

# Religious Epistemological Disjunctivism

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**Abstract:** This paper explores religious belief in connection with epistemological disjunctivism. It applies recent advances in epistemological disjunctivism to the religious case for displaying an attractive model of specifically Christian religious belief. What results is a heretofore unoccupied position in religious epistemology—a view I call ‘religious epistemological disjunctivism’ (RED). My general argument is that RED furnishes superior explanations for the sort of ‘grasp of the truth’ which should undergird ‘matured Christian conviction’ of religious propositions. To this end I first display the more familiar perceptual epistemological disjunctivism (PED), contrasting it with both externalist and classically internalist views. This prepares the way for introducing RED with its own distinctive factive mental state operator—pneuming that p. In this second section I present the RED model, not failing to address a potential problem concerning religious disagreement. I also clarify RED’s distinctive internalist aspect, describing how it comports with contemporary internalist thinking in epistemology. I then move in section three to criticize externalist and classical internalist views, showing where they fail to make proper sense of the sort of knowing which should ground mature Christian conviction. Specifically, I highlight three intuitions which I think any theory of religious belief should capture: what I call the case-closed intuition, the good believer intuition, and the Plantingian platitude. This is all to set up for the final section where I argue that RED is superior for understanding proper religious believing— capturing the aforementioned intuitions.

## 1.0 Introduction

Up till now epistemological disjunctivism has been largely defended and discussed in connection with visual-perceptual knowledge.<sup>1</sup> But I think epistemological disjunctivism has fascinating implications for *religious* epistemology—especially for articulating the knowledge grounding matured ‘Christian conviction’.

I think that when one knows some religious fact in the manner grounding paradigmatic matured Christian conviction, she should enjoy a rather robust epistemic relation to the fact known.<sup>2</sup> I think epistemological disjunctivism is uniquely resourced for furnishing superior explanations on this score, besting its externalist and classical internalist rivals. What will result in the course of this discussion is a heretofore unoccupied position in religious epistemology—a position I call ‘religious epistemological disjunctivism’ (RED).

For motivating RED in connection with matured Christian conviction I’ll first need an explication of the proposal—just what religious epistemological disjunctivism *is*. With this rudimentary account in tow, I’ll then proceed to pressure externalist and classically internalist religious epistemologies in connection with Christian conviction. As it happens these views are generally inadequate for explicating one’s epistemic position vis-à-vis religious facts. By contrast we’ll find that religious epistemological disjunctivism secures an especially robust epistemic connection to religious facts—one to match the shape of knowing which should undergird mature Christian conviction. As I will show, this is marked by strong relations of rational or evidential support—enjoyed not only among the ranks of the academically sophisticated, but widely among Christian laypersons as well.

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<sup>1</sup> For a clear and thorough introduction, see Pritchard (2012).

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<sup>2</sup> I’m aware that ‘conviction’ typically connotes nothing epistemically stronger than mere strong subjective *confidence*—hardly a very demanding *epistemic* relation. But this is something I mean to correct with respect to matured *Christian* conviction. I want a conception of Christian conviction on which one is not only strongly confident, but has *the right* to be confident, because they *know* after the fashion I’ll describe in this paper. Thanks to Adam Carter to raising this concern.

## 2.0 Perceptual Epistemological Disjunctivism

Before displaying the disjunctivist model for religious knowledge and exploring its implications for matured and rationally-based Christian conviction, it'd be helpful to first display the more familiar *perceptual* epistemological disjunctivism (or PED), contrasting it sharply with externalist and classical internalist perspectives.

PED<sup>3</sup> holds that in the best cases of perceptual knowledge that *p*, one's knowledge is in virtue of one's belief that *p* enjoying reflectively accessible and factive rational support.<sup>4</sup> On the standard view, this support is furnished by one's *seeing that p* to be the case.<sup>5</sup>

So for instance take Madison who in standard epistemic conditions enjoys a veridical perception of a moose and believes and comes to know that there's a moose. This is our 'good' case. Compare Madison with her non-factive mental state duplicate Kaylie who – to keep things simple – is the victim of some radical deception plot (she's a brain in a vat, say). Kaylie undergoes a matching experience *as of* a moose – a mere seeming seeing<sup>6</sup> of a moose – which is introspectively indistinguishable from Madison's veridical experience. Of course Kaylie is not in position to know that there's a moose – contrary to what *she* thinks – least because there's no moose *there* to be seen. This is our corresponding 'bad case'.

As PED views things, Madison knows that there's a moose because she believes this for the reason that she sees that there's a moose, where this is reflectively accessible. This is

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<sup>3</sup> My characterization of PED follows Duncan Pritchard's. He conceives epistemological disjunctivism's 'core thesis' like this: "In paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge an agent, *S*, has perceptual knowledge that  $\varphi$  in virtue of being in possession of rational support, *R*, for her belief that  $\varphi$  which is both *factive* (i.e. *R*'s obtaining entails  $\varphi$ ) and *reflectively accessible* to *S*." (Pritchard (2012), pg. 13).

<sup>4</sup> I do take it that a belief's enjoying *factive* rational support is *always* sufficient for knowledge. Indeed it's *plenty* sufficient, perhaps even a kind of epistemic over-kill. It's at least hard to imagine what further conditions one should like on knowing.

<sup>5</sup> But see Craig French (2012) for alternative 'thing seeing' conception.

<sup>6</sup> 'Seeming seeing' is John McDowell's label for one's perceptual experience when it looks to one as if *p*, but it's not a case of *p* making itself visually manifest, or else it's not a case of one seeing that *p*. See McDowell's (2013) presentation at University College Dublin: 'Can Cognitive Science Determine Epistemology?' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8y8673RmII>.

rational support of the finest grade, since there's no logical gap between one's seeing that *p* and the obtaining of *p* itself. By contrast, Kaylie is radically deceived and so does not see that there's a moose. Whatever else one says of her evidential or rational support, it's very different from Madison's—it's surely not *factive* rational support. The view's *disjunctive* aspect is now apparent: cases in which it visually 'looks' as if *p* are cases in which one's rational basis for believing is *either* one's seeing that *p* *or* one's merely seeming to see that *p*—depending upon the case.

To compare, familiar externalist reliabilist interpretations of these two cases agree that Madison and Kaylie enjoy very different epistemic support for their respective moose beliefs. This is owing however to the fact that while Madison's belief enjoys the property of having been produced by a reliable doxastic process, Kaylie's belief is produced by way of a thoroughly *unreliable* process. In keeping with standard thinking about the analysis of knowledge, some reliabilists have thought that this difference in epistemic support amounts to a difference in justificatory support, so that Madison's belief is thus *better justified* than Kaylie's.<sup>7</sup> You might find this attractive not least because justification looks like something worth carrying about from the epistemic point of view. Justification at least conceptually entails belief which is *probably* true.

