

The Minimal Facts Argument as Historical Anchor in a Cumulative Case for Christianity

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Abstract

The minimal facts method has become one of the most influential historical approaches to defending the resurrection of Jesus, largely because it restricts itself to data that are strongly evidenced and widely granted by critical scholarship. This paper argues that the method is epistemologically valuable but often overextended. By examining the stated aims of the method, its acknowledged limitations in the work of Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, and the distinction between event-level, causal, and theological explanation, the paper contends that the minimal facts method can establish a strong historical foundation for the death of Jesus and the postmortem experiences of his followers, but it cannot by itself establish the theological claim that God raised Jesus or that Christianity is true. Rather than rejecting the method, this paper situates it within a broader cumulative case for Christianity. When properly constrained, the minimal facts method functions as a historical anchor that secures key resurrection-related data and creates the need for further metaphysical and theological explanation. Its strength is preserved precisely when it is not asked to bear more argumentative weight than historical inquiry can sustain.

Contents

The Minimal Facts Method (MFM)	2
The Acknowledged Limitations of the Method	4
What Then Is the Epistemic Value of the Minimal Facts?	6
The MFM Is a Uniquely Strong Historical Apologetic	6
How Does a Historical Case Fit in the Broader Cumulative Case?.....	10
Conclusion	12
Bibliography	15

“The Earth is a sphere, and the evidence is in the pictures brought back by NASA.” On the surface, this statement seems rather simple. Pictures that NASA vets do indeed show a spherical Earth. However, that particular statement is one that is going to be rejected instantly in the mind of someone who truly holds to the view of a flat Earth. They typically reject that anyone has even been to space, and they reject the pictures as either fabrications or (if willing to admit that humans have been to space) the result of lens distortion. Additionally, there is simply a general, vigorous distrust of NASA and often of the government as a whole. In cases like this, arguing from pictures that were taken in space is certainly going to get one nowhere. One needs to find ways to argue that might have some chance, however slight, to reach the person on the receiving end of the argument. While this particular case is quite niche, the concept of producing arguments that may actually have a chance of reaching the opposing person or scholar is common. After all, if an argument is not built in such a way that it can be received, it is almost not worth making. It will likely be a waste of effort. But if the *content* of that argument is packaged in a way that the one argued against at least accepts the basic premises, then there is a much greater chance that the effort of making the argument will pay off.

As such, arguing from the facts that a critic allows has long been a viable method. It can even be seen in how some of the people in Scripture presented the gospel. The most famous example is Paul when he is before the Areopagus in Acts 17:18-34. He not only uses a statue that the Greeks had in their pantheon and argues for their clear religiosity and concern that they do not leave any gods out (they had an “unknown” god statue), but he also quotes pagan philosophers whom they would have been familiar with. The logic is rather simple. The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers he was engaging with were both religious and cared much about learning new things.

He used the very things that they were most familiar with to teach about the gospel. In other words, he tailored his argument to his audience.

While there are a lot of ways that this tailoring can be done, one way is to use only what that particular audience will allow. If a scholar opposes a given position and another scholar provides an argument for said position, but does so with arguments and points that the first scholar dismisses *a priori*, then the argument has virtually no chance to be successful (even if it works logically and adheres to reality). Thus, a methodology that specifically engages only that which has a great deal of evidence for it and that which the audience explicitly allows as evidence in the particular debate is likely to be a fairly strong methodology. Of course, such a methodology is not without its limitations. This paper addresses one such methodology. In this paper, the minimal facts methodology regarding the resurrection will be defined, and a demonstration of its limitations will be given. The goal of which is to demonstrate that, while not sufficient on its own to prove the theological claim that Christianity is true, the minimal facts methodology is epistemologically strong as part of a cumulative case for Christianity.

The Minimal Facts Method (MFM)

The goal of this section is not to build the method or even prove it. The point is to utilize the creator of the method (as applied to the resurrection) and its most staunch users, all of whom are actively seeking to advance this methodology from a scholarly angle. As such, this section will also not focus on how the method is being *used* in apologetics. While the goal does not include this latter part, it is worth noting that this paper as a whole shows how the method *should* be used. This is particularly relevant because it has been argued that the minimal facts method has garnered

“near-exclusive use in Christian apologetics circles.”¹ If this is indeed true, clarifying what can and cannot be done with the minimal facts is imperative. But first, the minimal facts argument needs to be laid out.

