

Reformed Epistemology and the Recontextualizing of Natural Theology
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Introduction

Contemporary Anglo-American philosophy of religion continues to exhibit significant interest in the epistemology of religious belief. Roughly stated, religious epistemology is an area within philosophy of religion concerned with the positive epistemic status of religious belief. More precisely, it designates inquiry into whether, in what sense, and under what conditions beliefs with religious content, especially belief in God, can have epistemic properties such as rationality, justification, warrant, and knowledge. In other words, the epistemology of religious belief is concerned with the epistemic integrity, appraisal, or evaluation of religious belief.

One dichotomy within contemporary religious epistemology is between what I will designate evidential and non-evidential approaches to religious epistemology. According to the former, religious belief possesses positive epistemic status only if there is sufficient evidence for it. For this reason the evidential approach is usually allied with natural theology, the project of developing rational arguments for the existence and nature of God. By contrast, the latter approach attempts to ground religious belief in intuition, religious experience, or some other ostensibly direct (as opposed to inferential) process of belief formation, where the process is taken to be an epistemically efficacious

one. Since the 1980s this approach has been commonly associated with the Reformed epistemology movement represented by prominent American philosophers Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and William Alston.

In the present paper I will examine the implications of these two approaches in religious epistemology for a central methodological question concerning philosophy of religion. How should philosophical reflection on religious belief be carried out within the perspective of faith? I will focus on one particular but very important expression of philosophical reflection on religious belief, namely natural theology. The “perspective of faith” here will designate the Christian Faith, though much of my argument will be applicable mutatis mutandi to other religious traditions whose doctrines are grounded in an ostensible divine revelation and systematized by way of something like dogmatic theology. Restated, then, what do these contrasting epistemologies of belief in God entail about the role of natural theology within the perspective of the Christian faith? I argue that the distinctive contribution of Reformed epistemology at this juncture is not the exclusion of natural theology from the Christian’s rational reflection on God, but a critique of a particular way of carrying out this activity, the so-called pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology.

I. The Evidentialist Approach to Theistic Belief

The evidentialist approach to belief in God maintains that belief in God is rational only if there is sufficient evidence for it. This evidence must be drawn solely from human reason, from what we know or rationally believe by way of

sense perception, induction, intuition, and our other natural cognitive faculties. Clearly not everyone who accepts this claim believes that there *is* sufficient evidence for belief in God. Quite a few people in fact explicitly deny it, or at least are agnostic about it. Some of these people nonetheless believe in God, but the majority of them do not. I will understand a “theistic evidentialist” to be someone who (i) believes in God, (ii) accepts the evidentialist requirement for belief in God, and (iii) believes that there is sufficient evidence for belief in God. Assuming the value of rational beliefs, (i) and (ii) together sanction the project of natural theology, and (iii) entails the objective validity of that project.¹

On my understanding of theistic evidentialism, theistic evidentialism entails the endorsement and objective validity of natural theology, but it does not entail that theistic belief must be based on the arguments of natural theology.

First, suppose we take a slightly stronger formulation of theistic evidentialism according to which belief in God is rational only if it is based on sufficient evidence, not merely that there is such evidence. We should not conclude from this that theistic belief is rational only if it is based on the arguments of natural theology, or any explicitly formulated argument. If a person S’s belief B is based on evidence, then S has what he takes to be truth-indicating reasons for B. The person takes it that some of his other rational beliefs, B*, provide evidential support for B. We might also suppose that B* are causally responsible for generating or sustaining B. In this case, B is based on reasons, which he would presumably cite if he were asked why he thinks B is true. The “supports relation” can be explicated in terms of rational argument, and a

sufficiently reflective person might do just that. But prior to this, B need not be based on any explicitly formulated argument.

The point here is not to deny that the evidentialist forges a tight connection between rational belief and argument. The point is rather that logical arguments are often best taken as attempts to formally articulate more implicit grounds or evidence for belief. So the theistic evidentialist can plausibly view the arguments of natural theology as a way of showing the rationality of belief in God, rather than making theistic belief rational. In this way, natural theology would allow the theistic evidentialist to reflectively confirm, elaborate, and develop a more natural or spontaneous reasoning about God.² This kind of reflection may be important to theistic apologetics or to improving the epistemic credentials of belief in God, especially in the face of various objections to (iii). It is certainly necessary to the theistic evidentialist's position, for there is no good reason to believe (iii) unless one has worked through natural theology arguments.

