

The Floating Fortress of Theology

Empirical Detachment, Hermeneutic Retreat, and the Public Failure of Christian Realism

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Central claim

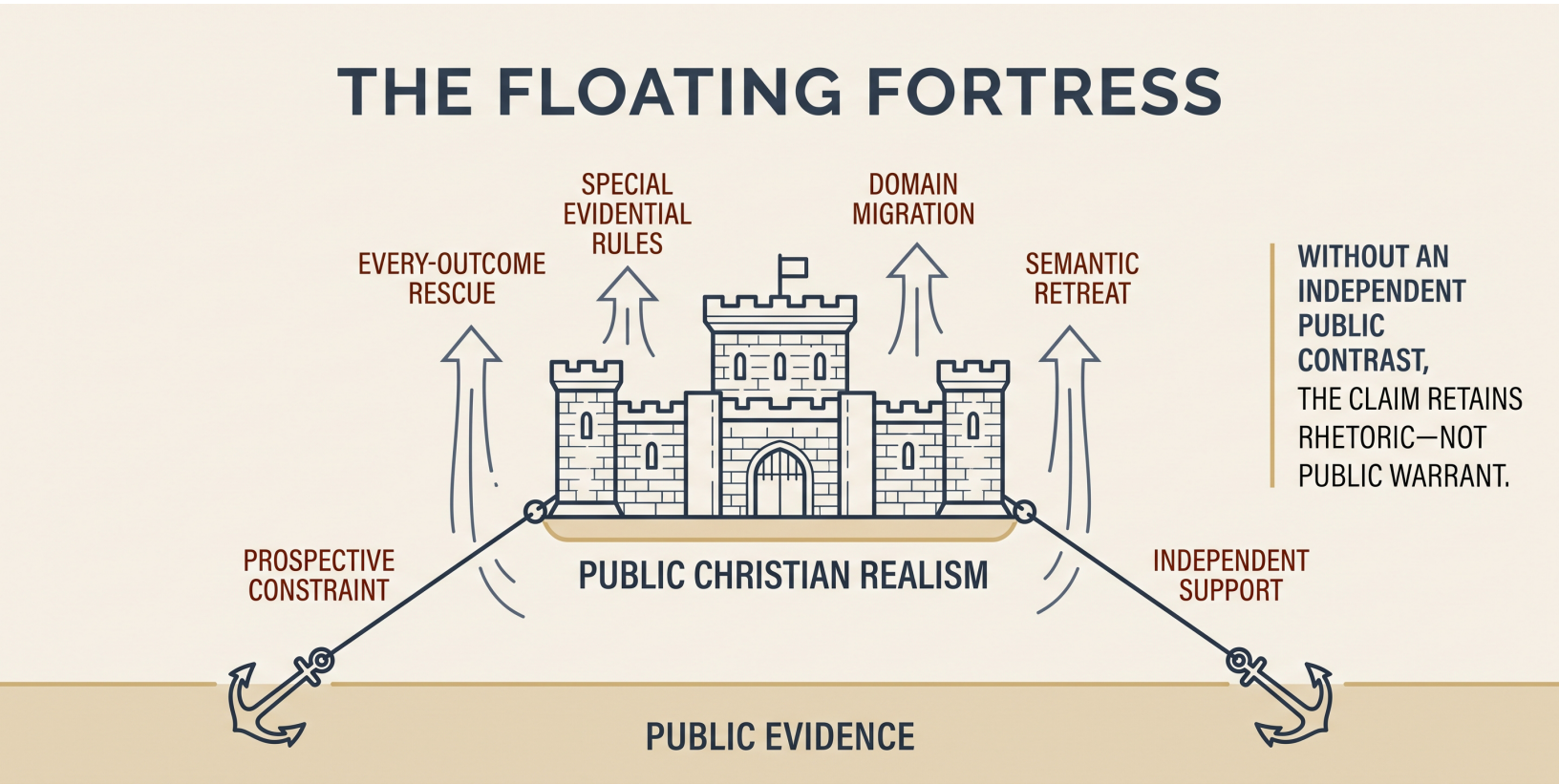
The target is public Christian realism: specific divine agency offered to explain public events or to supply public evidence. Such a claim gains warrant from a public record only if it makes that record more expected than at least one live alternative. When the cited record does not supply that contrast, an unsupported rescue cannot repair the shortfall by removing the contrast while retaining the rhetoric of the stronger claim. The resulting record-plus-rescue package does not warrant the stronger public explanation; any materially revised view needs independent support. This does not refute every Christian God-concept, private religious warrant, or symbolic theology.