From a very broad perspective, the minimal facts approach has two axioms. The first is that it only uses events that “must be established by an abundance of strong evidences, usually by multiple critically ascertained, independent lines of historical argumentation.”² The second axiom is that “the vast majority of published contemporary scholars with credentials in relevant fields of study have to acknowledge the historicity of the event.”³ Gary Habermas, the originator of the method as applied to the resurrection, spends several pages expounding on which facts get to be counted in the main minimal facts, what is meant by “vast majority” of scholars, as well as which scholars qualify as “critical.”⁴ Additionally, he is careful to note, “Of these dual criteria [highly evidenced facts and the majority of scholars agreeing], I have always specified that the first is by far the most crucial.”⁵ There are generally five or six highly attested facts that are argued for.⁶ The specific facts themselves are not relevant for this paper, as the paper is focused on the methodology itself.

¹ Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts* (Chillicothe, OH: DeWard Publishing, 2017), 220-21. It must be noted that McGrew is not “happy” about this near-exclusivity. The way that this statement is framed in her chapter makes it function more as a lament. From a broad perspective, the author of this paper agrees with McGrew’s critique. The minimal facts method is valuable, but epistemically limited.

² Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection*, vol. 1, *Evidences* (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024), 92.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 93-98

⁵ Ibid., 92.

⁶ Habermas lists six in his *On the Resurrection* series, while Benjamin Shaw lists five in his short chapter on the minimal facts in his book *Trustworthy*.

That is generally what the MFM *is*, but what is the purported strength of the method? Habermas is explicit here. He says, “The minimal facts method does not begin with or require in any way some sort of prior belief in the supernatural quality or the inspiration of Scripture before this enterprise can be launched.”⁷ He even goes so far as to say that the method allows that the “New Testament texts could even be *generally untrustworthy* and still yield truths, among which could be these well-established data.”⁸ This goes back to the example given in the introduction to this paper. Skeptics of Christianity rarely grant inspiration and often even reject the general reliability of the Bible.⁹ As such, it seems as though an argument that can bypass this would at least have *some* value in arguing for the Christian faith.

The Acknowledged Limitations of the Method

The two main scholars who are advancing the minimal facts method are Gary Habermas (the originator) and Michael Licona.¹⁰ Other scholars make use of the method but are not necessarily “advancing” it as a field of research. This section focuses on showing that these two scholars explicitly acknowledge the limitations of the methodology they are advancing.

Licona states, “Historians do not possess tools capable of verifying theological claims. Take, for example, the statement ‘Jesus died for our sins.’ Historians can verify that Jesus died.

⁷ Habermas, *Evidences*, 103.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 104. Habermas is careful to note here that he is not saying that the New Testament *is* generally untrustworthy or that he believes it is, only that it *could* be, and the method would still work. I agree with what he is saying *if and only if* the method is only used to establish basic historical claims. If the argument includes any form of the claim “therefore, Christianity is true,” I would firmly disagree with what he is saying here. That said, this will be discussed at much more length as the paper progresses.

⁹ Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004), 44.

¹⁰ Benjamin Shaw is another scholar who is in this realm, but much of his work has been in collaboration with Habermas or focused more on the use of the method in lay contexts via his ministry Core Apologetics.

They can verify that the early Christians *believed* Jesus's death atones for our sins. However, they do not possess tools capable of verifying that Jesus's death truly has atoning qualities."¹¹ In other words, a method that limits itself to history is explicitly limiting what kind of conclusions can be made strictly from applying the method. Habermas, likewise, acknowledges this limitation.¹²

In addition to the above, it is widely acknowledged that historical inquiry is inherently probability-based.¹³ To quote Licona:

When historians say that “x occurred” in the past, they are actually claiming the following: *Given the available data, the best explanation indicates that we are warranted in having a reasonable degree of certainty [sic] that x occurred and that it appears more certain at the moment than competing hypotheses. Accordingly we have a rational basis for believing it. However, our conclusion is subject to revision or abandonment, since new data may surface in the future showing things happened differently than presently proposed.*¹⁴

