

Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*

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Critical Essays with a Reply by Alvin Plantinga

Edited by Dieter Schönecker

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Preface

In the eyes of many philosophers and theologians, Alvin Plantinga is the most important contemporary philosopher of religion. He is widely recognized as an epistemologist and philosopher of great sagacity and originality even by those who do not share his Christian worldview, and his thought has sparked intensive discussions within the philosophical world. All the more striking is that his early works as well as his trilogy on warrant (including *Warranted Christian Belief*, WCB) are still almost unknown to most German philosophers and students, and he is certainly unknown to the German intellectual public at large. There are possibly three reasons for this. First, Germany is a highly secularized nation in which debates on religious questions most often take place under the public proviso that those who hold religious views are peculiarly 'metaphysical' and 'irrational.' In any case, religious perspectives are not taken seriously in public and intellectual life. Unfortunately, this is, secondly, also true for the philosophical and academic field. In contrast to the USA or Great Britain, there is almost no influential philosophy of religion in Germany. Atheistic and agnostic philosophers set the tone, and only very few philosophers are known as religious (let alone Christian) philosophers. Third, there have been no translations of Plantinga's books.

The latter fact sparked the idea to provide a German edition of WCB. Supported by the *John Templeton Foundation*, Joachim Schulte undertook the heavy burden of translating this voluminous and wide-ranging book (the translation is forthcoming from the same publisher, Walter de Gruyter). The present collection of essays provides critical interpretations of many aspects of Plantinga's seminal book: Dieter Schönecker (University of Siegen) tries to get a grip on what WCB is really about; at the same time, this paper can be read as an introduction to WCB and Plantinga's religious epistemology. Christian Tapp (University of Bochum) deals with Plantinga's critique of negative theology and proposes a more constructive way to read Kaufman's and Hick's reinterpretation of Christian belief; he also provides an assessment of the range of Plantinga's view on divine infinity. Winfried Löffler (University of Innsbruck) deals with what he considers an underrated merit of Plantinga's philosophy, to wit, the importance of what Löffler himself calls 'world-view beliefs'. Oliver Wiertz (University of St. Georgen) argues that the charge of ideology against Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology is unsubstantiated; however, Wiertz also believes that Plantinga would be in an even better position to defend himself if he took into account the tradition of natural theology. Thomas Schärfl (University of Augsburg) critically analyzes Plantinga's concept of certainty that is oriented to the standard of knowl-

edge; alternatively, Schärfl offers a concept of certainty in the tradition of Wittgenstein which he thinks does more justice to the peculiarity of religious belief. With regard to the problem of religious diversity, *Anita Renusch* (University of Frankfurt) argues that believing oneself to be in a better epistemic position is not as easy as Plantinga thinks it is and that he thus disregards part of the trouble the problem causes for religious believers. *Georg Plasger* (University of Siegen) provides reasons why he is not convinced that Plantinga's A/C model is rightly so called with regard to Calvin. *Christian Illies* (University of Bamberg) argues that Reformed Epistemology makes it plausible why the problem of evil does not defeat the strong believer; yet, he says, the problem remains a defeater in the eyes of the strong non-believer. *Gregor Nickel* (University of Siegen) sheds methodological (and mathematical) light as well as doubt on the very idea of using probabilistic reasoning in religious epistemology, with an eye on the debate between Plantinga and Swinburne regarding 'dwindling probabilities'.

We hope that both books, (and most importantly, of course, the translation of WCB), will boost the German reception of Plantinga's idea of what a warranted Christian belief could be. At the same time, the essays, which are all written by native speakers of German (philosophers, theologians, one mathematician), may be or will be of interest to those already familiar with Plantinga's work.

I thank, first of all, Alvin Plantinga, who not only agreed to publish a German translation of WCB, but also was so kind as to take the time and effort to reply to all the essays that critically examine his thought. My thanks also go to all the authors who participated in this project. At a conference in Berlin, sponsored by the *Fritz Thyssen Stiftung*, we had the opportunity for intensive discussions; thanks to the *Katholische Akademie Berlin* for hosting us. Last but not least, I'm grateful to Jonas Höhler, Christian Prust, and Elke E. Schmidt for their support in editing this volume.

Dieter Schönecker
University of Siegen
September 2015

Dieter Schönecker

The Deliverances of *Warranted Christian Belief*

Die Philosophen unterschätzen die Schwierigkeit
wirklich zu verstehen, was einer gesagt hat.

Friedrich Nietzsche

We're gonna need a bigger boat.

Martin Brody

After more than 2500 years of philosophy, it is very hard to leave a new and lasting trace in this perennial human enterprise. A pretty sure sign of such a trace is that people begin to wonder what exactly it is that the philosopher claims. To ask such a question is to do historiography of philosophy; its task is not to figure out whether what is being claimed is true and whether how it is argued for is valid. Rather, the task is to decipher *what* is being claimed; after all, how are we to say whether a given proposition is true or an argument sound, if we don't know what the proposition says or the argument is in the first place?¹

But which proposition? What argument in which book? It is one thing, for instance, to interpret Kant's *Grundlegung*, and another to interpret his *Tugendlehre*. Both are written by Kant, both are even written by the so-called 'critical' Kant, and yet there are enormous differences (or so I'd claim). People speak of Kant's *transcendental philosophy*, but they do not (yet) speak of such a thing as *Plantingianism*.² To speak of such a thing as *Plantingianism* would suggest that Plantinga's philosophy is more or less a unified whole; it would suggest that there is one basic idea, or thesis, or an argument, a red line of thought in his oeuvre. (People, and Plantinga himself, do speak of such a thing as *Reformed Epistemology*,³ but the differences within this camp—Alston, Mavrodes, Plantin-

1 Cf. WCRL, 154, for the distinction between asking what a text means and whether what it claims is true.—I shall use the following abbreviations: GOM = *God and Other Minds*; RBG = *Reason and Belief in God*; SP = *Self Profile*; WCB = *Warranted Christian Belief*; WCD = *Warrant: The Current Debate*; WCRL = *Where the Conflict Really Lies. Science, Religion, and Naturalism*; WPF = *Warrant and Proper Function*.

2 Though Geivitt and Jesson (2001, 338) once speak of a "loyal Plantingian". And there is, to be sure, an activity called 'to alvinize' and 'to planting' (and people who do this are 'plantingers'); cf. *The Philosophical Lexicon* by Daniel Dennett and Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen (on the web).