Preview:

Target claim	Public contrast	Rescue pattern	Bounded result
Specific divine agency explains public events or verifies a tradition.	The claim prospectively changes what should be expected relative to live alternatives.	Pressure prompts an unsupported qualification, domain migration, or semantic retreat that removes the contrast.	Where the record lacks the contrast, the rescue supplies none; any changed view needs independent support.

The paper evaluates a recurring evidential structure, not the prevalence of that structure in every church or the truth of every Christian proposition.

Visual preview:



The floating fortress depicts the argument’s diagnostic pattern. Publicly confident claims begin near empirical ground; four kinds of defensive revision can preserve the structure while lifting it away from adverse evidence. A legitimate refinement reconnects the claim to the ground through prospective, independently supported constraints. An unrestricted rescue leaves the rhetoric standing but supplies no support of its own; the weaker claim must be assessed on what it now says.

Abstract

Some Christian claims do more than express worship, identity, or metaphysical commitment. They present specific divine agency as a public explanation of events or as public evidence for a religious tradition. This paper argues that when the cited record does not supply the evidential contrast required for that stronger claim, and a defense removes the contrast while supplying no independent support, the resulting package does not warrant the stronger explanation. A materially revised view may remain meaningful, coherent, true, or privately warranted, but it must stand on other reasons. To distinguish responsible clarification from insulation, the paper develops two constraints. The public-difference requirement says that an explanatory claim must make some prospectively identifiable difference to expectation relative to live alternatives. The prospective-accountability requirement says that a qualification can inherit the earlier argument's evidential credit only when it preserves the relevant content, is independently motivated, constrains interpretation rather than merely absorbing the result at hand, and remains open to evidential loss. These constraints are applied to petitionary prayer, miracle testimony, models of divine action, and figurative or deferred readings of religious claims. Across these domains, favorable outcomes can retain the authority of a concrete claim while unfavorable outcomes trigger qualifications, domain shifts, or semantic changes that reduce exposure without clearly acknowledging changed content. This is a diagnostic failure mode, not a claim that every revision is ad hoc or every Christian proposition false. In that precise sense, the fortress floats.

Keywords: Christian realism; public explanation; prospective accountability; petitionary prayer; miracles; divine action; hermeneutics; ad hoc revision

1. The Target: Public Christian Realism

A *God-concept* is a specified conception of a deity, including the character, intentions, powers, and mode of action attributed to that deity. Christianity contains many such conceptions and many uses of theological language. Some discourse is liturgical, ethical, contemplative, symbolic, or apophatic. Some concerns ultimate dependence rather than a personal agent acting as one cause among others. This paper does not treat those diverse projects as one empirical hypothesis.

The target is narrower. Call a claim *publicly realist* when it attributes a determinate state of affairs or act to the Christian deity and offers that attribution either as an explanation of publicly accessible events or as evidence that nonadherents should be able to assess. A claim that petition altered a medical outcome, that a miracle publicly verifies a revelation, or that providence explains a historical event belongs to this category. The bare metaphysical claim that reality has a transcendent ground does not, without more, predict a particular recovery, historical report, or physical pattern.