Second, suppose we adopt a more modest version of evidentialism according to which the rationality of theistic belief requires simply the availability of sufficient evidence, presumably somewhere in the person's intellectual community. In this case, a theistic evidentialist need not claim that belief in God ordinarily originates from any kind of reasoning or inference. He might suppose that belief in God originates from testimony, religious experience, or is produced directly by God. As long as there is sufficient evidence, belief in God is rational. The theistic evidentialist isn't committed to the further claim that this evidence must have been causally operative in producing his belief in God. Of course, an

evidentialist might want to make this additional claim (and some have), but given that many of our ostensibly rational beliefs are in place prior to the consideration of evidences and the development of arguments, it may be more sensible simply to require the availability of evidence.³

The above points highlight the fact that the evidentialist approach to belief in God is logically compatible with a variety of different accounts of the causal origin of belief in God. Belief in God may originate from argument, but it may also originate from a more spontaneous kind of inference, or it might not originate from any kind of inferential cognitive process. Thus, contrary to a common criticism,⁴ evidentialism doesn't necessarily place an unrealistic demand on our actual doxastic practices. It does, however, place an important demand on the theistic evidentialist. If someone rationally believes (iii), it would seem to require having reasoned to this conclusion from an examination of the arguments of natural theology.

II. Reformed Epistemology and Natural Theology

Reformed epistemology began as a critical response to the tradition of theistic evidentialism, specifically the evidentialist requirement for belief in God. In a variety of publications stretching from the 1970s to present, Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and William Alston have each challenged the idea that the positive epistemic status of belief in God depends upon argument or evidence.⁵ Reformed epistemologists have defended the proper basicity of theistic belief, the idea that belief in God can be rational (or possess some other sort of positive

epistemic status) even if it isn't based on evidence, indeed even if there is no evidence available for it. The general logical architecture of this defense has been to argue that there is no plausible epistemological theory that excludes taking theistic belief as properly basic. Of course, Reformed epistemologists have also presented a number of positive arguments for the proper basicity of belief in God. These have been largely based on the analysis of positive epistemic status and analogies between theistic belief and other kinds of ostensibly properly basic beliefs (e.g., belief in other minds, belief in the external world, sensory perceptual beliefs).

While Reformed epistemologists have relied on recent developments in general epistemology to launch their non-evidentialist approach to religious epistemology, the idea of properly basic belief in God is by no means a novel idea in philosophy of religion. In Our Knowledge of God (1939), John Baillie defended the idea of immediate knowledge of God over against the tradition of natural theology associated with both St. Thomas Aquinas and the Protestant scholastic tradition. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, William James' "Will to Believe" (1896) contained a defense of the right to hold religious beliefs in the absence of evidence. In his famous Varieties of Religious Experience (1902), James argued that all rational discourse about God is ultimately grounded in religious experience, a direct sense of the presence of the divine. In the nineteenth century Charles Hodge, Samuel Harris, William Shedd, George P. Fisher, and Augustus Strong all argued that there is a natural

knowledge of God that is immediate or intuitive and does not originate from any process of reasoning.

So Reformed epistemology must be seen as continuous with an older tradition in American philosophy of religion, indeed a tradition that arguably stretches back through Protestant scholasticism and medieval philosophy to ancient Greek philosophy.⁶ This continuity is particularly important from the vantage point of assessing Reformed epistemology's stance toward natural theology. There has been a strong temptation to interpret the claims of Reformed epistemology as a critique and rejection of natural theology.⁷ This interpretation is mistaken. Reformed epistemology opposes theistic evidentialism, not the project of natural theology. While theistic evidentialism entails an endorsement of natural theology and its objective validity, the converse is not true.

The proper basicity thesis amounts to the claim that theistic belief has positive epistemic status for some (perhaps many) people under some circumstances in the absence of propositional evidence. While this entails the negation of the classical evidentialist requirement for theistic belief,⁸ it does not entail the negation of the claim that there is evidence for theistic belief. It also doesn't imply that evidence can't contribute to the positive epistemic status of belief in God in various ways. Indeed, the proper basicity thesis is compatible with there being strong evidence for theism and this evidence, at least on some occasions, playing a significant role conferring positive epistemic status on belief in God. So there is nothing intrinsic to the proper basicity thesis that leads us in the direction of rejecting the project of natural theology. Reformed

epistemology simply denies that either natural theology or the evidences it develops are necessary for the positive epistemic status of belief in God.

