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Shipwrecked or Holding Water? In Defense of Plantinga's Warranted Christian Believer
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published in

Philo
2014

document version

Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

de Ridder, G. J., & Berger, M. (Accepted/In press). Shipwrecked or Holding Water? In Defense of Plantinga's Warranted Christian Believer. *Philo*, 16(1), 42-61.

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Shipwrecked or Holding Water? In Defense of Plantinga's Warranted Christian Believer

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Abstract

Herman Philipse argues that Christian belief cannot be warranted in Alvin Plantinga's sense. More specifically, he thinks it is impossible for intellectually responsible and modern believers to hold their religious beliefs in the manner of properly basic beliefs, not on the basis of explicit evidence or arguments. In this paper, we consider his objections to Plantinga's work and argue that they all fail.

1. Introduction

Herman Philipse thinks that Christian belief lacks the warrant of properly basic beliefs, at least for intellectually responsible modern believers. That is to say, he thinks that a modern Christian believer cannot be rational in holding on to her religious beliefs without engaging in natural

theology, i.e., offering explicit evidence and arguments in defense of these beliefs, or at least relying on experts in her community to do so. To argue for his position, he offers a threefold — or fourfold, more on that later — criticism of Alvin Plantinga’s defense of the possible warrantedness of Christian belief.¹ In this paper, we will scrutinize Philipse’s criticisms and argue that they are unconvincing. Far from being ‘shipwrecked’², Plantinga’s account of the warrant of Christian belief survives unscathed, holding as much water as it ever did.

We start with a brief rehearsal of the essentials of Plantinga’s account of how Christian belief can have basic warrant in the next section. We then present and evaluate Philipse’s objections in sections 3 through 6, arguing that none of them succeeds.

2. Warranted Christian Belief

Warrant, according to Plantinga, is

that further quality or quantity (perhaps it comes in degrees), whatever precisely it may be, enough of which distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief.³

The basic conditions that a belief must satisfy in order to have warrant are as follows:

[A] belief has warrant for a person *S* only if that belief is produced in *S* by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for *S*’s kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth.⁴

Under these conditions, if a person *S* holds her warranted belief that *p* firmly enough, and if *p* is true, she knows that *p*. A few points of clarification. First, warrant is understood in terms of proper function, which in turn is closely connected to a design plan. Cognitive faculties, like organs and body parts, ought to function in certain ways. Doing so is what they are for. This is because they have been designed (by God or processes of evolution) to function in these ways. Cognitive faculties function properly when they function in accord with their design plan. Second, proper functioning is relativized to cognitive environments; cognitive faculties do not

deliver reliable outputs in any sort of environment, but only in appropriate environments. The human visual system is unreliable in the deep ocean, but highly reliable in broad daylight. Third, warranted beliefs must have been produced by faculties the aim of which is to produce true beliefs, as opposed to, say, beliefs that are good for survival or personal happiness. Fourth, the design plan must be a good one. It should not just aim at the production of true beliefs, but be successful at that. When cognitive faculties function in accord with it, they should indeed produce mostly true beliefs.

To get from the basic account of warrant to the claim that theistic, and specifically Christian, belief can be warranted, Plantinga appeals to the idea of a *sensus divinitatis*. The *sensus* is a cognitive faculty that, when functioning properly, produces true religious beliefs in humans. These beliefs are produced in the basic way, not on the basis of explicit evidence or arguments but directly, much like perceptual beliefs or memory beliefs. If theism is correct, says Plantinga, it is likely that God gave people a cognitive faculty like the *sensus divinitatis*, the purpose of which is to produce true religious beliefs in the cognitive environment in which people typically find themselves.⁵ The *sensus divinitatis* produces general theistic beliefs, but Plantinga also maintains that ‘the full panoply of Christian belief in all its particularity’ can be warranted. Specifically Christian beliefs, he says,

do not come to the Christian just by way of (...) the cognitive faculties with which we human beings were originally created; they come instead by way of the work of the Holy Spirit, who gets us to accept, causes us to believe, these great truths of the gospel.⁶

Since the workings of the Holy Spirit can be conceived of as a special kind of properly functioning cognitive process, Christian beliefs, too, fit the basic account of how beliefs can come to have warrant. As Plantinga draws inspiration from claims made by Aquinas and Calvin, he dubs this account of how Christian belief can be warranted the extended Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model.⁷

Anticipating later discussion of objections, we draw attention to a few features of the A/C model. First of all, Plantinga claims that it is broadly logically possible, i.e., free from contradiction. It is, moreover, also epistemically possible, i.e., consistent with what we know. It thus offers Christians (and others) a way to conceive of the positive epistemic status of Christian

beliefs. (Which is of course not to say that their thus conceiving of said status is a condition for their beliefs having it!) Although he himself believes the model to be true, or at least close to the truth, he does not claim to *show* that it is true. Instead, he argues for a conditional claim: *If* theism is true, *then* it is likely that theistic belief is warranted in something like the way Plantinga describes. The dialectical import of this maneuver is that it rules out objections to the warrantedness (rationality, justification) of Christian belief that are not also objections to its truth.⁸

Secondly, Plantinga's account of warrant is *externalist*. Externalism in epistemology is typically contrasted with internalism. One can be an internalist or externalist with regard to various positive epistemic statuses, such as justification, rationality, warrant, and knowledge. Crucial to the distinction between externalism and internalism is whether or not it is required that a person has *cognitive access* to the factors that determine a belief's positive epistemic status. A recent handbook characterizes the difference as follows:

The most generally accepted account of this distinction is that a theory of justification is *internalist* if and only if it requires that all of the factors needed for a belief to be epistemically justified for a given person be *cognitively accessible* to that person, internal to his cognitive *perspective*.⁹

Although this characterization concerns justification, the same can be said for other positive epistemic statuses. Externalism is the denial of internalism. It is the thesis that *not* all of the factors needed for a belief to have the relevant positive epistemic status for a person must be internal to that person's cognitive perspective.

With the above characterizations of internalism and externalism in hand, we can readily see that Plantinga's account of warrant is paradigmatically externalist. None of the conditions for warrant require any sort of cognitive access on the part of the subject. In order for a subject to have warranted beliefs, she does not need to be aware, know, or even believe truly that her beliefs have been produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties, operating in an appropriate environment according to a successful design plan aimed at true belief. Subjects can have warranted true beliefs and thus knowledge without having second-order beliefs about this.