Be that as it may, what makes for the justificatory difference isn't reflectively accessible to either Madison or Kaylie, and so you might at least think it odd that while Madison's belief enjoys justification Kaylie's belief doesn't. After all, Kaylie's position is introspectively indistinguishable from Madison's position—it is just as if she sees a moose. This is the thinking engendered by the so-called New Evil Genius intuition—that one's justificatory support in the bad case is no worse than one's justificatory support in the good case. There is a very quick argument from this idea to a kind of *evidential internalism*. If the justified belief is the evidentially supported one, then it seems, provided Kaylie is no less justified than Madison, that they enjoy *equal* evidential support (plausibly furnished by facts concerning their non-factive mental life). In the case at hand, for example, it would be that

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<sup>7</sup> Alvin Goldman (1988) is the principle text here, wherein he identifies reliability with *strong* justification (which he distinguishes from *weak* justification—the positive epistemic status shared with one's radically deceived counterpart).

both subjects believe on the basis of their *seeming* to see that there's a moose. Evidential internalism, then, entails that *one's evidence or reasons for belief in the good case are no better in epistemic quality than one's evidence or reasons for belief in the bad case*. Classical internalists think this way, adopting evidential internalism. You might find this attractive because it retains an essential connection between justification and rational responsibility. The proper belief is *responsibly* believed, that is, on the basis of one's reasons or evidence.

Now PED can't agree to this. I mean they can't agree to the classical internalist idea that one's evidential support in the good case is no stronger than one's evidential support in the bad case. They can't agree to evidential internalism. For on PED, in the good case one enjoys *factive* rational support furnished by one's seeing that *p*, something *unavailable* to her radically deceived counterpart. Nonetheless such factive rational support *is* reflectively accessible in the good case. PED is thus internalist—by virtue of maintaining a kind of *accessibilism*<sup>8</sup> about status. But it's *non-classically* internalist—by virtue of its rejecting the idea that non-factive mental state duplicates share the same evidence, that is to say, by virtue of adopting a kind of evidential *externalism*.<sup>9</sup>

The view has its problems.<sup>10</sup> To lighten the load of the paper I simply assume that these problems aren't insurmountable. Assuming that PED can get up and running, my project is simply to highlight some of the view's advantages for religious epistemology. Let's move on then to display the disjunctivist model for religious knowledge, before putting the model to work for illuminating epistemically robust and rationally-supported Christian conviction.

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<sup>8</sup> *Accessibilism* is a form of internalism distinct from what some have termed *mentalism*. First to make this contrast were Conee and Feldman (2000), 55. It's not at all clear in the literature how PED relates to various internalist theories—for instance, whether it need necessarily be accessibilist, or mentalist, and then to what degree. I'll make an effort in this direction when I introduce 'religious epistemological disjunctivism' below.

<sup>9</sup> For more on evidential externalism, consult Silins (2005). Examples of types evidential externalist views are Williamson (2000), McDowell (1995), Pritchard (2012), Millar (2011a, 2011b, 2014), and Alston (1988c).

<sup>10</sup> In Pritchard (2012) Duncan Pritchard classifies these as the *basis, access, and indistinguishability* problems. Consult this same work for ways of answering these problems.

### 3.0 Introducing Religious Epistemological Disjunctivism

#### 3.1 Stating the Model

*Religious epistemological disjunctivism* (RED) holds that in the best cases of religious knowledge one's knowledge is in virtue of epistemic support which is both factive (truth-entailing) and reflectively accessible. What precisely does this epistemic support look like for the religious case?

Well what we need first is a religious perception analogue to *seeing that p*—the factive mental state involved in cases of sound *visual* perception. We need to introduce some locution for the factive mental state operator at issue in the best cases of distinctly *religious* perception. For lack of a better alternative I submit *pneuming that p* (pronounced 'nooming').<sup>11</sup> *Pneuming that p* is like seeing that *p* or remembering that *p* in that each of these are success verbs and sui generis *factive* mental states—one cannot enjoy them unless the propositional stand-in for *p* is true. That is to say, you cannot *see that* there's a moose unless there's a moose there before you. And you cannot *remember that* you had eggs for breakfast unless you *in fact had* eggs for breakfast. Similarly, you cannot be *pneuming that p* unless *p* is true at the time of *pneuming*.

Now of the full range of religious beliefs *possibly* supported by states of one's *pneuming that p*, to keep things simple I'll restrict my treatment to what William Alston called M-beliefs, or *manifestation* beliefs.<sup>12</sup> These, Alston writes, are beliefs 'about what God is doing vis-à-vis the person at that moment.'<sup>13</sup> He offers such examples as the belief

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<sup>11</sup> *Pneuma* is Greek for 'spirit'. Of course I have in mind here the 'Holy Spirit' as He is characterized in orthodox Christianity.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that I wish to restrict the class of beliefs which can be *pneuma'd* to Alstonian manifestation beliefs. In fact I think *at times* it is possible for one to pneumas some simple biblical teaching, when one undergoes the relevant mediated religious perception of their truth. But exploring these extensions of RED will have to wait for another time.

<sup>13</sup> Alston (1992). 67.

that God is now strengthening one, sustaining one in being, filling one with His peace, and etc.

With this new bit of terminology, the big idea then is that in paragon cases of religious knowledge that *p* one knows that *p* by virtue of rational support furnished by one's pneuming that *p*, where this mental state is both factive and accessible on reflection.

To see the view in action consider the following pair of cases. Assume Christianity is true. In circumstances requiring great courage, Madison, a devout Jesus-follower, suddenly experiences a profound strengthening of God. By way of this religious experience she thereby comes to believe and know that 'God is strengthening me now'. Now assume Christianity is a sham. Kaylie is Madison's *deceived* non-factive mental state duplicate in the same circumstances, who in response to a similar experience comes to believe *falsely* 'God is strengthening me now', and with equal assurance. Now the two experiences match in their phenomenology—they're both seeming *pneumings* that the religious claim in question is true. But while classical internalist thinking would have it that Madison and Kaylie thus enjoy the same degree of evidence or rational support for believing as they do, RED interprets these cases very differently.

