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THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN
RECENT APOLOGETIC THOUGHT

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THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RECENT APOLOGETIC THOUGHT

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To Lindsay,
my perfect love, my greatest asset,
my cherished friend, and my fellow heir of the grace of life,
and to all my family,
without whom this
journey would not be possible

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AME Anglican-Methodist Epistemology
CF Classical Foundationalism
IIHS Internal Instigation of the Holy Spirit
RE Reformed Epistemology
SD *Sensus Divinitatis*
ST *Summa Theologiae*
WCB Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*

PREFACE

I often chortle when discussing this dissertation work with those expressing any interest. Amidst their encouragement and admiration directed toward me and my efforts, there is an unintentional oversight in acknowledging the network of support, assistance, and accountability that has truly made this work possible. First, Dr. Ted Cabal, my supervising professor, is owed a debt of gratitude for his willingness to offer a mixture of freedom, wisdom, and correction. I am also appreciative to other professors—Dr. Tim Beougher, Dr. Chad Brand, and Dr. James Parker—who have provided great guidance and insights and critiques.

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Third, and significantly, I am grateful to my wife, Lindsay, for her steadfast and tireless efforts toward me and our beloved children—Shepherd, Annabelle, Colton, and Tate. Her patient and enduring love throughout long nights turned to weeks turned to months turned to years is certainly deserving of more gratitude than I can express. She is the most virtuous woman I know, and with her by my side, I am blessed to complete a true journey. It is to my love that I dedicate this dissertation. May we always walk together as fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7).

Finally, and foremost, I thank God for His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have been continually reminded and amazed by the grace He has conferred upon my family and me. He has truly been my strength, my hope, and my foundation. In this work—and all I do—I pray He will be glorified.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the Apostle Paul was traveling through Ephesus, he asks the disciples there, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” The Ephesian Christians responded, “No, we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2).¹ Sadly, similar responses can be heard throughout the history of Christendom due to the long-standing disregard of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit is traditionally and often referred to as the neglected or forgotten Person of the Trinity.² In recent decades, the Christian church has generally rediscovered, or reengaged, the essential work of the Holy Spirit.³ Moreover, the Holy Spirit presently receives specific treatment across numerous theological areas: systematic theologies, doctrinal volumes, historical investigations,

¹Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references herein are from the New American Standard Bible (1995).

²The significance of this assertion—that the Holy Spirit is traditionally neglected—cannot be overstated. Thomas Goodwin made this point centuries ago (mid-1600s), saying, “There is a general omission in the saints of God, in their not giving the Holy Ghost that glory that is due to His person and for His great work of salvation in us, insomuch that we have in our hearts almost lost this third person.” Thomas Goodwin, *The Work of the Holy Ghost in Our Salvation*, in vol. 6 of *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861; repr., Eureka, CA: Tanski, 1996), 3. More recently, the popularity of Francis Chan’s bestselling book bears out the point—through both its content and its title—that: this trend toward neglect is being reversed but more work on the Spirit is certainly needed. See Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009).

³Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 11-12. Ferguson writes, “It was commonplace in my student days for authors, lecturers, and preachers to begin their comments on the subject of the Holy Spirit with some such statement as, ‘The Holy Spirit has been until recently the forgotten person of the Godhead.’ No-one writing on this topic today would employ such language. . . . The Holy Spirit is no longer the ‘forgotten person’ of the Godhead” (11).

spiritual manifestos, practical volumes, and others. There is no longer a dearth of Spirit theology. Yet, there remains a dearth within Spirit apologetics⁴ and Spirit philosophy.⁵

The Dearth of the Holy Spirit in Apologetics

Philosopher Paul K. Moser highlights the dearth of the Holy Spirit in Spirit apologetic literature,

The Jewish-Christian God goes beyond revelation as the imparting of information and experience. This God offers a distinctive kind of evidence of divine reality, a kind of evidence widely overlooked in philosophical and theological discussions of God's reality. The evidence is the *imparting of God's Spirit* to humans. Such evidence . . . calls for attention, in religious epistemology, to the human conditions for receiving the Spirit of an all-loving God. Religious epistemology seldom attends to this vital area, despite its prominence in the Jewish-Christian Scriptures.⁶

As Moser's statement suggests, there is no deliberate, calculated, or full-orbed treatment of the Holy Spirit's role in Christian apologetics.⁷ The vast majority of apologetic

⁴The word combination “Spirit apologetic(s)” is used frequently in the pages to follow. Simply stated, Spirit apologetics refers specifically to the role that the Spirit plays in apologetic activity.