Philipse, however, characterizes externalism as the thesis that

whether a belief is warranted and amounts to knowledge merely depends on whether the process by which it is produced is of the right kind or type, quite independently of whether the believer is, or can become, aware of whether it is indeed of the right kind.¹⁰

Here, 'being of the right kind or type' has to do with whether the type of process in question makes it probable that the beliefs it produces are true. This characterization is atypical and also problematic. By limiting possible warrant-conferring factors to the reliability of belief-producing processes, it prematurely excludes various forms of externalism that do not analyze positive epistemic status in such terms.¹¹ Moreover, Philipse makes the internalism/externalism dichotomy non-exhaustive. He labels as internalist those views that require that a subject has cognitive access to what confers positive epistemic status on a belief. As a result, views which hold (a) that there are other factors that contribute to the positive epistemic status of a belief besides (or instead of) the reliability of the process by which it is produced and (b) that a subject needs to have cognitive access to some but not all of the factors that confer positive epistemic status come out as neither internalist nor externalist.¹² These problems set the stage for later misinterpretations of Plantinga's view, as we will see in due course.

Third, like most externalists, Plantinga accepts that warranted beliefs can lose their positive epistemic status when they are confronted with *defeaters*. A defeater for a belief is an experience or propositional attitude that you come to have and that takes away the warrant or rationality of your initial belief. To acquire one, you must come to have the experience or propositional attitude in question and also see its defeating connection with your original belief. Defeaters come in two kinds: a *rebutting* defeater is a ground or reason to think that your initial belief is false and an *undercutting* defeater is a ground or reason to think that the grounds or reasons for your initial belief are not indicative of its truth or that the source from which it came is unreliable.¹³ Whether something is a defeater doesn't just depend on your initial belief and current experiences in isolation, but also on the rest of what you know and believe. If I read in the newspaper that a famous actor has died, I would normally acquire a (rebutting) defeater for my belief that this actor is alive. However, if my friend, who is an editor at the newspaper, has told me earlier that they made an egregious mistake by printing this actor's obituary in the paper while she hasn't actually died, I do not acquire said defeater. Alternatively, if I speak to my

friend after reading the obituary, I thereby acquire a defeater for my defeater for my belief that the actor is alive. Defeaters can be defeated by further experiences or beliefs that take away or undermine the warrant or rationality of the defeater in question.

Contrary to what Philipse appears to think, acceptance of a *no-defeater condition* (NDC) on warranted beliefs does not make Plantinga's account of warrant surreptitiously internalist.¹⁴ Note first that this follows directly from the standard account of the internalism/externalism distinction cited above. Even if an NDC were a clearly internalist condition (which it isn't), Plantinga's view would still not require cognitive access to *all* warrant-conferring factors. Second, no matter which precise characterization of the internalism/externalism distinction one prefers, it is generally accepted that adding an NDC to an externalist account of positive epistemic status does not make that account internalist.¹⁵ Third, however, it is important to understand that the NDC Plantinga works with does not add an extra positive condition to the basic account of warrant. Warrant does not also require a subject to have the belief that she has no defeaters. Warrant is conferred only by the four factors cited above. The idea is rather that someone's warranted belief is *in fact* not subject to defeaters. The basic NDC is thus externalist. Cognitive access only comes in view once a subject actually acquires a defeater (and defeater-defeater, etc.), because having a defeater by definition involves being aware of it.

3. Two Red Herrings

We can be brief about the first two objections to Plantinga's account of warranted Christian belief, since both of them are red herrings, as Philipse also acknowledges.

The first objection concerns the A/C model's logical force, which Philipse claims is very limited for two reasons. First, it is conditional in two respects. Since it incorporates exclusively Christian doctrines, its import is limited to people who endorse these doctrines. In addition, the plausibility of the model is conditional on the existence of God. If there is no God, then Christian belief will not be warranted in the basic way. Plantinga's account, however, does nothing to answer the question of God's existence.¹⁶ Secondly, Philipse thinks the model is only useful for a small group of people. It only provides comfort to 'unwavering Christians' who do not doubt the truth of their religious beliefs. As far as intelligent, reflective Christians and non-believers are

concerned, Plantinga's account of warranted Christian belief 'merely depicts a logical possibility'.¹⁷

These claims fall flat on closer inspection. Since the explicitly and repeatedly stated purpose of Plantinga's account is to provide *Christian* believers with an appropriate way in which to conceive of the positive epistemic status of their *Christian* beliefs, it is nothing against it that it does only that. Next, Plantinga readily admits that the plausibility of the extended A/C model is conditional on the truth of Christian theism.¹⁸ He wants to show that Christians can rationally endorse their religious beliefs *if God exists*, thereby refuting the frequently voiced complaint that theistic belief is intellectually unacceptable regardless of whether it is true. Perhaps Philipse deems the truth of theistic belief a more important issue; perhaps he wishes that Plantinga would have done more to argue for it. That's fine; but this does not even so much as slyly suggest that there is a problem with the A/C model. Finally, the claim that Plantinga's model is useful only to unwavering Christians is easily refuted. In fact, Philipse already does so himself, albeit in a footnote:

Plantinga will answer (correctly) that his extended A/C model is indeed hypothetical, but that it also does great services both to Christian believers and to those who want to criticize religious beliefs. Christian believers who have doubts concerning the truth of their creed *merely* on the ground that they cannot support it by arguments or evidence, will be comforted by the model, since it shows that such arguments of positive apologetics are not necessarily necessary. And the model teaches critics of religion that *de jure* objections to religious belief must be grounded in *de facto* objections.¹⁹

Quite apart from this, various claims in the periphery of the model contain suggestions — all of them rooted firmly in the Christian tradition — for how the *sensus divinitatis* might be triggered and how the Holy Spirit might reveal the 'great truths of the gospel' to our minds. Surely, this is of use to wavering and unwavering Christians alike, as well as to agnostics and atheists.