Public warrant here does not mean proof from premises accepted by every possible observer. It means support that can be checked without first granting the conclusion or giving the favored tradition an evidential privilege denied to rivals. Historical testimony, randomized trials, background knowledge, conceptual coherence, and comparative explanatory success can all contribute. What public warrant excludes is a rule under which the target claim receives credit for every favorable appearance while no unfavorable appearance can count against it.

The governing thesis is therefore conditional but consequential. When a Christian realist package draws public authority from a contrastive claim of concrete divine action, the cited case fails to supply that contrast at the advertised strength, and the response removes the contrast without independent support or an accounting of changed content, the record-plus-rescue package does not warrant the stronger public explanation. A materially revised view may have other support; it cannot simply inherit the abandoned claim's evidential credit.

This formulation avoids two easy overstatements. First, the argument is not a survey establishing how often every denomination uses an insulating strategy. It examines a recurring structure in four prominent claim domains. Second, the conclusion is not that accommodation is always irrational. Learning normally changes theories. The question is whether the change increases understanding and constraint or merely ensures survival.

2. Two Constraints on Public Explanation

An explanation need not predict an exact event to have empirical content. A claim about a free agent can alter probabilities, identify relevant reasons, distinguish expected patterns, or guide inquiry without functioning like a mechanical law. Scott Davison's contrastive analysis of answered prayer illustrates the point: coincidence between a request and an outcome is not enough; the request must play an essential role in explaining why that outcome occurred rather than an alternative (Davison, 2017). Public content begins with a difference.

Public-Difference Requirement

When a specific theological claim is offered to explain a public record, it must identify some result, frequency, distribution, or evidential relation that is more expected under that claim than under at least one live alternative. Mere compatibility with the observed record does not supply explanatory support.

This requirement is modest. It does not demand a decisive experiment, a universal exceptionless law, or a simple falsifier. It asks what the theological explanation adds. If the same public record is equally expected whether or not the attributed intervention occurred, the record cannot by itself support that attribution.

The timing and basis of a qualification also matter. A condition can be stated after an event and still be legitimate if it follows from independently supported commitments. Conversely, a condition stated early can still be empty. The relevant distinction is not merely chronological; it is whether the qualification constrains the claim independently of the datum it is introduced to absorb.

Prospective-Accountability Requirement

A qualification can inherit the original public argument's warrant only if it is independently motivated, can guide expectation before the relevant result is classified, and applies comparable standards to favorable, unfavorable, and rival cases. If it changes the claim's content, the revised view must be evaluated on its own support rather than silently inheriting the earlier claim's evidential credit.

The philosophy of prediction and accommodation counsels care here. Evidence used in constructing an account can still support it, and a post hoc hypothesis is not defective merely because of when it appeared. What raises suspicion is lack of independent testability, coherence, or new constraint (Barnes, 2025). Likewise, Lakatos did not condemn every protective auxiliary. A research programme is progressive when adjustments generate excess content and corroborated novelty; it degenerates when repairs mainly protect the core from pressure (Lakatos, 1978).

Table 1 turns those cautions into a practical comparison.

Test	Responsible refinement	Insulating rescue	Why it matters
Independent basis	Follows from textual, moral, metaphysical, or empirical reasons available apart from the anomaly	Is introduced because the favored reading failed, with no other support	A repair built only to fit the failure gains no support from that fit alone
Prospective constraint	Guides expectation or inquiry before the result is classified	Leaves every possible result compatible with success	A public claim must distinguish at least some evidential possibilities
Symmetry	Applies the same standards to favorable and unfavorable cases and to rival traditions	Credits favorable cases while raising the burden only for adverse or rival cases	Selective standards manufacture apparent confirmation
Content accounting	States clearly what the earlier claim got wrong or no longer asserts	Keeps the authority of the stronger claim while adopting the safety of a weaker one	Intellectual progress requires identifying what changed
Further leverage	Produces new questions, discriminating consequences, or independently checkable connections	Mainly prevents loss of confidence in the protected core	Survival and explanatory progress are different achievements

Table 1: The distinction is functional, not psychological. A theologian can offer an insulating rescue sincerely, and a refinement prompted by failure can still be responsible if it satisfies the stronger column.