It is worth noting that many of the defenders of immediate knowledge of God in nineteenth-century philosophy of religion (e.g., Hodge, Shedd, Harris, Strong) also did not reject natural theology. Many of them presented a variety of theistic arguments. Although they contended that the knowledge of God is intuitive or immediate, it may nonetheless be systematically clarified, augmented, and defended by way of inference and argument. These thinkers objected to the idea that the natural knowledge of God is based solely on inference or that the knowledge of God originates from theistic proofs. Natural theology is important, as it is a scientific or reflective expression of theism, but it is grounded in the intuitive or direct awareness of God. The knowledge of God is analogous to our knowledge of the external world and other minds. Rational argument here always presupposes a more fundamental knowledge of the realities in question. Our immediate knowledge does not render inference and argument superfluous, but the latter always presupposes the former and functions as their ultimate ground.

III. Natural Theology and the Perspective of Faith

I have argued, then, that theistic evidentialism entails the endorsement and objective validity of natural theology and that there is nothing intrinsic to the idea of properly basic theistic belief that would render it incompatible with natural theology. So there can be a constructive dialogue between theistic evidentialism and Reformed epistemology concerning natural theology. Among other things,

each can ask how we should view natural theology from the perspective of faith. Up to this point I have simply been considering the logical relationship between these two approaches to religious epistemology and the project of natural theology. The crucial question is how each respectively sees, or ought to see, the place of natural theology as an activity of reason within the context of faith. So let's first examine the idea of "perspective of faith."

A theist is rarely just a theist. He will typically belong to a particular theistic religious tradition, be it Judaism, Christianity, Islam, dualistic Vedanta Hinduism, or some other brand of religious theism. Theistic religious traditions involve both religious practices and systems of belief. With regard to the latter, theistic religious traditions make more claims about God than are included within the province of natural theology. These claims, while shaped in various ways by the experiential and practical tier of religion, are usually the deliverances of authoritative sacred texts. As such they are allegedly beyond the power of human reason to demonstrate or otherwise prove. These religious claims are divinely revealed and form the content of so-called revealed theology.

In the Christian tradition, Thomas Aquinas is well known for having distinguished between the articles of faith and the preambles to the faith. The latter are truths about God that can in principle be demonstrated by human reason. These truths include the existence, unity, goodness, and wisdom of God. The articles of faith are truths about God that reason could not even in principle demonstrate, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation, Christ's passion and bodily resurrection from the dead. Aquinas provides one

way of drawing the lines of demarcation between natural and revealed theology, but Christian thinkers have disagreed about precisely where to draw these lines. Anselm, for example, thought that he could prove the necessity of the incarnation, and Richard of St. Victor and Bonaventure tried to prove the doctrine of the Trinity. Others, recognizing the limits of natural theology, have sought to supplement natural theology with various historical evidences of the Christian faith, especially evidences that purport to show that the Bible is a divine revelation, thereby lending indirect support to the doctrines of Scripture. Invariably, though, the Christian theist is someone whose theism is informed by a range of sources other than human reason. The two interrelated primary sources are scripture and church tradition, which are codified in the system of dogmatic theology. So to situate natural theology within the perspective of faith involves placing natural theology in this larger doxastic context.

IV. Two Rival Versions of Natural Theology

I want ultimately to argue that Reformed epistemology rejects a particular way of thinking about natural theology within the perspective of faith. But to see this in its clearest relief, I'll consider in this section two rival versions of natural theology articulated in the Protestant scholastic tradition.⁹ These represent different ways Christian theists have tried to relate rational reflection on the existence and nature of God to their faith perspective.

A. The Dogmatic Conception of Natural Theology

The presentation of arguments for the existence and nature of God first unambiguously appear in the Protestant tradition in Philip Melanchthon's Locis Communes (1535, 1543-44) and Commentary on Romans (1532, 1540). In the latter they appear as an elaboration and development of Romans 1:19-20, which affirms that God can be known from the created order. In the former they appear under the heading de creatione, a biblically based discussion of creation. In each case, it is clear that theistic arguments are directed to the Christian as a means of rationally reflecting on the data of Biblical revelation. Melanchthon develops theistic arguments in the course of articulating aspects of revealed theology, with the stated goal of strengthening the Christian's knowledge of God.¹⁰ There is no attempt here to construct a theology of God based solely on reason.