The second objection is a version of the generality problem for reliabilism.²⁰ Because warrant is partly determined by the reliability of cognitive processes, Plantinga's account is broadly reliabilist. Hence, it is confronted by the problem of generality which arises

because one may describe at many different levels of generality the actual token-process by which a belief that *p* is generated in a subject. As a result, this process may fall both under reliable kinds or types and under unreliable kinds of processes, whereas there may not be a principled manner of choosing between them.²¹

Plantinga's conditions for warrant are supposed to eliminate this problem, Philipse explains, because the design plan determines a unique level of generality at which to describe the cognitive processes involved. However, he claims that when the theory of warrant is applied to the production of religious belief, the problem re-emerges. Because we cannot test whether the *sensus divinitatis* is a reliable belief-forming process, we cannot tell whether the resulting religious beliefs enjoy warrant in the basic way; the level of generality at which the functioning of this belief-producing faculty is to be described is uncertain.²²

This objection, too, comes to nothing. On an externalist account of warrant such as Plantinga's, you can be fully warranted in endorsing properly basic religious beliefs in spite of your (or anyone's) inability to discover whether the conditions for warrant are satisfied. That you may be unable to find out which level of generality is the right level is simply irrelevant as long as there is in fact a correct level. Philipse agrees:

[T]he problem of generality is not a decisive objection against the *logical* and *epistemic possibility* of a warranted basic belief that God exists. What the problem shows is merely that even if God exists (...) *we humans* can never discover by calibrating tests whether our religious beliefs are warranted as properly basic or not.²³

The problem of generality turns out to be a red herring as well.

4. Religious Pluralism Defeated, Part I

We move to Philipse's third objection; the one he claims to be insuperable. The core of this objection is that serious awareness of religious diversity constitutes a *defeater* for the intellectually responsible modern Christian.²⁴ Suppose Adam, who is the epitome of modernity and intellectual responsibility, has a warranted belief that Jesus is the son of God. He becomes

deeply aware of the fact that there are many Muslims who deny this and who are, to all appearances, just as modern and intellectually responsible as he himself is. Their testimony constitutes a rebutting defeater for his belief.²⁵ Perhaps serious awareness of the world's rich religious diversity also constitutes an undercutting defeater because it should lead Adam to doubt the veracity of his own source of religious beliefs. The fact that so many intelligent and well-informed people have incompatible religious beliefs doesn't quite entail that his own source of religious beliefs is unreliable, but it goes some way towards suggesting it. Note that Philipse cannot be content to argue that religious diversity *could* constitute a defeater for some Christian believers.²⁶ His goal is to argue that Christian belief cannot be warranted in the manner of properly basic beliefs, so he must show that religious diversity *always* constitutes an undefeated defeater for the modern intellectually responsible believer.

Is it indeed the case that awareness of religious diversity inevitably gives Adam a defeater for his Christian belief? There are two options available to someone who seeks to defend Plantinga's position. She could either argue that awareness of religious diversity fails to constitute a defeater for Adam in the first place, or she could argue that Adam can obtain a defeater-defeater. We explore the first option in this section and the second in the next.

The first option might seem hopeless at first sight. To claim that awareness of religious diversity does not constitute a defeater sounds like dogmatic demotion of the opinions of others. Holding on to your beliefs in the face of recognized controversy may seem epistemically irresponsible and irrational. However, there are plenty of occasions where we not only discount others' opinions, but do so rationally. For instance, when you know that others are not as well-informed about an issue as you are, that they are less reliable or adept at reasoning vis-à-vis the issue, or that they lack access to some of the evidence or a source of information to which you do have access. In such cases, testimony of others that conflicts with a belief of yours will not take away the warrant or rationality of your belief, because relative to the rest of what you know, it fails to constitute a defeater.

This may be so even when you are willing to grant such things as (a) that those who disagree with you are generally speaking your 'epistemic peers', i.e., that, apart from your disagreement about the issue at hand, they are as well-informed about matters, intelligent, thoughtful, free from bias, etc.²⁷ as you are, (b) that they might have the same 'internal markers' as you do, i.e., feel just as confident and secure that their belief is true, and (c) that you cannot

produce an argument or any other piece of evidence that would convince others that they are wrong.

In fact, it seems to us that this is how things sometimes go in disagreements about basic ethical, political, and philosophical issues. You disagree with people who appear to be your epistemic peers, you might become convinced that they feel just as confident and secure about their conflicting belief as you do about yours, and you might be unable to produce arguments that would get them to reconsider their belief. Nonetheless, you cannot help believing that you are right. You have thought the issue over carefully, trying to take in all the relevant facts and circumstances, and in full awareness of the diversity of opinion that surrounds the issue. Still, you find yourself with a strong belief that things are as you judge them to be and, by implication, that those who disagree with you are wrong. Plantinga himself gives an example:

Perhaps you have always believed it deeply wrong for a counselor to use his position of trust to seduce a client. Perhaps you discover that others disagree; they think it more like a minor peccadillo, like running a red light when there's no traffic; and you realize that possibly these people have the same internal markers for their beliefs that you have for yours. You think the matter over more fully, imaginatively re-create and rehearse such situations, become more aware of just what is involved in such a situation (the breach of trust, the injustice and unfairness, the nasty irony of a situation in which someone comes to a counselor seeking help but receives only hurt), and come to believe even more firmly that such an action is wrong.²⁸

We are strongly inclined to agree with Plantinga here. In situations like these, holding on to your own belief is the rational thing to do and conflicting testimony of others fails to give you a defeater.²⁹

But even apart from the defensibility of this general point, the pertinent question is whether Plantinga's account of how Christian belief can be warranted has the resources to support the claim that awareness of religious diversity need not even constitute a defeater in the first place. This, we will now show, is beyond doubt, in spite of Philippe's misgivings.³⁰

Let's suppose that Adam's belief that Jesus is the son of God has a lot of warrant for him; his *sensus divinitatis* functions properly and the Holy Spirit has sealed the belief upon his heart.

Adam, being the intellectually responsible man that he is, understands that if he knows that p , people who believe that not- p are wrong. Hence, he thinks that Muslims and others who deny that Jesus is the son of God must be wrong. Perhaps he has some sort of explanation for why they are wrong, which makes it rational for him to ignore their testimony. Philipse gives an example of such an explanation, but he deems belief in this particular one deeply immoral and unjustified for decent Christians. Adam could believe

that all Muslims are wicked and that God rightly punishes them for their sins by deforming their *sensus divinitatis* and by intentionally withholding from them the redeeming insight in His incarnation.³¹

But of course, there are less demeaning explanations as well. For instance, Adam could merely believe that he has been graced in a way that others have not, but perhaps will be later. Perhaps Adam doesn't really believe in one particular explanation; perhaps he just believes that some such explanation must be correct. He wouldn't believe this because he has an argument or other independent evidence for its truth; it would be something that makes sense of his conviction that those who deny that Jesus is the son of God are wrong, where this latter conviction is straightforwardly entailed by his belief that Jesus is God's son, which we assumed to be highly warranted.

