

The Predictive Power of Religions’ Popularity— 14

Phil Stilwell

Independent Scholar

ORCID: [0009-0009-3725-8682](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3725-8682)

Revised August 2026

Central claim

Religious testimony can transmit genuine warrant, but multiplying dependent recipients does not multiply independent confirmation. Christians and apologists who cite billions of believers as public evidence for a single, reliably communicated Christian revelation must therefore show that the crowd adds truth-connected, sufficiently independent, and calibrated support beyond the sources it repeats. The observed pattern—incompatible mass convictions, strong cultural inheritance, durable nonconvergence, and no robust public predictive advantage—is more expected if ordinary sociocultural transmission is sufficient to explain popularity; raw headcount therefore adds no independent confirmation and directionally favors that comparator, without disproving theism, invalidating private warrant, or excluding revelation models that abandon public-convergence expectations.

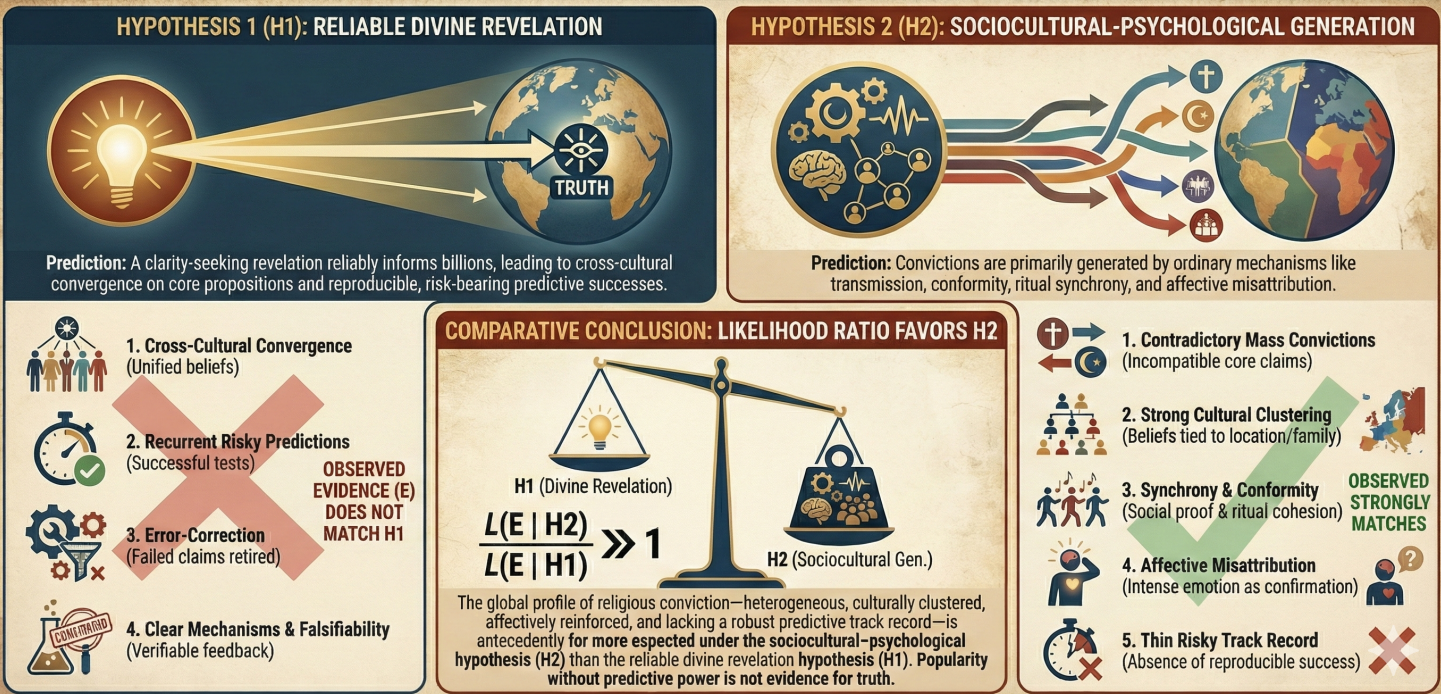
Preview:

Target appeal	Required bridge	Observed pressure	Rational conclusion
Billions of believers make one Christian revelation more credible.	Large numbers add support only through truth-connected sources, partly independent checks, and calibrated outcomes.	Religious judgments share transmission channels, conflict across traditions, remain divergent, and lack a robust distinctive public track record.	The number itself adds no independent confirmation; ordinary transmission sufficiently explains the distribution.