In sixteenth and many seventeenth-century Protestant dogmatic systems theistic arguments were typically presented under theological prolegomena or the locus de Deo.¹¹ In these systems, though, neither theological prolegomena nor the locus de Deo was pre-dogmatic in nature. Both exhibit a dependence on and integration with Scripture and the correlated Christian doctrine of God, even where the dogmatic system begins with the locus de Deo. This explains the reliance on Scripture in the locus de Deo, as is illustrated in the use of the "divine names" as a point of departure for articulating and systematizing the divine attributes.¹² It also explains the inclusion of the doctrine of the Trinity under the locus de Deo.¹³ In some instances the locus de scriptura is prior to the locus de

Deo¹⁴ so it is clear that the doctrine of God rests on scriptural revelation as its foundation, not reason. Not surprisingly, we find no independent locus on natural theology, either within or prefaced to the theological system.

To be sure, we do find an apologetic use of theistic arguments among these Protestant scholastics, though in this context theistic arguments are not used to establish either theism or the Christian faith but simply to refute atheists and remove objections to the faith within the larger logical architecture of revealed theology. Francis Turretin and Edward Leigh, for example, used the proofs to refute atheists, but these arguments appear subsequent to the doctrine of Scripture under a Biblically informed doctrine of God. This is, of course, entirely consistent with the instrumental use of reason in theology. There is a reasoned defense of the faith but no apologetically motivated theological prolegomenon in which natural theology is used to lay the foundations for subsequent claims about God derived from Scripture.

B. The Pre-Dogmatic Conception of Natural Theology

The influence of Cartesianism on Protestant theology in the seventeenth century contributed to an expansion of the role of reason in theology.¹⁵ With this expansion, there was a progressive detachment of natural theology from revealed theology. Natural theology became an autonomous system of rational theology that was intended as a pre-dogmatic foundation for the Christian faith.

Some illustrations of this from the Protestant scholastics help clarify this evolution of natural theology. Jean-Alphonse Turretin presented natural theology as a system of purely rational truths accessible to reason apart from any

supernatural revelation.¹⁶ For Salomon van Til, natural theology was a prolegomenon in which a purely rational discourse on the divine existence and attributes, separated from Scripture, prepared the way for the system of revealed theology.¹⁷ The idea of a distinct rational-theological locus upon which the Biblical doctrine of God could be based further evolved during the eighteenth century under the influence of Christian Wolff and Wolffian rationalism.¹⁸ In the works of Johann Friedrich Stapfer and Daniel Wyttenbach, a detailed discussion of the existence and attributes of God is the first port of entry to the doctrine of God, only subsequently followed by a discussion of Scripture and the Christian doctrine of God.¹⁹ In England, the Protestant response to Deism led many to erect a supernatural theology on the basis of a limited natural religion that encompassed the existence and attributes of God, as well a range of moral duties accessible to reason, as is illustrated in Richard Fiddes' Theologia Speculativa (1718) and Joseph Butler's Analogy of Religion (1736).

The nineteenth century would inherit this pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology, adjusted in various ways to counter the Kantian and Darwinian critique of traditional cosmological and design arguments. This arguably reached its culmination in the famous Gifford Lectures established by Lord Gifford in 1888. Gifford's goal was to provide a platform for a purely scientific or rational treatment of the existence and nature of God, independent of any claims originating from an ostensible divine revelation. Such a project, while indicative of the character of post-Enlightenment natural theology, marks a significant departure from the early Protestant scholastics.²⁰

V. Evidentialism, Reformed Epistemology, and the Pre-Dogmatic Conception of Natural Theology

The dogmatic and pre-dogmatic conceptions of natural theology represent two significantly different ways in which Christian theists have tried to relate rational reflection on the existence and nature of God to their faith perspective. How should we think of evidentialism and Reformed epistemology in this regard?