By the lights of RED Madison knows that 'God is strengthening me, now' by virtue of her reflectively accessible factive reason constituted by her *pneuming that* this is case. In such paradigmatic cases Madison's religious knowledge is based on her pneuming the relevant fact. Her pneuming to this effect is something Madison can access and present to herself and others on occasions when its wondered whether what she believes is true.<sup>14</sup> When asked why she believes as she does, it isn't any less natural for Madison to respond that she *pneumas* that God is strengthening her now than it is for her to defend her belief that she has hands by responding that she *sees* that she has them. But then Kaylie, whose case is in all respects introspectively indistinguishable from Madison's, *does not* enjoy the

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<sup>14</sup> Granted, if Madison's justification is being requested of by a religious skeptic, then to report that she *pneumas* the relevant fact will be little satisfying. But neither is the external world skeptic satisfied when we appeal to our states of *seeing* to justify our external world beliefs. In any case, RED is not meant to furnish some argument to think religious belief *is true*—not unless you like question-begging arguments. Rather, RED is meant to vindicate a conception of religious knowledge, *given the truth* of the Christian worldview.

same rational support, despite her blamelessly thinking otherwise. Therefore cases of *apparent* religious knowledge are cases in which one's rational basis for believing is *either* one's seeming that *p* or one's mere seeming that *p*—depending upon the case. This is what makes this model of religious knowledge *disjunctivist*.

### 3.2 RED, Disagreement, and Internalism

Before moving ahead, I should like to address one challenge and offer one piece of clarification.<sup>15</sup> The challenge stems from the problem of religious diversity or disagreement; the clarification is regarding RED's internalist aspect. I'll address the challenge from religious disagreement first.

It may not be *so* easy to straightforwardly apply epistemological disjunctivism to the religious case. A seemingly important *disanalogy* between PED and RED has to do with *disagreement*. In particular, unlike the domain accessible via basic visual-perception, there's tremendous *disagreement* over the domain putatively accessible via *religious*-perception. You might think such disagreement or pluralism constitutes an *undefeated defeater* for one's religious knowledge, thus *undermining one's entitlement* to religious beliefs. Sanford Goldberg has argued this recently, and forcefully.<sup>16</sup> This has the potential to make trouble for RED, since RED purports to offer a particular *vindicating* conception of paradigmatic religious belief, purporting to explain how one is *in fact* entitled to her Christian beliefs.

Goldberg in effect argues *from* the fact of religious disagreement for a *strong* agnosticism regarding religious truth claims. Goldberg himself doesn't think he knows any religious truth claim, *and he thinks you don't know, either*. Contrary to popular anti-skeptical thinking in religious epistemology<sup>17</sup>, Goldberg thinks he has a sound *de jure*

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<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Duncan Pritchard for raising the objection, and to Adam Carter for requesting the clarification.

<sup>16</sup> See Goldberg (2014).

<sup>17</sup> I have in mind here views stemming from the *reformed epistemological* tradition; chief adherents including Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, and Nicholas Wolterstorff. These theorists of religious knowledge argue that sufficient for proper religious belief is that such meet certain *externalist* criterion. These criterion will differ for different epistemologists—but the hallmark idea is that proper religious belief need not be supported by

objection to Christian knowledge (or any religious knowledge for that matter).<sup>18</sup> That is to say, Goldberg has an objection to one's entitlement to Christian beliefs which he takes to be *independent* of any challenge to *the truth* of Christianity. But moreover his objection is independent of any challenge to the idea that *there in fact exists* reliable methods of religious belief formation (or in our case, states of *pneuming that p*). In this connection Goldberg advertises his challenge as remarkably *concessive*<sup>19</sup> to the religious anti-skeptic. *Even if* Christianity is true, and *even if*, in our terms, Christians enjoy states of *pneuming* with respect to divine reality, Goldberg would argue that the particular organization of the social landscape (systematic religious disagreement) is such that Christians are not entitled to their religious beliefs, are not entitled to rely on what *they take* to be cases of religious perception of divine reality.

Goldberg's argument is fashioned with *reliabilist* religious epistemologies in mind. But I think there's a straightforward application of the challenge to RED. Assume Christianity is true, and take some religious believer who is *in fact* pneuming that, say, 'God is strengthening me, now', and believes on the basis of this fact. Now most such believers are either aware or *should be* aware that many other non-Christian religious folk *take themselves* to enjoy mental states of *pneuming* regarding other propositions radically inconsistent with their Christian view. In light of this undeniable fact, the Christian believer is thus compelled to admit something like this: there's a lot of misleading *seeming pneumings* about; there's a lot of people *mistaking* their religious experiences for states of pneuming that *p*. But should the believer not then wonder why *she* is so lucky to be among the small minority of folks whose seeming pneumings are the genuine article? It seems that

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independent reason or argument, no more than proper perceptual belief need be supported by independent reason or argument.

<sup>18</sup> Plantinga (2000) writes that while *de facto* objections are 'objections to the *truth* of Christian belief, *de jure* objections concern 'arguments or claims to the effect that Christian belief, whether or not true, is at any rate unjustifiable, or rationally unjustified, or irrational, or not intellectually respectable, or contrary to sound morality, or without sufficient evidence, or in some other way rationally unacceptable, not up to snuff from an intellectual point of view.' (preface, ix).

<sup>19</sup> Goldberg writes that "even on the concessive assumption that there *is* a reliable process of revelation, even so, given the fact of systematic disagreement, no one would be entitled to rely on it in belief formation." Goldberg (2014), 297.

barring some *independent reason* to think that what *she takes* to be states of pneuming divine reality *are indeed* such states, then with the facts involving religious disagreement in play it looks rather reflectively chancy that *she* (and her religious community) should be so fortunate in this regard.

Needless to say I haven't the space here to embark upon the epistemology of disagreement and religious diversity.<sup>20</sup> What I can do very quickly is to highlight some possible directions for response.

Firstly, thinkers working in peer disagreement distinguish from among themselves the *conformists* and *non-conformists*.<sup>21</sup> While conformists in the disagreement literature call for a measure of *belief revision* in cases of acknowledged peer disagreement, non-conformists, or those who are 'steadfast', argue that no such revision is required. Perhaps there's a 'steadfast'-style response in the offing for proponents of RED. Whatever reasons are given for thinking that disagreement between acknowledged epistemic peers *need not* call for belief revision, perhaps such reasons can be exercised for thinking that even in the face of many 'imposter' seeming pneumings, one is no less entitled to her Christian belief, if believed on the basis of a *genuine state of pneuming*.

