

Scripture After the Fact

Context Swapping, Translation Drift, and the Manufacture of Messianic Fulfillment

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Central claim

Lists of messianic “fulfillments” do not become strong public evidence merely by accumulating correspondences. When later writers know the earlier texts, translation and genre choices can reshape them, narratives can be arranged around them, and listmakers can count dependent matches as independent, the same pattern is expected under ordinary scriptural reuse. The rational burden is therefore to establish contextual prediction, semantic stability, specificity, causal independence, and independent attestation item by item; this conclusion leaves theological typology and any future case that meets those standards open.

Preview: From correspondence to warranted prediction

Starting claim	Evidential requirement	Manufactured fit	Rational conclusion
Many scriptural matches make fulfillment too unlikely to be ordinary.	Earlier wording must be predictive, stable, specific, and independently confirmed.	Reuse, translation, narration, selection, and double-counting can create or inflate matches.	Audit production and dependence before treating the count as predictive evidence.

The argument concerns public evidence for foreknowledge. It does not deny that retrospective or typological readings can carry theological meaning within an accepted canon.

Visual preview:

Scripture After the Fact: Deconstructing the “Prophecy” List

Tactics of “Manufactured” Fulfillment

Context Swapping

Lifting passages from their original historical setting to create a new messianic meaning.



Translation Drift

Relying on specific wording in later translations (like the Septuagint) that the original Hebrew lacked.

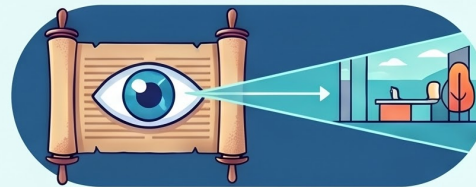


Self-Contained Narratives

Staging Gospel events specifically to mirror old scripts, removing any evidential independence.



The Disciplined Audit



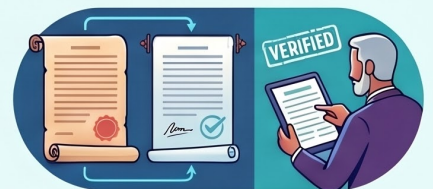
Contextual Future-Orientation

The original text must have been intended as a forecast, not a contemporary observation.



Non-Trivial Specificity

Claims must be narrow enough to rule out coincidence or common biographical traits.



Independent Attestation

The event should be verified by sources outside the document claiming the fulfillment.

Left: four processes can create a match after an earlier text is known; right: four checks ask whether a match was genuinely predictive and independently confirmed. The “astronomical odds” and “< 1%” graphics depict the pseudo-statistical rhetoric being criticized, not estimates endorsed here. The diagram diagnoses a method and does not show that every proposed prophecy fails.

Abstract

Accumulated scriptural correspondences do not become strong public evidence of predictive fulfillment merely because a list is long. The relevant question is how each match was produced. A later writer who knows an earlier text can reuse its language, choose a convenient translation, redescribe a poetic image, stage an enactable action, or shape a narrative around a scriptural pattern. A later listmaker can then divide one literary dependency into several “independent” fulfillments and attach an astronomical probability to a reference class that was never defined.

This paper develops a dependency-aware audit of messianic fulfillment claims. It distinguishes prediction from retrospective figural reading, correspondence from confirmation, and numerical accumulation from evidential independence. Representative cases from Matthew’s use of Isaiah 7:14, Hosea 11:1, Zechariah 9:9, and Psalm 22 show different mechanisms by which real intertextual relationships can be converted into overstated predictive evidence. The original setting, textual form, genre, causal pathway, and source of the fulfillment report must all be examined before a match can discriminate intentional foreknowledge from ordinary scriptural reuse.

The conclusion is direct but bounded. Lists assembled through context swapping, translation drift, poetic flattening, narrative control, and false independence do not justify their advertised odds or multiply public confirmation. This does not show that the Gospel writers were insincere, that figural interpretation is theologically empty, or that no prophecy could ever provide evidence. It shows that a public predictive argument must identify a genuinely prospective and semantically stable claim, a nontrivial outcome, an independently attested fulfillment, and a dependence-aware comparison with ordinary literary production. Until those burdens are met, correspondence is evidence of scriptural interpretation, not yet of prediction.

