

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY



LAST TIME

- The Work of Christ
 - Resurrection Facts

BEST EXPLANATION OF THE FACTS

- Case for the resurrection.
 - Establishing the basic facts.
 - What is the best explanation of those facts?

RESURRECTIONS FACTS

1. Jesus was buried in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.
2. That tomb was found empty on the Sunday following the crucifixion by a group of women, whom were followers of Jesus.
3. Many people experiences appearances of Jesus alive after his death.
4. The disciples immediately believed that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

THE QUESTION

- If those facts are accurate, which seems to be the case.
- They are accepted by the vast majority of NT scholars.
- What is the best explanation for those facts?

THE RESURRECTION HYPOTHESIS

- The explanation that the disciples of Jesus gave.
- God raised Jesus from the dead.
 - Most reservations with this hypothesis are not historical but rather philosophical.

EHRMAN & HUME

- Bart Ehrman echos David Humes 1700's book in his argument.
- A miracle, by definition, is the most improbably things that could happen, therefore history cannot prove it.
- Dead men don't rise from the dead, according to the laws of nature.

CONT.

- They would argue that “extraordinary events require extraordinary evidence.”
- No matter the evidence, you can't get enough.

ANSWERING EHRMAN & HUME

- First of all, Hume did not really understand probability theory.
- Remember they say extraordinary events require extraordinary evidence.
- What about the lottery?

PROBABILITY CALCULUS

- Essentially, in addition to the probability relative to background information and the laws of nature, Hume would also need to address the probability that we would have the historical facts we do *without* a resurrection.

PROBABILITY CALCULUS

- Basically, if the resurrection did not happen what is the probability that the evidence that we do have would be exactly as it is?
- Since Hume did not consider any of these other things then his argument is fallacious.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Hume even make certain assumptions in his background information.
- Is it improbable that Jesus rose naturally from the dead?
- It is different if we say that God raised Jesus from the dead?
- There is a a much greater probability!

CONT.

- So if they say that it is very improbable relative to the background info, then they have to either show that God's existence is improbable or, if God exists, then his raising Jesus is improbable.

CONCLUSION TO HUME

“So it seems to me that Hume’s argument suffers from two faults. To summarize: First, it is demonstrably fallacious because it doesn’t take into account all the factors in the probability calculus. To compute the probability of the Resurrection Hypothesis, given the background information and the evidence, compared to the Non-Resurrection Hypothesis, you have to consider all of these factors, and he simply doesn’t do it. Second, Hume just assumes that the resurrection is highly improbable relative to the background information, and I don’t think there are any good grounds for thinking that.”

ALVIN PLANTINGA

- The Problem of Dwindling Probabilities.
 - In order to establish the resurrection, you first have to establish several other claims.
 - Once you start stacking them, it become very improbable.

DWINDLING PROBABILITY

- Establish that God exists. -90% certain or .9
- Establish Jesus existed. -.9
- Jesus made certain claims about himself. -.9
- Historicity of empty tomb. -.9
- Resurrection appearances. -.9

DWINDLING PROBABILITY

- Once you reach 7 steps of .9 probability, you are already less than 50% probability.

ANSWERING PLANTINGA

- Example: Cygnus X-1
 - Think it is a black hole because of evidence.
 - Can't be sure though.
 - Using Diminishing Probabilities, it would certainly not be one.

WHERE IS THE PROBLEM?

- He forgets that at each step, you add in new evidence.
- By adding evidence each time the probability can actually increase.
- With the resurrection, simply take all the evidence and what is the probability relative to the entire body of evidence. Pretty good!

PROBABILITY OF RESURRECTION HYPOTHESIS

- The real question is:
- God raised Jesus from the dead, or
- God did not raise Jesus from the dead.

TWO OTHER PROBABILITIES

- Intrinsic Probability.
- Explanatory Power.

INTRINSIC PROBABILITY

- If you leave out all of the evidence, what is the probability of the resurrection based on background information alone?
- Which is more probable?
 - The Hypothesis
 - Its negation

EXPLANATORY POWER

- How well does this hypothesis explain the evidence that we have for the resurrection?
- This hypothesis has excellent explanatory power for the evidence that we have looked at.

REMEMBER

- Just because something is improbable in light of its background information does not mean that it remains improbable when evidence is presented.
- A court follows the evidence regardless of the background information

A WORD ON BACKGROUND

- Remember it is highly improbable that Jesus *naturally* rose from the dead.
- Even the wacko theories would be more probable than that!
- But if God exists and raised him... that is much more probable.
- Even our studies in natural theology help to show the probability is very high.

CRITERIA FOR BEST EXPLANATION

- Explanatory Scope
- Explanatory Power
- Plausibility
- *Ad-hocness*
- In Accord with Accepted Beliefs
- Outstrips Rival Hypotheses

EXPLANATORY SCOPE

- The hypothesis needs to explain all of the evidence, not just some of it.
- Broad scope is best.

EXPLANATORY POWER

- How well does the hypothesis explain the evidence?
- Is it specific and accurate?

PLAUSIBILITY

- Is the hypothesis plausible?
- Does it require false beliefs?
- Consider the context.

AD-HOCNESS

- Is the hypothesis contrived or *ad hoc*?
- It is made up just to explain this specific event?
- Does it fit within the larger context?

ACCEPTED BELIEFS

- Does the hypothesis find itself in accord with a accepted beliefs?
- The fact God raised Jesus from the dead does not run counter to accepted beliefs.

OUTSTRIPS RIVAL HYPOTHESES

- Is this hypothesis the best among all of the alternative hypotheses?
- Most resurrection hypotheses today have no followers today and so most are left with no explanation at all.

QUESTIONS

The background is a deep blue with a wavy, undulating texture that resembles water or a nebula. It is sparsely populated with small, bright white and light blue dots, giving it the appearance of a starry night sky or a distant galaxy. The overall effect is serene and cosmic.

NEXT TIME

- Next Week
- Read:
 - Defenders 2-6- The Doctrine of Christ- Pages 189-210