

REPLY

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First, I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Steve Wykstra, Linda Zagzebski, and Michael Sudduth for their interesting and useful comments on *Warranted Christian Belief*. I could go on in that vein; however that would be contrary to established custom and convention, which requires that we philosophers mainly contradict each other.

Ad Wykstra

That said, I must add that there is much to appreciate in Stephen Wykstra's 'Not Done in a Corner'; it's hard to find much to argue with.

One valuable feature of Wykstra's discussion is that it highlights the fact that there are whole families of models in the nearby bushes, aligned along a couple of axes. On my model (the A/C model), the internal testimony or instigation of the Holy Spirit (IIHS) provides warrant for the great things of the gospel (the beliefs, roughly, that constitute the intersection of the great Christian creeds) and indeed warrant sufficient for knowledge. The model is *paradigmatic*: the actual epistemic condition of Christians will vary greatly and will not typically match the condition described in the model. Other models can differ along at least two different dimensions. First, the beliefs for which the IIHS provides warrant may be more or fewer than in the A/C model. But second and (in the present context) more important, models can differ with respect to the degree of warrant provided by the IIHS for a given such belief. At one end of the continuum is the A/C model. At the other end is the Lockean/Swinburnian position I argued against in WCB: on this view there may be such a thing as the IIHS, but it doesn't provide any warrant at all; whatever warrant the great things of the gospel enjoy (for us) will have to arise from ordinary historical inquiry.

Now Wykstra, as is his wont, endorses what he calls 'sensible evidentialism',¹ and proposes a sensible evidentialist model. Wykstra's model appears to agree with mine on the particular beliefs involved, except for the resurrection of Jesus. According to his model the warrant accruing to *this* belief arises from a synergistic combination involving both IIHS and ordinary testimonial and historical evidence. Far from swinging free of our ordinary ways of knowing historical events, the Gospel proclamation derives a crucial part of its warrant

1. See his 'Towards a Sensible Evidentialism: On the notion of "Needing Evidence"', in *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd Edition, ed. William Rowe and William Wainwright (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), pp. 426 ff.

from the fact that the resurrection and other evidencing visible works of God came within the perceptual access of Jesus' followers, and within the testimonial access of those coming after them. This synergy works as follows:

[The sensible evidentialist] will allow that a *Sensus Divinitatis* can ground a warm and living theistic belief, that the Holy Spirit can awaken the heart to a sense of God's holiness and love, and that this can make the story of God's work with Israel a living option. If this background knowledge is then brought to bear upon the gospel narrative of the resurrection in its full historical context, I believe that antecedent improbability [of Jesus' resurrection] loses its defeating power. . . . Such improbabilities no longer effortlessly defeat ordinary testimony, so the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus can begin to appear in its true colours—as far more impressive, on our model, than the testimonial evidence for most other events of ancient history, on which we routinely form historical beliefs (p. 106).

So the idea is that the believer has a sense of God's holiness and love provided by the IIHS; this is part of her background knowledge, and while it doesn't in itself provide evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, its conjunction with the ordinary testimonial and historical evidence provides evidence sufficient for knowledge.

Now there is one feature of Wykstra's model I'm not quite clear about. The idea is that for this teaching, warrant sufficient for knowledge of Jesus' resurrection requires historical evidence. Of course it isn't that each believer must herself be in possession of this historical evidence; such knowledge, rather, must be present in the believing community. In this way some believers will believe on the testimony of others, the testimonial chain tracing back to those believers who do have the appropriate kind of non-testimonial knowledge—the apostles and other witnesses themselves, presumably. And the warrant provided by this testimonial chain, together with the Spirit-induced knowledge of God's holiness and love, will provide warrant for belief in the resurrection. But what about the rest of the great things of the gospel—trinity, incarnation, atonement, etc.—how do they fit into the way in which warrant accrues to resurrection?

