Philosophy Compass 10/8 (2015), 547–559, 10.1111/phc3.12185

Religious Epistemology†

Trent Dougherty* and Chris Tweedt
Baylor University

Abstract

Religious epistemology is the study of how subjects' religious beliefs can have, or fail to have, some form of positive epistemic status (such as knowledge, justification, warrant, and rationality) and whether they even need such status appropriate to their kind. The current debate is focused most centrally upon the kind of basis upon which a religious believer can be rationally justified in holding certain beliefs about God (whether God exists, what attributes God has, what God is doing, etc.) and whether it is necessary to be so justified to believe as a religious believer ought (in some sense of 'ought' more general than rational justification). Engaging these issues are primarily three groups of people who call themselves 'fideists', 'Reformed epistemologists', and 'evidentialists'. Each group has a position, but the positions are not mutually exclusive in every case, and in the debate, the names better describe the groups' *emphases* than mutually exclusive positions in the debate. In this article, we will first give a brief historical survey of evidentialism, fideism, and reformed epistemology. Second, we will give the fideist's position. Third, we will give the evidentialist's position. Fourth, we will give the reformed epistemologist's position, and last, we will include some comments on the current state of the debate, where we will show that the groups' positions are not mutually exclusive.

Religious epistemology is the study of how subjects' religious beliefs can have, or fail to have, some form of positive epistemic status (such as knowledge, justification, warrant, and rationality) and whether they even need such status appropriate to their kind. The current debate is focused most centrally upon the kind of basis upon which a religious believer can be rationally justified in holding certain beliefs about God (whether God exists, what attributes God has, what God is doing, etc.) and whether it is necessary to be so justified to believe as a religious believer ought (in some sense of 'ought' more general than rational justification). Engaging these issues are primarily three groups of people who call themselves 'fideists', 'Reformed epistemologists', and 'evidentialists'. Each group has a position, but the positions are not mutually exclusive in every case, and in the debate, the names better describe the groups' *emphases* than mutually exclusive positions in the debate. This will become clear in what follows.

Fideism is difficult to define, because those who call themselves 'fideists' hold a variety of related but distinct positions. The views so-named might well be related by family resemblance rather than any one property they have in common. Fideists can be thought of as occupying positions along a spectrum. Fideism in its extreme form is the view that religious beliefs have a special status (rather than being subject to ordinary evidential standards, e.g. the standards for science, law, or history) so that someone can rationally hold some theistic beliefs without any supporting evidence or even contrary to what her evidence supports. In a moderate form, it is the view that the evidence for theistic beliefs is ambiguous, and one can choose to hold theistic beliefs because of their special, morally-central nature. Fideism in a weak (but certainly not uncontroversial) form is the view that someone must have faith or trust in God in order to rationally hold a theistic belief.

Reformed epistemologists hold that someone can rationally hold some theistic beliefs (including the belief that God exists) without any argument or inference. That is, some theistic beliefs are properly basic or immediately justified in some way.

Evidentialists hold that for any theistic belief someone justifiedly holds, she holds that belief on the basis of adequately supporting evidence she has. We'll call this position 'epistemic evidentialism', because sometimes 'evidentialism', especially as the target of Reformed epistemologists' arguments, is used to refer to the conjunction of epistemic evidentialism – the view that justified belief requires evidence – and additional positions, namely that (1) evidence consists entirely of a certain kind of foundational propositions and (2) theistic beliefs (e.g. that God exists) are not among those foundations. We'll call the conjunction of these positions 'Hyperevidentialism', and we'll say more about this below.

The first section will contain a brief historical survey of (epistemic) evidentialism, fideism, and Reformed epistemology. The second section will give the fideist's position. The third section will give the evidentialist's position. The fourth section will give the Reformed epistemologist's position, and the final section will include some comments on the current state of the debate.

1. A Brief History of Faith and Reason

Medieval theologians such as Boethius,[1] Augustine,[2] Anselm,[3] Aquinas,[4] and others all held that arguments can be given for theism and that these arguments do make it rational for someone to believe on the basis of these arguments. (According to Aquinas, we can believe theism without theistic proofs, but if we believe on the basis of proofs, we turn our belief into knowledge, which is a better epistemic condition to be in.)[5] Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Berkeley all offered arguments for God's existence.[6] By offering these arguments and devoting considerable time to them, they seem to indicate, sometimes in more explicit statements, that in ordinary circumstances at least a believer ought to base her belief on these arguments and that there is something intellectually amiss with those who do not. During the Enlightenment, precipitated in part by Locke's philosophy, the thought seems to have been held by many that the *only* rational way to believe that God exists was via arguments. Locke held that we ought to proportion our belief according to the evidence, that evidence consists in a set of propositions that are directly seen to be true and which are indubitable or evident to the senses, and that the proposition that God exists is not in that set of propositions.[7] Locke thought that God could enlighten people's minds and directly reveal truths to them, but he didn't think that it did in fact happen.[8] Locke's view, often called 'the enlightenment view' or something similar, *paired with the view* that arguments for God's existence is not strong enough to make the belief that God exists rational – or at least not strong enough to make it rational for someone believe with the conviction that faith requires – is what Reformed epistemologists call 'the evidentialist challenge' to religious belief. (Plantinga and Wolterstorff 1983, passim)

Immanuel Kant argued that the traditional arguments for God's existence all fail to be an adequate basis for believing theism.[9] Further, Kant's philosophy appears to preclude someone from believing that God exists on epistemic grounds; if we believe God exists, it should be on practical grounds.[10] Kierkegaard agreed that we should not base theistic belief on arguments. To Kierkegaard, true belief in God is faith, and faith is a belief that you have 'in virtue of the absurd'.[11] Faith is above reason. If someone acts according to faith, they act either against or outside the jurisdiction of reason. That is, Kierkegaard is a proponent of fideism. Fideism was also held later by Wittgenstein and has been developed and modified since, especially by D.Z. Phillips (1963), (1971), (1976), C. Stephen Evans (1998), and John Bishop (2007), (2013).