Plantinga could even maintain that Adam can hold on to his belief without having anything by way of explanation for why conflicting testimony can be discarded. This is because Adam's belief could have a great deal of what Plantinga calls *intrinsic* warrant, so that it forms its own defeater-defeater or, as Plantinga sometimes says, an *intrinsic neutralizer*.³² Some beliefs of ours have so much warrant that potential defeaters for it do not stick. For instance, when I remember clearly that I spent all of yesterday sick in bed, my friends' sincere testimony that they saw me at the train station does not defeat my belief, not even if they tell me that they're sure of it and show me photos of someone who admittedly looks a lot like me. My belief has so much warrant for me because I actually *remember* where I was. As a result of this (but not as an argument for it) I believe I have access to a privileged source of knowledge regarding my whereabouts that others do not have.

Something analogous can happen with religious belief. Adam's belief could have been powerfully produced in him and forcefully revealed to his mind. And because of this, he believes that others who hold conflicting religious beliefs are wrong; they lack access to a privileged source of knowledge to which he has been granted access. Hence, conflicting testimony of other religious believers fails to constitute a defeater for Adam. Thus Plantinga:

If the believer concedes that she *doesn't* have any special source of knowledge or true belief with respect to Christian belief—no *sensus divinitatis*, no internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, no teaching by a church inspired and protected from error by the Holy Spirit, nothing available to those who disagree with her—*then*, perhaps, she will have a defeater for her Christian belief.³³

In light of what has been said so far, it should be clear that the belief in question about having access to a source of warranted belief that others lack, is a straightforward implication of the believer's original warranted Christian beliefs. Hence, Philipse radically misinterprets Plantinga's position when he writes that:

While the original warrant for the Christian belief (*p*) was a purely externalist one (...), this warrant is now backed up by an *internalist justifying argument* (*j*), namely that the believer has the original warrant, and that such a warrant is lacking in the case of those who endorse incompatible beliefs.³⁴

This interpretation gets the intended order of explanation exactly wrong. Plantinga's suggestion is emphatically not that *j* justifies *p*, but that the Christian believer is committed to believing something like *j* because that follows from her strongly warranted belief that *p*.³⁵

Perhaps, however, there is something wrong with the idea that religious beliefs can have enough intrinsic warrant. Philipse certainly thinks so. He formulates two objections.³⁶ First, he says that even though Christians might have intrinsic neutralizers *if* Christian theism were true, this wouldn't help them in a discussion with other religious believers because they in their turn might appeal to an analogous account of the intrinsic warrant of *their* belief, conditional on the truth of their religious belief system.

It's hard to see how this is even supposed to be an objection. The fact that Plantinga's position won't help the Christian believer in a discussion with other believers is neither here nor there. Nobody ever suggested otherwise. Next, the mere fact that other religious believers could appeal to an analogous account of warranted belief entails neither the falsity of Christian belief nor the falsity of Plantinga's account of warranted Christian belief. Also, it does not entail that Christian belief lacks warrant. Upon hearing such appeals, the Christian believer will simply think that they must be mistaken, in virtue of her having strongly warranted Christian beliefs.³⁷

The second objection is more involved. Philipse suggests that the reason why memory beliefs can have intrinsic warrant is that their warrant derives from perceptual beliefs. The latter, in turn, can have so much warrant because they involve *transparent access* to their truth-makers. In (properly) forming a (true) perceptual belief, (a) the truth-maker for that belief is directly present to you and (b) you recognize this to be so. He further stipulates that the warrant for such perceptual belief comes partly from (b), i.e., your recognizing the truth-maker to be directly present to you. In effect, then, he adds a condition to Plantinga's basic account of warrant. In order for a basic perceptual belief to have high intrinsic warrant, Philipse claims, it not only has to meet the four conditions outlined in section 2 to a high degree, it also has to meet a transparent access condition, which requires cognitive access to one of the warrant-conferring factors. Philipse goes on to argue that Christian belief cannot meet this transparent access condition. What triggers Christian beliefs (e.g., reading the Bible or a feeling that God disapproves of what you have done) is not identical with the truth-makers of these beliefs. Christian beliefs thus fail to satisfy the transparent access condition.³⁸ As a result, it is impossible for Christian beliefs to acquire the status of intrinsic neutralizers.

This objection is unconvincing on several counts. First of all, it is dialectically problematic to first argue that your opponent ought to accept certain additions to his view and then to base your objection solely on problems with these additions. *A fortiori* when the additions in question are wholly foreign to the view in question, because they supplement a thoroughly externalist account of warrant with an internalist access condition. Thus, the natural thing to do for Plantinga would be to insist that, notwithstanding Philipse's claims to the contrary, having intrinsic warrant really is just a matter of meeting the four conditions discussed above to a high degree. Then, given the A/C model, nothing stands in the way of Christian belief indeed having intrinsic warrant. With that, the objection is dead in the water.

But suppose we ignore this point and grant that acquiring a perceptual belief with high intrinsic warrant indeed requires transparent access to its truth-maker. This may be so, but why think that this is the *only* way in which beliefs (perceptual or other) can come to be intrinsic neutralizers? Philipse provides no arguments for this claim. Since Plantinga says that beliefs produced by the *sensus* are *like* perceptual beliefs but not exactly analogous to them,³⁹ it may be that they acquire high intrinsic warrant in a slightly different manner than do perceptual beliefs. Considering powerful moral or rational intuitions helps to make this more plausible. Seeing that *modus ponens* is a valid form of reasoning does not appear to involve transparent access to the truth-maker of the belief in question, but it seems highly plausible to us that our belief that *modus ponens* is valid has enough intrinsic warrant to ward off defeaters in the form of countervailing testimony from others.