Keywords: messianic prophecy; fulfillment; typology; intertextuality; Matthew; evidential independence; probability; scriptural interpretation

1 The Inference Behind the List

Popular fulfillment arguments are built for accumulation. An earlier passage appears beside a later event; the match receives a check mark; the list grows; and the reader is invited to feel that ordinary explanation has become impossible. The implied inference is not merely that early Christians interpreted Israel’s scriptures through Jesus. It is that the correspondences publicly confirm intentional disclosure of future events and thereby support a Christian identification of Jesus as Messiah.

That inference needs a comparator. A *God-concept* is a specified conception of a deity, including the capacities and intentions attributed to it. The narrow target here is a predictive-disclosure God-concept: a deity knows future contingencies, places recognizable forecasts in earlier scripture, and intends later fulfillment to function as evidence available to an inquirer who does not already accept Christian canonical unity. The comparison is ordinary scriptural reuse: historically situated writers interpret inherited texts, work through available translations, narrate events in scriptural language, select resonant details, and transmit the resulting correspondences. This comparison neither presupposes atheism nor accuses anyone of fraud. It asks which production process better explains the full record.

Evidence is contrastive. A fact supports one account over another when it is more expected under the first than under the second; a verbal match has little discriminating force if both accounts readily predict it (Sober 2008). The relevant evidence therefore includes more than the match. It includes the earlier passage’s date and original function, the textual form used by the later writer, the specificity of the alleged prediction, the writer’s access to it, the independence of the narrated event, and the listmaker’s selection rules.

The dependence principle

A correspondence cannot be treated as an independent predictive success when the later author knew the proposed prediction and could create the match through interpretation, enactment, translation choice, narrative selection, or description. A list cannot recover independence by counting several effects of that same literary dependence as separate fulfillments.

This principle does not imply that dependence makes a story false. A known script can guide a real action. An author can faithfully describe an event in inherited language. A community can sincerely interpret a past text as a pattern for a later life. The narrower point is evidential: a match partly produced by the item offered as its predictor is not an independent check on that predictor.

2 Prediction and Scriptural Reuse Answer Different Questions

A prediction is an antecedently available claim that narrows the range of expected outcomes. It must be prospective in context, stable enough to identify before the outcome, and specific enough to risk failure. Scriptural reuse is broader. A later author may cite, echo, transpose, or reframe an earlier passage to illuminate a later event. Reuse can be exegetically rich even when the earlier passage was not forecasting that event.

Ancient Jewish and Christian interpretation regularly treated scripture as a living store of patterns whose significance could extend beyond an initial setting. Kugel documents how ancient interpreters expanded and transformed inherited stories, while Beale's evangelical handbook distinguishes quotation, allusion, typology, and other modes of New Testament use (Kugel 1997; Beale 2012). Hays describes Gospel interpretation as figural: earlier events and persons acquire fuller significance through retrospective rereading (Hays 2016). These accounts disagree about important theological questions, but together they block a false choice between direct prediction and dishonest invention.

The distinction matters because the evidential directions are reversed. Direct prediction moves from an earlier, independently fixed claim to a later outcome. Figural reading moves from the later event and community back through the earlier text. The latter can produce coherence, identity, and theological insight. It cannot automatically supply independent evidence for the worldview that licenses the retrospective reading.

Suppose a Gospel writer presents Jesus as recapitulating Israel's history. That writer may reasonably use exodus, wilderness, royal, temple, or suffering motifs to make the claim vivid. The resulting correspondence demonstrates a literary and theological relation between texts. To use it as public predictive evidence, however, an advocate must also show that the earlier passage was independently prospective, that the later event was not selected or narrated to fit it, and that the match is more surprising under ordinary reuse. Without those added premises, the argument changes the label on interpretation while leaving the evidential burden unpaid.

3 How Correspondences Are Manufactured

The word *manufactured* describes a production pathway, not necessarily deception. Matches can be sincerely produced by accepted interpretive practices. The problem begins when an apologetic list suppresses that pathway and presents its finished correspondences as independent forecasts.