The conclusion concerns what religious numbers add beyond their sources. It leaves open transmitted or private warrant, weaker or hidden revelation models, other conceptions of a deity, and theism in general.

Visual preview:

POPULARITY IS NOT EVIDENCE FOR RELIGIOUS TRUTH: SOCIOCULTURAL MECHANISMS EXPLAIN GLOBAL CONVICTION PATTERNS BETTER THAN DIVINE REVELATION



The infographic contrasts a clarity-seeking revelation with sociocultural generation and maps the evidence that bears on the comparison. Its headline is shorthand for the bounded conclusion that correlated headcount without source-diagnostic calibration supplies no independent confirmation of religious truth; its H1/H2 labels represent the specified revelation hypothesis and the ordinary-transmission sufficiency hypothesis.

Abstract

The appeal to “billions of believers” treats religious popularity as public evidence for Christianity. Testimony can transmit warrant, but the number of dependent recipients adds confirmation only insofar as it reflects further truth-connected, partly independent, and calibrated routes to the claim. This paper compares two explanations of the global pattern: a single Christian revelation that reliably communicates central world-involving truths to large populations, and the sufficiency of ordinary sociocultural transmission operating through upbringing, conformity, ritual cohesion, prestige, and demographic reproduction. The evidence is directional rather than numerically decisive. Major traditions with enormous memberships teach incompatible core propositions; religious identity remains strongly linked to childhood socialization and geography; persistent disagreement blocks unqualified deference to one’s own group size; and controlled intercessory-prayer research has not produced a robust distinctive advantage that could calibrate the headcount. These strands jointly make the observed distribution more expected under ordinary transmission than under the specified revelation model. By the law of likelihood, that comparative fit favors the transmission explanation and defeats the move from multiplied recipients to independent confirmation. The conclusion does not disprove theism, deny that testimony or private experience can warrant belief, or rule out revelation. A revelation model can remain logically possible by weakening its public expectations, but then the number of adherents cannot serve as the public success that motivated the appeal.

Keywords: religious popularity; wisdom of crowds; informational cascades; testimony; religious diversity; cultural transmission; likelihood

1. Billions Cannot Do the Work Assigned to Them

A child is born into a community where conviction saturates ordinary life: family prayer, weekly gatherings, music, testimony, trusted authorities, and friends who treat one tradition’s central claims as obvious. Another child enters an equally sincere community organized around incompatible claims. Each grows up surrounded by adults who can truthfully say, “millions of people agree with us.” The symmetry is not a cynical observation about believers. It is the evidential problem.

This paper is addressed especially to Christians and apologists who use the size, endurance, or geographical spread of Christianity as public evidence for its truth. The belief under challenge is not that testimony never matters or that a majority is always wrong. It is the inference from *large religious numbers* to *independent confirmation of one revelation*. Testimony is indispensable: one well-placed witness can rationally inform thousands. But the warrant transmitted down one chain and the corroboration supplied by several independent routes are different. Large numbers add evidential weight only when the processes generating them are connected to truth in a way that makes the crowd more than repeated uptake of the same sources.

The target must be precise. A *God-concept* is a specified conception of a deity. The relevant model here is not theism in general. It is the **publicly clarity-seeking Christian-revelation hypothesis**: one Christian revelation reliably informs large populations about central world-involving claims, and the resulting mass adherence is offered as public evidence of that reliability. The comparator is the **ordinary-transmission sufficiency hypothesis**: the scale and distribution of religious conviction can be generated and sustained without invoking revelation, through ordinary learning, family and institutional inheritance, prestige, conformity, ritual bonding, demographic change, and the interpretation of experience within inherited categories.

These models are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive metaphysical possibilities. A theist could accept that ordinary transmission explains most features of religious populations while also affirming revelation. A revelation account could limit disclosure to a small community, emphasize hiddenness, or deny that public convergence was ever intended. The comparison asks a narrower explanatory question: does the observed headcount contain a residual, source-diagnostic feature that ordinary transmission does not already make expected? If broad uptake is offered as the effect of revelation, revelation must improve the explanation of that effect beyond what its ordinary channels supply.