3 Fales (2003, 353) speaks of Plantinga's "trilogy on Reformed Epistemology".—It certainly does not seem clear at all whether the Calvinist ring to this tag is helpful. As we will see, on the A/C model it is important that the human being is created in God's image. As Plasger shows in his

ga, Woltersdorff, among others—are huge; they are probably not as enormous as the differences within, say, *German Idealism*—philosophers such as Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Herder et al. have next to nothing in common with one another, it seems to me—, but they are significant enough to render such a term almost useless.) What I am interested in here is not (primarily) whether there is such a thing as *Plantingianism*. Rather, my interest is in *Warranted Christian Belief* (WCB). What is the basic idea, or thesis, or argument, or red line of *this* work? My starting point was the impression that readers of WCB take different stances on what this book is really about.⁴ Is its basic idea the same idea that Plantinga already presented in his earlier books and texts, to wit, that one can be rational (or something in this epistemic ‘neighborhood’, to use one of Plantinga’s favorite terms) in one’s theistic beliefs without having arguments for them? Or is WCB substantially different? In the preface of WCB, Plantinga says his book is a “sequel” (WCB, xi, fn.3 and p. 68) to *God and Other Minds* and to *Reason and Belief in God*; to be more precise, Plantinga says WCB is a sequel “in a slightly different direction” (WCB, xi, fn.3, m.e.). This suggests that there is a red line running through those early texts and WCB; there is some ‘slightly different direction’, all right, but more or less WCB is a sequel nonetheless. What exactly makes a book a ‘sequel’, Plantinga does not explain; one may assume, however, that a philosophical book that is such a sequel further develops (or goes into the details of) a basic idea, or a thesis, or an argument already presented in earlier books by the same author.

This is not a paper about the plausibility or soundness of Plantinga’s arguments. To be sure, I have a number of specific observations to make regarding WCB, and I shall draw attention to certain difficulties directly related to the topic of this paper, i.e. to the question of what the central aim of WCB really is; our discussion and critical remarks in this context will help us to see what that ‘red line’ is. However, I shall not (really) get into problems that have already been discussed for quite some while and will occupy both sympathetic and hostile readers for quite a while in the future, questions such as: How do we know that a belief is properly basic? Would not too many beliefs be properly basic? How much interpretation is involved in religious experience? Does Plantinga wind up in voodoo epistemology? Do or may we properly and basically believe in the Great Pumpkin or his grand-son? Are there new Gettier woes? If belief

paper, however, it is doubtful whether on Calvin’s account there is anything left in us after the fall that resembles God, anything like a *sensus divinitatis* (Plasger 2015, this volume).

⁴ As a matter of fact, my very starting point was my reading of a draft of Christian Tapp’s paper for this volume. As I saw it, he placed too much emphasis on what I shall call “TW”. I am grateful to Prof. Tapp for further discussion of this point.

in the Christian God is as properly basic as the belief in other minds and the past, why don't as many people hold that belief as people hold these beliefs? What exactly is Christian belief in the first place? And so on.⁵ So these questions are *not* what concerns me. Rather, the leading question of this essay is this: The main result of WCB seems to be that *if Christian belief is true, then belief in the Christian God is probably warrant-basic*; but can that really be the main result? Is that really what the argument amounts to? One would think not; for even an atheist does not need to deny that if God exists, then in all likelihood he would give us the faculty to know him. That would be so small-bored a result that atheists would have nothing to fear and Christians little to hope from WCB. The principle of charity requires that a given interpretation should not yield the implication that the author of the interpreted text is out of his mind (or something equally implausible) or defends positions that no one denies or would need to deny; and this assumption seems particularly justified in the case of Alvin Plantinga. Thus we have reason to think that such an interpretation of WCB is incorrect. There must be more to it than just that claim. But is there more in WCB? Yes, there is, I submit, and there is a much more. But there is also *less* than in Plantinga's early works.

Obviously, this paper cannot be a comprehensive study of Plantinga's works and their development, and not even a truly close analysis of the aim and structure of WCB. It is at best a very first step in the direction of Plantinga *exegesis*; and there is, of course, some extra appeal to such an attempt given that Plantinga himself will comment upon it. It is quite tempting here to quote Kant's famous dictum that "it is not at all unusual to find that we understand the author even better than he understood himself" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 370). Note, however, that Kant continues: "...since he may not have determined his concept sufficiently and hence sometimes spoke, or even thought, contrary to his own intention" (*ibid.*). As I see it, chances are rather slim that Plantinga 'has not determined his concept sufficiently'; but there might be other reasons that he sometimes speaks or writes, nonetheless, in a way 'contrary to his own intention'. I'm not saying that what matters in interpretation is (only) intention; what matters is the text itself, and so the last authority concerning the interpretation of Plantinga's texts are these texts and its interpreters. Plantinga is just one of these interpreters. So even if he should say something to the effect "This is not what I *meant*" a fair reply would be: "Well, but this is what you *wrote*".⁶

⁵ Some of these objections are dealt with in ch. 10 of WCB.

⁶ For interpretation as a method of philosophy cf. Damschen/Schönecker (²2013, 205–272).

I shall begin (1) with a sketch of what I think is for the most part a parity argument in the early Plantinga, based mainly on a brief look at GOM as well as RBG. I will then demonstrate that some understand WCB as a ‘sequel’ to that parity argument, others, however, as a book that shows (even) less than the parity argument since it allegedly only shows that *if* Christian belief is true, then it’s probably warranted (2). The next step will be to interpret what Plantinga says himself in WCB about the aim of WCB (3). I’ll then make a proposal on how to understand the deliverances of WCB (4). Finally, I’ll briefly sum up and also have a look at how Plantinga interprets his own position in texts written after WCB (5).

1 Properly Basic Christian Belief: Plantinga’s Parity Argument in the prequels to WCB

God and Other Minds

Let’s begin our sketch of the parity argument with *God and Other Minds* (first published in 1967). The book opens, roughly speaking, with what in WCB is called the *de jure* question⁷: Is it rational to believe in God? The basic anti-evidentialist answer is well-known: It is not true that for every proposition in order to be rationally justified in holding it one must have evidence (reasons) for it; if that were true, then we would not be rationally justified in believing in other minds, simply because we have no convincing argument for that belief; however, we are rationally justified in believing in other minds; therefore, that evidentialist claim cannot be true. What is often called the *parity argument* could also be called the ‘same epistemological boat’ argument. Already in the preface to GOM, Plantinga says that “belief in other minds and belief in God are in the same epistemological boat; hence if either is rational, so is the other. But obviously the former is rational; so, therefore, is the latter” (GOM, viii); and the very last sentence of the book reads as follows: “if my belief in other minds is rational, so is my belief in God. But obviously the former is ration-

7 More on this later; in GOM, Plantinga simply says that he “shall investigate the rational justifiability” (GOM, 3) of God.