Secondly, the proponent of RED might pursue a kind of parity argument, looking for 'companions in guilt' among other basic sources of belief. Goldberg's challenge would effectively pressure Christian religious believers to provide a non-question-begging vindication that their states of seeming pneumings are indeed genuine, on pains of losing their entitlement to believe on their basis. But then might not a similar challenge be mounted against our entitlement to *visual-perceptual* belief from the mere *possibility* of disagreement in this realm? It's not so difficult to imagine that there exist beings who perceive the world very differently from us, who might, say, disagree about there being independent external world objects which bear properties and are arranged in space.<sup>22</sup> More

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<sup>20</sup> This is not to suggest that I don't find Goldberg's recent challenge rather formidable. For a good start into this literature, see Alston (1988*b*) and Plantinga (2000), 447-457.

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Lackey has a nice recent summary of these positions in Lackey (2014).

<sup>22</sup> Alston hints at such a parity argument in Alston (1988), 444.

generally, we can very easily imagine how our visual-perceptual faculties might be radically disconnected from the truth (think of your favorite radical skeptical scenario). But then why should this fact not likewise call for a non-question-begging vindication of perceptual knowledge, on pains of losing the entitlement to believe on such basis? Well hopefully it doesn't, if an anti-skeptical view of visual-perceptual belief is to be desired. For very probably no non-question-begging or independent vindication of the perceptual doxastic process is forthcoming. But then why shouldn't religious knowledge likewise be off the hook from such an independent vindication? Or else, is there not some double-standard at play here?<sup>23</sup>

These are mere *suggestions* of lines of response to the challenge from religious disagreement. I should say that my instincts indicate that the challenge will be formidable against *any* vindicating conception of Christian belief. But then I should emphasize that Goldberg's challenge is a problem for *any* religious epistemology. That is to say it's not a problem *in particular* for RED. I might then qualify the thesis of this paper: In so far as Christians are so much as entitled to their religious beliefs *at all*, such entitlement is best understood disjunctively—that is, on the model of RED. In so far as problems from religious diversity are not insurmountable, paradigmatic Christian knowledge should be conceived along the lines proposed by RED.

Now for a clarification. Following Duncan Pritchard's disjunctivist model<sup>24</sup> for perceptual knowledge, I've characterized RED as a kind of *internalist* theory of religious knowledge. After all, the view is that in bona fide cases of religious experience that, say,

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<sup>23</sup> But perhaps there's a significant difference between *actual* and mere *possible* disagreement, such that this line of response looks like special pleading for defenders of religious belief. In particular, you might think that agreement is in some fashion *built into* the very notion of basic evidence for belief. That is to say, a necessary condition for entities of kind *k* to serve as evidence or reasons for belief is that there not be wide and systematic disagreement concerning the reality these entities reflect or indicate. This will require a more nuanced response from the defender of religious belief. For example, perhaps there are social epistemological strategies available. The defender of religious belief might hold that our thinking about epistemic support is significantly dependent upon *social* context. She might reply that RED is meant to elucidate the kind of epistemic support available for religious belief *only* relative to the social structures undergirding religious practices. Relative to *these* social contexts, then, there isn't the kind of disagreement Goldberg needs to run his objection. Thanks to a referee for pushing me more on this point.

<sup>24</sup> Again, Pritchard's model is presented in Pritchard (2012).

‘God is strengthening me, now’, one knows this proposition by virtue of one’s *pneuming that* ‘God is strengthening me, now’ a fact which I said is *reflectively accessible* to the subject in question. Borrowing a line from John McDowell, I want to say that when one is in a state of *pneuming* how divine reality is, ‘a warrant and cause for one’s belief that things are that way is visibly *there* for one in the bit of reality that is within one’s view (...)’; that in such case one’s justification is ‘not external to what is available’ to one from her ‘present angle on reality.’<sup>25</sup> Of course some metaphor is unavoidable here in application to the case of *religious* experience—but the spirit remains the same. But just *what* do I have in mind in thinking that *pneuming that p* should be *reflectively accessible*? How does RED’s internalist element comport with contemporary thinking about epistemological internalism?

Conee and Feldman say that the internalist approach in epistemology ‘consists in requiring that a person whose belief is justified have *cognitive access* to a justification for the belief [emphasis mine].’<sup>26</sup> Guided by this thought, then, RED minimally holds that in paradigmatic cases of religious knowledge that *p*, the fact that one *pneumas that p is cognitively accessible*. But whereas Conee and Feldman conceive of a cognitively accessible justifier as one that is *merely* ‘internal to the person’s mental life’,<sup>27</sup> I want to say something *stronger* about the cognitive accessibility at issue in RED.

Surely when one is in a state of *pneuming that p*, this is a goings-on ‘internal’ to one’s mental life.<sup>28</sup> But, for any mental state (or event), it’s at least conceptually possible that one *be in* that state whilst nevertheless having no second-order awareness *that* one is in that mental state.<sup>29</sup> I conceive of RED as imposing such a higher-order awareness requirement. In more familiar terms, I conceive of the cognitive access at issue in RED in terms of a higher-order *accessibilism*. Conee and Feldman don’t require any such higher-order

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<sup>25</sup> McDowell (2002*b*), 280.

<sup>26</sup> Conee and Feldman (2000), 47.

<sup>27</sup> Conee and Feldman (2000), 47.

<sup>28</sup> Of course I’m assuming here that states of *pneuming that p* are bona fide mental states.

<sup>29</sup> Or no ‘apperceptive awareness’ that one is in such a mental state.

awareness requirement, thus committing themselves to a kind of mere *mentalism* about cognitive accessibility.<sup>30</sup>

But not all accessibilist views are created equally. Firstly, views diverge concerning the required *type* of access (or second-order awareness) one has to the facts which epistemically support one's belief. For our purposes, this is to say that views diverge concerning whether in order to do its justificatory work one's pneuming that *p* must *already be* contained in one's perspective on the world, or if not, that this can very quickly and easily *be brought into* one's perspective.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, views diverge concerning the required *range* of access one has to the facts regarding one's epistemic support. This is to say, in order for one's pneuming that *p* to do its justificatory work, there's a question as to whether one must simply be aware that she's pneuming that *p*, or whether *in addition* she must also be aware that pneuming that *p* is *good reason* to believe that *p*.<sup>32</sup>

How do I conceive RED's accessibilist aspect with respect to these prominent distinctions?

Firstly, I conceive of one's cognitive accessibility to her *pneuming that p* such that this is a fact one can *only* very quickly bring into one's perspective, or achieve higher-order awareness of, upon considering the issue. One *need not* already justifiably believe or know that one is *pneuming that p* before it's true that one knows or properly believes on this basis.<sup>33</sup> In Michael Bergmann's terminology, I advocate for *potential awareness* with respect

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<sup>30</sup> This distinction between *mentalism* and *accessibilism* is one Conee and Feldman themselves drew to help distinguish their particular internalist view.