There are at least two ways this could go. On the one hand, it might be that belief in these things requires, to be warranted, a prior belief in the resurrection. On the other hand, it might be that belief in them can precede belief in the resurrection, and warranted belief in them can be part of the believer's noetic structure prior to her forming a belief in the resurrection. On this second account, presumably, belief in the resurrection wouldn't need a lot of warrant from ordinary testimony and testimonial transmission in order to be warranted for the believer. She would already know that Jesus was the incarnate second person of the trinity, that by his suffering and death he made redemption possible for us human beings, and so on. Given such a noetic structure, it wouldn't take much by way of testimonial evidence for the believer to acquire a substantially warranted belief in the resurrection. Indeed, it might not require any such evidence at all: one element of the great things

of the gospel is the proposition that Jesus Christ, as the Apostle's Creed has it, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God; could this be true if he had remained dead? On this scenario, then, not much historical evidence for the resurrection would be required—that belief would acquire a great deal of warrant by way of its being easily seen to follow from other warranted beliefs.

So perhaps instead the idea is that warranted belief in the resurrection is independent of or even epistemically precedes² the warrant accruing to those other beliefs. At least some warrant must accrue to the belief in question by virtue of ordinary testimony and transmission from the first century to the present, if in fact the believer's belief in the resurrection is to have warrant sufficient for knowledge. But here too there is a problem. Wykstra notes that historical biblical criticism (HBC) could in principle serve as a warrant defeater for belief in the resurrection. In principle, perhaps, but not in practice. There is indeed no consensus among practitioners of HBC as to the resurrection; but, says Wykstra, this need not constitute a defeater for belief in that proposition. Here he calls me as a witness to his case:

For as Plantinga himself stresses, in New Testament scholarship we find competing research programs animated by prior commitments of a deeply metaphysical and even ideological character. Even if the alleged defeaters are entirely spurious, we might well expect this battlefield to show wild disparity about their worth. The fact of such disparity—that is, the actual lack of scholarly consensus—thus gives us scant reason to think this testimony has real defeaters (p. 113).

But isn't there still a problem? True, it's not significant that *Troeltschian* (WCB pp. 390 ff.) Scripture scholars look with a jaundiced eye on the claim that Jesus actually arose from the dead; they are prevented by their methodology from taking that claim seriously. Assuming *ab initio* that no one rises from the dead or performs other miracles, they can hardly be expected to endorse the resurrection of Jesus. But there are other kinds of Scripture scholar as well. There are *some* Scripture scholars who try just to follow the historical evidence wherever it leads. They bracket such theological assumptions as incarnation, atonement, the Bible's being divinely inspired, and the like; hence they aren't engaging in traditional Biblical commentary (WCB pp. 381 ff.). But they also eschew Troeltschian dicta, trying to avoid all theological and philosophically contentious assumptions in the pursuit of the historical evidence. A prime example of such scholarship would be John Meier's monumental three volume work *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*.³ Widely regarded as maximally careful, responsible and thorough, Meier doesn't conclude that

2. Resurrection belief would precede these other beliefs just if these others can have warrant for someone only if she accepts resurrection belief. Wykstra might even want to add this precedence of resurrection belief to his model. He might want to add this, but of course the rest of the model doesn't require it. The other great things of the gospel might have warrant sufficient for knowledge quite independent of any warrant accruing to belief in the resurrection.

3. (Doubleday, 1991).

Jesus in fact arose from the dead, or even that it is very likely that he did. After careful, dispassionate, scrupulous consideration of all the evidence, he is prepared to say only that Jesus was a prophet, a proclaimer of an eschatological message from God, someone who performed powerful deeds, signs and wonders that announce God's kingdom and also ratify his message. He doesn't think that the sheer and mere historical evidence (and of course this would include the testimonial tradition involved) strong enough to warrant the claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

Shouldn't this give Wykstra pause? Is the historical evidence, just as such, sufficient to confer warrant, or much warrant, on Jesus' resurrection? Shouldn't this reticence on the part of Meier and others give me a defeater for the belief in question, if I am accepting it just on the basis of a testimonial tradition, or at least cause me to hold it with firmness insufficient for knowledge? I'm inclined to think so. Of course there is one complicating factor: in Wykstra's model the inference to the resurrection is to be made on the basis of the historical evidence *together with* a "warm and living theistic belief", and "a sense of God's holiness and love". Meier is presumably also bracketing these beliefs in his estimate of the evidence. Clearly this makes *some* difference, but how much? That's not easy to say. I'm therefore not sure that Wykstra's model offers a viable epistemological account of knowledge of Jesus' resurrection; but also not sure that it doesn't.