al; so, therefore, is the latter” (GOM, 271).⁸ This is Plantinga’s early answer to what Woltersdorff later in the introduction to his and Plantinga’s seminal edition of *Faith and Rationality* called the “evidentialist challenge”, namely that “[n]o religion is acceptable unless rational, and no religion is rational unless supported by evidence” (Woltersdorff 1983, 6), where to be supported by evidence means to be supported by propositional evidence. A challenge can be met in two ways: Either you comply and deliver the goods (which in this case is to say you avail yourself of the means of natural theology); or you reject the challenge itself. Plantinga took the latter route.⁹

Reason and Belief in God

The parity argument and with it the basicity claim were developed at some length in *Reason and Belief in God* (1983); therein too we find the ‘same boat’ allegory.¹⁰ Recall that GOM and RBG are officially declared by Plantinga to be the (main) prequels to WCB, and indeed there can be no doubt that much of WCB is a sequel to RBG.¹¹ As in GOM, the crucial question is “whether belief in God—belief in the existence of God—is rationally acceptable” (RBG, 19). Since a belief is rationally acceptable, if (but not only if) it is properly basic, the question is this: Is belief in God properly basic? Now properly basic beliefs are beliefs that one

8 This very same formulation is quoted in WCB (70) in quotation marks, but no reference is given.—In his preface to the 1990 Paperback Edition to GOM, Plantinga combines the allegory (or metaphor) of the ‘epistemological boat’ with the language of ‘parity’ by saying that belief in other minds and belief in God “are on an epistemological *par*” (Plantinga 1990, xii, m.e.).

9 This is not quite true. Looking back to GOM in his preface to the 1990 Edition, Plantinga mentions that he “employed a traditional but improperly stringent standard” (Plantinga 1990, ix) in relation to theistic arguments; as he rightly points out, (almost) no philosophical argument is such that it could only be rejected on pain of irrationality (and who sets the standards for the latter?); cf. WCB, 170. Also cf. Plantinga (2001c, 384f.) for a clarification on how Plantinga relates to philosophers such as Swinburne (namely positively); then again, he also says: “I don’t know of any such arguments” (2001c, 398), i.e. of arguments that actually show that Christian belief is true; and in (2002, 34), Plantinga says that of all the (two dozen or so; cf. Plantinga, 2007a) arguments for God “none delivers *knowledge*” (his emphasis); also cf. Plantinga 2001a, 217ff.

10 Cf. RBG, 90: “Belief in the existence of God is in the same boat as belief in other minds, the past, and perceptual objects”.—In his famous *Advice to Christian Philosophers* (1984, on the Web), the parity argument is dominant as well.

11 For instance, Plantinga’s very brief discussion in RBG (19–20) of negative theology (Kant, Kaufman, Hick) is much broadened in WCB (3–63) and the same is true for his discussion of the *sensus divinitatis*, sin, and all that.

does hold, and may hold, without the evidential support of other beliefs; they are beliefs not accepted on the basis of other beliefs (i.e. they are not based on arguments or inferences) and yet they are acceptable. Belief in God, says Plantinga, is such a properly basic belief. The main point behind classical foundationalism, as I understand it, is that some propositions are and must be affirmed (and are thus *properly* believed) without (further) evidence because otherwise there would be an endless chain of propositions.¹² Maybe one can doubt even these propositions and remain skeptical. But it's important to see that Plantinga's task is not to refute skepticism. Rather, he must show that Christian belief is *not* "noetically below par" (RBG, 17). Belief in God, Plantinga aims to show in RBG, is just as rational, i.e. epistemically acceptable as other beliefs (about other minds, the past, perceivable objects) that are acceptable insofar as they are properly basic (if neither kind of belief is considered acceptable by a skeptic, then they are both in *this* boat).¹³ From the point of view of classical foundationalism, only beliefs that are self-evident, or perceptual (evident to the senses) or incorrigible beliefs are properly basic; we just *see* them to be true without evidence.¹⁴ Being a non-classical (Reidian) foundationalist, Plantinga adds belief in God to that set of properly basic beliefs. The strategy is twofold:

First, there are two arguments against imperialistic foundationalism (as it were):¹⁵ If only those beliefs are rationally acceptable that are either properly basic or somehow based upon properly basic beliefs, then it would render most (allegedly) non-basic beliefs (about other minds, the past, etc.) that we find rationally acceptable to be unacceptable because it is hard to see how they are based upon basic beliefs; also (second argument), that belief itself (classical foundationalism) is not rationally acceptable because it is neither properly basic nor based on properly basic propositions. So there is no reason to think that *only* beliefs that are self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses are properly basic.

12 Cf. RBG, 39. "Not even God", says Plantinga in one of his replies (2001c, 390), "can have a proof" that his beliefs are reliable because for such a proof he would already need to rely on the ways he forms these beliefs; the point is that at one point or other one must *trust* in one's cognitive faculties. It is striking, by the way, that Plantinga (as far as I can see) never reflects upon the possibility of something like transcendental *Letztbegründung* (*à la* Höhle, for instance).

13 There is, says Plantinga, an "analogy between belief in God and belief in the existence of perceptual objects, other persons, and the past" (RBG, 81). On the difference between "God exists" and, for instance, "God is speaking to me" as well as on the difference between "Other persons exist" and "There are other persons" cf. RBG, 80–82.

14 There's quite some (semi-technical) analysis in RBG on 'asymmetry', 'irreflexivity' etc.; I'll ignore all this.

15 "Epistemic Imperialism" is a term used by Alston (1991, 199); but cf. RBG, 28.

However, there is also no reason to think that belief in God is not properly basic and, what is much more: belief in God, *secondly*, has “the *characteristics* a proposition must have to deserve a place in the foundations” (RBG, 59, m.e.). At the end of part II of RBG, Plantinga promises that in part IV¹⁶ he will “look into the proper procedure for discovering and justify such *criteria* for proper basicity” (RBG 62, m.e.). So what are these criteria (characteristics)? To begin with, it is striking that Plantinga in his discussion of the *Great Pumpkin Objection* (which is within part IV) argues that from the fact that reformed epistemologists reject the criteria “of proper basicity purveyed by classical foundationalism” (RBG, 75) one may not infer that they must accept just any belief as properly basic, but that he does *not* explain what exactly a ‘criterion’ is. The first time Plantinga introduces the term ‘criteria’, he actually says “*such* criteria” (RBG, 62, m.e.), referring thereby to proposition “(33)” in RBG (p. 60) which formulates the foundationalist claim that a given proposition (belief) A is properly basic “for me only if A is self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses for me” (ibid.); this finding is confirmed by the fact that in part IV Plantinga refers to the very same ‘criteria’ of “modern foundationalism” (RBG, 75). But self-evidence, incorrigibility and perceptual evidence are not criteria of proper basicity; they are *instances*. If they were criteria—which really would be “necessary and sufficient conditions of proper basicity” (RBG, 76)—,¹⁷ then obviously the very idea of showing that belief in God could be a properly basic belief alongside self-evident, incorrigible and perceptual beliefs would be doomed from the outset; by means of criteria one can cognize *which* elements belong to a certain group. If self-evident, incorrigible and perceptual beliefs are properly basic, they must have certain qualities *in common*; once we know what it is that they share and what justifies us in subsuming them under one term (which is ‘properly basic’), we can say that other beliefs (Christian belief, for instance) also have these qualities and thus are also properly basic. As far as I can tell, in RBG Plantinga fails to name these qualities.¹⁸

In any event, Plantinga makes an important point which I’d formulate (in my own words) as follows: Whenever we define terms such as ‘knowledge’, ‘justification’, ‘rationality’, or ‘basicity’, we need to offer paradigmatic cases of what counts as a relevant instance of the term in question. And for these paradigms, there is no neutral ground, as it were, to start from. This is not to say that there is

¹⁶ It actually says “Part III” in RBG (62); in private exchange, Prof. Plantinga has confirmed that this is simply an error.