The headcount dilemma

1. Either the number of adherents adds source-diagnostic support beyond the evidence and transmission channels they share, or it does not.
2. If it does, that added force depends on source competence, partly independent routes, calibration, and discrimination—conditions the number alone cannot establish.
3. If it does not, the number supplies no independent confirmation beyond its sources.
4. Therefore, in neither branch does citing “billions believe” by itself establish that “their number independently confirms Christianity.”

The form is deductively valid. Whether a religious crowd actually satisfies the conditions in the second premise is an empirical and comparative question. The rest of the paper explains why the observed pattern does not establish that bridge and instead fits ordinary transmission well.

2. When Numbers Rationally Matter

2.1 A majority is evidence only through the process that produced it

Suppose a thousand thermometers agree. Their agreement is impressive only if the instruments are responsive to temperature, have a reasonable error rate, and are not all wired to the same defective sensor. The same structure applies to human judgment. Counting opinions without examining their production mistakes repetition for replication.

Condorcet-style results are often invoked as a mathematical vindication of crowds. Under suitable assumptions, if each voter is more likely than not to be correct and judgments are suitably independent, majority reliability can rise with group size. But the conclusion is conditional on the assumptions. Opinion leaders and dependence complicate the inference (Estlund, 1994); formal work on social epistemology shows that individual and group-level success can diverge when independence fails (Mayo-Wilson et al., 2011). A million people may rationally learn from a common source, yet still fail to provide a million independent checks on that source.

This distinction does not require an individualistic theory on which every believer must reconstruct the evidence alone. Lackey argues that testimony is itself an irreducible source of knowledge, and Greco develops a social religious epistemology centered on transmission within epistemic communities (Greco, 2020; Lackey, 2008). Even if those accounts are correct, multiplying hearers does not automatically multiply the upstream evidence. The public question is what the size of the audience adds beyond the reliability of the speakers, experiences, texts, and institutions from which the belief descends.

The relevant requirements can be stated without technical machinery:

1. **Source competence:** the originating evidence, speakers, or methods must be reliably connected to the question at issue.
2. **Source structure:** added numbers matter only to the extent that they reflect additional partly independent, truth-sensitive routes rather than repeated uptake of the same channels.
3. **Calibration:** there must be a track record connecting confidence to correctness.
4. **Discrimination:** success must favor the claim over live alternatives rather than being equally expected under them.

These are not anti-religious requirements. They are the same reasons it can be rational to defer to a mature technical consensus while withholding deference from a rumor, a market cascade, or an audience repeating one authority. Goldman emphasizes that rational reliance on experts depends on evidence of their comparative reliability

and on indicators available to nonexperts, not on sheer self-certification (Goldman, 2001). Informational-cascade models likewise show how individually understandable choices can create a stable collective error once people rationally follow earlier choices rather than their own thin evidence (Bikhchandani et al., 1992).

2.2 Religious disagreement is not a neutral background fact

Religious disagreement has two distinct evidential roles. First, it blocks simple majoritarian reasoning because large populations support incompatible claims. The Christian proclamation that Jesus died and was raised conflicts with the Qur'anic denial that Jesus was crucified (Biblica, 2011; Dar-us-Salam, 1997). These are not merely different metaphors for one proposition. At least one vast population is wrong about a central world-involving claim. Numbers alone cannot identify which one.

Second, disagreement is higher-order evidence: evidence about how trustworthy one's own reasoning may be. Philosophers disagree about how far conciliation should go, especially when disputants are not exact epistemic peers, and blanket conclusions about the effect of religious diversity ignore important differences among cases (Christensen, 2007; Kelly, 2010; Koehl, 2005). Still, learning that apparently serious inquirers reach incompatible conclusions defeats the unqualified claim that one's own group size settles the matter. It creates a burden to identify a symmetry-breaker—a reliable method, track record, or discriminator that rivals lack.

The conclusion is not that every disagreement mandates suspension. A community can rationally prevail by showing better evidence or a better method. But that is precisely the point: the work must be done by the method and evidence. Headcount cannot substitute for them.