If this is true, and there seems to be no reason to doubt that it is, then any conclusion focused specifically on historical data cannot produce an unassailable position. Thus, even though atheistic scholars agree so firmly that Jesus definitely died by crucifixion (as shall be shown later), it is still not a “guaranteed” thing. Instead, it is a “based on the current evidence, this seems to be the case” kind of thing. This is especially true given the difficulty in getting to a true consensus when speaking about historical events.¹⁵

To formalize the above discussion on what can be said about historical events, it is necessary to engage with three different levels of explanation. The first level is event level (asking

¹¹ Michael R. Licona, *Jesus, Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 171.

¹² Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 4.

¹³ Habermas, *Evidences*, 23-27.

¹⁴ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 69.

¹⁵ See Licona, *The Resurrection*, 62-66.

“what happened?). The second level is the causal level (asking “what caused it to happen?”). The third level is the theological level (asking “What does this event mean, and what does it reveal about reality?”).¹⁶ Specifically in regard to the MFM, this can be formalized as such:

1. The Minimal Facts Method establishes conclusions at the level of historical events.
2. Historical event data underdetermine causal explanations.
3. Causal explanations do not, by themselves, establish theological meaning or identity.
4. Therefore, the Minimal Facts Method cannot independently justify theological conclusions about the resurrection.
5. Therefore, further epistemic, metaphysical, and theological reasoning is required to move from historical event to Christian doctrine.

What Then Is the Epistemic Value of the Minimal Facts?

To put the section heading a different way—if history alone does not yield theology, what is the proper epistemic role of the minimal facts argument? This is a necessary question to ask because the limitations listed above demonstrate, quite clearly, that the method is not sufficient in and of itself to prove that Christianity is true. That said, this question can be broken down into two smaller sections. The first section emphasizes the strength of the method, while the second section demonstrates that it must function within a broader cumulative case.

The MFM Is a Uniquely Strong Historical Apologetic

While there are other apologetic arguments that engage or use history to one extent or another as arguments for God, the MFM has a distinct advantage. Namely, it uses only the historical facts that are strongly evidenced and, typically, only the ones that the critical scholars allow themselves. This makes for an apologetic argument that is firmly historical in a way that is rather hard to deny. This is important because the historicity of the event in question (the

¹⁶ This one can also be more broadly understood as the “metaphysical” level if not talking about something directly theological.

resurrection) is imperative to the reasonability of Christianity.¹⁷ To quote a skeptic on this, Gerd Lüdemann says, “For without this foundation [the historicity], any theology of the resurrection, even New Testament theology, is groundless speculation.”¹⁸ As such, a method that can get to a firm historical foundation regarding the hinge on which the Christian faith turns is of vast importance. The methodology provides some very strong grounding for most of the facts claimed. For example, regarding the death of Jesus, Lüdemann states, “The fact of the death of Jesus as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.”¹⁹ The fact that the death of Jesus is “indisputable” presupposes that Jesus existed in the first place; a claim (that Jesus is a myth) that is *still* brought to this day by many lay atheists. Additionally, he says, “It may be regarded as historically certain that Peter (and the disciples) had an experience after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to him/them as the Risen Christ.”²⁰

While it is beneficial for the believer to be able to cite widespread acceptance of this particular fact, it must be noted that what a given skeptical scholar means by “experienced” is far from being a specific, universally held belief. This language allows for hallucinations, seeing a shade or ghost, or a “real” resurrection, but one lacking a physical aspect.²¹ It is still obviously valuable, but it is nowhere near as strong as all or most critical scholars acknowledging a real, *physical* resurrection of Jesus. To use Lüdemann as an example again, it seems reasonably clear

¹⁷ See Paul’s argument about Christians being those who are “most to be pitied” if the resurrection is not true in 1 Corinthians 15.