¹⁷ Cf. WCB, 84: “conditions of proper basicity”.

¹⁸ I think that this is a very important point. I’ll deal with it in another paper in detail, but will come back to this later.

or could not be a discussion, no revision of what paradigms to use, and no defeaters; properly basic beliefs, and paradigmatic examples of them, are *prima facie* justified, they are not infallible.¹⁹ But it is to say that one cannot simply (imperialistically) claim that belief in God cannot be properly basic because only self-evident or incorrigible propositions or those evident to the senses are properly basic. For how do you know? This is what you say, but I say something else. Plantinga says: “The Christian community is responsible to its set of examples, not to theirs” (RBG, 77).²⁰ A further important point is this: A belief is basic to me, negatively speaking, if I do not hold it on the basis of other beliefs; still there is a reason why I hold it, some kind of evidence or ground (and this is why Plantinga even endorses a “moderate evidentialism” [Plantinga 2001c, 396].²¹ For instance, if I believe that there is a tree in front of me, then I don’t hold this belief because I have beliefs about, say, my environment, or my perception; I hold it because I’m having an experience (‘being appeared to treely’). This experience is the reason, so to speak, why I have that belief; and this experience is, along with further conditions, all I need in order to be rational, or justified, or within my epistemic rights, to hold that belief.

19 Cf. RBG, 77 and WCB, 343f.

20 To give my own example drawn from another context: It would be imperialistic to use only examples from (alleged) knowledge in mathematics and natural sciences in order to define ‘knowledge’ and then jump to the conclusion that there is no such thing as *moral* knowledge (such an imperialistic move is really what Mackie’s famous *argument from queerness* is all about). Moral realists can and should reply that from their point of view moral knowledge is *just as paradigmatic* as mathematical or scientific knowledge; thus moral knowledge is at least one of the foundational (properly basic) beliefs we start from.—Plantinga mentions properly basic *moral* beliefs here and there; cf. RBG, 89; WCB, 148, 174; 208ff., 299, 452f.; and Plantinga (2007a).

21 Therefore, it is a little difficult to see why the version of evidentialism offered by Norman Kretzmann should not be acceptable to Plantinga. According to Kretzmann (the way Plantinga reads him), “what is required is only that the believer have evidence of *some sort*” (WCB, 103). It depends on what ‘evidence’ means, of course. If one understands evidentialism as the position that the belief in God is acceptable only if there is evidence by means of other propositions, then Plantinga is right. But Kretzmann’s position is not a case of evidentialism in this sense. As Plantinga points out, religious experience could be evidence; but if this falls under the rubric of ‘evidence’, why not the following: Upon reading the Scriptures I find myself convinced that the great things of the gospel are true. Why would the gospel, or reading it with a certain doxastic experience, not count as ‘evidence’? You ask me: What evidence do you have for believing in God? I say: the evidence of the Scriptures taken the basic way.

Self-Profile

In his *Self-Profile* (1985), Plantinga says that what he wrote in GOM “still seems to [him] to be substantially true” (SP, 55): “I am obviously rational in believing that there are other minds; so why am I not similarly rational in believing that God exists?” (SP, 156). So “*some* propositions can properly be believed without evidence. Well, why not the proposition that God exists?” (SP, 59). To accept a belief without further propositional evidence is to accept it as basic; Plantinga never tires of arguing for this claim: “my *main aim* was to argue that it is perfectly rational to take belief in God as *basic*—that is to accept theistic belief without accepting it on the basis of argument or evidence from other propositions one believes” (SP, 56, m.e.).²² So after GOM and before the warrant-books, *the* prominent idea in Plantinga’s work—along with an increasing focus on what it means to be *rational*, *justified*, or something along these lines—is that belief in God is *properly basic* and as such as good as the belief in other minds or the past.

To better understand this, let’s briefly compare it with Alston’s parity argument.²³ Very roughly, Alston’s argument goes like this: Perceptual beliefs are *prima facie* trustworthy (rational, justified, or whatever is epistemically positive); some theistic beliefs are (like) perceptual beliefs; therefore, some theistic beliefs are *prima facie* trustworthy (rational, justified, whatever).²⁴ Alston’s strategy is to show that theists who claim to have mystical (religious) experiences avail themselves of the same, or at least of essentially the same, cognitive tool (the faculty of perception) as everyone else; therefore, their theistic beliefs based on those experiences are just as trustworthy (until proven guilty) as ordinary perceptual beliefs. Thus the parity in Alston’s parity argument is twofold: There is parity regarding the positive epistemic status, *and* there is parity with regard to the source of this status; both ordinary perceptions as well as mystical perceptions have a positive epistemic status, and they do have this status because they are both perceptions (and perceptions are *prima facie* trustworthy, or so the *principle of credulity* says). The parity argument in Plantinga’s work, however, is different. His strategy is not to show that theistic belief is brought about by the same cognitive faculty or the same kind of epistemic input, but by an altogether different faculty of its own; in that sense, theistic belief is unlike other beliefs, and there is no parity in this sense. Still they have something in common with other beliefs;

²² Cf. Plantinga (2007b, 614), where he still speaks of the very same “main aim” (though not with explicit reference to WCB).

²³ Cf. Alston (1991); for a short version, cf. Alston (2005).

