 27:26 26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived Patternicity Isaiah authoritative Zech 13:6 seems out of place. The wounded one doesn’t seem to be Jesus. Synchronicity? Is this a type 1 error for contemporaries?</p> | 40 | ? |
| <p>Smitten Is 50:6: 6 I gave My back to those who strike <i>Me</i>, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. Mic 5:1 1 “Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. 2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, <i>Too</i> little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago,</p> | <p>Mt 26:67; 67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, Lk 22:63 63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, 64 and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, “Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?”</p> | <p>Naturalism God-perceived Patternicity Some features apply</p> | 41 | ? |

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| From the days of eternity.” | | | | |
| Spit upon <u>Is 50:6:</u> 6I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. | Mt 26:67; 67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, | <u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u> Patternicity | 41 | ? |
| The look <u>Ps 22:17</u> 17I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; | Lk 23:35 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.” | <u>Naturalism</u> <u>God-perceived</u> Patternicity Synchronicity | 51 | Yes |

Iteration 2

After reflecting on the prophecies the belief allocation chart is constructed using the colour coding and the subjective belief allocation weights which emerge from the consideration of the prophecies. As can be seen in the revised chart below some prophecies seem more credible than others. They all receive a degree of credibility, but there are corresponding levels of doubt. Subsequent thinking, reflection, analysis, attention to authorities, could change the weights dramatically for iteration 3. As the figure stands for iteration 2 there seems to be sufficient warrant for considering that there is a reasonable tilt towards theism in these prophecies (or at least some of these prophecies) for a single day.

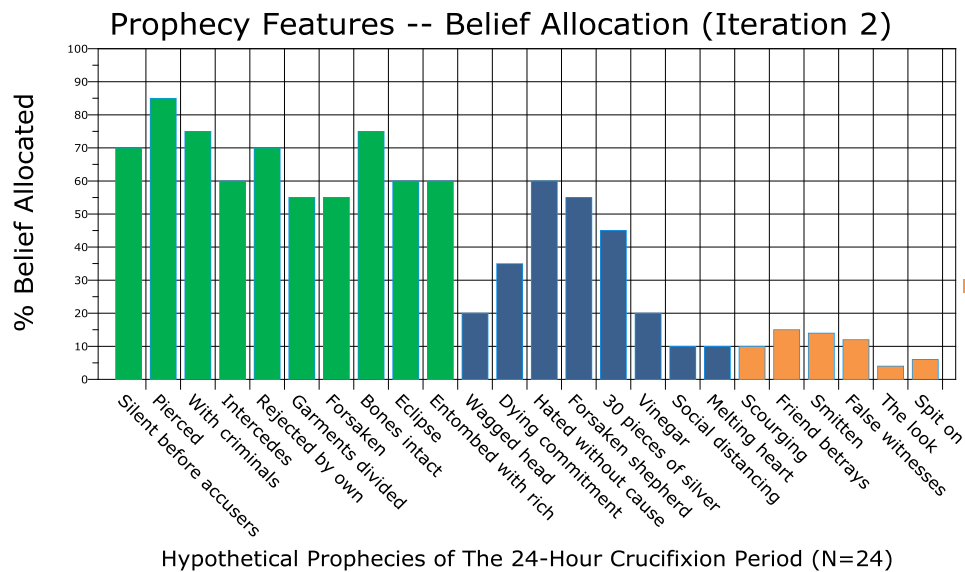


Figure 3. Belief allocation, after reflection, to various prophecies regarding the 24-hour period surrounding the crucifixion.

Iteration 3

In a third iteration a number of the prophecies get an increase in belief allocation. Why? The reason is twofold. First, there is the continued application of *reasoning* as seen in the [Judicial Stance](#) argued above. Second, there are *reflections* related to an involvement of authorities; not authorities looking at these particular prophecies, but authorities looking at particular prophecies. To illustrate, Sandoval (2010) offers a critique of the prophecy relating to the destruction of Tyre. His critique claims to show that the prophecy fails. However Manweiler's (1988/2001) analysis is more nuanced and it seems there is a pretty sound argument that claims of failure, such as that proposed by Sandoval (2010), actually fail, or falter, upon closer inspection. Consequently, the Tyre prophecy can be seen to have good credibility, with potential problems explained. The critique of the serious skeptic falters when an alternate explanation is offered. Generally, this serves to bolster credibility, or a tentative openness, for other prophecies as well. Open mindedness increases mindfulness. It leaves one with the sense that there is often a case for allocating further credibility upon deeper inspection. This confidence itself can serve to place a little confidence in other prophecies. Thus, several of the prophecies for a single day gain some credibility by virtue of the fact that other prophecies are seen to gain credibility with further analysis. There is a rise in confidence.

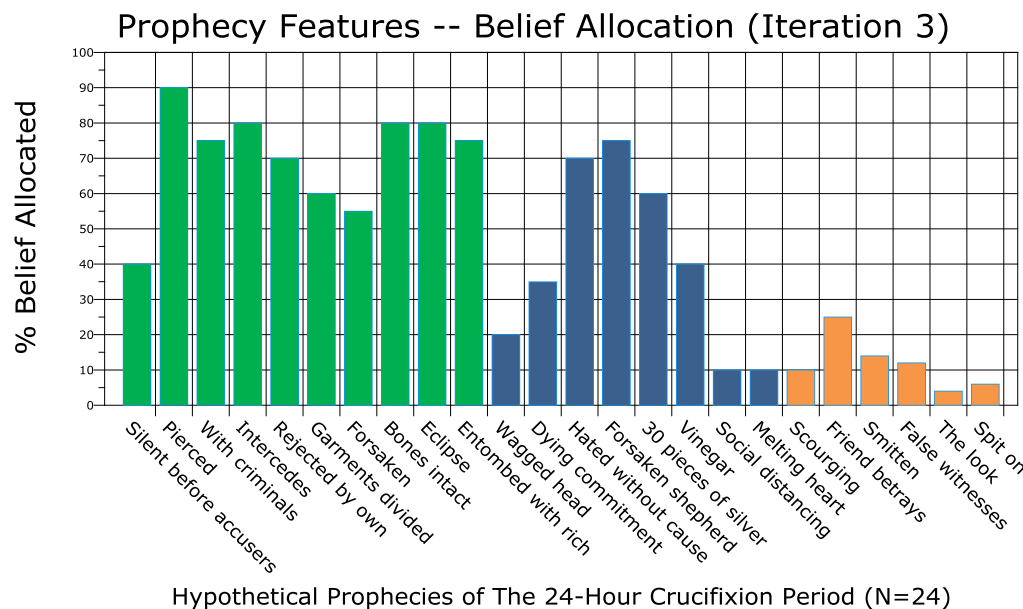


Figure 4. Belief allocation to various prophecies, after further reflection, regarding the 24-hour period surrounding the crucifixion.

What's the conclusion? Some of these prophecies considered here are striking. Maybe the prophecies are not technically evidentially convincing; but they strike one as sufficient to offer a tilt towards a positive consideration of prophecy, to remind one of the importance of a virtue-epistemology with respect to prophecy, and to tilt one further towards Christian theism. Here I would reiterate the same conclusions itemized earlier when considering prophecy.