3. Why the Global Pattern Fits Transmission Better

3.1 Inheritance predicts correlated conviction

Human beings are cultural learners. We acquire language, skills, norms, and much of our practical knowledge from others; this dependence is one of our species' strengths (Henrich, 2016). Religious ideas use the same learning capacities. Foundational work in the cognitive science of religion explains how memorable agent concepts and recurrent social practices spread without presupposing that each recipient independently tests their truth (Barrett, 2004; Boyer, 2001). More recent synthesis explicitly connects religious belief to cultural learning, prestige, testimony, and cognitive biases (White et al., 2021).

None of these mechanisms shows that a transmitted belief is false or unwarranted. Parents also transmit true arithmetic and accurate history. Their relevance is narrower: they explain how conviction can become numerous and durable without each believer supplying a new independent evidential sample. Once ordinary mechanisms sufficiently predict scale, scale by itself loses diagnostic force; the quality of the originating evidence remains a separate question.

Official demographic data sharpen that point. Pew Research Center's 2025 analysis used more than 2,700 censuses, surveys, population registers, and related sources across 201 countries and territories. It attributes global change from 2010 to 2020 chiefly to natural increase—which reflects age structure, fertility, and mortality—and religious switching; migration reshapes regional and national distributions rather than global totals. Most adults still identify with the religion in which they were raised (Pew Research Center, 2025). Those data do not measure the truth of any religion. They do show that population size and change are substantially produced by demographic and social processes that operate whether the inherited theology is true or false.

3.2 Cohesion can strengthen confidence without calibrating truth

Classic conformity experiments show that perceived unanimity can move reports even when the stimulus is simple and visible (Asch, 1955). Synchronous action can also increase cooperation and affiliation (Willemuth

& Heath, 2009); a meta-analysis found effects on prosocial behavior, perceived social bonding, social cognition, and positive affect, while emphasizing the limits of conceptual rather than direct replication (Mogan et al., 2017). Religious rituals frequently employ synchronized speech, music, posture, and movement.

This evidence must not be abused. It does not establish that worship causes false belief, that believers lack reasons, or that every ritual participant conforms. It establishes a plausible, independently evidenced route by which communities can become cohesive and confident. Cohesion is socially valuable, but it is not a calibration test. Rival traditions can produce it simultaneously.

3.3 A cumulative evidence ledger

Table 1 prevents a common mistake: treating each strand as a standalone disproof. The conclusion comes from their convergence. Each strand states what the headcount-supporting revelation model leads us to expect, what the observed record contributes, why the transmission comparator predicts that record, and the strand's limit.

Table 1: Evidence ledger for the comparative argument

Evidence strand	Pressure on the revelation model	Fit with ordinary transmission	Contribution and limit
Incompatible mass claims	Reliable mass disclosure should reduce conflict on central public propositions.	Separate communities can stably transmit incompatible narratives.	Defeats headcount symmetry; does not identify which claim is false.
Cultural inheritance	Broad access should add source-diagnostic support beyond birthplace and parental tradition.	Family, institutions, language, and prestige predict clustered identity.	Shows shared transmission channels; inheritance alone does not make a belief false or unwarranted.
Durable nonconvergence	Error correction should yield some trend toward adjudication on core claims.	Schisms and stable pluralism are expected when feedback is weak or tradition-bound.	Pressures public clarity; leaves hidden or plural revelation models open.
Ritual and conformity	Confidence should be calibrated by truth-sensitive feedback rather than group cohesion alone.	Synchrony and social proof help sustain affiliation and cooperation.	Supplies a mechanism for confidence; does not reduce all belief to conformity.
Risky public record	A widely active, publicly confirming revelation should sometimes yield replicable discriminators.	Ordinary transmission requires no distinctive public success beyond its social and demographic effects.	Weakens public confirmation; cannot test every deity or every form of prayer.

No row proves ordinary-transmission sufficiency. Together they create a pattern: the same mechanisms that explain the geographical and familial shape of conviction also explain why confidence can remain intense amid incompatibility and why raw numbers persist without an external calibration record. The cumulative case is stronger than a study inventory because each strand bears on the same contrast and asks whether a distinctive revelatory residue remains.

4. The Public Track-Record Question

4.1 A risky test must distinguish the hypotheses

The headcount argument often shifts when challenged. Numbers are first presented as the natural result of an active, reliable revelation; when nonconvergence is raised, revelation becomes subtle, culturally mediated, or resistant to public testing. These replies can preserve logical possibility. They cannot preserve the original evidential use unless they restore a difference that observation could reveal.