Even if transparent access in Philipse's sense were required, there is room to argue that Christian beliefs, or at least some of them, can satisfy this condition. Space precludes us from discussing William Alston's impressive case for the possibility of veridical perception of God,⁴⁰ but we can at least hint at a different possible example. Suppose Adam comes to believe correctly, upon seeing a majestic mountain peak, that God sustains it. The truth-maker for such a belief is God's sustaining activity, which, presumably, is indeed present in the mountain peak, in so far as we can speak of activities being present at specific locations. Of course, God's activity wouldn't be perceivable in the same straightforward sense as ordinary material objects, but it seems to us at least possible that Adam could be aware of God's activity and recognize this to be so, although offering a detailed account of this would require serious work.

The upshot of what we have said so far is simple: Philipse has not shown that serious awareness of religious pluralism *always* constitutes a defeater for the modern and intellectually responsible Christian believer.

5. Religious Pluralism Defeated, Part II

Although we believe the arguments of the previous section to be sufficient to establish that Philipse has not made his case, it remains possible that awareness of religious diversity does give some Christians a defeater. How could this be so? There are several options. The arguments of the previous section depended on the assumption that Adam's beliefs had a great deal of warrant

for him to begin with. Of course, this is not true for all believers. For someone whose beliefs barely meet the threshold for knowledge, a serious encounter with religious diversity can constitute a defeater. It might also be argued that awareness of religious diversity constitutes an undercutting defeater by making salient the possibility that one's religious belief-forming faculties are unreliable. After all, the fact that so many seemingly equally intelligent, sincere, and well-informed individuals come to hold conflicting religious beliefs would be well explained by the general unreliability of religious belief-forming faculties. This line of thought could be strengthened further by noting that non-Christian religious believers may attempt to appeal to suitably adapted versions of Plantinga's A/C model to show how their religious beliefs could be warranted in the manner of properly basic beliefs. This seems to confirm the apparent epistemic parity between religious believers of various stripes.⁴¹ Finally, unwarranted or irrationally held beliefs, too, can be defeaters.⁴² Perhaps some Christians simply misjudge the argumentative force of the objection from religious diversity, deeming it much stronger than someone with properly functioning cognitive faculties would. In that case, they will also acquire a defeater for their Christian beliefs.

We will now go on to argue that — within the framework of Plantinga's extended A/C model — it is perfectly possible for those Christians who acquire a defeater by becoming seriously aware of religious diversity to acquire a defeater-defeater and thus to go on to have warranted basic Christian beliefs.

Suppose Abel is a Christian for whom awareness of religious diversity initially constitutes a defeater. Abel might attempt to ward off this defeater by producing arguments for the truth of his original Christian beliefs and thus engage in natural theology. This is a perfectly fine project and it may well be successful too. However, as Philipse rightly notes, this would defeat the purpose of Plantinga's project, which was to show how Christian belief can be properly *basic*, i.e., rational and warranted while not based on explicit evidence and arguments.⁴³

What else can be done? Abel could start to think the matter over, soberly considering the facts of religious diversity, pondering his original Christian beliefs and their potential positive epistemic status. He could go for a hike and accidentally witness a beautiful sunset and come to believe that God created it. He could read the Bible or go to church and, in doing so, form the belief that God is speaking to him, that Jesus is God's son, etc. Such actions, and many more, can trigger a renewed and more powerful working of his *sensus divinitatis* or can become the

occasion for a forceful internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, leading to confirmed and more firmly held Christian beliefs. (Nothing guarantees that this is how things will go. Surely, there can be Christians for whom no such thing happens and for whom Christian belief becomes irrational and unwarranted.) In line with the externalist outlook of the A/C model, Abel's experiences shouldn't be thought of as forming the basis of an explicit argument for the truth of his beliefs, a quick conscious inference, or any other cognitively accessible ground for belief. Like his original beliefs, the powerfully reproduced Christian beliefs would be warranted in the way of properly basic beliefs too. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, we'll let Plantinga speak for himself once more:

A fresh or heightened awareness of the facts of religious pluralism could bring about a reappraisal of one's religious life, a reawakening, a new or renewed and deepened grasp and apprehension of [Christian truths]. From the perspective of the extended A/C model, it could serve as an occasion for a renewed and more powerful working of the belief-producing processes by which we come to apprehend [Christian truths]. In this way knowledge of the facts of pluralism could initially serve as a defeater; in the long run, however, it can have precisely the opposite effect.⁴⁴

To summarize: the idea is that the defeater for Christian beliefs presented by religious diversity can be defeated when those very same Christian beliefs are produced anew and with greater strength through the same belief-forming processes by which they were originally formed. We take it that Plantinga's point here really boils down to the suggestion that Abel's Christian beliefs might come to have enough intrinsic warrant to ward off defeat once he has formed them again.

Philipse might have objected to this in the following way.⁴⁵ This suggestion amounts to saying that having the *mere belief* that your Christian beliefs have been reliably produced is enough to neutralize the defeater. Clearly, that is unacceptable once you realize that religious diversity ought to be construed as an undercutting defeater, for adherents of other religions might as well claim that *they* are fully confident that *their* conflicting beliefs have been reliably produced in them by analogous religious-belief-forming processes. To defeat this undercutting defeater, you need *independent evidence* for the reliability of your belief-forming processes.⁴⁶

In reply, note first that the objection overlooks an important element in Plantinga's suggestion. It's not having the mere belief that your Christian beliefs have been reliably produced that is supposed to do the defeater-defeating; rather, it is having those beliefs powerfully reproduced in you. Possibly, as a result of seeing the logical implications of your confirmed belief, you would also form the further belief that you are right and those with conflicting religious beliefs wrong.