Four recurrent warning signs follow: favorable cases confirm while unfavorable cases never disconfirm; success conditions become definite only after failure; a concrete claim migrates to a less exposed domain; or key terms change their public contrast while retaining their former rhetorical force. The following cases test this diagnostic rather than assuming its verdict.

3. Petitionary Prayer and the Every-Outcome Rule

Petitionary prayer illustrates the target because it can be described in importantly different ways. It may be a duty, a practice of attention, an expression of dependence, or a means of transforming the petitioner. Those descriptions need not imply a public difference in external outcomes. The stronger public claim says that petition is a dependable route to intervention—at least for some identifiable class of requests—and contributes often enough to change what should be expected. On Davison’s analysis, the petition must figure in a true contrastive explanation; sequence alone does not establish an answer (Davison, 2017).

Noam Oren separates the rationality of believing that petition is efficacious from the rationality of praying for other reasons. He argues that the empirical challenge bears on the former and on prayer practiced to bring about one future rather than another, not on every devotional purpose (Oren, 2025). That separation prevents a null medical result from being treated as a disproof of prayer’s psychological, relational, or liturgical value.

The controlled literature does not settle every theology of petition. The STEP trial found no benefit of intercessory prayer for complication-free recovery after cardiac bypass surgery; patients certain that they were being prayed for experienced more complications, though the study did not establish the reason (Benson et al., 2006). A meta-analysis of fourteen studies found no statistically discernible overall effect, with the estimate falling close to zero after exclusion of a controversial study (Masters et al., 2006). A different systematic review reported a small statistically significant pooled effect while still classifying intercessory prayer as experimental rather than established (Hodge, 2007). A later Cochrane review of ten trials and 7,646 participants found no clear effect on mortality, general clinical state, coronary-care readmission, or rehospitalization and judged the evidence too equivocal to support a recommendation for or against intercessory prayer (Roberts et al., 2009). Heterogeneous methods, disputed constructs, and the agency attributed to the deity block a universal metaphysical inference from these studies.

They do not block a narrower conclusion. This record does not provide a robust, replicated public difference for strong claims of dependable medical intervention. A defender can say that the deity declines to cooperate with tests, grants only requests aligned with hidden goods, acts too rarely for detection, or gives a different benefit. Any one of those proposals might be true. Taken as an unrestricted set, however, they make efficacy compatible with every outcome and frequency.

That is the every-outcome rule: receipt counts as an answer, nonreceipt counts as refusal or a better answer, delay remains indefinitely open, and an undetected effect counts as hidden action. The rule can preserve trust, but it does not itself provide evidence that petition changed the external outcome. A prospectively specified theology could do better by identifying the class of requests, the kinds of reasons relevant to refusal, the expected frequency or pattern, and what would lower confidence. The free agency of the attributed deity makes such an account difficult, not conceptually impossible.

The bounded result is clear. The reviewed studies do not establish that no petition has ever affected an event. They do not establish a robust public intervention claim, and the every-outcome rule adds no discriminatory support of its own. Prayer can retain other values without those values being presented as confirmation of external intervention.

4. Miracles, History, and Evidential Symmetry

Miracle claims pose a different problem. A resurrection or extraordinary cure is usually presented not as a repeatable intervention but as a unique act with historical or religious significance. It would be a mistake to demand a randomized trial of an unrepeatable event. Historical reasoning properly uses testimony, documents, causal background, source dependence, and comparison among explanations.

Hume's treatment of miracle testimony emphasizes the evidential weight of stable experience and the fallibility of reports (Hume, 1748/1999). Yet the argument cannot responsibly stop with Hume. Earman contends that Hume's distinctive probabilistic reasoning fails and that testimony can, under suitable conditions, overcome a low prior probability (Earman, 2000). Swinburne develops a detailed probabilistic case for the resurrection by combining historical evidence with a substantial background case for a deity who would have reason to become incarnate and authenticate that mission (Swinburne, 2003). These arguments show that a categorical rule against justified miracle belief is too crude.