A risky prediction is one that could fail and whose success is appreciably more likely under the target model than under its comparator. Dramatic testimony after an outcome is rarely enough because memory, selection, coincidence, treatment, and ordinary recovery can also produce dramatic stories. A public track record requires advance specification, independent measurement, replication, and a rule for retiring failures rather than endlessly reclassifying them.

Controlled intercessory prayer is relevant only as one public test case, not as a referendum on theism. The large STEP trial found no difference in complications between the uncertain groups that did and did not receive study prayer; participants certain that they were receiving prayer had more complications than those uncertain about receiving it (Benson et al., 2006). The 2009 Cochrane review of ten randomized studies found equivocal evidence: most results did not show a positive effect, and the review did not support a recommendation for or against the intervention (Roberts et al., 2009). That is not a deductive disproof of a responsive deity. Petitionary outcomes may depend on aims that a clinical protocol cannot fix, and uncontrolled prayer outside the study can blur groups. But this bounded record supplies no robust positive calibration capable of turning population size into independent public confirmation.

4.2 What would reverse the comparison?

The ordinary-transmission sufficiency hypothesis is not protected from all evidence. It would face pressure from a sustained pattern that it does not readily predict, for example:

- repeated, preregistered, independently replicated information unavailable through ordinary inquiry;
- convergence on precise central propositions across culturally isolated populations without a shared transmission channel;
- reliable successes tied prospectively to one tradition's distinctive claims rather than to vague spiritual expectations; or
- correction mechanisms that identify and retire failed religious predictions at a rate that produces demonstrable calibration.

Any candidate would still need controls against leakage, flexible interpretation, selective reporting, and multiple endpoints. The standard is demanding because the claim is demanding: billions are said to be informed by a transcendent source. A method capable of grounding that public inference should add a source-diagnostic success beyond the ordinary processes that already explain why billions can agree.

5. Strong Replies and Their Evidential Price

5.1 “Revelation works through culture”

It may. Ordinary cultural transmission and revelation are not logically exclusive. A deity could choose families, languages, rituals, and institutions as media. But if the religious distribution is indistinguishable from what those ordinary processes produce on their own, culture cannot be cited twice—first to explain the evidence and then as evidence for the further cause. The advocate needs some residual feature more expected if revelation is active.

This reply therefore creates a fork. If revelation-through-culture produces a public discriminator, that discriminator can be assessed. If it predicts no public difference, the model may remain coherent, but popularity ceases to confirm it.

5.2 “Religious experience gives direct warrant”

Accounts of religious warrant can make an individual's belief rational without deriving that warrant from population size. Plantinga's proper-function approach is an important example (Plantinga, 2000). The present argument does not decide whether a person can possess private or tradition-relative warrant. It concerns the public claim that *the number of believers* should move an outsider's credence.

Private warrant does not solve cross-tradition symmetry. If members of incompatible traditions report internally compelling experiences, the outsider still needs a source-diagnostic reason to treat one stream as

reliable. The more the justification depends on first-person access unavailable to public comparison, the less work aggregate numbers can do.

5.3 “Religious knowledge is socially transmitted”

This is the strongest answer to an overly individualistic crowd argument. Religious knowledge, if there is such knowledge, need not be regenerated independently by every believer. Testimony, trust, education, and epistemic communities can transmit knowledge and understanding (Greco, 2020; Lackey, 2008). A dependent believer is not therefore an irrational believer, and dependence does not by itself defeat the originating claim.

The answer preserves transmission but not automatic multiplication. If one reliable witness informs a million hearers, the hearers may acquire warrant; their number does not turn the one witness into a million independent witnesses. Public headcount inherits whatever warrant belongs to the upstream sources and channels. To make the audience size further evidence, the advocate must show that growth, retention, or convergence is itself more expected because the revelation is true than because successful communities transmit commitments well.

5.4 “There is substantial moral and spiritual convergence”

Shared moral practices and recurring spiritual themes may be real and important. Yet broad convergence on cooperation, ritual, agency, or moral concern is expected under cultural evolution and recurring human social problems (Norenzayan, 2013; White et al., 2021). It does not by itself confirm distinctive Christian propositions. Meanwhile, disagreements over incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, scripture, salvation, prophetic authority, and the nature of the deity remain central rather than peripheral.