Meanwhile it is important to see the extent of our agreement. Our models agree on the great things of the gospel except for the resurrection. On Wykstra's model, the IHS doesn't even in principle provide warrant sufficient for knowledge of this proposition. On my model, it does; but this is not to say that testimonial and historical arguments and evidence are merely superfluous and not of much value.⁴ It is also not to say that they can't increase warrant. True, I said that the warrant for Christian belief swings free of ordinary historical evidence; what I meant, however, was that the warrant provided by the IHS thus swings free; I didn't mean to say that this belief doesn't or can't also possess warrant that comes from other sources. (Or, if that isn't what I meant by the words I used then, it is what I mean by them now.) So suppose I'm a beneficiary of the IHS and in fact have *knowledge* of the resurrection, but then learn of the historical evidence: my belief in the resurrection might gain an excess of warrant from that additional knowledge. Further, the model, I said, represents things the way they go when they go really well; only paradigmatic cases of faith are like the model. For most of us, the model isn't a wholly accurate description. But then for many people the warrant provided

4. Calvin suggests that historical evidence can play a secondary but important epistemic role. Speaking of arguments for the veracity or inspiration of Scripture, he says, "Conversely, once we have embraced it devoutly as its dignity deserves, and have recognized it to be above the common sort of things, those arguments—not strong enough before to engraft and fix the certainty of Scripture in our minds—become very useful aids" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles (Westminster Press, 1960), I, 8, 1. p. 82). Perhaps the same goes for the resurrection. Once we believe it on the basis of IHS, that historical evidence Wykstra cites can indeed function as an aid, perhaps as an antidote to doubt, or as a defeater-defeater for certain potential defeaters.

by the IHS might not in fact be sufficient for knowledge. And for those people, it might be that additional warrant for the resurrection can be provided by ordinary historical evidence, so that the combination of the two sources is sufficient for knowledge. So suppose I'm a beneficiary of the IHS, but the warrant enjoyed by my belief in the resurrection doesn't come up to the standard for knowledge: learning of the historical evidence could bring it up to that standard.

Our models are thus not far apart. What I claimed for the A/C model is that if Christian belief is true, this model is probably close to the truth. Of course it's hard to know how to measure closeness, but I'd be inclined to say that if Wykstra's model is true, then mine is close to the truth.

Ad Zagzebski

First, I'd like to thank Linda Zagzebski for her thought-provoking comments. She calls our attention to an Aristotelian truism: that human beings—all normal, properly functioning human beings, anyway—are rational. The idea, I take it, is that all normal human beings display *ratio*: the power of reason. They are able to think thoughts and hold beliefs; they are capable of forming concepts, grasping propositions, seeing relations among them, and thinking about the things the world contains. This is indeed a truism, which doesn't at all reduce its importance.

Zagzebski goes on to infer a "corollary" which she calls the Rational Recognition Principle: "if a belief is rational, its rationality is recognisable, in principle, by rational persons in other cultures". I don't know whether this really is a corollary of the Aristotelian Truism, but in any event there is much to be said for it. What? Well, first we have to say what it is for a *belief* to be rational. Here perhaps Zagzebski would think along the following, still Aristotelian, lines: a human being is rational, in the basic Aristotelian sense, when she has *ratio*; she is rational in an analogically extended sense when her rational faculties are functioning properly, not subject to dysfunction or malfunction. Now we can say that a *belief* is rational, in still another analogically extended sense: when it is one that could be held by a rational human being. More specifically, it is the faculties or belief-producing processes involved in the production of the belief in question that must be functioning properly; the rationality of my belief that China is a large country is not compromised by the fact that I harbour irrational beliefs about my neighbour's dog (that constant and annoying barking has finally got the better of me and I finally come to believe that he's purposely trying to drive me insane).