They also clarify what a serious public case requires. The historical evidence does not operate alone. Its force depends on prior commitments about the existence and purposes of the relevant deity, the reliability and independence of testimony, and the comparative probability of rival explanations. A miracle may be argued for within that full evidential package. It should not then be advertised as a freestanding deliverance of ordinary history while the package's controversial background premises are left implicit.

Distribution matters as well as isolated testimony. Oderberg formulates the wooden-leg problem: traditions report cures of conditions compatible with remission, misdiagnosis, psychosomatic change, or incomplete documentation, yet not the conspicuous regeneration of an amputated limb. He canvasses ten theistic replies and ultimately defends one, so the problem is not presented as an effortless refutation (Oderberg, 2026). Its relevance here is methodological. The kinds of events reported, absent, and independently documented form part of the public record. A defense that invokes hidden purposes or the ill-disposition of observers must explain that distribution rather than merely make it compatible with the target claim.

Appeals to noncoercive relationship or hiddenness face the same constraint. Schellenberg's hiddenness argument concerns apparently nonresistant nonbelief under a perfectly loving personal deity, not miracle distribution alone (Schellenberg, 1993). Even so, a hiddenness defense used in the miracle context changes the expected evidential profile: clear public confirmation is now said to be deliberately limited. That may be coherent. It also weakens the use of miracle discourse as broadly available public confirmation.

The conclusion is not that the resurrection did not occur or that extraordinary testimony can never justify belief. It is that uniqueness supplies no automatic exemption from comparative standards. Public miracle arguments must

state their background case, assess source and alternative explanations symmetrically, and allow the distribution of reports and absences to bear evidential weight. A shift between ordinary historical prestige and exceptional theological immunity is the insulating pattern.

5. Divine Action and Domain Migration

Theories of divine action range across substantially different ontologies and explanatory ambitions. Tracy distinguishes action as the ontological ground of every event, action through created causes or free agents, action within physical underdetermination, and intervention that exceeds creaturely causal powers (Tracy, 2009). Saunders surveys attempts to reconcile special divine action with natural law, quantum theory, and chaos, concluding that a satisfactory account remains difficult (Saunders, 2002). Wildman's ground-of-being family goes further by denying that ultimate reality is a determinate entity at all, thereby contrasting sharply with personal or agential theism (Wildman, 2009).

This plurality blocks a simplistic history in which one primitive theology merely retreated upward as science advanced. Noncompetitive causation, allegory, and apophatic restraint are not modern inventions. A ground-of-being model can be adopted for independent metaphysical reasons. An interventionist account can also be revised because of genuine conceptual discovery. Prompted revision is not *ipso facto* bad faith or degeneration.

The public-accountability problem arises when authority migrates across these models without an accounting of changed content. A community may invite trust through stories of an agent who heals, answers, protects, or interrupts, then answer evidential pressure with a model on which ultimate reality is not a determinate agent or acts only as the ontological condition of every event. The latter model is not a protected version of the former. It makes different claims, faces different objections, and offers different public contrasts.

Four questions distinguish progress from retreat:

1. **Continuity:** Does the new model attribute the same kind of agency and explain the same events?
2. **Independent motivation:** Are there reasons for the model beyond its ability to absorb a difficulty?
3. **Retained exposure:** What public difference, if any, does the new model still predict or explain?
4. **Authority transfer:** Is support originally offered for intervention now being used to validate a model that no longer entails intervention?

A responsible transition can answer openly: the earlier causal expectation was too strong; the current model gives it up; the new model should be judged on its own metaphysical, ethical, or experiential merits. An insulating transition says, in effect, that nothing important has changed while using the weaker model only when the stronger one encounters difficulty. The failure is not metaphysical abstraction. It is claiming both the evidential authority of contact and the immunity of distance.