²⁴ Richard Gale’s reconstruction of this (or a similar) argument is discussed by Plantinga in WCB, 336 f.; Gale speaks of ‘analogy’ rather than ‘parity’.

they are basic, and they are properly so. That they are basic is easily shown. The propriety of these basic beliefs is a different, much more difficult story. From early on, I submit, Plantinga is successful in showing that classical foundationalism is finished because it is self-referentially inconsistent, and because it is imperialistic in only accepting certain beliefs as foundational. For the same reason, evidentialism with regard to theistic beliefs is criticized (though maybe not finished because it is at least not inconsistent); one need not have an argument for believing in God if belief in God is just as properly basic as other properly basic beliefs. But is it a properly basic belief? It would not be so if we had reason to think that belief in God is inconsistent or otherwise somehow false; as we'll see, to show that this is not the case is a major concern of WCB. But how do we know belief in God is proper? What exactly is propriety? 'Well', says Plantinga in SP, why can the proposition that God exists not properly be believed without evidence? Well, one might reply, why *should* it be believed even if we knew that nothing speaks against it? As Plantinga self-critically points out himself,²⁵ the "deeper question" (SP, 56) of what rationality and justification are in the first place remains unaddressed in the early works. But note that this is also why the question of the propriety of basic beliefs was not (or at best unsatisfyingly) answered. In RBG (72), a belief is defined as "properly basic" if "it is *rational* to accept it without accepting it on the basis of any other propositions and beliefs at all" (m.e.).²⁶ So if we don't know what rationality is, we don't know what the propriety of properly basic beliefs is. Do we know better after WCB?

2 The Reception of WCB. Confusion and Friendly Fire

It's too early to say, of course, but if I were to bet on which books of the last 50 years or so will still be read in another 50 years from now, I'd bet that one of them will be Plantinga's WCB. It is extremely difficult to come up with something novel in philosophy, especially in disciplines such as philosophy of religion and epistemology, but I am convinced that Plantinga has managed to give us some truly fresh ideas (and not just some old wine in new analytic bottles).²⁷ But

²⁵ Cf. SP, 56 and WCB, 67–70.

²⁶ Cf. Plantinga's definition in Plantinga (1982, 15) and (2007b, 614, Fn.).

²⁷ To be fair to Plantinga and his predecessors, it should be noted that Plantinga himself always points out that there are predecessors such as Thomas Reid, Herman Bavinck and, of

what exactly are those novel ideas? To be more precise: What is the basic idea of Plantinga's WCB? What is its aim?

To many it seems that WCB boils down to this: "if theistic belief is *true*, then it seems likely that it *does* have warrant" (WCB, 188; let's refer to this claim with "TW", I will be more precise later). But obviously, it is one thing to say that Christian belief *has* warrant, and another to say that it has warrant *provided* Christian belief is true. This is exactly what Plantinga's antipode, Richard Swinburne, finds problematic about WCB.²⁸ According to his interpretation of WCB, it is Plantinga's claim that "we cannot in any interesting sense ask whether it is rational to believe that Christian belief *has* warrant—he [i.e. Plantinga] says, or seems to say" (Swinburne 2001, 207, m.e.). All that Plantinga succeeds in doing, says Swinburne, is "showing what *would* give warrant to Christian beliefs" (op. cit., 205, m.e.), but Plantinga does not show that Christian beliefs *are* warranted: "a monumental issue which Plantinga does not discuss, and which a lot of people will consider needs discussing. This is whether Christian beliefs *do* have warrant" (Swinburne 2001, 206, m.e.).

Swinburne's worry is pervasive. Take Moreland and Lane Craig (2003, 160 – 169): They are, in principle, certainly friendly readers of Plantinga's project, and yet they also attack his argument in this regard; the "aim of this project" (Moreland/Craig, 167)—that is of what they call the "private" (ibid.) project of providing "from a Christian perspective an epistemological account of warranted Christian belief" (Moreland/Craig, 161)—is just to show TW; and even that, they claim, is not sufficiently argued for. In the same vein, Groothius expresses the worry that "some may be disappointed that Plantinga never tries to make a compelling case that Christianity is true" (Groothius, on the web) which is why these people will seek out resources "to argue that Christianity is not merely warranted, but true"²⁹; similarly, Anderson in his review (on the web) notes that Plantinga's abandonment of a proof for the truth of Christianity "may strike some readers

course, Calvin (and even Aquinas) who already developed some of the principal ideas involved in what has become Reformed Epistemology.

28 It is, by the way, an interesting question whether there really is such an enormous gap (as is often claimed) between Swinburne's approach and Reformed Epistemology. Certainly, Swinburne has much more confidence in arguments for God; but note that the entire cumulative argument rests upon the argument from religious experience: If the probability of theism on the other evidence is not very low, the testimony of those with religious experience strengthens the cumulative probability. Since the argument from religious experience itself is based upon the principle of credulity (which is a reformed principle, as it were), Swinburne is not a complete evidentialist; cf. Plantinga's brief remark in WCB (91, footnote 43); on Swinburne's approach, cf. (Nickel/Schönecker, 2014).

29 There is confusion here; for if Christianity is warranted, then it is (in all likelihood) true.

as an anticlimax and even as a glaring omission”; Moser (2001, 371) is afraid that Plantinga’s achievement “will doubtless disappoint many”; and Helm (2001, 1112) finds Plantinga’s strategy “not so ambitious”. To Greco, the “central thesis of Reformed Epistemology [...] is that some beliefs about God *can* be properly basic” (2007, 629, m.e.); Plantinga’s project, Greco then says, “is to explain how Christian beliefs might be warranted or properly basic, as opposed to *showing* that they are” (op. cit., 636, his emphasis). For Senor (2002, 391), Plantinga’s “aim is not to show that belief in God is warranted but only that there is no good reason to think it is not” (Senor 2002, 392). Then he says: “In sum, what we get in WCB is an argument for a conditional claim” (393), namely TW (‘if theistic belief is true, then it seems likely that it does have warrant’). Daniel von Wachter (2007, 496) also reduces WCB to this claim: “In *Warranted Christian Belief* [...] Plantinga argues that Christian beliefs probably are knowledge if they are true”. Similarly, Forrest in his review of WCB (2002, 109) says: “In this work Plantinga argues for [TW]”. All in all, Forrest (2009) finds the lack of argument for the truth of Christian belief or the A/C model to be the “most pressing criticism of Plantinga’s recent position”.