Nonetheless, Philipse might insist, in order to acquire a defeater-defeater you need independent evidence showing that you are right and others are wrong. Without such evidence it would be arbitrary and irrational for you to stick to your beliefs. In reply, we will readily grant that there are several kinds of cases where this demand seems eminently reasonable. When you and an epistemic peer have a persistent disagreement about the solution to a math problem, the rational thing to do is to look for help from an outside source and suspend belief in the meantime. Similarly, when you and your partner have differing recollections of an event, you should look for independent confirmation of either of your beliefs.⁴⁷ However, it doesn't follow from this that the demand for independent evidence applies universally. Although fully arguing the point is beyond the scope of this paper, we maintain that there are several domains of the intellectual life where it is possible to have rational beliefs in spite of the fact that independent evidence is very hard, if not impossible, to come by. Thus, we think it is true of several of our ethical, political, and philosophical beliefs that:

- a. We hold them rationally (perhaps even with warrant);
- b. We are aware of others who are, for all we can tell, our epistemic peers, who hold conflicting beliefs with as much inner confidence as we do, and whom we would be unable to convince by arguments or other evidence; and
- c. We do not have independent evidence for thinking that our belief-forming processes are (in general or on this occasion) more likely to be right than those of others.⁴⁸

The belief that it is wrong for a counselor to abuse his position of trust, cited in the previous section, is as good an example as any. It seems perfectly possible that (b) and (c) are true for this belief. Nevertheless, we may feel utterly convinced of the truth of this belief, it may have been produced in us by properly functioning cognitive faculties, operating in the appropriate

environment etc., and it may thus meet the conditions for warrant and rationality, so that (a) is true of it as well.⁴⁹

Plantinga is most naturally understood as saying that what goes for ethical, political, and philosophical beliefs, also goes for religious beliefs. Even though Abel can muster no independent evidence for his renewed Christian beliefs or for the claim that his belief-forming processes are more reliable than those of other believers, he feels utterly convinced that his Christian beliefs are true. In consequence, he will think that those who disagree with him are wrong, for some reason or other. With this, we are back to the discussion of intrinsic warrant in the previous section.⁵⁰

For those who continue to have sympathy for the demand for independent evidence, it might help to consider its consequences. If we are right in our earlier assessment of the epistemic status of many ethical, political, and religious beliefs, imposing this demand would force modern and intellectually responsible people to give up many of their beliefs in these areas and to become agnostics. Holding on to these beliefs would be *irrational* for them, no matter how conscientiously they have thought things through. We take this as a *reductio* of the demand for independent evidence. As an aside, note that this demand would force Philipse himself, too, to give up his atheistic beliefs and become an agnostic since he is confronted with at least two peers —Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne — who, we venture to predict, remain unconvinced of his arguments.⁵¹

Hence, Philipse has not shown that the Christian believer for whom religious diversity at first constitutes a defeater cannot acquire a defeater-defeater. Since we already saw in the previous section that there may be Christians for whom religious diversity need not even constitute a defeater, the overall conclusion so far is that we have not been given a reason for thinking that serious awareness of religious diversity always constitutes a defeater for the modern and intellectually responsible Christian believer.

6. Explaining Religious Beliefs

There is a delicate problem of interpretation concerning Philipse's final objection. As he presents it, it is conditional on his having established the impossibility of Christian beliefs possessing enough intrinsic warrant to ward off the defeater of diversity. Because of this, he explains,

Christians will have to produce arguments to defeat many potential defeaters.⁵² Perhaps, however, friends of the A/C model could maintain that Christians will only need to produce *negative* arguments to rebut those potential defeaters, and that no *positive* arguments for the truth of their own beliefs are required. If so, their religious beliefs could retain their warranted and properly basic status even though believers would have to engage in some argumentation to protect this status from potential defeat. Philipse then claims that there is at least one defeater for which this negative strategy will not work: the availability of secular explanations for religious belief, in particular those from the blooming field of the cognitive science of religion (CSR).⁵³ This particular defeater forces the believer to provide positive arguments for the truth of Christian theism, because

one might conceive of such a secular explanation of religious beliefs on the one hand, and the hypothetical explanation of by the extended A/C model on the other hand, as rivals in a contest for the best explanation of existing religious beliefs. In order to win this contest, Christian believers will have to show that their (...) explanation (...) is better.⁵⁴

Doing so amounts to offering positive arguments for the truth of Christian theism. Philipse thinks this contest is a run race. Because the secular explanation posits one kind of entity less (to wit, God), it is *simpler* than the A/C model. It is, moreover, confirmed by ‘massive empirical evidence’ whereas the A/C model is not backed up by any empirical evidence. Finally, if Christian believers were to argue that the A/C model is the best explanation for their beliefs, they would be left with difficult questions about the explanation of non-Christian religious beliefs. Should they be explained by secular explanations? If so, why would Christian beliefs be the exception?

In response, the obvious thing to say is that if the arguments of the previous sections are sound, this objection is a non-starter. If Christian beliefs can have enough warrant to function as intrinsic neutralizers, then Philipse is mistaken in thinking that rationality requires Christian believers to provide independent evidence or arguments against potential defeaters.

We think, however, that Philipse weakens the objection unnecessarily by making it conditional on his earlier discussion of intrinsic warrant and religious diversity. So let’s consider whether the explanations of religious beliefs developed by CSR⁵⁵ form an independent defeater.

In order to do so, they would either have to entail the falsity of Christian beliefs (a rebutting defeater) or entail the unreliability of Christian belief-forming processes (an undercutting defeater). It is clear that they do not do the former. Systematic observations about how natural teleological thinking is to children or detailed stories about how the evolution of humankind may have led us to form religious beliefs of certain sorts do not have any straightforward implications for the question of the truth of Christian beliefs. To claim otherwise would be to commit the genetic fallacy. Arguing that they form an undercutting defeater is therefore more promising, as Philipse himself also admits.⁵⁶ So do they?

This is a complicated question that raises more issues than we can do justice to here.⁵⁷ However, we can make a few brief observations and point to literature in which the implications of CSR explanations for theistic belief are discussed at length. First, on Plantinga's account, theistic belief isn't accepted as an explanatory hypothesis for anything. It is a properly basic belief. The Christian believer has no reason to go along with the idea that CSR explanations and the A/C model are in a competition for the prize of the best explanation of religious belief.⁵⁸ Hence, considerations about empirical adequacy, simplicity, and other criteria for choosing the best explanation are beside the point.

Second, Philipse immediately sets up a competition between CSR explanations and the Christian theistic explanation. As Kelly James Clark and Justin Barrett have argued, however, many CSR findings sit quite well with at least the basic A/C model.⁵⁹ To poise them against each other as mutually exclusive alternatives is thus premature. One could even go further and argue that some CSR findings offer positive empirical support for Plantinga's model.