Reformed epistemologists also believe, in response to 'the evidentialist challenge', that it is rational for someone to believe that God exists in the absence of arguments. Alvin Plantinga

and Nicholas Wolterstorff published the *locus classicus* of Reformed epistemology in 1983 – *Faith and Rationality* – and Reformed epistemology has developed over time into a mature view represented by Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief* in 2000. Today, many well-known philosophers classify themselves as Reformed epistemologists, including William Alston (1993), Michael Bergmann (2012), Kelly James Clark (1990), C. Stephen Evans (1996), (1994), (2011), George Mavrodes (1970), Alvin Plantinga (1981), (Plantinga and Wolterstorff, 1983), (2000), and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1976), (1986), (1988), (Plantinga and Wolterstorff, 1983).[12]

Epistemic evidentialism also has contemporary adherents among religious believers, including Richard Swinburne (2001), (2004), Stephen Wykstra (1989), William Lane Craig (2000), Trent Dougherty (2011a), (2011b), (2014a), (2014b), C. Stephen Evans (2010), 3–4, (2011), 39, and Paul Moser (2010).[13] Swinburne, for example, has offered probabilistic and cumulative case arguments for the existence of God. Swinburne does acknowledge that we can justifiably believe that God exists without arguments, but he also holds that arguments for God's existence make it rational for someone to believe that God exists.[14] In fact, most contemporary atheistic philosophers of religion assume epistemic evidentialism. For example, see Mackie (1983), Oppy (2009), Sobel (2003), and Draper (in Dougherty and Draper 2013).

(Whether there are any contemporary adherents to *hyperevidentialism* is unclear, because there are very few epistemologists who accept both classical foundationalism and that one can't have immediately justified belief in God. McGrew (1995), Fumerton (2001), and Bonjour (2001), (2003) all defend something like classical foundationalism, but nowhere do they deny that one can have immediate justification for theistic beliefs.)

Given that the three main views in the debate aren't mutually exclusive (in fact, C. Steven Evans occurs in each category at least once), it shouldn't be surprising to find that many adherents of one side of the debate also hold to a position sufficient to put them on one of the other sides, too. Nevertheless, adherents to one side often disavow adherence to the others. This is often due to differences in emphases, which stem from many different influences, sometimes including historical context and, plausibly, even personality type. In the next three sections, we'll describe fideism, (epistemic) evidentialism, and Reformed epistemology, respectively, in more detail, then we'll say something about how the views interact in the last section.

2. *Fideism*

Fideism in its extreme form is the view that someone can rationally hold some theistic beliefs contrary to what her evidence supports or without any supporting evidence at all.[15] This view is held by Wittgenstein and D.Z Phillips. D.Z. Phillips (1963), (1971), (1976), for example, holds that religious beliefs have criteria for acceptability that other kinds of beliefs don't have.[16]

Bishop (2007), (2013) endorses a moderate version of fideism that he calls a 'modest Jamesian fideism', according to which it is sometimes *morally* (and perhaps 'epistemically'[17]) permissible for someone to take a proposition to be true even if she correctly judges that the proposition isn't adequately supported by her total evidence (2007, 165). Bishop gives the conditions on which taking a not-adequately-supported proposition to be true is morally permissible (2007, 165). One of these conditions is that the evidence for the proposition is ambiguous. Different gestalts of the same data may be available (2013, 177), and when this occurs (and the other conditions obtain), a person is morally permitted to adopt one of the gestalts and take the proposition to be true. Bishop's position is incompatible with epistemic evidentialism. According to standard epistemic evidentialism, the attitude that fits situations of evidential ambiguity is suspension of judgment or, on a more fine-grained model, a credence of approximately.5.[18] So, although it is unclear whether Bishop takes himself to be opposing epistemic evidentialism, his position appears incompatible with standard epistemic evidentialism.[19]

C. Stephen Evans (1998) endorses a weak version of fideism, a view he calls 'responsible fideism'. According to that view, human reasoning processes have the tendency to err in certain ways as a result of sin, and this error can be ameliorated only by faith. Someone who has faith may appropriately hold a belief that appears to be unreasonable by those who don't have faith, but that is to be expected, and the person who has faith is, in fact, reasonable.

Both Evans' and Bishop's views differ from the extreme form in the first paragraph of this section. That is, they are compatible with the denial of the view that someone can rationally hold some theistic beliefs contrary to what her evidence supports or without any supporting evidence at all. Further, Evans' view is compatible with the denial of Bishop's view. Bishop's view, as we've shown, is incompatible with standard epistemic evidentialism, but it may be that some Reformed epistemologists and epistemic evidentialists find themselves having the same commitments as fideists (like Evans) who hold to the weak form of fideism. We'll discuss the interaction between fideism, evidentialism, and Reformed epistemology in the last section. In the next section, we'll describe evidentialism.

3. Evidentialism

Epistemic evidentialism is the view that a subject is justified in believing a proposition at a time only if it is adequately supported by evidence.[20] Applied to beliefs about God, someone is justified in believing something about God only if her evidence supports what she believes. No one is justified in believing something about God without enough evidence to support that belief.