Well, what beliefs *are* rational in this sense? Here the first thing to see, obviously, is that different beliefs are rational in different circumstances. In my present circumstances it is rational to believe that there are several books on my desk. That belief isn't rational in *your* circumstances; you haven't given my desk a moment's thought and know nothing about it. We can put it like this: belief is rational, in a certain set of circumstances, when it is a healthy or sane belief to hold in those circumstances. The relevant circumstances have a

two-tiered character. First, there is my *noetic structure*: an assemblage of beliefs (and other cognitive states such as doubts, fears and so on) together with various salient properties of these beliefs and states and relevant relations obtaining among them. The second tier of circumstances is current experience. And we can say that a belief is rational, with respect to a given noetic structure and given current experience, just if it is a rational (i.e., non-pathological, non-dysfunctional) doxastic response to that structure and current experience.

Now according to the Rational Recognition Principle, if a belief is rational, its rationality is recognisable, in principle, by rational persons in other cultures. Is this correct? Given some qualifications and nuancing that would be pedantic to enter here, I should think it is—at any rate I don't mean to contest it. Even if you are not in my circumstances—even if you have different beliefs, and different current experience—you could presumably see, at least in principle, that one of my beliefs was a non-dysfunctional response to my circumstances. I certainly don't think it is acceptable to put your ageing parents on an ice floe and send them out to sea to freeze or starve, but I can see how an Eskimo, given his belief that you enter the next world with the degree of health and vigour with which you exit this, could sensibly think that's the right thing to do.

So the Rational Recognition Principle has much to be said for it. Zagzebski goes on to add another principle of rationality: the Need to Resolve Conflict Principle: It is rational to attempt to resolve putative conflicts between persons and cultures. This too certainly seems to be a sensible principle. That's why it's disturbing that Zagzebski claims that my model (or perhaps my offering my model) violates both of these principles. Take the second first: what she says is that

The underlying problem, then, is that it follows from the Need to Resolve Conflict Principle that the fact that some of us think Christian belief is rational and others think that it is not is a putative conflict that needs to be resolved. It is not resolved by the conditional conclusion Plantinga demonstrates. In fact, by shifting the focus to the more difficult issue of truth, the conditional conclusion makes it even harder to resolve it (p. 122).

Here I'm not convinced. First, the conditional conclusion I argued for had to do with *warrant*, not with rationality. I thought it pretty obvious (WCB p. 112) that Christian belief can be *rational*; the interesting question is whether it can have *warrant*. I argued that (probably) Christian belief is warranted if and only if it is true. Of course a belief has warrant for a person only if it is rational for him; so perhaps for present purposes it doesn't much matter that Zagzebski takes the model to be one for rationality rather than warrant.

Second, however, and more important, the Need to Resolve Conflict Principle quite properly says that a certain kind of activity is in fact rational. But you don't violate that principle by engaging in some *other* kind of activity. It's rational to eat breakfast; it doesn't follow that it isn't rational to mow my lawn, even if the latter doesn't contribute to the former. It's rational to try to

reduce conflict: it doesn't follow that any other kind of activity isn't rational, even if that other activity doesn't reduce conflict. My aim was to refute what Wykstra calls "the demure evidentialist objection" to Christian belief—one that seems to me to be the most important and popular objection currently on offer. So aiming in that way may or may not be trying to reduce conflict (perhaps one could argue that it's an attempt to get people who offer the objection to stop offering it, thus reducing conflict) but even if it isn't, how would it be a violation of the principle? The principle says that trying to reduce conflict is rational, not that any other kind of activity isn't. Clearly enough, defending Christian beliefs by refuting objections to them is another rational activity, and certainly no violation of the principle in question. What about the other principle?

And now we can see why the strategy also violates the Rational Recognition Principle. It does not permit a rational observer outside the community of believers in the model to distinguish between Plantinga's model and the beliefs of any group, no matter how irrational and bizarre—sun-worshippers, cult-followers, devotees of the Greek gods . . . , assuming, of course, that they are clever enough to build their own epistemic doctrines into their models in a parallel fashion. But we do think there are differences in the rationality of the beliefs of a cult and Christian beliefs, even if the cult is able to produce an exactly parallel argument for a conditional proposition to the effect that the beliefs of the cult are rational if true. Hence, the rationality of such beliefs must depend upon something other than their truth (p. 122).

