Augustine and Ambrose
Bernaert van Orley (early 16th C)

Christian and Scientific Knowledge Claims…

Misleading ideas about science….

[1] can only disprove or falsify things in science….

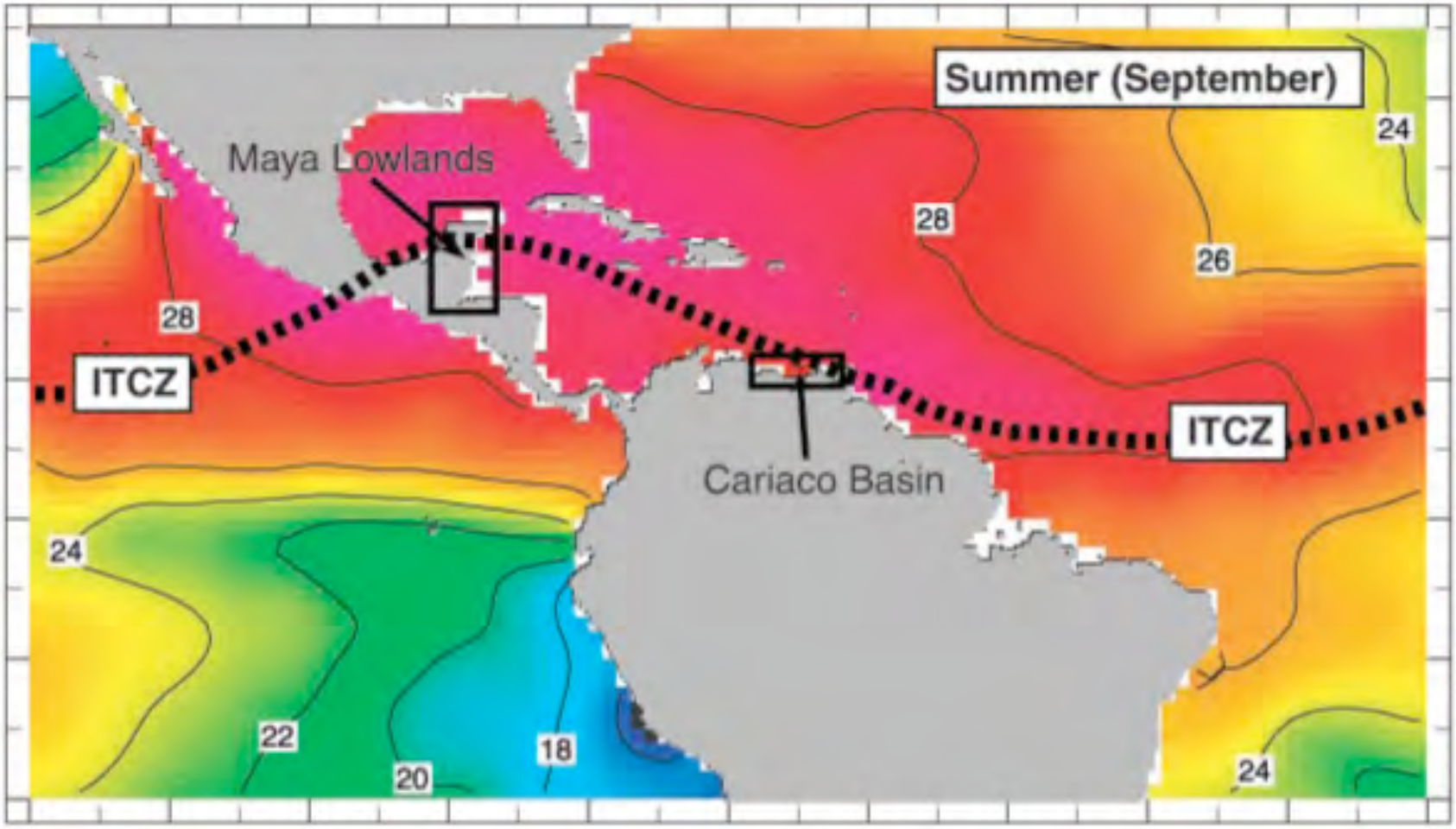