¹⁸ Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach to the Resurrection*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹ Lydia McGrew, “Minimal Facts vs. Maximal Data,” *What’s Wrong with the World*, February 2015, https://whatswrongwiththeworld.net/2015/02/minimal_facts_are_not_enough.html.

that by “experience” he means a vision of some kind, not necessarily a physical resurrection.²² Overall, despite having some real challenges in determining the exact consensus among scholars, the MFM does a great job of providing a strong, historical basis for one of the pivotal points that Christianity must affirm.

At this point, a warning ought to be issued. The strength of the method itself as a strong historical apologetic for the life, death, and reasonable belief in the resurrection of Jesus is dependent on adherents to the method not overclaiming what it can produce. Some, for example, have argued that the brute fact of a resurrection of Jesus, if indeed it happened, is God putting his “signature on the work of Jesus.”²³ While Richard Swinburne is not necessarily arguing from the minimal facts here, it must be acknowledged that any attempt to argue in this vein necessarily brings in a bunch of assumptions (i.e., God’s existence, a specific God’s existence, that the Gospel’s are largely reliable in what they teach about what Jesus taught, and that God is the only one who can reasonably resurrect somebody). The latter example runs into an immediate problem. Given that Satan appears capable of performing a resurrection (Revelation 13:2-3), he sometimes appears as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14),²⁴ and false prophets will/have produced false signs and wonders where it is not obvious that they did not or will not really do said signs and wonders (Exodus 7-8, Matthew 24:24, and 2 Thessalonians 2:9), the leap to the assumption that Jesus *must* have been raised by God simply because of the brute fact of being resurrected is

²² Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, 60.

²³ Richard Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 114.

²⁴ This creates a problem, given that the resurrection “experiences” are not necessarily agreed to be bodily. If one takes, for example, that the disciples merely had visions or saw some form of apparition, what prevents this from being satanic in origin? Paul himself said (2 Corinthians is widely acknowledged to be a genuine Pauline letter) that Satan can masquerade as an angel of light. Someone could posit that the resurrection experiences were a ruse put on by this evil being. One need not accept Christianity necessarily to agree with Paul that an evil, non-physical being exists and can pretend to be someone else.

problematic *unless* the reliability of the Gospels can be largely trusted.²⁵ Even the general reliability of the Gospels is probably not enough. They need to teach theological truth, not just be historically reliable, if one wants to posit that the God of the Bible resurrected Jesus as his “signature” of approval on his life and ministry. For the MFM, both the general reliability of Scripture and the truth of its theological claims are intentionally bracketed out. As such, to maintain its reputation as a strong *historical* argument, those who use the method need to maintain a proper distinction between what the method can actually get to on its own (historical claims) and leave proving the truth of Christianity to downstream arguments about the existence of God and the reliability of Scripture.

Another point of strength regarding the MFM is that, due to the nature of the method itself, it is particularly conducive to debate formats.²⁶ It is difficult for critics to disagree with the basic facts that the method uses because most scholars affirm these facts. The difficulty is that, even though many of the skeptical scholars agree with the basic facts, they do not agree with the interpretation. This connects directly to the above acknowledged limitation of the method itself. The method gets to some great facts that pretty much everyone agrees on (at least from a surface level),²⁷ but the facts need to be interpreted. This leads directly to the next section.

²⁵ The main problem with what was just laid out is that *under Christianity's own framework*, one can reasonably posit that some agent other than God is capable of resurrecting people or at least performing great signs and wonders with all power. Thus, the brute fact that a resurrection happened does nothing to determine how it happened or who caused it.

²⁶ McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 220.

²⁷ See again the problem of what one means by “experience.”

How Does a Historical Case Fit in the Broader Cumulative Case?

It seems evident that, if the minimal facts method cannot, on its own, produce theology (as the method is focused on defending a historical fact that, in and of itself, only shows that a historical event happened or it is reasonable to believe that it happened), then one needs to “go beyond” the minimal facts method in order to actually get to Christianity as a whole. In other words, the MFM is a great *starting point*.²⁸ It establishes a reasonable baseline on which one can build a broader argument. Moving from “the most reasonable hypothesis regarding the facts surrounding the death and claimed resurrection of Jesus is that the resurrection actually happened” to “therefore, Christianity is true” requires more explicitly theological arguments.