A. Evidentialism and the Pre-Dogmatic View of Natural Theology

We might suppose that the pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology entails evidentialism, for it supposes that revealed theology needs to be based on a more fundamental kind of theology accessible to human reason and grounded in evidences. There's little doubt that some theologians have taken this model to imply that faith must be grounded in evidence, or that the distinctive doctrines of Christianity can be reasonably believed only on the basis of natural theology or its evidences.²¹ On this view, natural theology is a prerequisite for reasonable belief in both God and the Christian revelation. However, it isn't clear that the pre-dogmatic foundations model has this implication. Theistic evidentialism involves a claim about what is required for anyone's belief in God to be rational. The pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology entails a more restricted evidentialist requirement, a requirement for the systemic or scientific development of theology. This is a demand placed on the theologian's implicit claim to be engaging in rational discourse about God. One can be an evidentialist in this domain without being an evidentialist about rational belief.

There is of course a positive correlation between theistic evidentialists and advocates of the pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology, but this is better interpreted as a case of classical foundationalism and evidentialism in philosophy exerting causal influence on Christian dogmatics. Evidentialism, when applied to theology, led to the pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology. At any rate, situated in the context of the Christian faith, the evidentialist principle seems to entail the pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology. First, if the rationality of belief in God requires evidence, then a fortiori the rationality of belief in the Christian God requires evidence. While evidences of revelation play a role here, the force of such evidences arguably presupposes natural theology. So we return to natural theology foundations, which must be supplemented by Christian evidences. But secondly, theology, revealed or natural, is ostensibly rational discourse about God. Given the evidentialist principle, though, we can only understand the rationality of theological discourse in terms of some form of external validation. So when the Christian attempts to reflect on his belief in God in the light of the evidentialist principle, he will find in natural theology the starting point of an epistemic validation of his larger doctrine of God. In the systematic articulation of the doctrine of God, natural theology must come first and provide the basis for subsequent claims made about God from divine revelation. So there is an important evidentialist argument for the pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology.

B. Reformed Epistemology and the Pre-Dogmatic View of Natural Theology

While Reformed epistemology does not reject natural theology, its critique of evidentialism does provide, at least indirectly, a challenge to the pre-dogmatic view of natural theology. There are two considerations from Reformed epistemology that reinforce this challenge and critique.

First, according to the Reformed epistemologist, there is no need for a pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology because there is no need for revealed theology to be epistemically validated by natural theology, which is ostensibly the point behind the pre-dogmatic view of natural theology. Reformed epistemology defends externalist theories of knowledge, according to which knowledge is understood in terms of reliable processes of belief formation or the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties.²² Externalist theories allow for religious knowledge independent of evidence or argument, whether of the sort found in natural theology or in Christian evidences. As long as the religious belief in question was reliably engendered or produced by properly functioning cognitive processes or faculties, the belief will have the kind of positive epistemic status sufficient - along with truth – for knowledge. This means that religious experience, tradition, and the scriptures can be epistemically efficacious sources of belief on their own, without assistance from reason.

If one adopts an externalist epistemology, then at the reflective level it won't be necessary to do natural theology to validate the positive epistemic status of one's belief in the doctrines of revealed theology. This is not to say that natural theology won't be necessary for some other reason. It is simply to note that a shift in one's epistemological assumptions, specifically the

introduction of externalism, removes the primary motive for construing natural theology as a foundation for revealed theology, namely the need for an epistemic validation of revealed theology from outside the sphere of revealed theology. For the Reformed epistemologist, the Christian is right to begin with revealed theology in his rational reflection on God.

Second, from the perspective of Reformed epistemology it isn't possible for natural theology to constitute a rational foundation for dogmatic theology.

(i) A foundation gives a guarantee, and in the context of modern philosophy this guarantee has been understood in terms of certainty or some other powerful epistemic credential. Along with many others, Reformed epistemologists have argued that theistic proofs do not constitute rationally compelling arguments or logical demonstrations.²³ Hence, they cannot confer on belief in God the kind of epistemic credentials necessary for a foundation for revealed theology, at least not in the way envisioned historically by advocates of the pre-dogmatic model of natural theology. However strong the arguments of natural theology, they can't confer on religious belief a greater certainty than such beliefs have on other grounds, which ostensibly involve genuine human-divine interaction (e.g., God presenting himself to us in our experience, the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit). Indeed, it would seem that in this regard, inference is inferior to other grounds for religious belief. Making the former the basis for the latter seems methodologically wrongheaded.