[2] repeatability is essential

[3] must be experimentally accessible can't deal with past events…

[4] science is about hypothesis testing…

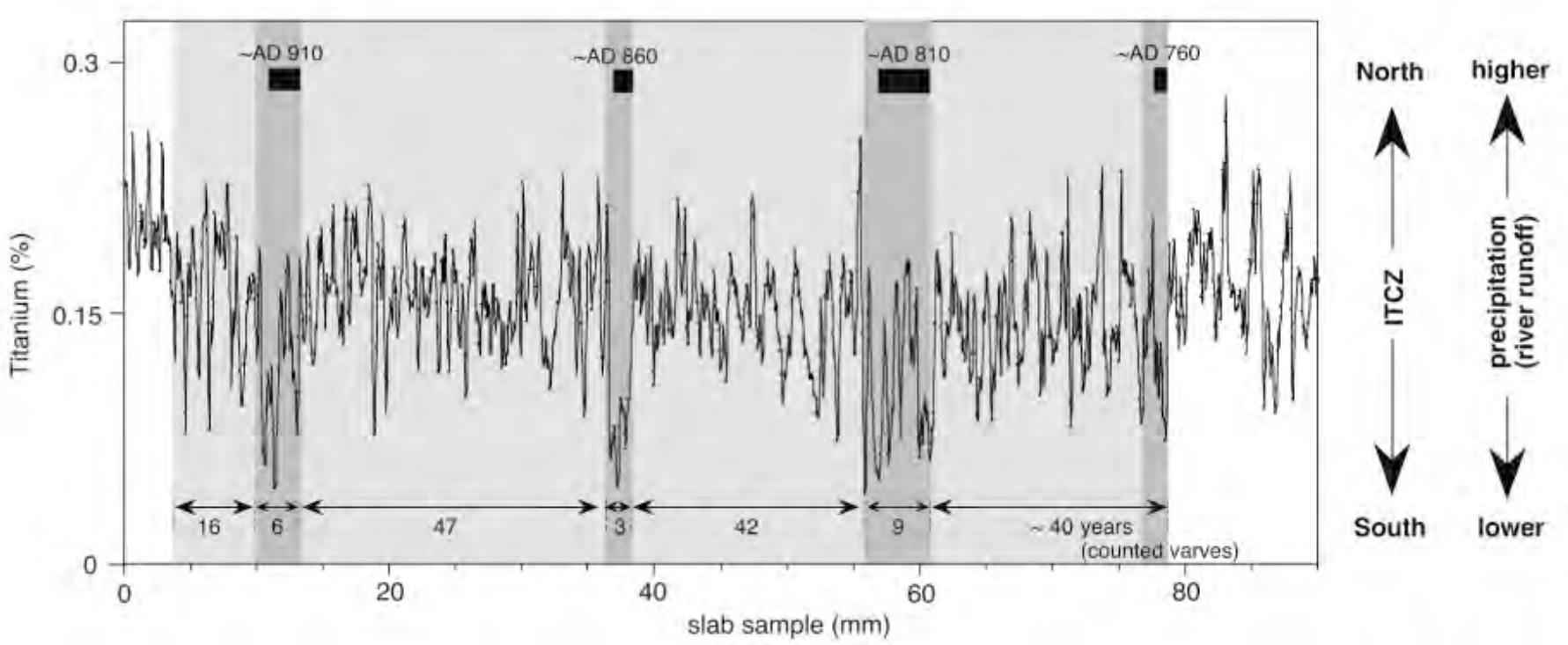
So what is science up to ???