6. Metaphor, Deferral, and Content Change

Religious texts contain poetry, parable, hyperbole, apocalypse, narrative, and liturgy. Literalism is not the default for every genre, and figurative interpretation is not an evidential vice. The relevant contrast is between a stable interpretation defended by linguistic, historical, and theological reasons and a reclassification whose main function is to prevent a public expectation from counting as failed.

Flew's falsification challenge asks what a putatively factual theological assertion excludes; indefinite qualification can reduce a claim until no describable state of affairs counts against it (Flew, 1955). Mitchell's response remains essential. Rational trust need not collapse at the first contrary appearance, and a person's commitment can reasonably organize the interpretation of ambiguous evidence (Mitchell, 1955). Resilience is not self-sealing by definition. The cumulative weight of contrary evidence and the believer's willingness to recognize it still matter.

The prospective-accountability requirement locates the boundary. Suppose a passage about protection, healing, or fulfilled petition is interpreted figuratively before a crisis on independent grounds, and the reading identifies its moral or liturgical function. No rescue has occurred. Suppose instead the same language is used concretely to motivate expectation, then becomes purely inward or symbolic only after the expected event fails. The later reading might be valuable, but it cannot inherit the public confirmation initially sought by the concrete one.

Hick's eschatological verification proposal offers a more disciplined deferral. Certain religious claims, he argues, could be verified in a postmortem future even if they cannot be decisively verified within present history (Hick, 1960). That proposal preserves possible factual content without pretending that present public events decide it. The evidential boundary should be honored in both directions. A claim whose verification is deferred beyond current history cannot simultaneously explain a current recovery, political event, or absence with robust present authority merely because future verification remains possible.

Semantic continuity matters. If *answer* comes to include grant, denial, delay, inward transformation, and unknown benefit; if *healing* changes from bodily recovery to spiritual reconciliation; or if *presence* is consistent with every experiential state, the terms may retain religious importance while losing their earlier public contrasts. Clear theology can make that trade. Floating-fortress theology obscures it.

7. The Cumulative Diagnostic

The four domains are not four replications of one experiment. They involve different evidence and different standards. Their cumulative relevance lies in the shared direction of revision: concrete public force is retained in rhetoric while adverse evidence is answered by reducing the claim's exposure. Table 2 keeps the domains distinct.

Domain	Advertised public use	Insulating move	Warranted conclusion
Petitionary prayer	Petition contributes to requested external outcomes	Every result is classified as an answer, refusal, delay, hidden gift, or unmeasurable act	The rule supplies no public support; reviewed clinical evidence does not independently show a robust advantage
Miracle testimony	An extraordinary event publicly verifies a religious claim	Ordinary history supplies prestige, while uniqueness, hiddenness, or special standards block adverse comparison	A case must disclose its background premises and meet symmetrical historical and probabilistic scrutiny
Divine action	A personal agent explains events within public causation	Pressure prompts movement to non-intervention, secondary causation, or non-agential ground without content accounting	The new model may be coherent, but it cannot automatically inherit support for the abandoned intervention claim
Interpretation	Concrete promises or narratives guide expectation and evidence	Failure triggers figurative, inward, or indefinitely deferred meaning while former rhetoric persists	Stable symbolism is legitimate; post hoc semantic retreat does not confirm the concrete claim

Table 2: A cross-domain evidence ledger. The conclusion in each row concerns public warrant, not the truth or value of every claim in that domain.

Lakatos supplies an illuminating analogy, not a jurisdictional transfer. Scientific programmes are evaluated across sequences of theories by novel content and corroboration (Lakatos, 1978). Theology is not thereby declared a natural science. The borrowed question is simpler: does a repair create independent explanatory leverage, or mainly protect a commitment from the anomaly that prompted the repair?