Theistic evidentialists often offer arguments for God's existence and for their beliefs about his attributes. Theistic proofs include cosmological, moral, ontological, teleological, and other kinds of arguments for God's existence. Most often today, these arguments are offered as parts of a cumulative case for theism. The accumulation of many independently plausible arguments for the same proposition gives that proposition a higher probability than any one of the arguments on its own. Theistic evidentialists also find it important to reply to arguments against the existence of God, primarily arguments from the magnitude, duration, and distribution of suffering in the world and arguments from divine hiddenness.[21]

4. Reformed Epistemology

Reformed epistemologists argue that someone can justifiedly[22] believe that God exists (and hold some other theistic beliefs) without any arguments or inferences.[23] Some theistic beliefs are immediate or properly basic; that is, they are appropriately held but not on the basis of other propositions. Beliefs that God exists (and others) are much like perceptual or memorial beliefs. According to William Alston (1993), for example, beliefs about God are justified on the basis of perceptions we have of God. According to Alvin Plantinga (2000), when religious belief is produced by God in a religious believer in the right kind of way, the result is faith, which is an immediately justified (even more, a warranted) religious belief. Some Reformed epistemologists believe we have a special faculty, called the *sensus divinitatis*, by which we perceive or otherwise obtain immediately justified beliefs about God. Nevertheless, most Reformed epistemologists also find it important to reply to arguments against the existence of God, primarily arguments from the magnitude, duration, and distribution of suffering in the world and arguments from divine hiddenness. We'll give Plantinga's and Alston's views in a little more detail.

Specifically for Plantinga (2000), many religious beliefs are properly basic; that is, they are proper and basic. A belief is basic for a subject just in case the subject holds the belief but not on the basis of other beliefs she holds. A belief is proper just in case the belief is justified, rational, and warranted. A belief is justified just in case the subject isn't violating any intellectual

obligations by so believing. A belief is rational just in case the subject's cognitive system is functioning properly and she has done her best with respect to forming the belief. A belief is warranted just in case the subject's belief is produced by a belief-forming process that is (1) functioning properly, (2) in an appropriate epistemic environment, (3) designed to aim at truth, and (4) successfully aimed at truth. According to Plantinga, if Christianity is true, fundamental beliefs about Christianity, including theistic beliefs, meet these criteria and so are properly basic.

Specifically for Alston (1993), many people do perceive God (where perceiving something doesn't require that the thing perceived exists[24]), and on the basis of their perception of God, people do form justified beliefs about God. Alston argues for this claim by first giving reports from people who have claimed to have perceived God. These perceptions are similar to paradigm perceptual experiences: awareness of the object, the object being presented to them, etc. Alston then argues that even though perception of God doesn't occur via the normal senses, there may be a different faculty responsible for delivering perceptions of God. We can't justify beliefs based on normal sense perception without arguing in a circle, so we need to start with our normally-accepted belief-producing practices based on the perceptions we have. The relevant beliefs about God that people who have perceived God have are justified on the basis of their normal practices of forming beliefs based on perceptions, as long as we don't have sufficient reasons for taking perceptions of God to be unreliable. But as with normal perceptions, we don't have a good reason to take perceptions of God to be unreliable. Even if there are contradictory reports about perceptions of God, each person who perceives God at least has a sufficient internal reason to engage in belief-forming practices using her perception(s) of God.

Reformed epistemology is motivated in at least three ways. First, Reformed epistemology is partially motivated by a particular interpretation of Christian Scriptures.[25] According to this interpretation, humans are cognitively defective due to sin. Cognitively defective humans aren't helped by believing the premises of a theistic argument. It would take a special act of God to get humans to have warranted beliefs about God.

The Reformed epistemologist's view is also motivated by the fact that many people have believed theism without believing on the basis of arguments (sometimes misleadingly called 'propositional evidence').[26] Plantinga says, for example, that if we needed to proportion our belief according to arguments, then only a few people would be justified in their beliefs about God, and only after much effort and time, and their belief would be uncertain and 'shot through with falsehood'.[27] If only a few people have justified religious beliefs, then theism is, as Stephen Wykstra says, in 'big doxastic trouble'.[28] Most believers would be acting contrary to their intellectual duties. But, so the argument goes, theism is not in this much trouble, so we need not proportion our beliefs according to our arguments.

Reformed epistemology also gets its motivation by arguing against Locke's view – what we've called 'hyperevidentialism' but which Reformed epistemologists often simply call 'evidentialism'.[29] There are two kinds of arguments against this view.[30] The first is to show that there are many beliefs that we're justified in holding but which we don't hold on the basis of any arguments (or 'propositional evidence'), e.g. the belief that there are other minds, the beliefs based on memory, and the belief that the world was not created five minutes ago. Further, some people believe things about God upon seeing a beautiful sunset without any evidence to offer, and presumably those beliefs are justified.

The second argument against Locke's view is that the view sets the standards for justified belief about God way too high: By Locke's standards, there cannot be sufficient evidence for the existence of God. The standards go something like this: The evidence you need to base your belief on in order for it to be justified must be propositions[31] that are either self-evident, certain, indefeasible, etc. [32] No theistic proof has premises that are self-evident, certain, or indefeasible.

Further, even theistic proofs that are probabilistic involve many premises whose probabilities need to be multiplied to yield the probability of the conclusion. Multiplying the probabilities of the premises results in a very low probability for the conclusion, a probability that is not sufficient to justify belief in the conclusion.[33] So if Locke's view is true, the bar for justification is set way too high and, as a result, many theistic beliefs are unjustified.

5. The Current State of the Debate

Fideism and Reformed epistemology are both reactions to the 'enlightenment view' closely associated with Locke's views, which has as its core the following three theses serving as premises for the conclusion that justified belief that God exists is not foundational.