Third, establishing that the religious belief-forming processes uncovered by CSR are unreliable so that CSR explanations form an undercutting defeater is far more complicated than Philipse lets on. Obviously, if the falsity of theism were assumed, their unreliability would follow immediately. But such an assumption begs the question. Next, the mere fact that our religious belief-forming processes have evolutionary origins doesn't entail their unreliability. If it did, the same would go for all our belief-forming processes⁶⁰ — a consequence everyone will find unpalatable. Hence, it must be some special feature of *religious* belief-forming processes that accounts for their alleged unreliability. Prima facie plausible candidates might include the facts that (a) these processes are known to be unreliable in other areas; (b) they produce mutually exclusive beliefs in different people; (c) they do not have the appropriate relationship to the

object(s) about which they produce beliefs; or (d) they have not been properly subject to winnowing forces of natural selection. However, Michael Murray has argued that none of these features leads to the desired conclusion, at least not without further question-begging assumptions.⁶¹

We fully realize that these sketchy remarks leave a lot to be desired. Nonetheless, they should at least make it clear that, if Philipse really wants to argue that CSR explanations form an undercutting defeater for Christian beliefs, he has much more work to do. For the time being, we have been given no good reason to think that CSR explanations show Christian beliefs to be unreliably produced.⁶²

7. Conclusion

We have shown that none of Philipse's criticisms of Plantinga's extended A/C model is successful. Plantinga's claim that even modern and intellectually responsible Christian believers can be rational and warranted in holding on to their Christian beliefs even when they do not have explicit evidence or arguments to back them up is neither 'shipwrecked' nor 'conclusively refuted'.⁶³ On the contrary, it survives unscathed and is as plausible as it ever was.

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Gijsbert van den Brink, Rik Peels, Herman Philipse, Emanuel Rutten, and René van Woudenberg for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Notes

1. Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chs. 3–4.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
3. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 153 (henceforth *WCB*).

4. *Ibid.*, p. 156. See also Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Chs. 1–2 (henceforth *WPF*). Plantinga, *WCB*, pp. 156–161 discusses various subtle amendments to this basic construal in response to criticisms, but these do not matter for present purposes.

5. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

7. This paragraph has provided only the bare bones of the extended A/C model. There are further details about the cognitive effects of sin, the role of grace and scripture, and the nature of faith, but they don't matter for present purposes.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 168–170.

9. Laurence Bonjour, "Externalism/Internalism," in *A Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Jonathan Dancy, Ernest Sosa, & Matthias Steup (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 364–368. Similar characterizations are found in widely used textbooks, such as Matthias Steup, *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), p. 84; Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 240–242.

10. Philipse, *God*, p. 44, see also pp. 67–70.

11. E.g., William Alston, "An Internalist Externalism," *Synthese* 74.3 (1988): 265–283; Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Vol. I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Duncan Pritchard, "Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology," *Journal of Philosophy* 109.3 (2012): 247–279.

12. Although Philipse is aware of this problem (*God*, p. 44 note 4), he works with the given characterizations anyway.

13. Michael Bergmann, "Defeaters and Higher-Level Requirements," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 55.220 (2005): 419–436, pp. 422–424. See also Plantinga, *WCB*, pp. 359–366; Philipse, *God*, pp. 48–49.

14. Philipse, *God*, p. 53. We suspect that his atypical characterization of the internalism/externalism distinction may have led him astray here, but that is admittedly speculation on our part.

15. Michael Bergmann, "Internalism, Externalism and the No-Defeater Condition," *Synthese* 110 (1997): 399–417.
16. Philipse, *God*, p. 41.
17. Philipse, *God*, p. 42.
18. Plantinga, *WCB*, p. xiii.
19. Philipse, *God*, p. 42, note 37.
20. Earl Conee & Richard Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism," *Philosophical Studies* 89.1 (1998): 1–29.
21. Philipse, *God*, p. 44. For discussion and proposed solutions, see Mark Heller, "The Simple Solution to the Problem of Generality," *Noûs* 29.4 (1995): 501–515; Klemens Kappel, "A Diagnosis and Resolution to the Generality Problem," *Philosophical Studies* 127.3 (2006): 525–560; Juan Comesaña, "A Well-Founded Solution to the Generality Problem," *Philosophical Studies* 129.1 (2006): 27–47.
22. Philipse, *God*, p. 47.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Philipse, *God*, pp. 48–50.
25. Plantinga accepts that testimony can be a source of warranted basic beliefs and that, in the absence of defeating reasons for not doing so, we ought to trust the testimony of others. Plantinga, *WPF*, pp. 77–82.
26. Plantinga already admits this much, see *WCB*, pp. 456–457.
27. For more on the notion of epistemic peerhood, see Tom Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology, Vol. I*, eds. John Hawthorne & Tamar Szabo Gendler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 167–196; Richard Feldman, "Epistemological Puzzles About Disagreement," in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 216–236; Nathan King, "Disagreement: What's the Problem? Or: a Good Peer Is Hard to Find," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85.2 (2012): 249–272.
28. Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 457.
29. In recent debates about disagreement, the view that it can be rational to hold on to one's belief in cases of peer disagreement has come to be known as a *steadfast* view. It is contrasted with a *conciliatory* view, which maintains that one always ought to give in to one's peer to some

extent in a case of disagreement (see David Christensen, “Disagreement as Evidence: The Epistemology of Controversy,” *Philosophy Compass* 4.1 (2009): 1–12; Richard Feldman & Ted Warfield (eds.), *Disagreement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)). A general defense of the steadfast position is beyond the scope of the current paper, but for arguments in its favor, see Peter van Inwagen, “It Is Wrong Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything Upon Insufficient Evidence,” in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality*, ed. Jeff Jordan & Daniel Howard-Snyder (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), pp. 137–153; Tom Kelly, “Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence,” in *Disagreement*, eds. Feldman & Warfield, pp. 111–174; Michael Bergmann, “Rational Disagreement After Full Disclosure,” *Episteme* 6.3 (2009): 336–353; or Jennifer Lackey, “A Justificationist View of Disagreement’s Epistemic Significance,” in *Social Epistemology*, ed. Adrian Haddock, Alan Millar, & Duncan Pritchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

30. One of us has already argued extensively elsewhere that no objection from religious pluralism of the kind that Philipse attempts to mount is ultimately successful; see Jeroen de Ridder, “Religious Exclusivism Unlimited,” *Religious Studies* 47.4 (2010): 449–463. What we say here is based in part on that paper.