3.1 Context swapping

Context swapping removes a phrase from the problem it originally addressed and installs it in a later messianic biography. Isaiah 7:14 is the central example. In its literary setting, the sign is addressed

to Ahaz during an eighth-century political crisis; the surrounding sequence concerns the threatened kingdoms and a near historical horizon (Blenkinsopp 2000). Matthew 1:23 rereads the sign around Jesus' birth. That later use may be theologically meaningful, but the original setting does not behave like a simple biographical forecast of a birth centuries later.

Hosea 11:1 shows the same reversal even more plainly. The Hebrew line recalls a past exodus: when Israel was young, the deity loved the nation and called the son out of Egypt (Elliger et al. 1997). Matthew 2:15 applies the line to Jesus' return from Egypt. The move makes sense within Matthew's larger presentation of Jesus as embodying Israel's story. It is retrospective figuration, not evidence that Hosea was making a distant forecast.

Context discipline is not a rule that later texts may never deepen earlier ones. It is a rule about public evidence: an earlier statement cannot acquire antecedent predictive risk from a later author's application. If its original function was recollection, royal address, lament, or liturgy, then its later reuse must be argued as reuse rather than silently counted as prediction.

3.2 Translation and textual drift

Translation can make a correspondence look more precise than the earlier Hebrew warrants. Isaiah 7:14 again supplies the familiar case. The Hebrew expression *ha-'almah* denotes a young woman without itself specifying virginity, whereas the Greek Septuagint uses *he parthenos*, a term that can carry the more specific sense used by Matthew (Elliger et al. 1997; Rahlfs and Hanhart 2006). Matthew's Greek citation follows the form available to a Greek-reading audience (Aland et al. 2012). Brown's detailed treatment of the infancy narratives shows why the relation among language, tradition, and theological composition is more complex than a one-line prediction chart suggests (Brown 1993).

The point is not that translation is corruption. Every translation interprets. The evidential error occurs when a later rendering is projected backward and treated as the unambiguous content of the earlier source. A fair audit therefore displays the relevant textual forms, identifies which wording generates the match, and reduces confidence when the claimed precision arises only in the later form.

Textual selection can also occur without translation. Hosea 11:1 in the Septuagint refers to the deity calling the son's children from Egypt, while Matthew's formula uses the singular "my son." The Gospel wording aligns more directly with the Hebrew singular than with the Greek form at that point. Such choices may be learned and purposeful. They also show why the later author's textual agency belongs inside the evidential record rather than disappearing behind the word *fulfilled*.

3.3 Poetic flattening and portable motifs

Poetry is designed to carry images across situations. Laments speak of surrounding enemies, pierced vulnerability, mockery, divided possessions, abandonment, and vindication. Royal psalms use idealized language for enthronement and victory. Prophetic poetry compresses political hope into symbolic scenes. When these genres are read as technical specifications, metaphor becomes a checklist.

Psalms 22 illustrates the danger. Its language supplies a powerful scriptural vocabulary for suffering, mockery, and vindication, and the passion narratives use that vocabulary. The literary relation is real. Yet vivid motifs are portable precisely because they can describe many sufferers. When later narration uses the earlier poem, the same textual dependence that creates the resonance prevents the details from being counted as independent predictions.

Genre therefore changes evidential weight. A rare, plainly prospective statement fixed before an outcome is different from a flexible image whose details become salient only after a later story has been told. A list that divides one poem into several fulfilled "prophecies" does not gain several independent successes. It has partitioned one reusable literary source into multiple rows.

3.4 Typology and retrospective fit

Typology treats an earlier person, institution, or event as a pattern fulfilled or intensified later. Israel, Moses, David, exodus, temple, exile, and restoration can all become patterns through which a Christian writer understands Jesus. Typology is not a defective form of prediction; it is a different form of interpretation.

The evidential inflation occurs when the flexibility that makes typology fruitful is hidden. If Jesus can recapitulate Israel, then many features of Israel's story become available for reuse. The pool of possible correspondences expands dramatically. A match selected from that pool is less surprising than a list suggests, especially when the later author decides which pattern to emphasize after the life being interpreted.

This is not merely a modern critical observation. Hays explicitly characterizes figural reading as retrospective, while Beale defends robust theological continuity through carefully differentiated modes of Old Testament use (Hays 2016; Beale 2012). An advocate may defend providential typology. But providence is then part of the theological model to be supported, not an independent premise that can be inserted into an argument offered to establish that model.