5.1. HYPEREVIDENTIALISM ARGUMENT

1. *Epistemic evidentialism*: Belief B is justified for S at t only if S's evidence sufficiently supports B at t[34] (where the general criteria for what counts as evidence for religious beliefs are the same as the criteria for what counts as evidence for non-religious beliefs).[35]
2. *Classical Foundationalist Account of Evidence*: S's evidence[36] consists entirely of propositions that are certain, self-evident, indefeasible, etc.[37]
3. *Particular theological thesis*: The proposition that God exists is not certain, self-evident, indefeasible, etc.[38]
4. The proposition that God exists is not part of S's evidence. (from 2 & 3)

So,

5. *Hyperevidentialism*: If S's belief that God exists is justified, it is sufficiently supported by other propositions (i.e. it is supported inferentially). (from 1 & 4)

The main objective of Reformed epistemology is to include the proposition that God exists in the foundations, so to deny Hyperevidentialism. The enlightenment view as conceived by Reformed epistemologists includes commitments that bar the proposition that God exists from the foundations. Getting God into the foundations requires rejecting at least one of these commitments (usually Premise 2). But the above argument can be generalized so as to remove any reference to classical foundationalism. *Any* foundationalism that requires that the foundations have a feature that the proposition that God exist*s* doesn't have generates the same conclusion in a very similar way:

5.2. GENERALIZED HYPEREVIDENTIALISM ARGUMENT

1. *Epistemic evidentialism*: Belief B is justified for S at t if and only if S's evidence sufficiently supports B at t (where the general criteria for what counts as evidence for religious beliefs are the same as the criteria for what counts as evidence for non-religious beliefs).
2. *Selective Account of Evidence*: S's evidence consists entirely of propositions that have feature F.
3. *Particular theological thesis*: The proposition that God exists does not have F.

From these, it follows that

4. The proposition that God exists is not part of S's evidence. (from 2 & 3)

So,

5. *Hyperevidentialism*: If S's belief that God exists is justified, it is sufficiently supported by other propositions (i.e. it is supported inferentially). (from 1 & 4)

Fideism in its extreme and moderate forms entails the denial of 1. Fideists of the extreme type hold either that someone can rationally hold a belief contrary to her evidence or without any supporting evidence, or that the criteria for what counts as evidence differs from religious beliefs to non-religious beliefs. Fideists of the moderate type hold that it is sometimes rational to hold a theistic belief even if it is ambiguous as to whether the evidence supports that belief. If someone were to deny 1, she would, of course, not need to deny any other premises to deny 5, and she would think that it is irrelevant to the rationality of theistic beliefs if 4 were true. On the other hand, fideists of the weak type can endorse 1 (Evans's view is compatible with it – see the section on fideism above) while denying another premise. As the remaining discussion of Reformed epistemology will make clear, an endorsement of a weak type of fideism is compatible with an endorsement of Reformed epistemology.

Reformed epistemologists deny 5. In fact, they define their position in opposition to Hyperevidentialism (what Reformed epistemologists have simply called 'evidentialism'). Almost all Reformed epistemologists deny 5 because they deny 4: Reformed epistemologists hold that the existence of God can be a properly foundational belief – it does not need to be supported by other propositions to be justified – and so it can be part of our evidence, and if it's supported by propositional evidence (e.g. of the classical foundationalist type), that is, merely 'bonus' justification. If Reformed epistemologists deny 4, it is because they deny 2 (2′) or 3 (3′).[39] Reformed epistemology is completely consistent with 1. 1 is irrelevant to whether someone is a Reformed epistemologist. Further, as was shown in the previous paragraph, if someone were to deny 1, she wouldn't need to deny 2 or 3. Extreme and moderate fideists deny 1, and Reformed epistemologists do not endorse extreme or moderate fideism.[40] In fact, Plantinga explicitly endorses epistemic evidentialism. In his 1993, 193, Plantinga says that warrant requires evidence, so a subject cannot warrantedly believe God exists without evidence.[41]

Reformed epistemologists argue against 2. For example, Kelly James Clark (1990), (2004), and (Clark and VanArragon, 2011), Michael Bergmann (2006), William Alston (1993), and Alvin Plantinga (2000), all Reformed epistemologists, explicitly argue against 2.[42] Further, Paul Moser (2010) and C. Stephen Evans (2011), who might be called Reformed epistemologists, but who also endorse epistemic evidentialism, also deny 2. Even further, Richard Swinburne, an evidentialist who some Reformed epistemologists say has carried on the enlightenment project,[43] denies 2 and endorses the view that religious experience provides basic, non-inferential evidence for theism (2004, chap. 13).[44] So, denying 2 is not unique to those who call themselves 'Reformed epistemologists'. In fact, it is denied by many who call themselves 'evidentialists', too.

Not only do many Reformed epistemologists (people who hold belief in God can be properly basic) hold to epistemic evidentialism but also many epistemic evidentialists hold that belief in God can be properly basic (and thus to Reformed epistemology). Any evidentialist who holds that religious experience provides a rational basis upon which to believe that God exists endorses the view that someone can rationally believe that God exists without argument from other propositions. To that person, the existence of God is immediate and basic. So anyone who thinks that religious experience provides evidence on the basis of which someone can rationally believe that God exists (or hold other theistic beliefs) is both an evidentialist and a Reformed epistemologist.

The epistemic evidentialist and Reformed epistemologist can agree, contrary to Locke's view, that it is rational to have as a basic belief that there are other minds and that the world was not created five minutes ago. The epistemic evidentialist maintains that it is rational for a subject to believe these things on the basis of her evidence. If evidence isn't restricted to beliefs or arguments, the epistemic evidentialist can take evidence (in some cases, at least) to be intuitions, experiences, or seeming states.[45] In

this way, the epistemic evidentialist can also affirm that it is rational to have as basic beliefs that there are other minds and that the world was not created five minutes ago.