Observation and rich knowledge…



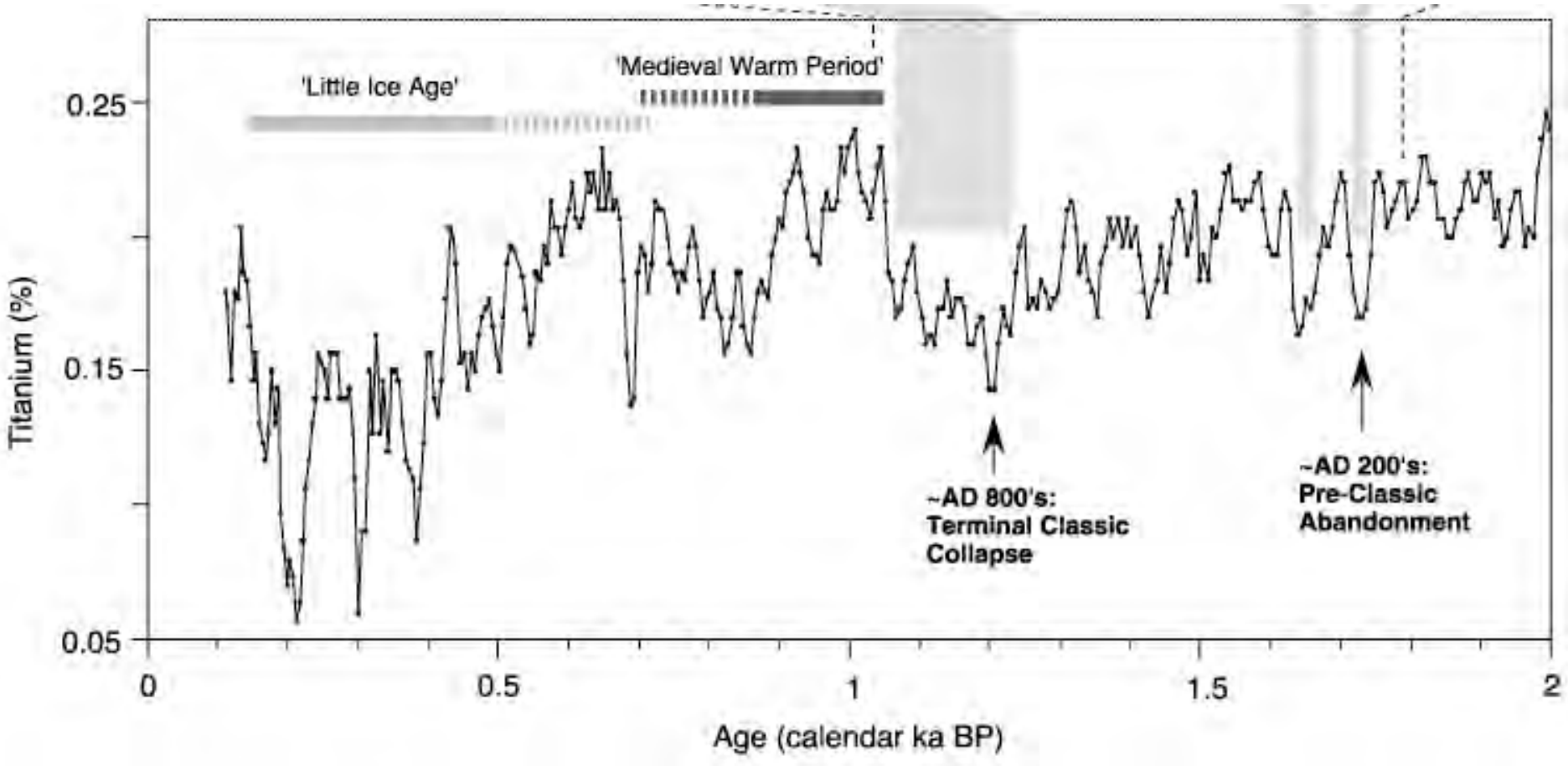
G. Haugh et al., Science 2003

Observation and rich knowledge…



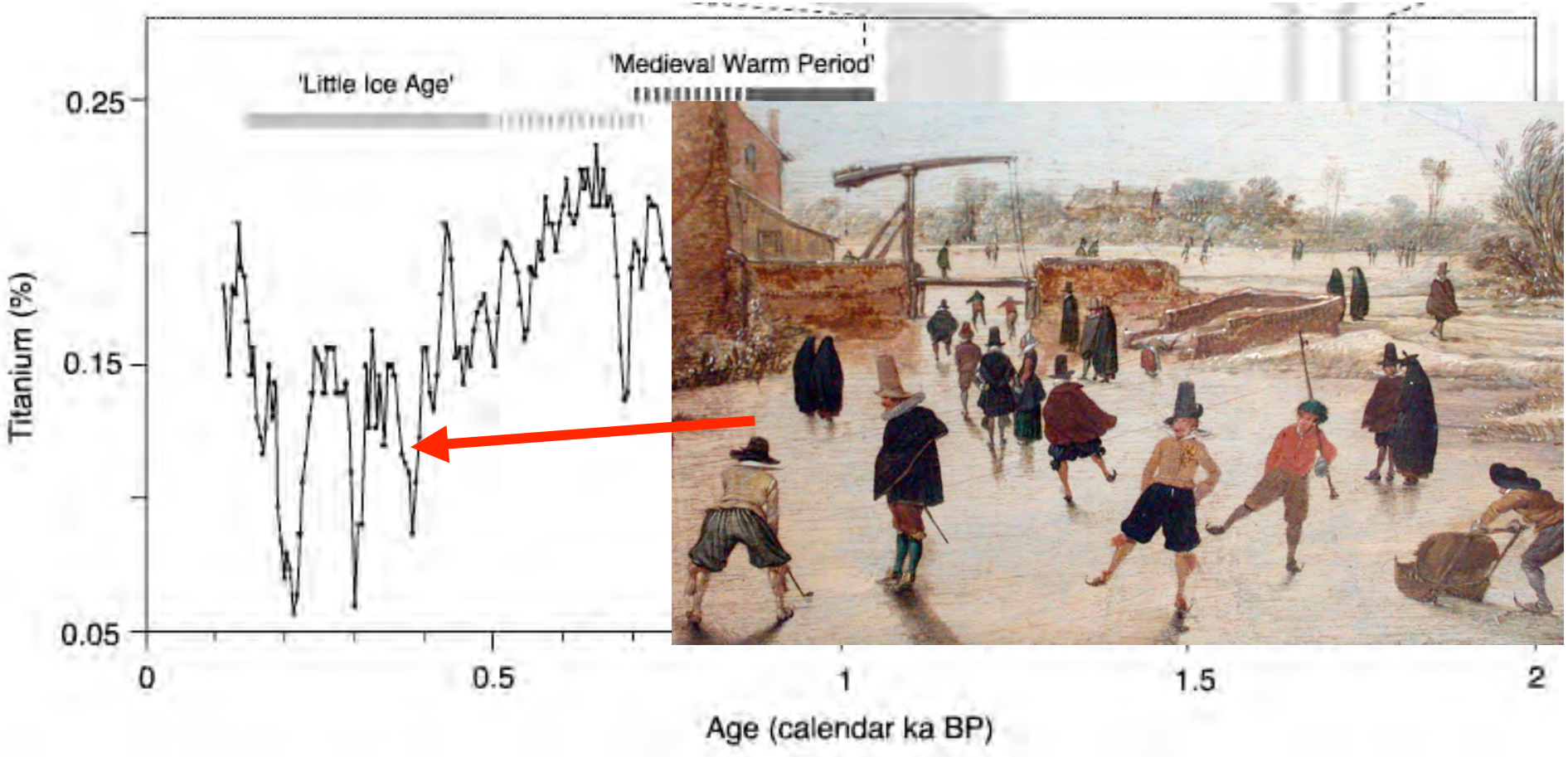
G. Haugh et al., Science 2003

Observation and rich knowledge…



G. Haugh et al., Science 2003

Observation and rich knowledge…



Esaias Van de Velde 1591-1630

Christian and Scientific Knowledge Claims…

[1] Necessary

[2] Contingent

[3] Mixed…

Scientific claim	Scientifically rich knowledge
Dark matter exists & interacts	*possible*
Dark matter exists, but doesn't interact	*impossible*
Dark matter doesn't exist	–

Asymmetry…

Scientific claim	Scientifically rich knowledge
Surface of Venus exists & we interact with it	*possible*
Surface of Venus exists, but we doesn't interact	*impossible*
Surface of Venus doesn't exist	–