Kuhn likewise does not license a quick parity between science and theology merely because both depend on traditions and exemplars (Kuhn, 2012). Reeves argues that Kuhnian exemplars are embodied problem-solving achievements and that theological practices differ in their capacity for publicly observable progress (Reeves, 2025). Paradigm dependence may explain disagreement; it does not make every protected programme equally successful.

Fallibility also applies to science. Stanford argues that recurrent unconceived alternatives should reduce confidence even in successful scientific theories and create at least as serious a humility problem for theological conceptions of otherwise inaccessible reality (Stanford, 2025). That symmetry strengthens rather than weakens the present argument. Public accountability does not require scientific certainty. It requires comparable openness to alternatives, content change, and evidential loss.

The authority-without-risk dilemma

A publicly realist claim can retain its concrete content and accept that some outcomes or patterns would lower confidence. Or it can reduce that exposure by moving toward symbolism, deferral, non-intervention, or inscrutable purpose. The second route may preserve coherence or religious value, but the retreat supplies no public warrant of its own and cannot silently carry the stronger claim's authority into changed content. A revised claim must earn that authority from independent support and the content it still exposes to evidence.

This is the paper's sense of *public failure*. It is not a census of Christian belief and not a proof that every examined proposition is false. It is the failure of a record-plus-revision package to warrant the advertised explanation where the record lacks the required contrast and the revision supplies none. A revised claim may still stand on independent grounds.

8. Strongest Objections

8.1 Theology is not science

Agreed. The argument does not impose laboratory method on metaphysics, ethics, worship, or personal trust. It is conditional on the public use of a claim. When a theological claim explains a recovery, a historical event, or a distribution of evidence, it enters evidential relations appropriate to that subject matter. Refusing those relations is a possible theology, but it gives up that public explanatory use.

8.2 A free personal agent cannot be experimentally controlled

Freedom defeats a mechanical model, not every rational expectation. Knowledge of free agents routinely supports defeasible expectations based on character, reasons, promises, and patterns. A defender may attribute reasons for hidden or selective action to the deity. The reasons need independent content and must not be inferred solely from whatever outcome occurred. Otherwise agency becomes a universal solvent rather than an explanation.

8.3 Bayesian miracle arguments meet the historical burden

They can meet it in principle. Earman's criticism of crude Humean dismissal and Swinburne's positive case show why miracle testimony deserves probabilistic rather than categorical treatment (Earman, 2000; Swinburne, 2003). The present objection is to a double move, not to Bayesian reasoning: historical evidence is presented as publicly decisive, while the strong theological priors needed to make it decisive are concealed or insulated. A transparent full-package argument is not refuted by this paper; it is exactly what accountability requires.

8.4 Non-interventionism and metaphor can be genuine progress

Yes. A theory may become less concrete because it becomes more accurate, not because its advocates fear evidence. Table 1 supplies the distinction: independent motivation, prospective constraint, symmetry, content accounting, and new leverage. The critique applies when these are absent and when the authority of the abandoned claim is retained without its liabilities.

8.5 Revelation or experience can justify a believer privately

The paper does not deny that possibility. A person may reasonably assign weight to experiences, testimony, or a revelatory tradition that outsiders do not share. The scope changes when that private warrant is offered as public evidence. If revelation settles each disputed point before public evidence is considered, then the conclusion may remain rational for the believer while failing to function as a public explanation.

8.6 The cases are selected and do not establish prevalence

This objection correctly limits the result. Four domains do not establish how every congregation, theologian, or century handles disconfirmation. The paper therefore makes no numerical prevalence claim. The formal result is diagnostic: if the insulating structure obtains, public warrant fails. The empirical discussion shows that the pressure is not imaginary and that the relevant moves arise in consequential domains. A broader sociological or historical prevalence claim would require a different study.