Here's just one example of how this might be done. Evidentialists can maintain epistemic evidentialism and hold that someone can rationally believe that God exists without argument by holding to phenomenal conservatism.[46] One way to formulate phenomenal conservatism is this: If it seems to a subject S that a proposition p holds, then S thereby has a (defeasible) reason to believe p.[47] If the seeming state is sufficiently strong, then S thereby has a strong enough reason to believe p so that S is justified in believing p. These seeming states are not beliefs, they're not self-evident, and they're not certain, but they do constitute evidence. Thus, like Plantinga's proper functionalism, phenomenal conservatism is (or could at least be easily embodied in) a form of *non-classical* foundationalism.[48] Further, it can seem to us sufficiently strongly that there are other minds and that the world was not created five minutes ago. To the phenomenal conservative evidentialist who accepts that religious experiences make it seem that there is a God, beliefs (non-deviantly) resulting from these experiences will be properly based on evidence.[49] Thus, one can be both an epistemic evidentialist and a Reformed epistemologist.[50]

Furthermore, someone who holds to both epistemic evidentialism and Reformed epistemology can also consistently be a fideist of the weak type. This person can hold that there are conditions for adequately acquiring evidence, and one of these conditions is faith. Perhaps this evidence is an experience or seeming or some other ground, and upon getting this evidence, the person is immediately justified in believing that God exists.[51]

6. Conclusion

Perhaps it is useful for someone to call herself an 'evidentialist' (to show her opposition to extreme or moderate fideism) or a 'Reformed epistemologist' (to show her opposition to 'the enlightenment view') or a (weak) 'fideist' (to show her opposition to the view that sin or faith isn't relevant to rational belief formation). These titles are useful as a means of identifying with a particular community with particular historical distinctives. Nevertheless, it should be clear that when someone says they identify with one of these three views, they're not necessarily opposing the others. They can, in fact, all get along.[52]

Short Biographies

Trent Dougherty is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Baylor University. He received his PhD from the University of Rochester. His research interests include epistemology, philosophy of religion, and their intersection. His work on these topics has appeared in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Synthese*, *Faith and Philosophy*, *Religious Studies*, and other journals, and in a book, *Evidentialism and Its Discontents*, with Oxford University Press.

Chris Tweedt is a graduate student in philosophy at Baylor University. His research interests include epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion. He is in the process of completing a dissertation in epistemology, and his work has appeared in *Faith and Philosophy* and is forthcoming in the *Journal of Moral Philosophy*.

Notes

*Correspondence: Morrison Hall, Baylor University, One Bear Place #97273, Waco, TX, USA. Email: trent.dougherty@gmail.com

†This project/publication was made possible through the support of a grant from Templeton Religion Trust. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Templeton Religion Trust.

[1] Boethius has certain beliefs about God but relies on philosophy to provide reasons for these beliefs. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*.

[2] Augustine says that we ought to have faith seeking understanding (*fides quarens intellectum*). That is, we have beliefs that we turn into knowledge by understanding them. Augustine, *Sermon* 43.7, 9.

[3] Anselm also held that we should believe so that we might understand (*credo ut intelligam*), and to this end, he gave an ontological argument for God's existence, argued for God having certain attributes, and argued that for someone's sins to be atoned for by God, God needed to have become a human. Anselm, *Proslogion*, and *Monologion*, respectively, and Gilson (1955), 128–130.

[4] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.1.1 and *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.5.
Gilson (1936), chs. 1 & 2, and Gilson (1955), 366–368.

[5] In fact, Aquinas held that it was fitting and necessary that we believe things provable by reason on the basis of revelation: 'Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors.' Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.1.1. See also *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.5.

[6] Descartes, *Meditations* 3 & 5, Leibniz, *Monadology*, Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 4.10, Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, book 2.

[7] For a good exposition of Locke's view just given, see Wolterstorff (1996), 88–133.

[8] See Wolterstorff (1996), 126, and Locke's *Essay*, IV,XVIII,10.

[9] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Dialectic Book 2, Ch. 3, Sec. 4. Though in his early works (Kant 1994), he did allow for one possible kind of argument in support of theism.

[10] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

[11] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Hong translation), 35 ff. See Evans (2009), esp. pg. 155.

[12] William Abraham (see, e.g. Abraham 2006) and Keith Yandell share some similarities and may be considered Reformed epistemologists in some wider sense. Michael Bergmann also endorsed the title in correspondence.

[13] Paul Moser's recent and groundbreaking work (2008) may lead some to believe he is not an evidentialist; however, Moser considers himself an evidentialist (personal correspondence) and his 2010, 135 f. is explicit, as long as evidence isn't restricted to propositions. (See also the introduction to Clark and VanArragon's 2011.) C. Stephen Evans also considers himself to be an evidentialist as long as evidence isn't restricted to formal arguments or inferences. See his 2010, 3–4 and 2011, 45, 51. On the surface, it appears that Stephen T. Davis and Charles Taliaferro are also evidentialists.

[14] See Swinburne (2004).

[15] See Popkin (1967), 201–202 and Helm (2008), 189. John Bishop suggested a definition of this kind in correspondence. Some (e.g. Greco 2007, 632) define fideism as the view that faith opposes reason, but the nature of this opposition is unclear, and so defining fideism this way is unhelpful.

[16] Also, see Wolterstorff (1998).

[17] It seems that Bishop holds that epistemic justification is subsumed under moral justification. '[T]he justifiability question as it applies to faith-beliefs is ultimately a question about moral justifiability….' This justifiability question is about epistemic justifiability. Bishop argues like this: we care about epistemic justifiability of faith-beliefs because we 'should intend, in *all* our believing, to grasp truth and avoid error', and we have this intention because of the practical consequences of our beliefs (Bishop 2007), 33.

[18] There are ways for standard evidentialists to deal with vagueness that we've not covered here for brevity.

[19] Here's why Bishop may not be taking himself to oppose evidentialism. Bishop argues against 'moral evidentialism' (2007, 62), which is the conjunction of evidentialism as stated above plus the moral-link principle: someone is morally permitted to take a belief to be true only if it is justified by her evidence (2007, 62). Bishop seems to be denying the moral link principle, not evidentialism. Further, the evidential ambiguity of a proposition is compatible with evidentialism. See Poston (2009).

[20] Epistemic evidentialism is typically formulated in terms of *propositional justification*. This can be described by conditionals the antecedents of which describe the subject's experiences (broadly construed) and the consequents of which state that some proposition has some positive epistemic status for that person (Chisholm 1989). Alternatively, it can be described by epistemic support relations bearing between a target proposition and a conjunctive proposition describing the subject's experiences or basic beliefs (Swinburne 2001) or knowledge (Williamson 2000). What is *not* included in propositional justification is that a subject actually believes the target proposition. Whereas propositional justification is a relation among propositions or a function from experiences to epistemic status, *doxastic justification* is a property of beliefs wherein the propositional content of the belief is justified by the subject's evidence and, in addition, the subject is appropriately attentive to and rightly responsive to that evidence. Epistemic evidentialism is first and foremost a theory about propositional justification.