Recall that according to the Rational Recognition Principle, if a belief is rational, its rationality is recognisable, in principle, by rational persons in other cultures. My strategy, says Zagzebski, violates that principle. But how could I be doing that? The principle says that rational people can see that rational beliefs are in fact rational. As far as I can see, the only way, really, to *violate* this principle is to be a rational person who can't see the rationality of some rational belief. Presumably *that's* not what Zagzebski thinks I've done; but then where does she think I've gone wrong? Perhaps the idea is this: first, believers of any group—no matter how weird their beliefs—can produce an argument exactly parallel to mine for the conclusion that their beliefs are rational if true. But second, we think that some of these beliefs are irrational, even if those who hold them *can* produce an argument just like mine. Therefore third, contrary to what I say, the rationality of beliefs of this sort depends upon something other than their truth.

Here there seems to me to be misunderstanding. First, I was concerned with warrant, not with rationality. That makes a difference in this context, but in the interest of brevity, let's set it aside. More important, Zagzebski just assumes that for any belief at all, no matter how crazy, someone who accepts that belief can produce an argument exactly parallel to mine for the conclusion that the belief is rational if true. But that assumption is false. My argument depends essentially upon premises about God's knowledge, intentions, and power; parallel premises about the sun or the moon or Greek gods will be

manifestly false. Naturalists, furthermore, will also be unable to construct such an argument, as, indeed, will non-theists of any stripe.

But perhaps followers of any *theistic* religion (or set of beliefs) could produce an argument like mine; can't Jews and Muslims argue in the same way that their beliefs are rational (warranted) if true? If so, the demure *de jure* objection won't work against them either. (Of course this isn't so far a decent objection to my strategy. The fact is the demure *de jure* objection *won't* work against Islam and Judaism.) But couldn't the same be said for a manifestly *irrational* set of theistic beliefs—for instance, the belief that God has created rabbits that weigh 800 lbs. and live in Cleveland (and seriously wants us to know about it)? Couldn't one who believed this propose that God has created us with a *Sensus oryctolagus giganteus*, so that this monster rabbit belief is properly basic, and go on to claim that we can't show this belief to be irrational without showing it to be false?

Well, perhaps such a person could argue in that way. And no doubt, as Zagzebski says, we would think such a cult belief irrational, even if its devotees came up with such an argument. But how would this be relevant to my argument? I say that probably, beliefs of a certain sort (arguably including this belief) are warranted if and only if they are true. But then what about the giant rabbit belief: isn't that belief a counterexample? Zagzebski says we think such a belief irrational even if its partisans can come up with an argument like mine. Right; we do think that; and we also think that belief *false*. There aren't any rabbits of that size in Cleveland (they'd be pretty hard to miss); therefore God hasn't created any giant rabbits that live in Cleveland. This belief may be such that probably it is rational (or warranted) if and only if it is true; but the fact is it's false. So I fail to see how my strategy violates the Rational Recognition Principle; I also fail to see that there is a problem for my strategy here.

A couple of final comments. Zagzebski correctly points out that my model has two parts: a specifically Christian part, and an epistemological addendum. (She is also right that there can be other plausible epistemological addenda, leading to other plausible models.) She adds that according to my model, the epistemological addendum applies to itself: "Included in the model is the proposition that the Holy Spirit causes Christians, including me, to believe the doctrines in the model, including that one, and causes me to hold them in the basic way . . ." (p. 119). But that's a misunderstanding (due perhaps to my expository inadequacy): the epistemological declarations of the model apply only to the Christian teachings in the model; they do not apply to themselves (see pp. 343, 348).

Finally, Zagzebski thinks my argument (for the conclusion that Christian belief is warranted (rational) if and only if it true) is "rhetorically unwise": that is because

The move was intended to show that since Christian belief is rational if true, those who want to attack its rationality must attack its truth, a much harder task. But by the same token and for exactly the same reason, if the rationality of Christian belief is tied to its truth, Plantinga has given us the job of defending its rationality by defending its truth—a much harder task.

He has made the task of defending the rationality of Christian belief much harder than most of us thought it was (p. 121).