31. Philipse, *God*, p. 50.

32. See Alvin Plantinga, “The Foundations of Theism: A Reply,” *Faith and Philosophy* 3.3 (1986): 298–313; and Plantinga, *WPF*, pp. 450–451. The notion of intrinsic warrant also appears in Alvin Plantinga, “Naturalism Defeated,” unpublished (1984), p. 15 (available online at http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/articles/plantinga_alvin/naturalism_defeated.pdf) and Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 188–189.

33. Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 453. Also quoted by Philipse, *God*, p. 51.

34. Philipse, *God*, p. 51 (our italics).

35. Philipse’s objection that Plantinga’s position begs the question (p. 53) by turning *j* into a justifying argument for *p* thus misses the point, for it rests on this mistaken interpretation.

36. Philipse, *God*, pp. 56–58.

37. We’ll discuss the possibility that these appeals could give the Christian believer an undercutting defeater in the next section.

38. Philipse further adds that the Christian believer cannot become aware solely by reflection on her mental life that her *sensus divinitatis* or the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit has produced a belief in her (*God*, p. 58). We fail to see the relevance of this observation to the issue at stake, since neither he nor Plantinga proposed this as a condition on warrant.

39. Plantinga, *WCB*, pp. 180–184; 335–342.

40. William P. Alston, *Perceiving God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

41. See Philipse, *God*, pp. 51–52 for this thought.

42. Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 364.

43. Philipse, *God*, p. 50.

44. Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 457.

45. ‘Might have’, for he never actually does so. This is because the misinterpretation of Plantinga’s position that we pointed out in the previous section prevents him from clearly identifying the suggestion under discussion. We have tried to modify the objections he does give to make them fit Plantinga’s actual suggestion better.

46. Philipse, *God*, pp. 52–53.

47. But even in cases of perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, and mathematical beliefs it is an open question what rationality requires when the available methods of independent checking do not resolve your dispute. It may well be that, if your own belief strongly seems right to you, it can be rational for you to hold on to it.

48. As Herman Philipse and Gijsbert van den Brink suggested in correspondence, it might be objected that this is plausible only for *normative* beliefs and not for *factual* beliefs. We disagree. If one is attracted to ethical realism, as we are, there are *normative facts* about what is good and right. Hence, normative and factual beliefs should not be contrasted as mutually exclusive. Regardless of this, many philosophical beliefs are uncontroversially factual. Whether or not there are universals, whether or not we have free will, and whether or not substance dualism is true are all factual matters, beliefs about which can plausibly satisfy the three conditions stipulated above.

49. See the references in note 29 above for defenses of this position.

50. Alston, *Perceiving God*, Ch. 7 also contains an elaborate defense of the claim that Christian beliefs can be rational even when the believer has no independent evidence to support them or

the reliability of her belief-forming processes. Although details differ, his overall strategy is very much in line with what we say here.

51. In De Ridder, “Religious Exclusivism Unlimited”, one of us discusses various other objections in the neighborhood of this one, arguing that they, too, fail.

52. Philipse, *God*, p. 59. It remains unclear why Philipse thinks that there are *many* potential defeaters. After all, he has only tried to argue for the claim that religious diversity is a defeater.

53. Although Philipse doesn’t say so, we take it that he has in mind such explanations as presented in Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Scott Atran, *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion, Evolution and Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Sloan Wilson, *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Jesse Bering, *The God Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny, and the Meaning of Life* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2010); Justin Barrett, *Born Believers: The Science of Childhood Religion* (New York: Free Press, 2011); Robert McCauley, *Why Religion is Natural and Science is Not* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Justin Barrett, “Cognitive Science of Religion: Looking Back, Looking Forward,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50.2 (2011): 229–239 gives a brief and accessible overview.

54. Philipse, *God*, p. 61

55. We adopt different terminology because calling CSR explanations *secular* as Philipse does, is misleading in that it might suggest that the non-existence of God is somehow built into them, so that accepting them would automatically entail a commitment to atheism.

56. *Ibid.*

57. A preliminary issue is how much epistemic credit we ought to grant to CSR explanations. CSR is still a young field and many ‘findings’ are perhaps no more than first attempts to make sense of the data. However, since we don’t have the expertise to comment on this with any authority, we’ll assume that the science is secure.

58. See also Plantinga, *WCB*, pp. 367–373. Philipse (*God*, p. 63) considers and rejects this reply, but his rejection again depends on his mistaken interpretation of Plantinga. As we saw above, he thinks that, in order to defeat the defeater of religious diversity, Christians must believe that they have access to a special source of knowledge that other believers lack *as a justifying argument* for their beliefs. This justifying argument would now be confronted by a conflicting argument in

the form of CSR explanations, raising the question which argument is the better one. If, as we argued in section 4, Christians need not offer such a justifying argument, then Philipse's point fails.

59. Kelly James Clark & Justin Barrett, "Reformed Epistemology and the Cognitive Science of Religion," *Faith and Philosophy* 27.2 (2010): 174–189; "Reidian Religious Epistemology and the Cognitive Science of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79.3 (2010): 639–675.

60. In his evolutionary argument against naturalism, Alvin Plantinga tries to exploit this point to argue that naturalists (i.e., those who reject the claim that evolution is somehow guided by a supernatural intelligence) have a defeater for all their beliefs. See James Beilby, *Naturalism Defeated?* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002) for discussion and Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, Ch. 10 for the latest statement of the argument.

61. Michael Murray, "Scientific Explanations of Religion and the Justification of Religious Belief," in *The Believing Primate*, eds. Jeffrey Schloss & Michael Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 168–178.

62. For further discussion, see Jeffrey Schloss & Michael Murray (eds.), *The Believing Primate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); David Leech & Aku Visala, "The Cognitive Science of Religion: a Modified Theist Response," *Religious Studies* 47.3 (2010): 301–316; Aku Visala, *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Study of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011); Justin Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology: From Human Minds to Divine Minds* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011); Joshua Thurow, "Does Cognitive Science Show Belief in God to Be Irrational? The Epistemic Consequences of the Cognitive Science of Religion," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* Online first (2011), doi:10.1007/s11153-011-9300-y.

63. Philipse, *God*, p. 64.