<sup>31</sup> William Alston calls accessibilist views of the first sort *Perspectival Internalism* and views of the second sort *Access Internalism*. (see Alston (1986c, 1988c)). Michael Bergmann refers to views of the first sort as requiring *actual awareness* on justification-conferring facts, and views of the second sort requiring only *potential awareness*. See Bergmann (2006) and chapter 1.

<sup>32</sup> In this connection, Bergmann (2006) distinguishes *strong* from *weak* awareness. And Alston distinguishes 'awareness of the ground' of one's belief from 'awareness of the adequacy of the ground' of one's belief. Famously, Alston's 'internalist externalism' gains its externalist element in its denial that one need be aware of the adequacy of one's ground (see, again, Alston (1988c)). In Bergmann's terms, Alston required only weak awareness.

<sup>33</sup> I leave it open whether the relevant second-order awareness entails knowledge, justified belief or mere belief.

to cognitive accessibility of one's pneuming that *p*.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, in saying that one's pneuming that *p* is cognitively accessible, I mean that one is potentially aware *both* of one's pneuming that *p* *and* of the fact that one's pneuming that *p* constitutes good reason to believe that *p*. In William Alston's terms, one is potentially aware of both the ground of one's religious belief *and* the adequacy of this ground.<sup>35</sup> Bergmann calls this a *strong* awareness requirement.<sup>36</sup>

So then RED stipulates that in paradigmatic cases of Christian knowledge that *p* such is rationally based on one's pneuming that *p*, where this is cognitively accessible to one. By this I mean not merely that one's pneuming that *p* is a feature 'internal to one's mental life' (mentalism), but also that one can become aware of one's pneuming that *p* on the second-order level (accessibilism). The sort of second-order access I have in mind is a mere *potential* access, and a *strong* one at that. That is to say, one has potential access not only to the facts that go to make up one's epistemic support, but to the epistemic facts themselves.<sup>37</sup>

As promised my project is to exploit RED for vindicating epistemically robust Christian conviction, which to my mind represents a distinctly mature *human* knowledge of religious subject matter. But in order to appreciate RED in this connection in all of its explanatory splendor we must first review the relevant deficits of non-disjunctivist religious epistemologies.

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<sup>34</sup> See Bergmann (2006), chapter 1.

<sup>35</sup> See Alston (1988*c*).

<sup>36</sup> Bergmann (2006), chapter 1.

<sup>37</sup> This is merely my conception of RED's internalist dimension. One might conceive of RED differently—along mentalist lines, or along accessibilist lines which require *actual* awareness, and/or along accessibilist lines that require only *weak* access to one's epistemic situation. I prefer my own conception for reasons I can't go into here.

## 4.0 Externalism, Classical Internalism, and Christian Conviction

### 4.1 Externalism and Christian Conviction

So why not be contented with either externalism, classical internalism or some combination of the two for understanding mature Christian conviction?

Let's begin with externalist views, with our representative being something like Plantingian proper functionalism.<sup>38</sup> The proper functionalist view I have in mind is a version of what Robert Brandom calls *gonzo* externalism, or extreme externalism about knowledge.<sup>39</sup> On such views one can know that *p* despite having any reflective access to the epistemic support of one's belief, or being in possession of any reasons or evidence. Rather, for example, sufficient for knowledge is that one's true belief be produced by one's cognitive faculties functioning properly in the environment for which they were successfully designed according to some blueprint aimed at true belief.<sup>40</sup> On such a view of one's knowledge that one has any evidential support is immaterial—including for one's knowledge of Christian truth claims. One can know on the relevant externalist criteria alone.

You might sympathize with the Plantingian move to go 'gonzo externalist' about Christian knowledge. A major project in *Warranted Christian Belief* was to secure bona fide religious knowledge, or epistemically first-rate religious belief, for even unlearned Christian laypersons. It seems rather intuitive that one need not be a natural theologian to enjoy knowledge of such things as that 'God is now strengthening me' or even 'God exists'. Beliefs exemplifying Christian conviction should not need to be vindicated by non-question begging argument, in other words. Evidence and argument and other internalist desiderata are unnecessary for status.

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<sup>38</sup> Plantinga (1993).

<sup>39</sup> See Brandom (1995). On pg. 897 he writes that '*gonzo* externalists' think that 'issues of justification and reason-giving (...) can safely be treated as *globally* irrelevant' to 'attributions of knowledge'.

<sup>40</sup> Plantinga (2000) is himself explicit about this in the preface, xi.

I should say that I agree with the thought that epistemically first-rate Christian belief should be widely enjoyed by Christians, even those who haven't a single argument from natural theology. Any religious epistemology that suggests otherwise needs work. Let's call this requirement that Christian knowledge be *easy* in this way the *Plantingian Platitude*.

Nevertheless I don't think epistemically first-rate Christian belief should be conceived along 'gonzo externalist' or proper functionalist lines—at least not exclusively. My reasons for thinking so are my same for thinking that *any* mature human knowledge should be cast along 'gonzo externalist' lines. It should come as no surprise that Plantinga's proper functionalism with respect to Christian belief should face all the familiar setbacks associated with externalist accounts more generally.

Most prominently, on such a view how are we to make out the Christian as being *rationaly responsible* with respect to her Christian beliefs? Is it not desirable that criteria for religious knowing respect that human beings are rational, responsible and judicious truth-seekers? For instance, it is really very plausible that mature Christian conviction is compatible with one's believing that 'God is strengthening me, now', despite having no evidence or good reason for thinking this is true? Moreover, and even worse, does not such absence of evidence constitute *an undercutting defeater*<sup>41</sup> for one's religious belief? If you haven't any reason to think that *p*, then you have a reason not to think that *p*.<sup>42</sup> But as far as gonzo proper functionalism is concerned, it's sufficient for religious knowledge that Christians function as mere barometers, more or less reliably 'registering' or 'picking up' on divine reality, in accord with the design plan. Surely such 'brute' knowledge shouldn't be the most mature *rational* human knowers aspire to. Surely, such is not the stuff of epistemically mature Christian conviction.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> That is to say, some reason to doubt the quality of the epistemic support one's belief enjoys. Undercutting or *undermining* defeaters are typically contrasted with *overriding* or *rebutting* defeaters, or reasons to doubt the *truth* of the proposition one believes.

<sup>42</sup> For an argument along these lines see Neta (2009).