(ii) The force of theistic arguments plausibly depends on antecedent assumptions about God and God's purposes and interactions with the world, in

much the same way that our inferences about other minds and the external world depend largely on assumptions about these that we derive from a multiplicity of sources. The strength of theistic arguments is arguably affected by what we take ourselves already to know about God from scripture, religious experience, and church tradition. In that case, theistic arguments don't have the necessary theological neutrality required for being pre-dogmatic foundations for revealed theology. For example, theistic arguments seem to underdetermine God's unlimited power, knowledge, and goodness. However, if I already know that God is perfect, it is easier to infer with some show of plausibility God's unlimited power, wisdom, and goodness from the spatial and temporal regularities of the world. Also, the force of theistic arguments depends in part on how much weight is given to "evil" as alleged evidence against the existence of God. The doctrines of divine providence and an afterlife taught in scripture, however, play an important role in reducing the force of the problem of evil.

(iii) Even if natural theology could produce a logical demonstration of the existence of God in a theologically neutral manner, this would woefully underdetermine Christian belief in God. The Christian theist is someone who believes that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth for the redemption of the world, and who is intimately involved in the details of our lives, guiding the church and so forth. To complete the vision of the pre-dogmatic view of natural theology, the latter would have to be supplemented by various historical evidences that support the claim

that the Bible is a divine revelation. But this returns us to points (i) and (ii). Are these evidences strong enough to be foundations for revealed theology?

Now the preceding considerations do not entail that natural theology has no value, but they do undercut the contention that natural theology can play the role envisioned by the pre-dogmatic conception of natural theology. Hence, Reformed epistemology must be interpreted as rejecting this particular view of natural theology.

VI. Conclusion and Future Prospects

In this paper I have examined the implications of two approaches in religious epistemology for rational reflection on God within the perspective of faith. I have argued that theistic evidentialism – when employed as a principle of reflection on Christian belief in God - entails a particular conception of natural theology, namely as a rational foundation or basis for dogmatic theology. This view of natural theology as an independent system of theology separate from the theology of scripture has dominated post-Enlightenment philosophical theology. This conception of natural theology, I have argued, stands in sharp contrast to how many of the early Protestant scholastics thought of natural theology, namely as a rational exploration of the doctrine of God revealed in Scripture. The distinctive contribution of Reformed epistemology at this juncture is a challenge, not merely to the philosophical tradition of evidentialism, but to those segments of the post-Enlightenment Christian theological tradition that inherited from evidentialism a particular way of relating faith and reason.²⁴

I have not argued here that Reformed epistemology entails an endorsement of the dogmatic view of natural theology, though the prospects for this are interesting and should be an issue of future focus for Reformed epistemologists. To what extent can the distinctive epistemological features of Reformed epistemology support a dogmatic recontextualizing of natural theology? What is clear, though, is that Reformed epistemology's implicit critique of the pre-dogmatic view of natural theology has opened up the possibility of a genuine re-evaluation of the relevance and function of natural theology within the perspective of faith.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Whereas a "sanction" authorizes or provides a reason to pursue the project, "objective validity" entails the success of the project.

² A position maintained by several prominent Catholic and Protestant theologians at least since the latter part of the nineteenth century. George Hayward Joyce, Principles of Natural Theology (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1924), pp. 8-9; Jacques Maritain, Approaches to God (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), pp. 2-10; Robert Flint, Theism: Being the Bard Lecture for 1876, 7th edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), Lecture Three; A.A.

Hodge, Outlines of Theology, Revised Edition (Chicago: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878), p. 32.

³ See Stephen J. Wykstra, "Toward a Sensible Evidentialism: On the Notion of 'Needing Evidence'" in Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings, ed. W.L. Rowe and W.J. Wainwright, Second Edition (New York: Hartcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), pp. 426-437.

⁴ For example, Kelly James Clark, "Reformed Epistemology Apologetics" in Five Views on Apologetics, ed. Steven Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), p. 271.

⁵ Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); William Alston, Perceiving God (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Can Belief in God be Rational if it Has No Foundations?" in Faith and Rationality, ed. Plantinga and Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 135-186.

⁶ See Alfred Caldecott, The Philosophy of Religion in England and America (London: Methuen and Co., 1901); Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr., From Plato to Plantinga: An Introduction to Reformed Epistemology (Albany: State University of the New York Press, 1991).

⁷ Plantinga perhaps unwittingly contributed to this impression in some of his earlier material, for instance his criticisms of natural theology in God and Other Minds (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) and his linking the defense of properly basic belief with objections to natural theology within the Calvinistic streams of the Protestant theological tradition in "The Reformed Objection to

Natural Theology" Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 15 (1980), pp. 49-63.