So what is the impression yielded by a brief survey of the reception of WCB? TW is what really occupies these readers; they tend to take TW as the main result of the entire book, and they also think this is an insufficiently ambitious claim. But is the result of Plantinga’s *opus magnum* really so meagre? The book’s title, after all, is “*Warranted Christian Belief*”, not “*Possibly Warranted Christian Belief*”. As it turns out, there are other readings of WCB. It seems likely that entries in *Wikipedia* reflect a rather common interpretation of his project; if so, it is illuminating that according to the *Wikipedia* article on *Reformed Epistemology* Plantinga, having begun with a parity argument in GOM, has gone on in WCB to “argue that theistic belief *has* ‘warrant’” (Wikipedia 2012, m.e.). Similarly, in his contribution to *Religious Epistemology* in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Kelly Clark briefly explains the parity argument and then continues: “For the sake of parity, we should trust the deliverances of the faculty that produces in us belief in the divine (what Plantinga [2000], following John Calvin, calls the *sensus divinitatis*, the sense of the divine)”. Here Clarke—as well as Trigg (2002) and Hibbs (2001)—obviously understands Plantinga’s warrant-argument in terms of the parity-argument: The early Plantinga is well-known for his parity-argument and the concept of proper basicity; thus the expectation is that Plantinga now avails himself of the same strategy, based on the new and seminal epistemological concept of warrant. And this is not just the impression we receive from encyclopedia articles. Take Linda Zagzebski, for instance: In her introduction to a collection of “Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology” (1993) she speaks of Plantinga’s “new account of warrant” (Zagzebski 1993, 2), referring

to the publication of *Warrant and Proper Function* (WCB was not yet written). Zagzebski understands the (then new) warrant-project—obviously against the background of GOM and RBG—as providing the “resources to defend the positive position that religious beliefs *have* warrant and, when true, constitute knowledge” (ibid., m.e.); and she finds Plantinga’s new warrant-approach “obviously much stronger than the earlier claim that no one has shown it to be irrational to hold theistic belief in the basic way” (1993, 2).³⁰ Then WCB was published, and other readers also made the same assumption as Zagzebski. Thus Phillips (2004, 251) says: “Basic beliefs in religions *are* as warranted as they are in perception and memory” (m.e.). On Wykstra’s interpretation, TW along with the claim that the idea of a *sensus divinitatis* is possible “entail that for all we know, Christian theism *has* warrant” (2002, 94, m.e.). Paul Copan (2001, 940) begins his brief review by describing Plantinga’s aim as follows: “Theistic belief *has* good warrant, Plantinga wants to show” (m.e.); a little later, however, Copan writes: “Plantinga states that if Christian belief is true, it is also warranted” (ibid.). Yet again, Winfried Löffler (2006)—one of the few German-speaking philosophers that are familiar with Plantinga’s philosophy—has quite another view: With reference to RBG, he says that Plantinga’s claim is only that one “*könne*” (*could*, Löffler 2006, 92) entertain basic theistic beliefs whereas with reference to WCB, Löffler believes that Plantinga’s position became *stronger* because he (Plantinga) now argues, according to Löffler, that most theists are “*tatsächlich erkenntnistheoretisch vernünftig*” (*really* are epistemologically rational, ibid., 94)—as we will see, it is just the other way round.

After GOM and RBG, Plantinga developed his theory of warrant and published *Warrant: The Current Debate* (WCD) and *Warrant and Proper Function* (WPF; both 1993); as a matter of fact, Plantinga considers WCB to be a “sequel” (WCB, 68) to these two books as well. So both the pre-warrant-texts GOM and RBG as well as WCD and WPF are prequels to WCB; and this, I claim, has caused confusion in the book’s reception. Some people read WCB as if its main result were TW; others still see the good old pre-warrant-parity-argument at work and even believe that it is shown that Christian belief is warranted; yet others seem more or less confused. What is the proper reception?

³⁰ In her review of WCB, however, Zagzebski (2002, 117) criticizes Plantinga for showing too little: “if Christian belief is true, belief in it has the kinds of epistemic value that philosophers routinely discuss: it is justified, internally and externally rational, and warranted” (her emphasis).

3 The Aim of WCB: The Official Position

Authors typically describe their aim in a preface, and so does Plantinga. So let's turn to WCB itself, and let us first look at its *Preface* to see what Plantinga himself declares to be the aim of WCB. Central to the entire project is Plantinga's distinction between *de facto* objections and *de jure* objections. De facto objections—such as the argument from evil—are about the truth of Christian belief; if such an objection is viable, Christian belief is false (or very unlikely). WCB is not primarily concerned with these objections, says Plantinga; according to him, de facto objections are not as “prevalent” (WCB, ix) as de jure objections. Roughly speaking, de jure objections concern “the intellectual or rational acceptability of Christian belief” (WCB, vii). To be more precise, there are three main candidates for de jure objections, to wit, “that Christian belief is *unjustified*, that it is *irrational*, and that it is *unwarranted*” (WCB, x). From scratch, Plantinga puts great emphasis on the claim that de jure objections are supposed to work *regardless of the truth of Christian belief*; these objections hold that Christian belief, “whether or not true, is at any rate” (WCB, ix) unjustified or irrational or unwarranted (or all of it). There is, says Plantinga, “the common suggestion that Christian belief, whether true or not, is intellectually unacceptable” (WCB, xiii); what is wrong with Christian belief, according to de jure objections, is “something other than falsehood” (WCB, ix). Thus, Plantinga formulates “the main question of the book” (WCB, x) as follows: “is there a *de jure* objection to Christian belief? One that is independent of *de facto* objections and does not presuppose that Christian belief is false?” (WCB, x).

There are numerous general formulations of the de jure question (JQ). As it turns out later, these general formulations are only preliminary (or sometimes merely summary in character). For there is a “metaquestion” (WCB, 67). This is the question JQ is really asking about; what, exactly, is the de jure question? Given those three candidates for de jure objections, the de jure question can be broken up into three questions:

(JQ1) Is Christian belief justified?

(JQ2) Is Christian belief rational?

(JQ3) Is Christian belief warranted?

But this is not the crucial step for answering the ‘metaquestion’. The crucial step is to pose and answer the following question: What do ‘justified’, ‘rational’, and ‘warranted’ *mean*? (Or: What is it for a belief to be justified, rational, or warranted?) It is this question that Plantinga himself says he did not raise when he wrote

GOM (and did not fully appreciate when writing RBG).³¹ When it comes to justification, Plantinga took evidentialism in GOM for granted, and he didn't ask what exactly 'justification' and 'evidence' mean. In WCB, a huge part (the entire second part) is dedicated to the 'metaquestion': What do 'justified', 'rational', and 'warranted' mean, both in general and with regard to Christian beliefs? Once this is accounted for, the 'metaquestion' can be answered, i.e. JQ1, JO2, and JQ3 can be reformulated and, if possible, be answered. To put a highly interesting and useful debate in a nutshell, here are the answers to that 'metaquestion', i.e. here are the reconstructed variants of JQ:

(JQ1)* Is Christian belief justified, i.e. do those who hold Christian beliefs flout any epistemic obligations?

(JQ2)* Is Christian belief rational, i.e. are those who hold Christian beliefs internally and externally rational?³²

(JQ3)* Is Christian belief warranted, i.e. are these beliefs produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly in a cognitive environment, according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth?

In the *Preface* Plantinga himself says that the *de jure* objection both with regard to justification (justification-objection) and to internal rationality (internal-rationality-objection), unlike the external-rationality-objection and the warrant-objection, do *not* presuppose the falsity of theism;³³ so the claim is not that there aren't *any* *de jure* objections that do not depend on *de facto* objections, but there aren't any "*decent*" (WCB xiii, m.e.) such objections.