3.5 Narrative control and self-fulfillment

Some alleged fulfillments concern actions that a person who knew the text could deliberately enact. Others are reported only by the literary work presenting them as fulfillments. In both cases, the proposed prediction and the fulfillment report are causally connected.

Zechariah 9:9 portrays a king arriving humbly on a donkey using Hebrew poetic parallelism (C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers 1998). A claimant familiar with the passage could intentionally stage such an entry. Matthew 21 presents both a donkey and a colt in a way that closely tracks the paired wording, while the parallel Gospel accounts describe one ridden animal; France treats the episode as a case where scriptural interpretation and narrative presentation must be considered together (France 2007). A historical entry may underlie the account. Even so, an enactable action reported through the text that identifies it as fulfillment is not independent evidence of hidden foreknowledge.

Narrative control does not require invention from nothing. Memory, tradition, interpretation, and composition can interact. Allison's work on memory and imagination cautions against treating Gospel tradition as either a transparent transcript or unconstrained fiction (Allison 2010). The appropriate conclusion is calibrated: where the only route to an event is a narrator who knows the supposed prediction and writes in its language, the correspondence has weaker public evidential force than an independently attested outcome.

3.6 False independence and selection after the fact

The final manufacturing step occurs when listmakers count related correspondences as though each were a new trial. Several rows may derive from one psalm, one narrative episode, one translation choice, or one writer's controlling theme. The events may also be selected after the biography and canon are known. This makes the reference class elastic: successes are split, failures are omitted, and broad features are presented as if they had been specified in advance.

Independence is not a cosmetic statistical assumption. If one author shapes several details around the same scriptural passage, learning that one detail matches makes the others less surprising. If one translation choice creates several verbal echoes, those echoes share a cause. Multiplying their intuitive improbabilities treats shared dependence as repeated confirmation. The arithmetic can look exact while its inputs and structure remain imaginary.

The appropriate unit is the complete, dependence-aware record: the earlier text, the later writer's access, the translation and genre choices, the narrated event, external attestation, misses, and the listmaker's selection process. Only that record can be compared with rival production accounts.

4 A Dependency-Aware Evidence Ledger

The following ledger keeps the production pathway visible. The examples are representative mechanisms, not a statistical sample of every proposed messianic prophecy. Each row records what produces the appearance of fit and what the observation can and cannot establish.

Mechanism	Representative case	Why the match is not independent	Limited conclusion
Context swapping	Isaiah 7:14 and Hosea 11:1	Matthew supplies a later messianic referent to texts addressing a near crisis or recalling a past exodus	The reuse may be figural, but the original contexts do not by themselves supply distant biographical predictions
Translation or textual choice	Isaiah 7:14; Hosea 11:1	The operative Greek or selected wording differs in specificity or number from another available textual form	The match depends partly on the later writer's textual route and must not inherit unqualified precision
Poetic flattening	Psalms 22 and passion narration	Flexible lament imagery is reused in a story told with the poem already known	Several echoed details are one literary dependency, not several independent forecasts
Narrative control	Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21	The action is enactable and the reporting author explicitly knows the script	The episode may be historical while still providing weak independent evidence of foreknowledge
After-the-fact selection	Multi-item apologetic lists	Listmakers choose passages, divide themes, define matches, and count only after the later record is available	A long list does not determine its own reference class, base rate, or item independence

The ledger prevents two equal and opposite errors. It does not infer that every event is false because literary dependence exists. It also does not let a real event erase the dependence that shaped its description or selection. The recurring result is not “nothing happened.” It is “the correspondence is less discriminating than the list advertises.”

5 Why the Astronomical Odds Do Not Follow

Probability language can clarify evidence, but only when the event, reference class, hypotheses, and dependence structure are specified before the calculation. Popular prophecy arguments often do the reverse. They begin with correspondences already selected from a large canon and a completed biography, assign small probabilities to the chosen descriptions, assume independence, and multiply. The resulting number measures the assumptions more than the evidence.

Four failures are especially common.