⁸ I have argued elsewhere that Reformed epistemology is compatible with various evidentialist constraints on positive epistemic status. Reformed epistemology affirms that belief in God (or, some range of theistic beliefs) often has enough warrant for knowledge independent of propositional evidence. This is compatible with the claim that (i) some types of theistic belief need evidence to be sufficiently warranted for knowledge and (ii) there are some circumstances in which any kind of theistic belief requires evidence to have the degree of warrant needed for knowledge. See my "The Internalist Character and Evidential Implications of Plantingian Defeaters," The International Journal for Philosophy of Religion (June 1999), and "Proper Basicity and the Evidential Significance of Internalist Defeat: A Proposal for Revising Classical Evidentialism" in The Rationality of Christian Belief ed. Godehard Bruntrup and Ronald K. Tacelli (Kluwer Academic Press, 1999).

⁹ A detailed discussion of these two concepts of natural theology may be found in my Reformed Objection to Natural Theology (forthcoming, Ashgate).

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of natural theology in Melanchthon and Melanchthon's influence on subsequent Reformed dogmatics, see John Platt, Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: the Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), chapter two.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of theistic proofs in Reformed scholasticism, see Richard Muller, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), especially pp. 48-52, 153-195.

¹² See Muller, ibid., pp. 254-272.

¹³ For example, in Hyperius' Methodus theologiae (1568); Musculus' Loci communes (1560); Daneau's Christianae isogoges (1583); Turretin's Institutio theologiae elencticae (Geneva, 1679-85).

¹⁴ For example, Polansdorf, Syntagma theologiae christianae (Geneva, 1617), Edward Leigh, Body of Divinity (London, 1654), and Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae (Geneva, 1679-85).

¹⁵ On the modern transformation of natural theology in Catholicism, see G. de Broglie, "La Vraie notion thomiste des 'praebula fidei'" Gregorianum 34 (1953), pp. 341-89. On shifts in Protestant orthodoxy, see Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1, ed. John Bolt and trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), pp. 87-89, 104-108, 183-192, 287-289, 512-517, and Richard Muller, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, vol. 3, pp. 138-150, 193-195.

¹⁶ See Martin I. Klauber, Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism: Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1671-1737) and the Enlightened Orthodoxy at the Academy of Geneva (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1994), chapter 3.

¹⁷ Salomon van Til, Theologiae utriusque compendium (Leiden, 1704, 1719), I.i-iii, II.i-iii.

¹⁸ See Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, pp. 82-84, 174-176, 305-308, 396-398; vol. 3, pp. 121-129, 141-150, 193-195.

¹⁹ Stapfer, Institutiones theologiae polemicae universae, ordine scientifico dispositae, 4th ed., 5 vols. (Zurich, 1756-1757.).

²⁰ For a discussion of Gifford's view of natural theology in contrast to Aquinas's, see Stanley Hauerwas, With the Grain of the Universe, chapter one.

²¹ "It [natural theology] provides the rational basis on which belief in supernatural revelation can rest. For if we did not first know from the exercise of our natural powers of knowledge that there is a God, how could we accept as the Word of God anything that was claimed as a revelation from God? How could we believe in God, unless we knew first of all that there existed a God to be believed? From a religious standpoint, then, the knowledge of God such as natural theology provides is necessary as a preliminary to faith." John F. McCormick, Scholastic Metaphysics: Part II, Natural Theology (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1943), pp. 5-6. See also Arvin Vos, Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought: A Critique of Protestant Views on the Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), chapter four.

²² "Reliability" and "proper function" are externalist conditions because we do not have introspective access to whether these conditions obtain or not.

²³ See Plantinga, "Belief in God" in Introducton to Philosophy, ed. R Boylan (New York: Hartcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1992); Plantinga, "Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century" in The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader, ed. J. Sennett (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company,

1998), pp. 339-340; Kelly James Clark, "Reformed Epistemology Apologetics," p. 273, 282-284.

²⁴ Reformed epistemologists must be viewed here as resurrecting the critique of natural theology at the heart of Dutch neo-Calvinism beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century and represented by thinkers such as Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, and Cornelius Van Til. For further discussion on this, see my forthcoming Reformed Objection to Natural Theology (Ashgate).