

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

Robert Greg Cavin,
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Cypress College

Carlos A. Colombetti,
Department of Philosophy, Skyline College

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.0 The Two Core Arguments that Refute *R*

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

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

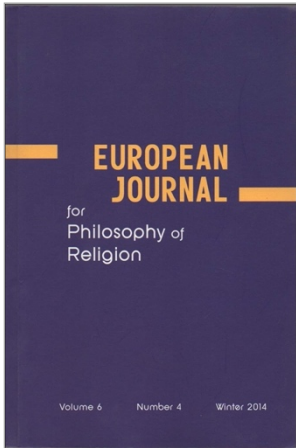
- Cavin, Robert Greg and Carlos A. Colombetti. “The Implausibility and Low Explanatory Power of the Resurrection Hypothesis—with a Rejoinder to Stephen T. Davis.” *Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry* 2, no. 1 (2020): 37–94.
- . “Assessing the Resurrection Hypothesis: Problems with Craig's Inference to the Best Explanation.” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 2 (2019): 205–28.
- . “Negative Natural Theology and the Sinlessness, Incarnation, and Resurrection of Jesus.” *Philosophia Christi* 16, no. 2 (2014): 409–18.
- Craig, William Lane. “Closing Response: William Lane Craig.” In *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann*, edited by Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, 186–87. Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2000.
- Davis, Stephen T. “Craig on the Resurrection: A Defense.” *Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry* 2, no. 1 (2020): 38–45.
- Feynman, Richard. “There’s Plenty of Room at the Bottom.” *Caltech Engineering and Science*, 23, no. 5. Accessed June 2, 2020. zyvex.com/nanotech/feynman.html
- Martin, Michael. “Reply to Davis.” *Philo* 2, no. 1 (1999).
- . “Christianity and the Rationality of the Resurrection.” *Philo* 3, no. 1 (2000).
- . “Davis On the Rationality of Belief in the Resurrection.” Accessed June 14, 2001. infidels.org/library/modern/michael_martin/davis-resurrection.html

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert Greg Cavin has a BA in Religion from the University of Southern California, an MA in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Irvine. He was a member of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cypress College from 1996 until his retirement from teaching in 2018.

Carlos A. Colombetti received his doctorate in Philosophy from the University of California, Irvine in 1992 and was a Lecturer at Stanford University from 1992 to 1995. He currently resides in San Francisco and is Professor of Philosophy at Skyline College.

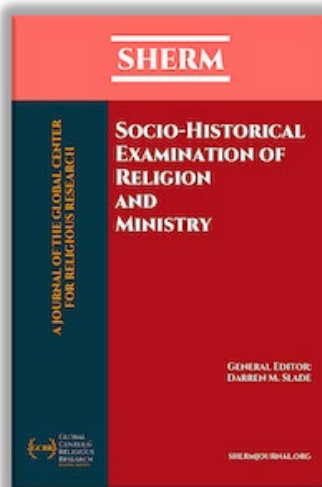
MORE FROM THE AUTHORS

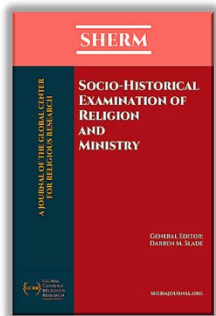


“Assessing the Resurrection Hypothesis: Problems with Craig’s Inference to the Best Explanation”
 vol. 11, no. 2 (2019): 205–28



“Evidence, Miracles, and the Existence of Jesus”
 vol. 31, no. 2 (2014): 204–16





CALL FOR PAPERS!
SOCIAL-SCIENCES
HUMANITIES
PHILOSOPHY
MINISTRY

Submit Proposal

GCRR and SHERM Journal are accepting submission proposals for the following fields of study:

- Religious History
 - Historical Theology
 - Historical Jesus
 - Psychology of Religion
 - Sociology of Religion
 - Anthropology of Religion
 - Philosophy of Religion
 - Religious Trends and Demographics
 - Issues in Contemporary Theology
 - Ancient, Medieval, and Contemporary Christian Literature
 - Patristic, Medieval, and Contemporary Exegesis
 - Ancient Near Eastern Languages and Writings
 - Ancient Israelite Religion and Second Temple Judaism
 - History and Literature of Contemporary Judaism
 - Hebrew Bible
 - New Testament
 - Textual Criticism
 - Islamic Studies
 - Mormon Studies
 - Native American Religion
 - Hinduism, Buddhism, and Other World Religions
 - Historical and Contemporary Religious Revivals and Sects
 - New Religious Movements (Cults)
 - Religious Violence
 - Religious Liberty
 - Freedom from Religion
 - General Religious Studies
- Ministry Research:
- Ancient, Medieval, and Contemporary Ministry Practices
 - Experimental Faith Communities
 - Ecclesiastical Trends and Issues
 - Economic, Political, Social, and Ecological Issues in Ministry
 - Ethical, Racial, Sexual, and Gender Issues in Ministry
 - Case Studies / Case Reports