1. **The target is defined after the outcome.** “Born in a particular place,” “rejected,” “suffered,” or “associated with a royal line” can be stated narrowly or broadly. A probability cannot be assigned until the wording and match rule are fixed independently of the person being assessed.
2. **The reference class is missing.** The relevant comparison is not simply “one random person.” It may include Jewish claimants, royal traditions, public figures whose biographies are selectively

recorded, or narratives intentionally written through scripture. Different reference classes produce different rates.

3. **The items share causes.** A single author's scriptural program, one translation, one poem, or one narrative scene can generate several rows. Their probabilities cannot be multiplied as though each match arose independently.
4. **The search process is ignored.** A large scriptural corpus, several textual forms, many interpretive traditions, and a long later narrative provide numerous opportunities for matches. Counting only the selected correspondences hides the number of passages and outcomes that could have been chosen.

These are not technical quibbles attached to an otherwise sound intuition. They determine what the number would mean. Without a pre-specified audit protocol and defensible data, there is no empirical basis for an "astronomical" estimate. Qualitative comparative reasoning is still possible. A highly specific, securely early prediction followed by a causally independent and well-attested event may be more expected under intentional disclosure than under ordinary reuse. But that judgment must include the whole production record and remain proportionate to its uncertainty (Sober 2008).

The every-count problem

If adding a correspondence always strengthens the case, even when the item is nonpredictive in context, translation-dependent, narratively controlled, or copied from the same source as earlier items, then the method has no principled way to distinguish new evidence from repackaged dependence. A count that cannot lose weight when dependence is exposed is not measuring independent confirmation.

This explains why a long list can be weaker than a single strong case. One independent forecast with fixed wording, genuine risk, and external confirmation can discriminate between accounts. Fifty correspondences produced by the same retrospective machinery may disclose much about an interpretive tradition while adding little predictive evidence.

6 Strongest Replies and Their Evidential Costs

6.1 A fuller divine meaning may exceed the human context

An advocate may distinguish the human author's immediate meaning from a fuller intention supplied by a divine author. The earlier passage can then concern Ahaz, Israel, or a royal figure at one level while also anticipating Jesus at another. This is a coherent theological proposal when embedded in a wider account of inspiration and canon.

The proposal does not restore independence by itself. The fuller intention is precisely what the fulfillment argument is supposed to support. If it is inferred from the later correspondence, it cannot also be assumed to make that correspondence predictive. Public evidence still requires a reason, available without presupposing the conclusion, to identify the fuller content before the later application.

The evidential cost is therefore clarity about direction. A fuller-sense reading may follow from an accepted theology and enrich it. It is not automatically evidence offered from outside that theology.

6.2 Providence can structure both history and scripture

A broader reply says that a deity can providentially shape earlier events as types and later events as fulfillments. Egypt, exodus, kingship, suffering, and restoration can therefore converge without each earlier text functioning as an ordinary forecast.

Again, logical possibility is not the issue. Providential typology can accommodate the correspondences. Ordinary scriptural reuse can also accommodate them and directly predicts that later writers will select inherited patterns to interpret a revered figure. To use typology as public confirmation, an advocate must show why the observed pattern is appreciably less expected under that ordinary process.

The reply preserves theological meaning but relaxes antecedent specificity. That trade may be reasonable. It should not be hidden by continuing to advertise the result as though it were a set of independent predictions.

6.3 The events may come from traditions earlier than the Gospels

Some fulfillment details may derive from oral or written traditions that predate the final Gospel narratives. Earlier tradition can reduce the final author's direct control over a story. It does not by itself establish independence from scripture. Tradents, communities, and actors also knew Israel's texts, and memory is shaped by repeated narrative frameworks (Allison 2010).

The right response is case-specific source work. An advocate should identify evidence for the tradition's date, wording, and independence rather than treating "tradition" as a container that automatically protects every detail. Multiple attestation can matter when the sources are genuinely independent; parallel retellings of a shared scripturalized tradition cannot simply be counted as separate witnesses.

6.4 Deliberate enactment can itself fulfill prophecy

If Jesus intentionally enacted Zechariah's royal image, the action may reveal a serious messianic claim. Deliberate action can be historically and theologically significant. What it cannot demonstrate by itself is inaccessible foreknowledge. The script helps cause the match.