Well, suppose the task of defending the rationality of Christian belief really is harder than most of us thought: must I shoulder the blame for that? Should we shoot the messenger? But here we need a distinction; here the difference between warrant and rationality really does make a difference. I argued that Christian belief is (probably) warranted if and only if true. What about rationality? I distinguished (pp. 255–258) *internal* rationality from *external* rationality (Zagzebski seems to be thinking of internal rationality), and argued (p. 255) that Christian belief is pretty clearly internally rational, whether or not it is true. So the internal rationality of Christian belief isn't tied to its truth. External rationality, on the other hand, is close to warrant. A belief is externally rational if it is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth; it is warranted just if it meets those conditions and in addition is formed in the right kind of cognitive environment. It is perhaps true that the external rationality of Christian belief is (probabilistically) tied to its truth, just as with warrant; I doubt, however, that most of us have thought otherwise. (If we have, then I'd have to say we were mistaken.) And finally, is it really all that difficult to defend the truth of Christian belief? As far as I can see, none of the objections to its truth have much to be said for them; all are easily refuted. Arguing *for* the truth of Christian belief, of course, is another matter altogether.

Ad Sudduth

As with Wykstra, so with Sudduth: I have little quarrel with what he says. An important upshot of both of their contributions is that there are alternative models in which there is more scope for argument and evidence than in the A/C model. The central difference between Wykstra and Sudduth has to do mainly with where this evidence is relevant: for Wykstra it is with respect to the resurrection of Jesus; for Sudduth the focus is (natural) knowledge of God. Sudduth proposes a model that differs in some way from mine; as with Wykstra, his claim is not that my model won't do the job it's designed to do (and his will), but that his model is closer to the sober truth.

On my model, there is both natural knowledge of God by way of the *sensus divinitatis* ("SD") and non-natural or supernatural knowledge of God, knowledge that comes as a result of the IHS. So far, Sudduth's model agrees. So where is the disagreement? It centres about the *nature* of this natural knowledge of God. On my model, the SD is a cognitive process that in a wide variety of circumstances produces beliefs about God. These beliefs are of the form *God has P* for some property *P*; thus God is great and glorious; is such that we should obey and worship him, disapproves of certain kinds of behaviour, forgives our sins, can help those whom he sees fit to help, and the like. These beliefs are triggered by many different circumstances: a sudden apprehension of one's guilt, beholding the beauty of the night sky, hearing the timeless crash and

roar of the surf, a thousand other circumstances. Such knowledge is non-inferential and immediate. It's not that we behold the beauty of the heavens and construct an argument, implicit or explicit, for some truth about God. Instead, perception of the secondary beauty and glory of the heavens triggers an immediate grasp of God's primary beauty and glory. So belief induced by the SD is basic, and according to my model, properly basic.

Sudduth's model is a little different. First, he notes an important distinction in the tradition of Reformed theology between "implanted" and "acquired" knowledge of God, a distinction he thinks is lacking in my model. On his model, as on mine, there is natural knowledge of God induced by the SD, and this natural knowledge is immediate, accepted or held in the basic way. But it doesn't arise as the result of triggers or special occasions: we are instead created with it; alternatively, it is simply implanted in us at some point. And secondly, this natural knowledge is less specific than in the A/C model. "The sense of divinity," as Calvin thinks of it, "appears to be a somewhat vague religious sense or awareness, a sense that there is some God and that he ought to be worshipped." Sudduth's model follows Calvin (as he sees it) on this point; the SD, on his model, produces a "rudimentary, antecedent knowledge of God" that he also characterises as "minimal" (p. 89); the function of inferential knowledge, he says, is "primarily to reach a fuller notion of the being whose existence is vaguely intuited or grasped immediately" (p. 90). So there is immediate natural knowledge of God on Sudduth's model as well as mine; on his model, however, this immediate natural knowledge is more like a vague grasp or apprehension of God, one that doesn't deliver much by way of propositions about what God is like or what properties he has.

This difference between our models, Sudduth thinks, induces another: on his model there is room for *acquired* natural knowledge of God, which is knowledge by way of inference from various features of the universe. Such inference would reach a fuller knowledge of God, knowledge of his omniscience, omnipotence, perfect goodness, etc. I'm not sure this difference amounts to much: my model is entirely consistent with the existence of good arguments whose conclusions ascribe these and other properties to God. The principal difference between our models here is that on my model there are propositions that are properly basic (even if they could also be inferred) that on his model can be reached only by inference. This, he says, makes room for an epistemic function for inferential knowledge (natural theology) that it doesn't have on my model: being the sole source of certain items of knowledge.