<sup>43</sup> The gonzo or extreme externalist might object here that they are not wholly without resources to make sense of responsible believing. For instance John Greco (2010), himself a kind of 'extreme externalist', writes: 'it seems to me knowledge requires both *responsibility in one's cognitive conduct* and reliability in achieving epistemic ends [emphasis mine]' (pg. 43). He thinks that '*S's* belief that *p* is epistemically responsible if and only if *S's* believing that *p* is properly motivated; if and only if *S's* believing that *p* results from intellectual

Of course, the general line I'm pushing here is the internalist one—there's something epistemically deficient with a mature person's belief that *p* if *she* can't appreciate some good reason to think *p* is true. An explanation of how it is that Christians generally enjoy scores of externalist-friendly true beliefs concerning religious matters rings hollow if such cognitive 'success' is achieved independent of our capacity for epistemic endeavoring, independent of the concern for the truth that goes along with our being *inquirers*. If religious knowledge is to amount to something like mature Christian conviction, it should be such as Christian human inquirers can take proper responsibility for. It should be such as to involve one's epistemic agency, permitting one in some measure to recognize oneself as enjoying a robust connection to the truth necessary for an anti-skeptical first-person perspective on one's religious beliefs.

But not just any return to an understanding of Christian knowledge as evidentially or rationally-grounded will do for making the best available sense of Christian conviction.

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dispositions that *S* manifests when *S* is motivated to believe the truth' (pg. 43). So it appears that Greco would agree with me that some measure of epistemic responsibility or proper epistemic motivation is required for proper believing, but that he can secure such responsibility on externalist thinking alone. But I wonder how Greco conceives this working out for simple cases of visual-perceptual belief? On Greco's conception it seems to me that even the most epistemically *vicious* individual believes responsibly with respect to his visual-perceptual beliefs. For isn't this individual's belief the result of a belief-forming disposition which he manifests when motivated to believe the truth? In cases of perceptual knowledge, does the vicious believer not use the *same reliable belief-forming mechanism* as he does when more virtuously minded? For consider: if this vicious individual were to suddenly acquire a deep desire for the truth, he wouldn't then exercise *any different* belief forming process when coming to believe that there's a cup on his desk—rather he'd use the very same process. It seems that when Greco's conception of responsible believing is applied to the case of simple visual-perceptual belief, there's no discernable *epistemic* difference between a perceptual belief viciously formed and the same perceptual belief virtuously or responsibly formed. I think this is a problem. And this brings out the sense in which I find 'gonzo' externalist theories dissatisfying. What gonzo externalists can't make sense of in connection to the virtuous believer is that she, unlike the vicious believer, is disposed to believe *for or in light of* good reasons of which *she* can appreciate. The externalist can't make sense of this because it's never necessary for proper believing that one believe *in the light of any considerations*, at all. There's a deeper sense of 'responsible believing' the gonzo externalist can't get at, even in principle. And this is the sense of responsible believing I have in mind. Thanks to Kyle Scott for stimulating my thinking on this point.

## 4.2 Internalism and Christian Conviction

We've seen that anything recognizable as mature human Christian conviction should essentially invoke relations of evidential or rational support. But however we conceive of this support, it can't be too difficult to get. It can't be that the only Christians who know of religious reality are serious academics. Otherwise Christian knowledge is not sufficiently 'easy'. This was the lesson engendering the Plantingian Platitude.

But where's the pressure for thinking that evidentially or rationally supported Christian belief must be difficult to obtain? Theistic *proofs* may be difficult to come by. But for any believer in Madison's situation, does it not at least *seem* to her that 'God is strengthening me, now'? Is this proposition not embalmed with a kind of 'glow' upon consideration? In such circumstances are not near all Christian folks in some way 'struck' that this is true? Surely in such cases the matured Christian at least *seems* to 'see' the truth in the proposition above. Or in terms we've introduced, she enjoys a seeming pneuming with respect to such propositions. In effort to secure Christian conviction as at least somewhat rationally-motivated, you might hold that in standard cases of religious knowledge, in addition to the requisite externalist criteria, one must believe that *p* for the reason that it seems to her as if *p*, or that she enjoys a seeming pneuming that *p*—something accessible to her upon reflection. The classical internalist I have in mind thinks this way.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> More generally, the *classical* internalist I have in mind is any *fallibilist* internalist. Trent Dougherty (2014) is a good example. He defends a view he calls *reasons commonsensism*: 'S has a pro tanto purely epistemic reason to believe that *p* if (and because) it appears to S that *p* [my emphasis]' (pg. 102). It's the 'because' here that is important for marking my *classical* internalist. They think that a sufficient *explanation why* of proper perceptual belief need only make recourse to features of the subject's perspective which would obtain anyway though *what* is believed is false. Another example is Michael Huemer's (2001) *phenomenal conservatism*: 'If it seems to *S* as if *P*, then *S* thereby has at least prima facie justification for believing that *p*' (pg. 99). Or consider James Pryor's (2000) *dogmatism*: 'my view will be that whenever you have an experience as of *p*'s being the case, you thereby have immediate (*prima facie*) justification for believing *p*' (pg. 532). Or listen to William Alston (1992): 'If one believes that God is *P* (e.g. loving) on the basis of an experience that one would normally take to involve God's appearing to one as *P*, that belief is prima facie justified' (pg. 68). Or hear Conee and Feldman (2008): "Suitable perceptual experience is prominent in acquiring justification for any particular perceptual belief. For instance, when the belief is that *that* is a tree (B1), typically one has visual experiences, E1-En, that consist in visual qualities, some of which are arranged in some treeish fashion, as viewed from some apparent perspective" (pg. 91). In so far as these conditions 1) are 'internal' to one's mental life and/or perspective, 2) may obtain independent of the truth of the perceptual belief, and 3) are conceived to sufficiently explain proper perceptual belief, we have my classical internalist. In any case, what makes RED *non-classically* internalist is that it denies 2) of this triad.

But in my view this is no more satisfying than the gonzo externalist position it's meant to ameliorate. And this is not because I'm conceiving of the view as 'unmixed', or purely internalist, not allowing any externalist auxiliaries. Add to this classical internalist position whatever externalist criteria you like. Still, it's problematic. Still I think we haven't anything recognizable as mature human knowledge—much less mature religious knowledge of the sort realizing Christian conviction.

For one, remember that classical internalism is essentially wedded to evidential internalism. Remember evidential internalism entails that one's evidence or rational support in the good case is no better than what she enjoys in the bad case. Hence when one perceptually knows that there's a moose, the best she has by way of evidence or rational support for this claim is that *she seems* to see a moose—the very same item of evidence available to her deceived counterpart. Similarly, when one knows that 'God is strengthening me, now' the best she has by way of evidence or rational support for this claim is something like its *seeming* to her that this is the case—the very same item of evidence available to her deceived counterpart.