Even if one takes Habermas’s minimalistic definition of the gospel from the “factual side” as being the “deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus,”²⁹ one can see the problem. The minimal facts demonstrate, as surely as one can with any historical argument, that Jesus died on a cross. Additionally, they provide a very reasonable grounding to believe that the resurrection happened. But Jesus’s deity? The minimal facts, at best, provide a view that the disciples *sincerely believed* Jesus was divine. It may be reasonable to say that a true resurrection increases the probability that a theistic being exists,³⁰ but even this increased probability still requires additional arguments, not

²⁸ Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3. Here, Swinburne actually disagrees with the idea that the MFM can be a starting point. He argues that it is deeply irrational to argue for the resurrection without introducing any theological claims and points out (I believe rightly) that one’s determination of whether the evidence is “strong enough” to support a real, physical resurrection tends to be based on one’s presuppositions about the possibility of God’s existence. However, I disagree that one cannot reasonably start from a minimal facts angle where causal and theological considerations are intentionally bracketed. I do think Swinburne and I would agree that one cannot get the full resurrection and its significance without bringing in causal and theological statements. Swinburne simply argues that these things must be frontloaded, something I disagree with.

²⁹ Habermas, *Evidences*, 341.

³⁰ Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, “The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, eds. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 594. The McGrews slightly overstate the case here by saying that if “Jesus of Nazareth died and then rose again bodily three days later, the probability of T [theism] is approximately equal to 1 [meaning it is almost certainly true].” While I agree that this particular explanation seems

to mention that it is based on the slightly less strong argument for the resurrection itself (when compared with the evidence for the death of Jesus). As such, the method does *not* demonstrate that Christianity is true. This is a problem with virtually all forms of natural theology.³¹ The minimal facts method is essentially what Richard Swinburne would call “ramified natural theology.”³² While it is a broader methodology than traditional natural theology, it intentionally brackets out things like needing to defend Scripture’s reliability.³³ It also logically brackets out other methodologies and arguments as well, given that it argues solely from historical facts that are typically widely attested. Therefore, if one’s goal is to show that Christianity itself is reasonable, one necessarily needs to bring in the very things that the minimal facts methodology intentionally brackets (just like any other form of natural theology). This is not inherently a problem if the method is used as part of a cumulative case. It basically just becomes one argument (albeit a relatively strong historical one) that provides a foundation on which other arguments can be built. This is not a problem because, historically, the claim to have *the* argument that proves Christianity true is exceedingly rare and most arguments claimed to do this do not, in fact, succeed.³⁴ *It is a*

more reasonable than positing aliens, some fluke of nature, some non-theistic version of God, or even “God” but meaning something significantly different from the Christian God, one cannot rule them out by the brute fact of a real resurrection. That would require a theological argument showing that it is *definitely* a theistic being.

³¹ Andrew Pinsent, “A Catholic View,” in *Natural Theology: Five Views*, ed. James K. Dew Jr. and Ronnie P. Campbell Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2024), 59. Pinsent demonstrates that, even in scholastic theology, it is generally known that certain things cannot be attained specifically via natural theology alone. He gestures to Thomas Aquinas’s acknowledgment of the existence of the Trinity as that which requires revelation. Given that the Trinity *is* the Christian God, this means that Aquinas would argue that one cannot get to the God of the Bible, at least not fully, without the Bible.

³² Richard Swinburne, “Natural Theology, Its ‘Dwindling Probabilities’ and ‘Lack of Rapport,’” *Faith and Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (2004): 533. This is a natural theology that allows some Christian distinctives to be brought into the equation.

³³ Benjamin C. F. Shaw, *Trustworthy: Thirteen Arguments for the Reliability of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2024), 131.

³⁴ Yujin Nagasawa, *The Existence of God: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 5. Nagasawa notes here that Anselm framed his *Proslogion* around finding a single argument that would alone be

problem, though, if the method is used exclusively, as it underdetermines Christianity by itself.