A common core can support a modest conclusion: humans across cultures generate recurring religious ideas and practices. To support one revelation, the convergent content must be more specific and more likely under that revelation than under shared human psychology and social life.

5.5 “Science is social and sometimes conformist too”

Correct. Scientific communities can exhibit prestige bias, groupthink, publication bias, and cascades. The contrast is not between pure independent science and corrupt religious community. It is between processes with demonstrable external calibration and processes whose errors are harder to identify.

Scientific consensus earns defeasible weight when independent instruments, adversarial checking, prediction, replication, and practical success make widespread error less likely. Its authority is domain-specific and revisable. Where those safeguards fail, scientific headcount should also lose weight. This symmetry strengthens rather than weakens the paper's principle: numbers inherit the reliability of the process that produced them.

6. Conclusion

Religious popularity has predictive power about social transmission, demographic continuity, institutional strength, and human needs for meaning and belonging. It does not automatically have predictive power about religious truth. The evidential difference lies in the path from claim to crowd.

For Christians and apologists who invoke billions of believers, the rational burden is straightforward. Show that the upstream sources are truth-connected and that the number itself adds partly independent, calibrated, source-diagnostic support beyond them. The observed record instead displays incompatible mass convictions, shared transmission channels, persistent nonconvergence, cohesion mechanisms that operate across traditions, and no robust public track record capable of calibrating the headcount.

Taken cumulatively, that pattern is more expected if ordinary sociocultural transmission is sufficient to explain popularity than under a single publicly clarity-seeking Christian revelation used to explain mass adherence. It

therefore directionally favors the sufficiency comparator and defeats the inference from multiplied recipients to independent confirmation. The principal limit is equally clear: this is not a disproof of theism, a denial that testimony can transmit warrant, a judgment about every believer's private reasons, or a test of revelation models that predict no public convergence. But a model that retreats from public expectations cannot continue to use public numbers as though they fulfilled them.

Popularity without demonstrated source-diagnostic power is not additional public evidence. Before citing the billions, establish what their number contributes beyond the sources from which their beliefs descend.

A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

Ordinary-language reconstruction

- P1.** Evidence favors one hypothesis over another when that evidence is more probable under the first hypothesis than under the second.
- P2.** If a single publicly clarity-seeking Christian revelation reliably informs large populations and mass adherence is evidence of that reliability, we should expect some combination of convergence on central public claims, reduced dependence on cultural inheritance, and risky public successes that calibrate the judgments.
- P3.** If ordinary sociocultural transmission is sufficient to explain religious popularity, we should expect culturally correlated and incompatible belief clusters, durable nonconvergence where feedback is weak, cohesion mechanisms that operate across rival traditions, and no necessary distinctive public success.
- P4.** The observed evidence has the pattern described in P3 rather than the public-discriminator pattern described in P2.
- P5.** Taken cumulatively, P2–P4 support the comparative premise that the observed evidence is more probable under ordinary-transmission sufficiency than under the specified revelation hypothesis.
- P6.** Therefore, by P1 and P5, the evidence favors ordinary-transmission sufficiency for explaining religious popularity, and raw headcount supplies no independent public confirmation beyond its sources.

Scope of the conclusion. P6 is comparative and defeasible. It does not entail that theism is false, that every religious judgment is unreliable, or that the two hypotheses exhaust all possibilities. A revelation model that predicts no public convergence remains logically open, but it cannot cite mass adherence as the public success at issue.

Symbols

- H_R : the specified publicly clarity-seeking Christian-revelation hypothesis.
- H_S : the hypothesis that ordinary sociocultural transmission is sufficient to explain religious popularity.
- E : the observed evidence package—incompatible mass claims, shared transmission channels, durable nonconvergence, cross-tradition cohesion mechanisms, and no robust distinctive public track record.
- $P(E | H_R)$: the probability of observing E if H_R is true.
- $P(E | H_S)$: the probability of observing E if H_S is true.
- Λ : the likelihood ratio comparing H_S with H_R on E .

Symbolic counterpart

$$\Lambda = \frac{P(E | H_S)}{P(E | H_R)}. \quad (1)$$

$$P(E | H_S) > P(E | H_R) \iff \Lambda > 1. \quad (2)$$

$$\Lambda > 1 \implies E \text{ favors } H_S \text{ over } H_R. \quad (3)$$

Validity. Once the comparative premise $P(E | H_S) > P(E | H_R)$ is granted, the evidential direction follows validly from the definition of Λ and the law of likelihood. The formal step does not establish the comparative premise by logic alone.