But doesn't this leave the Christian with a very awkward sense of her own grasp of the truth? I mean if evidential internalism is true then *at best* one is in the position of believing that *p* for considerations which leave it *entirely open* whether *p*. But on the contrary, shouldn't knowledge be the sort of thing apt to shut down inquiry?<sup>45</sup> For instance, after endeavoring to 'find out' whether *p*, if you then come to know that *p* then the matter concerning *p* should look settled from your point of view. In thus coming to know that *p*, the reasons or evidence for which you judged that *p* should reflect the light in which you considered the matter of whether *p* *decided*. But this is not the result we get on evidential internalist thinking. For on such views one believes on the basis of some fact which is

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<sup>45</sup> Alan Millar (2011) argues that knowledge should have this role: that when we have a grasp of the truth we should know this, 'which is why we can so often responsibly terminate our inquiries and responsibly vouch for the truth of what we have found out' (pg. 70). Millar thinks that unless knowledge that *p* appreciably merits a close of inquiry whether *p*, then knowledge *does not* satisfy the inquirers concern for the truth. Or in other words, then a kind of skepticism ensues.

entirely compatible with  $p$  being false. On such views, the Christian who *putatively* knows that  $p$  looks to still have all her inquiring work ahead of her.

In other words, like perceptual knowledge more generally, I think Christian religious knowledge should look *case-closed* from the subject's point of view. Our conception of first-grade Christian belief should not leave one in the dire position of thinking to herself, for example: 'I think that Jesus loves me, although for all my evidence indicates, for all my reasons allow, this isn't the case at all.' Call this the *case-closed difficulty* for classical internalism.

A related worry I'm only just beginning to explore emerges in connection with virtue responsibilism.<sup>46</sup> You might think that there's something wrong with a belief the believing of which *doesn't* manifest one's epistemic virtue, or one's concern for the truth. If one doesn't believe out of proper motivation then despite one's otherwise hitting upon the truth, one is not appropriately *guided* to the truth so as to enjoy knowledge. One must thus believe *for* good reason. This applies for any of our beliefs, Christian beliefs included.

Now it seems to me that if evidential internalism is true, then Christians are unable to manifest virtue, or their concern for the truth, with respect to even very basic religious beliefs. If religious beliefs are at best on the basis of considerations which are such as to leave the correctness of the target believe still open to question, then what business does one have as a responsible truth seeker believing on their basis? Is it of a piece with responsible, virtuous believing to judge that one should not remain agnostic on an issue – that one should 'go in' on a claim – but for considerations which, for all one knows, leave it entirely open that *what* one has now judged to be true is not instead false?<sup>47</sup> I don't think the responsible truth seeker does this. So neither do I think the responsible *Christian* truth seeker does this. Mature rationally-supported Christian conviction should not be the sort of

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<sup>46</sup> See Zagzebski (1996). Virtue responsibilism is typically distinguished from virtue *reliabilism*. While reliabilists conceive epistemic virtues as seated in reliable cognitive faculties or mechanisms, responsibilists would have virtue seated in acquired and enduring traits of character, or person-level dispositions of motivation and (epistemically relevant) action for which one can be held responsible.

<sup>47</sup> My thinking here is guided by McDowell (1998), who writes of fallibilist conceptions of 'mind reading' that they 'yield this thesis: knowing that someone else is in some "inner" state can be constituted by being in a position in which, for all one knows, the person may not be in that "inner" state. And that seems straightforwardly incoherent' (pg. 371).

thing that precludes our Christian believings from manifesting epistemic virtue in this fashion. Call this the *good believer* difficulty associated with classical internalism.<sup>48</sup>

Now it's an interesting question why epistemologists are wont to limit the quality of our evidence in this way—why classical internalists are compelled to adopt evidential internalism. No doubt the radically deceived are epistemically doomed, as it were. And so pre-theoretically it should come as no surprise that they have only rubbish evidence (mere seeming seeings). But conversely, *it is* pre-theoretically surprising that subjects in the good cases – even the best cases! – enjoy only the decrepit stock of evidence they *would* enjoy if in epistemically abysmal circumstances. Initially at least, is it not more sensible to allow that subjects in the good case enjoy a much richer stalk of evidence than do their radically deceived counterparts who are epistemically doomed through and through?

More interesting *still* is why *Christian* epistemologists are wont to limit the quality of our evidence in this way—why *they* should adopt evidential internalism. Of any group most ready to reject evidentially internalist views, *Christian* epistemologists should be first to sign up. After all, aren't they in the business of doing epistemology *Christianly*?<sup>49</sup> Well then why should God have fashioned human beings and their circumstances such that even in epistemically optimal conditions they have no better evidence or reasons to think claims about divine reality are true than what they *would* have if it were all a sham? I'm no theologian or student of divine providence—but surely God provides for mature human knowledge and rational responsibility on matters of fact concerning Himself better than this! So while I'd choose to remain neutral whether the same can be said for certain secular epistemologists, I do think that evidential externalism should be the default position for

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<sup>48</sup> William Alston (1986) has said that although he can't 'imagine any remotely plausible argument for the thesis that [one] can be justified in believing that *p* only if [one] *has justified* that belief', he suggests 'it might be argued with some show of plausibility that one can be justified in believing that *p* only if it is *possible* for one to justify that belief'. (pg. 79). I envision the line I'm pursuing here to be the beginnings of a sort of argument in this direction.

<sup>49</sup> See Alvin Plantinga's charge to Christian philosophers in Plantinga (1984).

*Christian* theorists of knowledge and evidence. By default, I think Christian theorists should be taking ‘the factive turn’<sup>50</sup> in theories of evidence.

So we’ve outlined some desiderata for a satisfactory theory of religious knowledge—a theory fit to elucidate mature rationally-based Christian conviction. ‘Gonzo’ externalist theories such as proper functionalism have it right that first-rate Christian believing should be relatively *easy* to obtain. One’s belief that God is good, for example, need not be supported by philosophical argument on pains of being only then second-rate. This is the thought encapsulated in the Plantingian Platitude. But this should not force a conception of religious knowledge as needing no rational or evidential support whatsoever. Rather one’s conception of mature Christian conviction should comport with the fact that human believers are *inquirers* on considered and adopted policy to believe something only if it’s true. In other words, Christian knowledge should be at least rationally supported knowledge. But, as we’ve just seen, not just any conception of rational support will do. Christian beliefs reflecting mature rationally-based Christian conviction should look *case-closed* from the subject’s point of view. Moreover, they should be the sorts of things which are capable of manifesting one’s epistemic virtue or concern for the truth. In my estimation RED secures all these desiderata.