As a full theory of epistemic justification, epistemic evidentialism is the view that a subject is justified in believing a proposition at a time if and only if the subject's evidence sufficiently supports that proposition at that time (and, of course, *because* the evidence supports it). Note: the parenthetical is not an official part of the definition of evidentialism, at least as defined by its main proponents, Conee and Feldman (Conee and Feldman 2004). However, they do endorse it as part of the broader project of evidentialism (2–4, 38, 93, 104).

Conee and Feldman state evidentialism in three ways. Here are two:

> EJ Doxastic attitude D toward proposition p is epistemically justified for S at t if and only if having D toward p fits the evidence S has at t. Conee and Feldman (2004), 83.

> E S is justified in believing p if and only if S's evidence on balance supports p. Conee and Feldman (2008), 83.

E and (less clearly) EJ, however, have a problem with the right-to-left direction of the biconditional. If someone's evidence supports a proposition with only a .5001 probability, S is not justified in (fully) believing p (though the subject would be justified in holding a very tenuous partial belief to degree .5001). The justification threshold for (full) belief needs to be higher than merely being on balance supported by evidence. If there were a coin that had a .5001 probability of landing heads, I would not be justified in (fully) believing that on its next flip, it would land heads. Conee and Feldman's next thesis precludes this objection.

> ES The epistemic justification of anyone's doxastic attitude toward any proposition at any time strongly supervenes on the evidence that the person has at the time. Conee and Feldman (2004), 101.

They summarize ES this way: someone's total body of evidence 'entirely settles which doxastic attitudes toward which propositions are epistemically justified in any possible circumstance.' Conee and Feldman, (2004), 101. We've tried to state this more succinctly and less technically. For further discussion, see Dougherty (2011a). Locke and others add a proportionality thesis: We should believe a proposition only to the degree that it is supported by our evidence. We've defined evidentialism without committing to the stronger proportionality thesis, but it is a natural extension, given the gradedness of belief.

[21] For recent work on the problem of evil, see Dougherty (2011b), (2013) and Dougherty and Draper (2013). For recent work on divine hiddenness, see Howard-Snyder and Moser (2001) and Dougherty and Parker (forthcoming).

[22] Plantinga (1983, see esp. 30) argues that someone can justifiably believe that God exists without any arguments or inferences. In his later work (e.g. 1993), 'justified' and its cognates became narrower so that if someone's belief is properly basic, it is justified (but not the other way around). Still, if a belief is properly basic, it's believed without arguments or inferences, so to Plantinga, these justified (and properly basic) theistic beliefs are still believed without any arguments or inferences.

[23] If p is 'without arguments or inferences', we mean, as it seems Plantinga does, that p is not evidentially supported by other propositions. To Plantinga, the core question is not whether someone who holds a theistic belief p can provide arguments for p but whether there are good arguments at all for p. See Plantinga (2000), 68 and Plantinga and Wolterstorff (1983), 48.

[24] Alston (1993), 1.

[25] See, e.g. Plantinga (2000), ch. 9 and pp. 269–270, where Plantinga gives his view influenced in part by John Calvin.

[26] Plantinga (1991), 290, Alston (1993), 305–306.

[27] Plantinga (2000), 270. Here Plantinga is clearly echoing the language of Aquinas in ST I.1.1.

[28] Quoted in Plantinga (1991), 290.

[29] See, e.g. Bergmann (2011), Clark (2004), Plantinga (1998), (2000). Bergmann calls the opposing view 'theistic evidentialism' in his 2010.

[30] An objection to 'evidentialism' similar to the Reformed epistemologist's objection to 'evidentialism' occurs outside *religious* epistemology, too. Here's Dougherty (2011a):

> Other challenges to [evidentialism] come from examples of justified belief that seem to lack any evidence… However, one way to frame these debates is not about whether evidentialism is true but rather how it is to be understood, how we are to understand the nature of evidence, having it, and its supporting a proposition or attitude.

[31] To see that the target of this kind of argument is the view that evidence consists entirely of propositions, arguments, or beliefs, see Plantinga (1984), (1991), 290–295, 298, 305, 310, (1993), 95, (1998), and Clark (2004). Sometimes it's

difficult to tell whether Reformed epistemologists take their target to be a position according to which evidence consists entirely of propositions or according to which evidence consists entirely of beliefs (or the contents of beliefs). To remain consistent, we will represent the target as a propositional view wherever possible. If the target is a doxastic view, only minor changes will be necessary.

[32] For an argument against an opponent's view that foundational beliefs must be certain, see Plantinga (1998). For an argument against the view that foundational beliefs must be self-evident, see Plantinga (1991). The argument in this paragraph is also given by Clark (2004).

[33] See Plantinga (2000), 271–280, for an example. For discussion, see McGrew (2006), Plantinga (2006), and McGrew and McGrew (2008).

[34] S's evidence E can support B either inferentially or noninferentially. E noninferentially supports B just in case E is nondoxastic experience, broadly construed, that S has and B is an epistemically fitting response to E. S's evidence inferentially supports B just in case E consists of other rational beliefs S has and the content of E deductively, inductively, or abductively supports B's content.

[35] Enlightenment evidentialism also contains the view that evidential support for a proposition can obtain only if the proposition is foundational or is sufficiently probable on the foundational propositions. This addition, however, is unnecessary for the above argument. Further, contemporary epistemological evidentialism doesn't contain the addition. There are coherentist evidentialists.