It is Plantinga's contention that such a dependence between the falsity and the *de jure* objection holds when it comes to warrant as that which "makes the difference between knowledge and true belief" (WCB, xi) and thus to the warrant-objection. The argument for this claim is very simple: "As it turns out, this *de jure* objection [the objection, say by Marx or Freud, that Christian belief lacks warrant] is really dependent on a *de facto* objection. That is because (as I argue) if Christian belief is true, then it is also warranted; the claim that theistic

³¹ Cf. Plantinga (1990).—In RBG, Plantinga uses terms such as 'to be rational', 'justified', or 'within one's epistemic rights' more or less interchangeably; here too, WCB is a sequel, but a sequel that is *much* more detailed and explicit than its prequel.

³² As we shall see later, the proper question is this: (JQ2)** Is Christian belief rational, i.e. are those who hold Christian beliefs internally rational?

³³ Cf. WCB, xiii. The reason is obvious: Neither flouting my duties nor properly sticking to my experience guarantees truth. It is therefore misleading of Plantinga (2001b, 327f.) to say that in WCB he argues that "*all*" (m.e.) *de jure* objections "presuppose the falsehood" of Christian belief.

(and hence Christian) belief is unwarranted really presupposes that Christian belief is false” (WCB, xii). As Plantinga already notes in the *Preface*, in order for a belief to have warrant, it must be produced by a cognitive faculty that is “successfully aimed at the production of true belief” (WCB, xi). So if a belief is warranted, then it is produced by a faculty that is successfully aimed at the production of true belief, and hence it is probably true; and if a belief is unwarranted, then for the same reason it probably is not true. And then a major point Plantinga believes he makes against Freud&Marx&Others is that they, when claiming that Christian belief is unwarranted, already presuppose that it is false: “their objection presupposes its falsehood” (WCB, xii). Again, a *de jure* objection is dependent on a *de facto* objection; ‘that is’, says Plantinga, because of TW.³⁴

Judging from our brief glance at the reception of WCB, one might easily get the impression that at the end of the day (and much sharp-witted reasoning) Plantinga’s position really amounts to no more (or not much more) than TW. So it’s about time we looked more closely at TW. In the section that those critics have in mind, Plantinga raises the following question: “Is Belief in God Warrant-Basic?” (WCB, 186). Then there are two brief answers: “If false, probably not” (WCB, 186); and: “If true, probably so” (WCB, 188). These are the headings of the subsections. A little further on, Plantinga provides the following answers to that question: “if theistic belief is false, but taken in the basic way [and not taken on testimony], then it probably has no warrant” (WCB, 186); and: “if theistic belief is *true*, then it seems likely that it *does* have warrant” (WCB, 188). How are we to understand this? To begin with, we should note that those statements (in WCB, 186 ff.) are statements about ‘*theistic* belief’ in general because Plantinga has not moved on to the extended A/C model. Once he has done that, he writes: “If *Christian* belief is true, then very likely it does have warrant” (WCB, 285, m.e.). But the difference between theistic and Christian belief is not the problem; rather, the problem is that in the official formulation of his argument there is a probability condition built into TW: If theistic (or Christian) belief is true, then *probably* theistic (Christian) belief has warrant; and if theistic (or Christian) belief is false, then *probably* theistic (Christian) belief has no warrant. I take it that this is not a very serious doubt or possibility; as a matter of fact, in the *Preface* Plantinga himself does *not* say: ‘if Christian belief is true, then it is also *probably* warranted’; rather, he formulates TW *without* the probability caveat: “if Christian belief is true, then it is also warranted” (WCB, xii). So maybe we could put this caveat aside. If we do that and follow the formulation of the *Pref-*

34 Cf. Plantinga (2001c, 387): “My reason for refraining from arguing that Christian belief is warranted is my belief that the latter is warranted if and only if it is true”.

ace, we read Plantinga as claiming ‘if true, then warranted’ as well as claiming ‘if false, then not warranted’. Since the latter is equivalent to ‘if warranted, then true’, we get: If Christian belief is true, then it is warranted, and if Christian belief is warranted, then Christian belief is true. On this reading, therefore, Plantinga’s alleged main position (or proposition, for that matter) would be a bi-conditional:

(TW) Christian belief is warranted if and only if Christian belief is true.³⁵

But the official (more rigid) formulations in WCB are different:

- (i) If Christian belief is false, then Christian belief probably has no warrant.
- (ii) If Christian belief is true, then Christian belief probably has warrant.

On the assumption that (i) is equivalent to

- (i)* If Christian belief probably has warrant, then Christian belief is true.

we get: If Christian belief probably has warrant, then Christian belief is true, and if Christian belief is true, then Christian belief probably has warrant. Thus, in this version, there is also a bi-conditional:

(TWP) Christian belief is probably warranted if and only if Christian belief is true.

But is that assumption (i.e. (i) and (i)* are equivalent) sensible? It depends on how exactly we understand the negation of the consequent of (i) (‘Christian belief probably has no warrant’). Generally speaking, the negation expresses that it is not the case that Christian belief probably has no warrant. But what exactly is being negated? On the first reading it is the claim that Christian belief probably has *no* warrant; the claim is that it probably has no warrant, and this claim is negated by saying that it probably *does have* warrant. Thus we get:

(NC1) Christian belief probably has warrant.

³⁵ This is how Plantinga put it in an interview with Robert Lawrence Kuhn for PBS; cf. the video on the web. Note, however, that in this interview too Plantinga sometimes mentions the probability caveat, sometimes not.

(This is the reading used in (i)*).³⁶ On the second reading the negation refers to the probability condition: the claim is that Christian belief *probably* has no warrant, and this claim is negated by saying that it *not* probably has no warrant. Thus we get:

(NC2) Christian belief improbably has no warrant.

Or more naturally speaking: It is improbable (unlikely) that Christian belief has no warrant. And then the question is this: Is there a difference between saying that Christian belief probably has warrant and saying that it is improbable that it has no warrant?

Possibly yet another meaning comes into focus by a formulation Plantinga uses in a text written after WCB: “I argue that (probably) Christian belief has warrant if and only if it is true” (Plantinga 2001a, 216). Thus we have:

(TWP)* Probably, Christian belief is warranted if and only if Christian belief is true.

Here the probability condition is put in front of the entire bi-conditional itself, and I’m not sure that TWP and TWP* are equivalent.