This reply changes the evidential conclusion in a useful way. Instead of "an ancient writer supernaturally predicted an uncontrollable future event," the conclusion becomes "a later claimant publicly enacted a known scriptural symbol." The second claim may support an interpretation of the claimant's aims. It is not independent predictive confirmation.

6.5 One genuine prediction could survive the audit

Yes. The argument is not that every candidate fails by definition. A securely dated and contextually prospective statement, fixed with nontrivial specificity before an event, followed by an outcome not controlled by the claimant or reporter and documented through an independent route, would deserve a different assessment. One such case could be stronger than a large dependent list.

The audit is therefore an invitation, not a ban. It directs attention away from easily manufactured correspondences and toward the cases capable of bearing the public burden assigned to them.

7 A Disciplined Audit for Fulfillment Claims

A responsible audit begins before the match is counted. It should preserve the complete textual and causal history rather than presenting only the polished pair of verses.

1. **Fix the earlier text.** Identify the earliest recoverable wording, date, textual variants, and translation used by the later author. State uncertainty rather than hiding it.
2. **Read the original unit.** Determine whether the passage is prospective in its own literary and historical setting. Record its subject, horizon, genre, and immediate function.
3. **Specify the outcome in advance.** Separate genuinely risky detail from broad or portable motifs. Do not let the completed biography determine which features count as precise.

4. **Trace causal access.** Ask whether the actor, reporter, translator, or community knew the proposed prediction and could shape the action, wording, memory, or narrative around it.
5. **Seek independent attestation.** Identify evidence for the event that does not merely repeat the fulfillment author's report or depend on the same tradition.
6. **Map dependence among items.** Group rows drawn from one passage, translation, narrative episode, author, or interpretive theme. Do not multiply them as independent successes.
7. **Declare the search space.** Record the passages considered, rejected matches, adjacent failures, competing fulfillments, and the rule by which the final list was selected.
8. **Compare complete explanations.** Ask whether the whole record is more expected under predictive disclosure than under ordinary reuse, not whether a match seems impressive in isolation.

The audit also keeps claims in their proper category. "Matthew rereads Hosea through Jesus" is a well-supported literary observation. "That rereading expresses a providential relation" is a theological interpretation. "The relation publicly confirms foreknowledge" is a further evidential claim. Moving from one level to the next requires additional premises.

The procedure is deliberately symmetrical. A critic may not dismiss every prediction merely because scriptural reuse is possible. An advocate may not treat every possible fuller meaning as positive evidence. Both sides must identify what their account predicts, expose the complete record, and state what would change their confidence.

8 Conclusion

The power of a messianic fulfillment list often comes from compression. Context disappears, textual differences vanish, poetry becomes specification, typology becomes forecast, narrative dependence becomes confirmation, and shared literary causes become independent rows. Once those production pathways are restored, the list no longer supports the simple arithmetic it advertises.

The central result is not that Christian scriptural interpretation is meaningless or that the Gospel writers were engaged in conscious deception. Their reuse of Israel's scriptures can be sincere, learned, imaginative, and theologically central. The result is that retrospective scriptural fit and independent predictive evidence answer different questions. The first shows how a community understands Jesus through inherited texts. The second requires a forecast that was genuinely prospective, stable, nontrivial, causally independent, independently attested, and assessed without after-the-fact selection.

Context swapping, translation drift, poetic flattening, typological retrofitting, narrative control, and false independence each weaken the move from correspondence to public confirmation. When several occur together, counting more rows does not repair the weakness. The whole dependence-aware record remains at least as intelligible under ordinary scriptural reuse, so an astronomical probability is not warranted.

The practical implication is straightforward: stop counting before auditing. Ask what the earlier passage did in context, which wording supplies the fit, how genre affects specificity, who controlled the event and report, what independent evidence exists, and which items share a cause. A candidate that survives those questions may deserve evidential weight. A list that avoids them is scripture after the fact: a record of interpretation presented as though it were prediction before the fact.

A Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

Plain-language reconstruction

The central argument combines a historical assessment with a valid evidential bridge:

1. A fulfillment list warrants strong public confirmation of predictive disclosure over ordinary scriptural reuse only if the list's complete record is justifiably much more expected under predictive disclosure.
2. The complete record includes original context, textual form, genre, causal access, attestation, rejected matches, and dependence among items; verbal correspondences considered alone are not the complete record.
3. When later writers know the earlier texts and can reuse, translate, enact, narrate, or select them, several apparent fulfillments can arise from one shared literary cause and cannot be multiplied as independent evidence.
4. The representative mechanisms examined here provide no justified substantial advantage for predictive disclosure over ordinary scriptural reuse.
5. Therefore, lists built through those mechanisms do not warrant strong public confirmation of predictive disclosure. This conclusion does not exclude a different candidate that is contextually predictive, stable, nontrivial, causally independent, and independently attested.

Symbols

- H_P : the list results from a deity's intentional predictive disclosure for public evidence.
- H_R : the list results from ordinary scriptural reuse, including retrospective interpretation and literary selection, without that predictive disclosure.
- B : the accepted background information about dates, texts, languages, genres, authors, actors, reports, and events.
- n : the number of correspondences presented in the list.
- e_i : the full record associated with the i th correspondence, not merely its verbal match, for each i from 1 through n .
- $E = (e_1, \dots, e_n)$: the complete joint record of the list, including dependence among its correspondences.
- $P(E \mid H_P, B)$ and $P(E \mid H_R, B)$: the conditional probabilities, or comparative expectedness, of the complete record under the two production accounts on background B ; no measured values are asserted.
- Λ : the likelihood-ratio function comparing how expected E is under H_P and H_R on background B ; its application here is written $\Lambda(E \mid B)$.
- τ : a threshold greater than 1 representing the substantial likelihood advantage required for strong public confirmation; no numerical value is assigned.
- J_B : the justification operator; $J_B(X)$ says that proposition X is justified by the argument and evidence available on background B .
- C_S : the proposition that E warrants strong public confirmation of H_P relative to H_R .

Symbolic form with annotations

First compare the entire dependence-aware record under the two production accounts:

$$\Lambda(E \mid B) = \frac{P(E \mid H_P, B)}{P(E \mid H_R, B)}.$$

Here the numerator asks how expected the complete record is if predictive disclosure produced the list; the denominator asks how expected that same record is if ordinary scriptural reuse produced it. The comparison concerns E , not the impressive-looking matches alone.

Shared literary causes block the usual multiplication of itemwise probabilities:

$$P(E \mid H_R, B) \neq \prod_{i=1}^n P(e_i \mid H_R, B) \quad \text{when the } e_i \text{ are dependent.}$$

This line does not say that multiplication is always invalid. It says that list items derived from the same passage, translation, author, event, or narrative program must not be treated as independent trials. Their joint probability requires a dependence model.

The central bridge is then:

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | $C_S \rightarrow J_B(\Lambda(E \mid B) \geq \tau)$ | strong confirmation requires a justified substantial advantage, |
| 2. | $\neg J_B(\Lambda(E \mid B) \geq \tau)$ | result of the contextual and dependence audit, |
| | | |
| 3. | $\therefore \neg C_S$ | modus tollens. |

Line 1 is a criterion: if the list strongly confirms predictive disclosure over reuse, the available evidence must justify a substantial comparative advantage. Line 2 is the paper's defeasible assessment of lists produced through the mechanisms examined. Line 3 follows deductively from lines 1 and 2.

Validity, support, and scope

The final three-line inference is deductively valid. If strong confirmation requires justified support for a substantial likelihood advantage and that support is absent, strong confirmation is not warranted. The validity of that conditional inference does not make line 2 certain.

Line 2 is an interpretive and historical synthesis. It is supported by the original contexts, textual differences, genre flexibility, causal access, narrative dependence, and list-selection problems analyzed in the body. Those considerations are defeasible. New evidence establishing early fixed wording, prospective context, nontrivial specificity, causal independence, and independent attestation could reverse the assessment for a particular case.

The notation also prevents two overstatements. First, $\neg J_B(\Lambda \geq \tau)$ is a failure of warranted strong confirmation; it does not entail that the evidence strongly favors H_R or that H_P is false. Second, the local comparison between H_P and H_R need not exhaust every metaphysical possibility to show that the advertised fulfillment list has not yet distinguished its preferred account from an ordinary rival. The formal result therefore matches the body: audit dependence before counting, and leave genuinely independent candidates open.

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