[36] The evidence we're referring to in this argument is basic evidence. Some people think that things that are inferred are part of one's evidence, but this is so only in a manner of speaking. What is true is that inferred propositions can serve as premises in a cogent argument. But as lemmas, they are always eliminable and only serve a pedagogical purpose – such as Premise 4 above – to allow us to appeal to simpler rules of inference.

[37] Plantinga (1993a), 19, esp. n. 35.

[38] See, e.g. Plantinga (2000), 114.

[39] Reformed epistemologists reject any foundationalism which proposes a necessary condition on being foundational in which the proposition that God exists can't meet. Instead of doing this piecemeal, however, they rather suggest their own foundationalism with a sufficient condition for God's existence being foundational. This proactive approach gives rise to a thicker 'reformed epistemology', especially Plantinga's Extended Aquinas Calvin model. But the same effect is achieved by certain contemporary moderate foundationalisms, including phenomenal conservatism (see below).

[40] See, e.g. Wolterstorff (1998).

[41] See also Evans (2011), 38–39 for cases where Plantinga says belief in God has grounds, which, according to the evidentialist, count as evidence.

[42] One way to characterize Reformed epistemology, as in Greco (2007), is opposition to the idea that beliefs about God need to be based on a 'particular sort of grounds – the sort involved in giving reasons or arguments for one's beliefs'. (629, see also premise 2 on the bottom of 630) But the reasons referred to are (as Greco makes clear on 631) based on self-evident or incorrigible beliefs (and similarly for the premises of the arguments referred to). This strategy can, of course, be generalized, as in the second argument. See also footnote 39.

[43] See, e.g. Wolterstorff (1998).

[44] Furthermore, Swinburne's commitment to credulism (2001) commits him to the possibility of fully justified belief on the basis of religious experience.

[45] In fact, leading epistemological evidentialists, e.g. Conee and Feldman (2004), (2008), do not hold propositional theories of evidence, but, rather, hold that ultimate evidence consists in experiences.

[46] Dougherty (2011c) gives a brief history of experience in evidence related to phenomenal conservatism. Conee gives his 'Seeming Evidentialism' in Conee and Feldman (2004), ch. 1: seemings that p provide reasons for believing that p. This view has its predecessors. Chisholm calls his view 'commonsensism' (1989), 63. Swinburne centers his epistemology on a 'principle of credulity' (2001), 135–141, and Huemer calls his view 'phenomenal conservatism' (2001), 99. See Tucker (2013) for the most recent work to date on phenomenal conservatism. For a new formulation and the most recent application to religious belief, see Dougherty (2011a) and Dougherty (manuscript).

[47] This is not quite Swinburne's principle of credulity or Huemer's phenomenal conservatism, which are both too strong. The seemings can be quite weak so not make p probable or justified (even prima facie), respectively.

[48] See, for example, Alston (1976a), (1976b), van Cleve (2005), and Huemer (2001).

[49] Compare the perception talk Alston gives – an awareness of something's appearing to one as such-and such (p. 5) – with a seeming, which is 'a kind of experience with propositional content' Tucker (2011), 55–56. If Alston's perceptions don't match seeming states, perhaps it matches a seeming-as-though state, which is non-propositional and which causally precedes seeming states. For an account of these states, see Huemer (2007).

[50] Chris Tucker (2011) has even made an attempt to reconcile phenomenal conservatist evidentialism with account of warrant (not merely justification; warrant is whatever is added to true belief to make it knowledge) and a place for what some Reformed epistemologists believe to be a special faculty for perceiving God: the *sensus divinitatis*.

[51] Plausibly, this view is represented by Wainwright (1995). See especially p. 3.

[52] Thank you to an anonymous referee, Kevin Schilbrack, and J. Aaron Simmons for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

Works Cited

Abraham, William. *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*. Eerdman's Publishing, 2006.
Alston, William. "Two Types of Foundationalism". *The Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976a): 165–185.
——. "Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?" *Philosophical Studies* 29 (1976b): 287–305.
——. Perceiving God. Cornell University Press, 1993.
Bergmann, Michael. "Foundationalism" in the *New Dictionary of Apologetics*. Eds. C. Campbell-Jack and G. McGrath. Intervarsity Press, 2006. 274–277.
——. "Religious Belief, Epistemology of (Recent Developments)" in A Companion to Epistemology. 2nd ed. Ed. Matthias Steup. Blackwell Publishers, 2010. 697–699.
——. "Reformed Epistemology" in the Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology. Eds. David Ferguson, Karen Kilby, Ian McFarland, and Iain Torrance. Cambridge University Press, 2011. 436–437.
——. "Rational Religious Belief without Arguments" in Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology. Eds. Louis Pojman and Michael Rea. Wadsworth, 2012. 534–549.
Bishop, John. "Evidence" in the *Routledge Companion to Theism*. Eds. Charles Taliaferro, Victoria Harrison, and Stewart Goetz. Taylor & Francis, 2013. 167–181.
——. Believing by Faith. Oxford University Press, 2007.
Bonjour, Lawrence. "Toward a Defense of Empirical Foundationalism" in *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism*. Ed. Michael DePaul. Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.
Bonjour, Lawrence and Ernest Sosa. *Epistemic Justification*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.
Chisholm, Roderick. *Theory of Knowledge*. 3rd ed. Prentice Hall, 1989.
Clark, Kelly James. *Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God*. Eerdman's Publishing, 1990.
——. "Religious Epistemology" in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Eds. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden. 2004 URL: http://www.iep.utm.edu/relig-ep/. accessed on October 27, 2013.
Clark, Kelly James and Raymond VanArragon. "Introduction" in *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon. Oxford University Press, 2011. 1–12.
Conee, Earl and Richard Feldman. *Evidentialism*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
—— "Evidence" in Epistemology: New Essays Ed. Quentin Smith. Oxford University Press, 2008. 83–104.
Craig, William Lane. "The Classical Method" in *Five Views on Apologetics*. Ed. Steven Cowan. Zondervan Publishing, 2000. 25–55.
Dougherty, Trent. "An Evidentialist Account of Epistemic Trust" in *Perspectives on Religious Faith and Evidence*. Eds. Tim O'Connor and Laura Goins. Oxford University Press, 2014a.
——. "The Ethics of Belief is (Just) Ethics" in The Ethics of Belief. Eds. Jonathan Matheson and Rico Vitz. Oxford University Press, 2014b.
——. "Skeptical Theism" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Ed. Ed Zalta. 2013. URL: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skeptical-theism/. accessed on October 27, 2014.
——. Evidentialism and Its Discontents. Oxford University Press, 2011a.
——. "Reducing Responsibility: An Evidentialist Account of Epistemic Blame". *European Journal of Philosophy* 18.2 (2011b): 1–14.
——. "Recent Work on the Problem of Evil". *Analysis* 71.3 (2011c): 560–573.
——. "Further Epistemological Considerations Concerning Skeptical Theism" in *Faith and Philosophy* 28.3 (2011d): 332–340.
——. "The Common Sense Problem of Evil". Manuscript.
Dougherty, Trent and Paul Draper. "Explanation and the Problem of Evil" in *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*. Eds. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Justin McBrayer. Wiley Blackwell: Oxford, 2013.
Dougherty, Trent and Ross Parker. "Divine Hiddenness" in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ed. Tim Crane. (forthcoming).
Evans, C. Stephen. "Religious Experience and the Question of Whether Belief in God Requires Evidence" in *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon. Oxford University Press, 2011. 37–51.
——. Natural Signs and Knowledge of God. Oxford University Press, 2010.
——. Kierkegaard: An Introduction. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

——. Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account. Eerdman's Publishing, 1998.
——. The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith. Oxford: University Press, 1996.
——. "Evidentialist and non-evidentialist Accounts of Historical Religious Knowledge". *Philosophy of Religion* 35 (1994): 153–182.
Fumerton, Richard. "Classical Foundationalism" in *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism*. Ed. Michael DePaul. Rowman & Littlefield, 2001: 3–20.
Gilson, Etienne. History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages. *Random House*. 1995.
——. The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936.
Greco, John. "Reformed Epistemology" in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Eds. Chad Meister and Paul Copan. Routledge University Press, 2007. 629–639.
Helm, Paul. *Belief Policies*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
——Howard-Snyder, Dan and Paul Moser, eds. Divine Hiddenness: New Essays. Cambridge University press, 2001.
Huemer, Michael. *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.
——. "Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74.1 (2007): 30–55.
Kant, Immanuel. One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God. Gordon Treash, Translator. University of Nebraska Press, 1994.
Mackie, John. *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God*. Oxford University Press, 1983.
Mavrodes, George. *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion*. Random House, 1970.
McGrew, Timothy. *The Foundations of Knowledge*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.
——. "Has Plantinga Refuted the Historical Argument?" *Philosophia Christi* 6 (2006): 7–26.
McGrew, Timothy and Lydia McGrew. "On the Historical Argument: A Rejoinder to Plantinga" *Philosophia Christi* 8 (2008): 23–38.
Moser, Paul. *The Elusive God*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
——. The Evidence for God. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
Oppy, Graham. *Arguing about Gods*. Cambridge UniversityPress, 2009.
Phillips, D. Z. "Philosophy, Theology, and the Reality of God" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 13 (1963): 344–350.
——. Faith and Philosophical Inquiry. Schocken Books, 1971.
——. Religion Without Explanation. Blackwell Publishing, 1976.
Plantinga, Alvin. "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?". *Noûs* 15.1 (1981): 41–51.
——. "Advice to Christian Philosophers". *Faith and Philosophy* 1.3 (1984): 253–271.
——. "The Prospects for Natural Theology" *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 287–315.
——. Warrant and Proper Function. Oxford University Press, 1993.
——. "Religion and Epistemology" in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Ed. E. Craig. 1998. URL= http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/K080. accessed on October 27, 2013.
——. Warranted Christian Belief. Oxford University Press, 2000.
——. "Historical Arguments and Dwindling Probabilities: A Response to Timothy McGrew" *Philosophia Christi* 8 (2006): 7–22.
Plantinga, Alvin and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. *Faith and Rationality*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
Popkin, Richard. "Fideism" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Paul Edwards. Macmillan, 1967: 201–202.
Poston, Ted. "Review of *Believing by Faith* by John Bishop," *Mind* 117 (2009): 151–155.
Sobel, Jordan. *Logic and Theism: Arguments For and Against Beliefs in God*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
Swinburne, Richard. *Epistemic Justification*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
——. The Existence of God. Oxford University Press, 2004.
Tucker, Chris. "Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism in Religious Epistemology" in *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Eds. Raymond VanArragon and Kelly James Clark. Oxford University Press, 2011. 52–73.
——, ed. Seemings and Justification: New Essays on Dogmatism and Phenomenal Conservatism. Oxford University Press, 2013.
van Cleve, James. "Why Coherence is Not Enough: A Defense of Moderate Foundationalism" in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, Eds. Matthias Steup and Ernest Sosa. Oxford University Press, 2005. 168–180.
Wainwright, William. *Reason and the Heart*. Cornell University Press, 1995.
Williamson, Timothy. *Knowledge and its Limits*. Press, 2000.
Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*. Eerdman's Publishing, 1976.
——. "The Migration of the Theistic Arguments: From Natural Theology to Evidentialist Apologetics," in Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays on the Philosophy of Religion. Eds. Robert Audi and William Wainwright. Cornell University Press, 1986: 38–48.
——. Reason within the Bounds of Religion. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988. accessed on October 27, 2013.
——. John Locke and the Ethics of Belief. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
——. "Faith" in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Ed. E. Craig. 1998. URL=http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/K021SECT5
Wykstra, Stephen. "Toward a Sensible Evidentialism: On the Notion 'Needing Evidence'" in *Philosophy of Religion*, Eds. William Rowe and William Wainwright. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.426–43.