So on the face of it, there is reason indeed to believe that Plantinga has only claimed something fairly meager and even something that is quite obvious: If God, as Christians typically understand him, exists, then our belief that He does exist is what He wants us to think about Him and so our belief that God exists is true, or as Swinburne in his review of WCB puts it: “It is natural to suppose that God created us in such a way that we would come to hold the true belief that He exists” (Swinburne 2001, 205). I’m not sure what Swinburne means by saying that this is ‘*natural*’; as it happens, Plantinga himself also finds it “natural” (WCB, 188). I think what they both mean is that it is obvious or very plausible to think so; if God is a loving God, and if he creates us in his image, then why should He do so in a way that we would have *no* knowledge of Him? Why would he (entirely) hide himself?³⁷ And yet, God’s possible *hiddenness* is a seri-

³⁶ In email-exchanges, Christian Tapp provided the following counter-example to argue that (i) is not equivalent to (i)*: If my car begins to stutter and then stops running, then probably it has no gas; however, if probably it does have gas, then this still does not imply that it does not begin to stutter and stops running.—I am grateful to comments made regarding this issue by Christian Tapp and Gregor Nickel.

³⁷ Geivett and Jesson (2001, 333) think that this point brings TW “close to the edge of tautology”; maybe that is rather strong, but Moreland and Lane Craig (2003, 167) are certainly right in saying that Plantinga’s argument for TW “is surprisingly thin”.

ous and much discussed topic; so I think it is surprising that Plantinga says little (in WCB) about the possibility of God hiding himself.³⁸ Given that TW obviously is a very important result of WCB (to some even the main or only result), this is quite disappointing. (Note that the subsections in which these answers are given are hardly four pages long.) This objection is all the more relevant given that TW is introduced with regard to theism in general, not with regard to Christian belief; so even if the God of Christianity cannot be understood as a (completely) hidden God, another God (a God from a Non-Christian perspective) could possibly have reasons not to reveal himself so TW wouldn't be 'natural'.³⁹

In the *Preface*, Plantinga goes on to describe what happens in part III the title of which is "Warranted Christian Belief". This title is, *nota bene*, identical with the title of the book itself. So one would expect it to be the central part of the book; as a matter of fact, Plantinga says that part III (except for chapter 10 that deals with objections) is the "central part of the story line" (WCB, xiv). In this part, Plantinga lays out his extended Aquinas/Calvin model which is a theory of a Christian *sensus divinitatis* as a cognitive faculty⁴⁰ that, supported by the Holy Spirit, produces Christian beliefs; the extended A/C model is thus a theory of what warrant is when it comes not only to theistic belief, and theistic belief before the Fall (then the model is unextended), but to Christian belief proper.⁴¹ And then Plantinga says: "I propose the extended A/C model; according to this model, Christian belief is warranted" (WCB, xii, m.e.). That certainly sounds as if, at least according to this model, Christian belief 'is' warranted;

38 There is only a brief discussion of a similar objection by Keith Lehrer (WCB, 282–284).

39 However, the God relevant in these subsections is already described as a "person who has created us in his image [...] who loves us" (WCB, 188), etc.

40 The *sensus divinitatis* itself (not just the instigation of the Holy Spirit) is sometimes described as a "*process*" (cf. WCB, 256, 331) rather than a faculty; I'll ignore this difference.

41 For my purposes, I will not (usually) differentiate between the A/C model and the extended model and often just speak of the 'model'.—Sometimes it sounds as if the model is a model of how a broad theistic belief in (some kind of) personal God is brought about and can have positive epistemic status (cf. the "essence" of the unextended model as described in WCB, 204) and the extended model of how "*specifically* Christian belief" (WCB, 200, 241, m.e.) is triggered; sometimes, however, it sounds as if the extended model is the model that describes our cognition and volition *after* the "fall into sin" (WCB, 205) whereas the unextended model is the model that accounts for the *sensus divinitatis* *before* the 'Fall'. But knowledge of God based on the *sensus divinitatis* *before the Fall* must still be knowledge of the Christian God, and thus, among other things, knowledge of the (typically Christian) Holy Trinity.—By the way, Plantinga has a good deal to say about the cognitive and affective effects of sin, but in WCB he is almost silent on how we are to understand the 'Fall' as described in *Genesis* (he says that "the model need not take a stand" on this issue, WCB, 207 and 213; cf. 211f., however, and 212 for a brief case of "speculation" regarding how the very first act of sinning sin was possible).

since the model is one ‘proposed’ by Plantinga, one would think that he claims Christian belief is warranted. But then he continues: “What I officially claim for the extended A/C model is not that it is *true* but, rather, that it is *epistemically possible* (i.e., nothing we know commits us to its falsehood); I add that if Christian belief is true, then very likely this model or something like it is also true” (WCB, xii). Christian belief is warranted, but only ‘*according to*’ the model.

Several things are noteworthy here: *First*, TW is presented here as something *added* (‘I add...’); it’s not the only claim, and it seems it isn’t even the main claim. Rather, *secondly*, the main claim seems to be this:

(EP) The extended A/C model is epistemically possible.

(I’ll get back to this.) *Thirdly*, we should note that EP is what Plantinga ‘officially’ claims. So officially he doesn’t claim that the extended A/C model is true (but only possible). This is to say, obviously, that *unofficially* (personally) he very well believes it to be true⁴² (though, certainly, he doesn’t *know* he is warranted for then he would need to know that his beliefs are true which he doesn’t).

Plantinga himself puts his two claims—TW and EP—in a certain perspective. WCB, he says, “can be thought of in at least two quite different ways” (WCB, xiii): as an “exercise in apologetics and philosophy of religion” (ibid.) and as an “exercise in Christian philosophy” (ibid.). In this context, Plantinga repeats that what he claims for the extended A/C model “is twofold: first, it shows that and how Christian belief can perfectly well have warrant, thus refuting a range of *de jure* objections to Christian belief. But I also claim that the model provides a good way for Christians to think about the epistemology of Christian belief, in particular whether and how Christian belief has warrant” (WCB, xiii). Here Plantinga seems to promise an answer to the question of ‘*whether*’⁴³ Christian belief has warrant; and a little later in the *Preface* Plantinga says the A/C model “is a defense of the idea that Christian belief *has* warrant” (WCB, xiv)—on pain of contradiction, however, it can only be a defense inasmuch the ‘idea’ itself is epistemically possible and thus *could* have warrant.⁴⁴

The “public” project, says Plantinga, “does not appeal to specifically Christian premises or presuppositions” (WCB, xiii), whereas the “Christian” (ibid.) project is “starting from an assumption of the truth of Christian belief” (ibid.).

⁴² Cf. WCB, 347 and 499, where Plantinga clearly says that he holds Christian beliefs to be true (and thus probably warranted).

⁴³ On page xiv of the *Preface*, Plantinga repeats this point: “... asking *whether and how* such [Christian] belief has warrant” (my emphasis).

⁴⁴ Maybe this observation made Copan write what he did write (see above, p. 13).