9. Keeping the Fortress Grounded

The critique yields a constructive standard for publicly realist theology. Before treating an outcome as evidence, a defender should:

1. specify the exact God-concept and kind of agency being asserted;
2. name live alternative explanations rather than compare the claim only with impossibility;
3. state what result, frequency, distribution, or evidential relation is more expected under the theological claim;
4. identify in advance what would lower confidence and over what evidential horizon;
5. apply comparable standards to favorable, unfavorable, and rival-religion cases;
6. distinguish independent reasons for a qualification from its usefulness in absorbing failure;
7. acknowledge when a revision gives up intervention, literal content, present verification, or public reach; and
8. separate the claim's public evidential support from its liturgical, ethical, existential, or privately warranted value.

These practices do not guarantee agreement. They make disagreement answerable. A tradition can preserve long-term commitment, revise under pressure, and maintain distinctive metaphysical assumptions while still admitting that a specific piece of evidence counted against a specific claim. What grounds the fortress is not permanent certainty but disciplined contact.

10. Conclusion

Public Christian realism acquires authority by speaking about what happened, what explains it, and what others should infer. That authority carries a reciprocal liability: the public record must be allowed to change confidence. The prayer studies do not disprove every answered petition, but they do not supply a robust external-outcome

advantage and the every-outcome rule supplies no contrast. Miracle testimony is not dismissed by uniqueness, but its public force depends on disclosed priors, source quality, alternatives, and distribution. Non-interventionist and ground-of-being models can be serious theology, but they do not automatically preserve interventionist content. Figurative and eschatological readings can preserve meaning, but they cannot silently inherit the present evidential force of concrete claims.

The common failure is not revision. It is authority without risk: concrete rhetoric draws confidence from contact with the world, while defensive interpretation removes the possibility of evidential loss. The resulting package may remain coherent, inhabited, beautiful, and important. Yet a rescue supplies no warrant of its own. Where the cited record also lacks the required contrast, the package does not warrant the stronger explanation; any materially revised view must stand on independent reasons.

The alternative is neither brittle literalism nor instant abandonment. It is prospective accountability: name the target, specify the contrast, welcome symmetrical scrutiny, and acknowledge content change. A theology that does so may be revised and still remain grounded. A theology that refuses can continue to float, but it should not describe its altitude as public support.

A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

A.1 Plain-language argument

1. A claim offered as a public explanation earns warrant from a record only if it identifies an evidential difference relative to live alternatives and permits some result or pattern to lower confidence.
2. A qualification can inherit the earlier public argument's warrant only if it is independently motivated, prospectively constraining, symmetrically applied, and content preserving; otherwise the revised view must be supported on other grounds.
3. An unrestricted rescue that accommodates every outcome, a domain migration that abandons the original causal claim, or a semantic shift that removes the original contrast cannot inherit support merely by preserving the favored conclusion.
4. In the prayer domain, the reviewed evidence does not supply a robust independent contrast for the strong intervention claim; in the other domains, the surveyed defenses show how uniqueness, model migration, or semantic change can remove a public contrast without themselves supplying new support.
5. Therefore, those moves add no warrant and any changed claim requires independent support. Where the cited record also lacks the required contrast—as the reviewed prayer evidence does for robust intervention—the record-plus-rescue package does not warrant the stronger public explanation.

The conclusion is about warrant, not truth. A claim may be true without being publicly established by the reasons offered. The inference also does not move from four cases to the proposition that every Christian theology is insulated. It applies to packages in which the diagnosed structure is present.

A.2 Validity and support

The inference is deductively valid if the first two premises state necessary conditions of support and the fourth accurately describes the package under review. Premises one through three distinguish support from bare compatibility and inherited warrant from a changed claim that needs its own support. Premise four is mixed: the prayer findings and model descriptions are empirical and bibliographic, while the classifications of miracle, divine-action, and interpretive defenses are case-sensitive comparative judgments. Prevalence across Christianity is not a premise. A defender can defeat the argument's application by supplying an independent contrast, prospective constraints, symmetrical evidence, or a clear account of genuine content-preserving progress.

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