Support for the premises. P2 and P3 are interpretive model expectations; P4 is an empirical summary supported by the cited philosophical, experimental, cultural-learning, and demographic evidence. P5 is the paper's central inductive judgment, not a deduction from P2–P4. Its support is qualitative and cumulative. No numerical value for Λ is claimed. Stronger public discriminators, more independent source structure, or a better-supported revelation model could change the comparison.

References

- Asch, S. E. (1955). Opinions and social pressure. *Scientific American*, 193(5), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican1155-31>
- Barrett, J. L. (2004). *Why would anyone believe in god?* AltaMira Press.
- Benson, H., Dusek, J. A., Sherwood, J. B., Lam, P., Bethea, C. F., Carpenter, W., Levitsky, S., Hill, P. C., Clem, J., Donald W., Jain, M. K., Drumel, D., Kopecky, S. L., Mueller, P. S., Marek, D., Rollins, S., & Hibberd, P. L. (2006). Study of the therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer (STEP) in cardiac bypass patients: A multicenter randomized trial of uncertainty and certainty of receiving intercessory prayer. *American Heart Journal*, 151(4), 934–942. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ahj.2005.05.028>
- Biblica. (2011). *Holy bible, new international version* [1 Corinthians 15:3–8].
- Bikhchandani, S., Hirshleifer, D., & Welch, I. (1992). A theory of fads, fashion, custom, and cultural change as informational cascades. *Journal of Political Economy*, 100(5), 992–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1086/261849>
- Boyer, P. (2001). *Religion explained: The evolutionary origins of religious thought*. Basic Books.
- Christensen, D. (2007). Epistemology of disagreement: The good news. *The Philosophical Review*, 116(2), 187–217. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-2006-035>
- Dar-us-Salam. (1997). *The qur'an: Sahih international translation* [Qur'an 4:157].
- Estlund, D. M. (1994). Opinion leaders, independence, and Condorcet's jury theorem. *Theory and Decision*, 36(2), 131–162.
- Goldman, A. I. (2001). Experts: Which ones should you trust? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 63(1), 85–110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2001.tb00093.x>
- Greco, J. (2020). Social religious epistemology. In *The transmission of knowledge* (pp. 161–184). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108560818.010>
- Henrich, J. (2016). *The secret of our success: How culture is driving human evolution, domesticating our species, and making us smarter*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400873296>
- Kelly, T. (2010). Peer disagreement and higher-order evidence. In R. Feldman & T. A. Warfield (Eds.), *Disagreement* (pp. 111–174). Oxford University Press.
- Koehl, A. (2005). On blanket statements about the epistemic effects of religious diversity. *Religious Studies*, 41(4), 395–414. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003441250500778X>
- Lackey, J. (2008). *Learning from words: Testimony as a source of knowledge*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199219162.001.0001>
- Mayo-Wilson, C., Zollman, K. J. S., & Danks, D. (2011). The independence thesis: When individual and social epistemology diverge. *Philosophy of Science*, 78(4), 653–677. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661777>
- Mogan, R., Fischer, R., & Bulbulia, J. A. (2017). To be in synchrony or not? a meta-analysis of synchrony's effects on behavior, perception, cognition and affect. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 72, 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.03.009>
- Norenzayan, A. (2013). *Big gods: How religion transformed cooperation and conflict*. Princeton University Press.
- Pew Research Center. (2025, June). *How the global religious landscape changed from 2010 to 2020* (Research report). Pew Research Center. Retrieved August 13, 2026, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/06/09/how-the-global-religious-landscape-changed-from-2010-to-2020/>
- Plantinga, A. (2000). *Warranted christian belief*. Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, L., Ahmed, I., & Davison, A. (2009). Intercessory prayer for the alleviation of ill health. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (2), Article CD000368. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD000368.pub3>
- White, C. J. M., Baimel, A., & Norenzayan, A. (2021). How cultural learning and cognitive biases shape religious beliefs. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 40, 34–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.07.033>
- Wiltermuth, S. S., & Heath, C. (2009). Synchrony and cooperation. *Psychological Science*, 20(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02253.x>