## 5.0 Disjunctivist Christian Conviction

Let’s now bring religious epistemological disjunctivism back into the picture. In this final section I’ll begin to explore the benefits of RED over rival theories for explicating mature rationally-based Christian conviction.

With respect to one’s *spiritual* salvation, I’m told that it was William Guthrie who said of ‘trusting’ or ‘saving’ faith in Christ that ‘less would not satisfy and more is not desired’. I should like to think the same concerning faith’s more *intellectual* aspect—for the propositional knowledge undergirding mature and rationally-based Christian conviction.

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<sup>50</sup> In May 2015 the University of Vienna held a conference entitled ‘The Factive Turn in Epistemology’. If you’re sympathetic to the idea that only ‘facts, true propositions, or factive mental states can be good reasons for belief’, then you might be sympathetic with this burgeoning movement. See the conference website here: <http://the-factive-turn-in-epistemology.weebly.com/>

But as I've tried to argue above, neither externalist nor classical internalist thinking about religious knowledge can vouchsafe as much. By contrast, RED provides a very satisfying explication of Christian knowing that I've here glazed as mature rationally-based Christian conviction—one that makes Christian believing out to be rationally-responsible without succumbing to the case-closed and good believer difficulties. Better still, RED is also fit to explain how Christian religious knowledge is nonetheless easily attainable by even academically unsophisticated laypersons, in keeping with the Plantingian Platitude.

For notice that owing to RED's (non-classical) *internalist* aspect, Christian knowledge so conceived does not succumb to the kind of residual dissatisfaction we highlighted in connection with Plantingian proper functionalism and other 'gonzo' or purely externalist theories. This is because in the paradigmatic case one's Christian knowledge is in virtue of being rationally-based on one's *pneuming that p*, a fact which is *reflectively accessible* to the subject in question. The result is that the facts undergirding one's knowledge are not entirely outwith the realm of one's reflective reach, allowing scope for one to take rational responsibility for her Christian believing in a way that respects her being a judicious and responsible truth-seeker.

But for being thus internalist RED doesn't suffer the liabilities we pointed out for *classical* internalism. How then does RED measure up against the case-closed and good believer difficulties?

First, with respect to the case-closed difficulty, RED successfully explains how one's rational basing for her Christian conviction can be seen to justify closing deliberation on the issue. Because when one knows that, say, 'God is strengthening me now', one's reason for believing this is that she pneumas this to be the case, a subject can reasonably take herself as needing no further information to decide the point at issue. After all it's not as if her pneuming to this effect leaves it open still as to whether *what* she believes is in fact true. Pneuming is factive, after all. Thus on the basis of such evidential support one can reasonably regard the question as to whether *p* settled. RED depicts Christian knowledge as a case-closed affair, the attaining of which justifies a close of inquiry.

And then secondly, RED straightforwardly permits for Christian believing to manifest one's epistemic virtue, or concern for the truth—thus sidestepping the good believer difficulty. Remember this difficulty reflected the fact that on evidential internalism it's mysterious how Christian believings are susceptible to proper epistemic motivation. If such believings are only ever believed for reasons that leave it entirely open whether *what* is believed is true, then it's hard to see how Christians have any business believing such things to begin with. But if factive mental states like *pneuming* that *p* are allowed candidacy among the considerations for which we believe things, then there's no obstacle toward viewing Christian beliefs as manifesting one's epistemically virtuous character. Then there's nothing in the way of conceiving Christian belief as belief for good reason. Christian epistemic character is then vindicated in cases of mature rationally-based Christian conviction, if RED is true.

Finally, what's more, this is all in keeping with the Plantingian Platitude—that epistemically robust Christian conviction should be easily attainable—even by, e.g., one's grandmother.<sup>51</sup> While RED does hold that religious knowledge in paradigmatic cases is by means of a kind of structural inference or bit of reasoning, this does not imply that the relevant status is difficult to obtain. For this is nothing as sophisticated as a good non-question begging vindication of one's religious commitment. When one is suitably situated, the move from one's *pneuming* that *p* to one's believing that *p* is just as elementary as the move from one's *visually seeing* that *p* to believing that *p*. RED has it that enjoying mature rationally supported Christian knowledge is no more difficult than enjoying analogous rationally-supported observational knowledge about one's material surroundings.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Thus you might also conceive the "Plantingian platitude" as a kind of 'grandmother requirement' on religious knowledge. That is to say, whatever we think about 'first-rate' epistemic support for religious beliefs, such should *not* be so difficult to obtain that pious granny's beliefs cannot enjoy it. Thanks to Brian Ballard for a conversation in this regard.

<sup>52</sup> You might wonder whether these arguments might just as well be applied to the *visual-perceptual case* for arguing for what I've called PED (perceptual epistemological disjunctivism). And if they aren't so applicable, you might then become suspicious of their power to persuade for RED in the religious case. For my own part I think the 'good believer' and 'case-closed' intuitions *apply with equal effect* to the visual-perceptual case. In other words, I have problems concerning gonzo externalism and classical internalism about *proper perceptual belief* as well, and this because such views fail to capture perceptual belief as virtuously formed and case-close from the subject's point of view (I think I'm *sure* that there's a pen in my hand, now; and rightly so—I don't need to conduct any further inquiry concerning whether there's a pen in my hand). But I should also say that I

In the final analysis nothing short of RED will do as fine a job at capturing the epistemic connection at issue in mature rationally-based Christian conviction. While gonzo externalist theories leave Christian beliefs looking like foreign entities from the first-person perspective, classical internalists are unable to explain the sort of *rational* epistemic support implicated in Christian knowledge—the sort that gets around the case-closed and good believer difficulties. Alternatively, RED secures all the goods. In my view, there’s nothing more to be desired than knowing Christianity *disjunctively*—nor will less satisfy.<sup>53</sup>

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agree with the thought that *should* it turn out that my arguments for RED are unpersuasive as arguments for PED, then this is reason to be skeptical of RED. For I don’t see any features peculiar to the religious case that might suggest that *it’s only with respect to religious knowledge* that such should capture the ‘case-closed’ and ‘good believer’ intuition while this might remain *optional* for the case of visual-perceptual knowledge. Thanks to a referee for raising these points of concern.

<sup>53</sup> Thanks especially to Duncan Pritchard and Adam Carter for commentary on earlier drafts, and to the participants of the (2015) Tyndale House philosophy of religion workshop at Cambridge for their incisive comments.

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