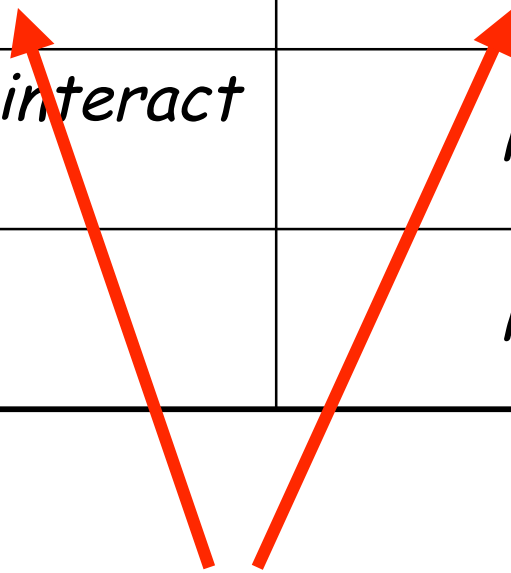
The cost of knowledge…

Theological claim	Theologically rich knowledge
God exists, interacts & communicates	*possible*
God exists, but doesn't interact or communicate	*impossible*
God doesn't exist	*impossible*

Asymmetry…

Cost of knowledge…

Theological claim	Theologically rich knowledge
God exists, interacts & communicates	*possible*
God exists, but doesn't interact or communicate	*impossible*
God doesn't exist	*impossible*



requires

recognizable information transfer

between God and humans

In the past God spoke to our forefathers
through the prophets
at many times and in various ways,
But in these last days he has spoken to us
by his Son,…

Hebrews 1

Theological claim	Theologically rich knowledge
God exists, interacts & communicates	*possible*
God exists, but doesn't interact or communicate	*impossible*
God doesn't exist	*impossible*

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."

—David Hume

Hume's arguments against miracles
were embraced by 19th Century
conservative Protestants
as part of their anti-Catholicism.

Colin Brown, 1984,
Miracles and the Critical Mind

Theological claim	Theologically rich knowledge
God exists, interacts & communicates	*possible*
God exists, but doesn't interact or communicate	*impossible*
God doesn't exist	*impossible*

"It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of of modern medical surgeries and discoveries, and at the same time believe in the New Testament world of spirits and and miracles."

—Rudolf Bultmann

欢庆圣诞

Rates of Religious Conversion* (millions/year 1995)

"Actualistic Christians"

	Christianity	*"Renewal" Christian*	***Non-religious & Atheist***	***Islam***	***Hindu***	***Buddhist***
Africa	0.44	*0.64*	0.05	0.13		
Asia	2.4	*1.27*	–1.29	0.46	–0.71	0.09
Europe & Russia	0.32	*0.37*	–0.58	0.23	0.02	0.02
North America	–0.34	*0.58*	0.23	0.03	0.03	0.04
Latin America	–0.25	*0.28*	0.16	0.01		
Oceania	–0.03	*0.02*	0.01	0.01		0.01
Global total	**2.50**	***2.81***	**–1.41**	**0.87**	**–0.66**	**0.16**

*conversion = total change – [births – deaths], which thus includes migrations between continents.
Source: David Barrett, George Kurian & Todd Johnson,
World Christian Encyclopedia (2nd edition), Oxford Univ. Press, vol. 1. 2001,

Actualism…

"the present is the key to the past.."

Actualism…

"the present is the key to the past.."

- God speaks in language
- Prayer involves communication
- God acts in informative ways

Actualistic Christianity

Augustine and Ambrose
Bernaert van Orley (early 16th C)

Actualistic Christianity

Actualistic Christianity

Nathanael under the fig tree….

--John 2

Augustine under the fig tree…

Actualistic Christians in Taiwan…

Joshua crossing the Jordan River…

Augustine and me…

How do we evaluate experiences of others??

How do we evaluate experiences of others??

[1] Analogous or similar experiences…

How do we evaluate experiences of others??

[1] Analogous or similar experiences…

[2] Self-checking community…

How do we evaluate experiences of others??

[1] Analogous or similar experiences…

[2] Self-checking community…

[3] Fruitful skepticism…

e.g. test the prophets

Christian and scientific
rich knowledge claims….

God even talks to professors….

Augustine and Ambrose
Bernaert van Orley (early 16th C)