Overall, the “place” of the MFM in apologetics can be formalized as such:

1. A method can only yield conclusions that fall within the scope of the kind of data it evaluates.
2. The Minimal Facts Method evaluates historical data and seeks the best historical explanation of that data.
3. Therefore, the Minimal Facts Method can only yield conclusions about what most likely happened in history, not about the ultimate cause or theological meaning of those events.
4. The claim that “God raised Jesus” is not merely a historical claim but a causal and theological claim.
5. Therefore, the Minimal Facts Method cannot, by itself, establish that God raised Jesus or that Christianity is true.
6. However, the Minimal Facts Method can establish that certain historical claims—such as Jesus’ death and postmortem appearances—are strongly evidenced and require explanation.
7. Therefore, the proper role of the Minimal Facts Method is to function as a historical foundation within a broader cumulative case, rather than as a self-sufficient proof of Christianity.

To quote Benjamin Shaw, “These historical arguments [the minimal facts and Habermas’s additional twelve facts] become even more robust when combined with arguments for God’s existence.”³⁵

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has sought to clarify both the strength and the limits of the minimal facts methodology. On the one hand, the method stands as a uniquely effective historical tool. By restricting itself to highly evidenced data that even critical scholarship broadly affirms, it establishes a stable and difficult-to-dismiss historical core. In this sense, the method succeeds precisely in what it sets out to do: it provides a defensible account of certain key events surrounding the death of Jesus and the subsequent experiences of his followers. As a historical enterprise, it is

sufficient to prove that God actually exists, and so was born his infamous ontological argument. This argument has met staunch resistance from both his contemporaries and modern scholars.

³⁵ Shaw, *Trustworthy*, 139-40.

not only viable but, in many respects, exemplary. On the other hand, the very features that make the method strong also define its boundaries. By design, the minimal facts method operates strictly within the domain of historical inquiry. As such, it cannot, on its own, move beyond event-level conclusions into causal or theological claims. This is not a failure of the method but a consequence of its methodological constraints. History, as practiced by historians, yields probabilistic judgments about what most likely occurred. It does not possess the tools necessary to adjudicate between competing metaphysical explanations or to establish theological meaning. These are philosophical and theological domains, respectively. Therefore, any attempt to move directly from minimal facts to the truth of Christianity involves a category shift that the method itself does not justify.

This tension explains both the appeal and the frequent misuse of the method. Its ability to secure widely accepted historical data makes it an attractive starting point, particularly in dialogical or debate contexts. However, when its conclusions are extended beyond their proper scope, the method is burdened with claims it was never designed to support. The result is not a strengthening of the argument but a weakening of it, as critics can rightly point out that the leap from historical data to theological affirmation has not been sufficiently warranted.

Accordingly, the minimal facts method is best understood not as a standalone proof but as a foundational component within a broader epistemic framework. It establishes that certain events are historically well-grounded and that these events require explanation. What it does not do is determine, by itself, what that explanation must be. That task necessarily involves additional layers of reasoning, including metaphysical considerations, arguments for the existence and nature of God, and the evaluation of the reliability and theological claims of Scripture. When situated within such a cumulative case, the minimal facts method retains its full force while avoiding the pitfalls

of overextension. In this way, the method finds its proper place. It does not bear the full weight of demonstrating Christianity's truth, nor should it be expected to. Rather, it serves as a critical anchor point, securing the historical dimension of the Christian claim and providing a firm basis upon which further argumentation can proceed.

When trying to think through how to use the minimal facts methodology, perhaps it would be best to view them as what they are claimed to be: facts. If viewed as strong historical data points, then the facts presented by Habermas can be used in any number of ways beyond the narrow methodology itself (which, as established above, can only get one to the brute facts or a reasonable belief in these facts). They can be used in an argument for the existence of God by showing that some form of supernatural existence seems to be strongly evidenced by Jesus's apparent resurrection (if *some form* of supernatural existence seems reasonable, this poses problems for naturalism). They can be used against popular-level atheists who reject the existence of Jesus. The minimal facts can be used to compare across religions to see if any other religions have a similar data set, which, in turn, could provide an *excellent* foundation for an argument for the truth of Christianity *if* one first argues for the existence of a Godlike being (or explicitly acknowledges that one is presupposing this possibility). The data set in and of itself is inherently valuable for a wide variety of applications. The careful apologist needs only to remember that the brute facts themselves do not produce causal or theological claims.

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