Now I have little by way of objection to this model; but I do want to look into the proposed distinction between implanted and acquired natural knowledge of God. This distinction can remind one of the dispute between Leibniz and Locke: the former thought of certain knowledge (*a priori* knowledge) as innate, while the latter thought of the mind as originally a *tabula rasa*; on which whatever is inscribed comes from the senses. Leibniz saw the difference between himself and Locke as follows:

Our differences are on matters of some importance. It is a matter of knowing if the soul in itself is entirely empty like a writing tablet on which

nothing has as yet been written, (*tabula rasa*), . . . and if everything inscribed there comes solely from the sense and experience, or if the soul contains originally the sources of various concepts and doctrines that external objects merely reveal on occasion.

We can understand Leibniz in at least two ways: on the one hand, he may think of the knowledge in question as innate, born into us. Of course very young children don't seem to have this knowledge, so perhaps a better suggestion is that at a certain level of maturity, these beliefs just appear. This seems to be how Sudduth's model goes: a sort of vague grasp or apprehension or knowledge of God is implanted in us.

On the other hand, we could think of Leibniz as proposing that what the soul originally contains is the 'sources', as the above quotation has it, of these doctrines and concepts: the idea would be that the beliefs in question emerge in response to experience of one kind or another (they are "concepts and doctrines that external objects merely reveal on occasion"). The second seems closer, perhaps, to what Leibniz actually had in mind.

Similarly, someone might think of the knowledge originating from the SD as present in the mind at birth, which seems a bit far-fetched, and may revise this to the idea that at a certain level of maturity, these beliefs simply arise. Alternatively, however, one could think of the knowledge in question as arising in response to certain kinds of experience: for example, the beauty of the mountains, or of the heavens, or awareness of one's guilt. This is how I was thinking of the SD, and how I think Calvin thought of it. I realise some Calvin scholars think that in Chapter 3, Book I, of the *Institutes* Calvin is proposing that there is an innate or implanted knowledge of God, and in Chapter 5 proposing that there is a different *acquired* knowledge of God, knowledge acquired by way of inference from the splendour of the heavens or the beauties of nature. I'm no Calvin scholar, but I doubt that he intended a distinction between the knowledge of God as proposed in Chapter 3 and that affirmed in Chapter 5. It's hard to know what Calvin would have said, had we put the question to him, but my guess is that he would have answered more or less along the lines of my model. When he speaks in Chapter 5 of the way in which knowledge of God is acquired by way of perception of the beauty and regularity of the heavens, I don't think he means to suggest that this knowledge comes by way of inference; it's rather that perception of this beauty and regularity is a sort of trigger for the SD. Doubtless Calvin wasn't thinking at all of the three possibilities here: implanted or innate knowledge, knowledge by way of inference, and the Leibnizian suggestion of knowledge as a direct response to experience. This last possibility, I suggest, hadn't entered his mind. If God or an angel had asked him which he endorsed, however, my guess is that it would have been the Leibnizian possibility.

In any event, that seems to me the superior position here, and for this reason I prefer my model to Sudduth's. I say this is the superior position because, ultimately, the inferential option isn't capable of delivering *knowledge* of God. No doubt there are a fairly large number of good theistic arguments—two dozen or so—but none delivers *knowledge*. All give one some reason to accept

theistic belief; some are stronger than others; but none of them, nor, I think, any combination of them, is strong enough to deliver knowledge that there is such a person as God. Nor, combined with Sudduth's vague and general knowledge, will they yield as *knowledge* such conclusions as that God is omnipotent or omniscient. They are epistemically probable, given their evidence base, and maybe in some cases very probable, but I doubt that their degree of warrant, insofar as it arises from such inferences, reaches the level necessary for knowledge. Christians do or can know those things, I think, but their knowledge depends essentially upon revelation. For this reason I am inclined to doubt that there is the kind of inferential knowledge of God Sudduth points to, even if in fact there are good theistic arguments for the existence of God, and even if we include in their evidence base the deliverances of the SD.