⁵A few words are needed to connect apologetics and philosophy since the closeness and symmetry of the two fields is a bedrock contention herein. And, this connection is necessary since Christian philosophy currently addresses the Spirit with greater attention than does the specific field of Christian apologetics. The evidence of their relatedness is readily substantiated through a look at various definitions associated with apologetics. See, for example, Hans-Georg Link, “Apology,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:51. Link offers a simple yet good starting point for connecting apologetics and philosophy, saying, “[A]pologetics is the working out and presentation of intellectual, scientific and philosophical arguments.” Bernard Ramm makes the connection more forcefully when providing his definition for apologetics: “Christian Apologetics is the strategy of setting forth the truthfulness of the Christian faith and its right to the claim of the knowledge of God. . . . [A]pologetics may be written under the rubric of the philosophy of religion (or some similar title).” Bernard Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), 13. Kevin Vanhoozer, amidst recognizing philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom, offers the following about apologetics: “The main object of apologetics, I submit, is defending the wisdom of God as displayed in the cross of Christ.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Theology and Apologetics,” in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. W. C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin McGrath (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 42. The collective result of these definitions demonstrates the close connection and relatedness between apologetics and philosophy.

⁶Paul K. Moser, “Cognitive Inspiration and Knowledge of God,” in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (New York: Routledge, 2003), 61. Emphasis added.

⁷This recognized oversight is not to say that there are no apologists who give greater ink to the

literature pays only passing tribute to the role of the Holy Spirit in the apologetic task.

The typical statement from one work to the next sounds something like the following:

“While we [apologists] are responsible to develop the best arguments we can, it is the Holy Spirit who will function as the ultimate persuader, and who will elicit a response.”⁸

It is also true that Christian philosophy—and not merely apologetics—overlooks the role of the Spirit.⁹ Elsewhere, Christopher Stead echoes Moser’s concern regarding the lack of Spirit discussions within philosophy. Speaking more from an historical sense, Stead writes, “Belief in the Holy Spirit is upheld by Church tradition founded on the Bible; but failing clear guidance from the philosophers, his origin and function are much less clearly worked out, and sometimes He almost disappears.”¹⁰ More specific to apologetics, William Edgar—speaking in regard to “the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our apologetics”—states, “[M]ost books I know, if they mention the Holy Spirit, ask us to

role of the Holy Spirit. William Lane Craig, albeit in a mere eighteen pages, is one notable apologist who offers a more extended and substantive commentary on the role of the Holy Spirit in defending the faith. Specifically, he promotes two important roles for the Holy Spirit in securing the truthfulness of Christian belief—what he calls “knowing” and “showing” Christianity to be true. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 43–60. Craig’s thought will be detailed later in this chapter.

⁸William Edgar, “Christian Apologetics for a New Century,” in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. W. C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin McGrath (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 3.

⁹Christian philosophers currently fare better in their direct engagement with the Holy Spirit, due in no small part to the work of Alvin Plantinga and the positive and negative responses directed toward him. Plantinga is best known for an array of impressive epistemic claims; most predominantly, he asserts that belief in God *might be* (emphasis mine) properly basic without the aid of foundational evidence or argumentation. On Plantinga’s religious epistemological view, what is needed is a nuanced appreciation of cognition, whereby the warrant that generates belief (and, specifically, faith) is arrived at through what he terms “proper functioning” cognition. And, most significantly, Plantinga commissions the Holy Spirit as the vital cognitive mechanism used by God to permit humanity to come to terms with religious belief. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially pt. III, 167–356. Plantinga is an important thinker within the conversation about the Spirit in philosophical discussions. As such, he will receive substantial attention and development under the “Reformed” perspective of this dissertation.

¹⁰Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 155–56.

choose between pure argument and somehow letting the Spirit do all the work for us.”¹¹

Moser, Stead, and Edgar capture the dilemma confronting the present project. And, they all appeal for greater attention to the Spirit’s role in assisting mankind’s receipt of the faithful knowledge of God. After all, it is the Spirit who delivers the certitude of faith to those whom God chooses (John 16:13-14). It seems reasonable therefore to pursue explanations of his function in bringing such knowledge.

Over the last few decades, some Christian apologists and epistemologists—and their interaction with the philosophy of religion—have sparingly but deliberately emphasized and employed the Holy Spirit in their apologetic and epistemological assertions.¹² These emphases have emerged in new and inventive ways. But, the forcefulness of their Spirit arguments have not received due recognition or analysis. This shortfall provides the jumping off point for the present study. The aim of this dissertation in part is to draw out and address these various apologetic, philosophical, and epistemological approaches to the Holy Spirit that have taken shape within the philosophy of religion or—more specifically—philosophical apologetics.¹³

¹¹William Edgar, foreword to *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith*, by K. Scott Oliphint (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 19.

¹²Avery Cardinal Dulles refers to apologetics as “a mixed discipline,” saying, “apologetics derives its formal principles from philosophy, especially the philosophy of religion.” Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 239. This “mixed discipline” contention will be embraced and echoed throughout the pages of this dissertation. For an alternative view—one that views apologetics and philosophy as less identifiable with the philosophy of religion—see Ronald B. Mayers, *Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 6-7.

¹³In an attempt to avoid confusion of terms, this project will proceed henceforth by amalgamating these fields—apologetics, philosophy, and, more specific to the present project, epistemology—under the single term *philosophical apologetics*. J. P. Moreland provides a useful explanation for philosophical apologetics: “As a working definition let us characterize philosophical apologetics as a philosophical activity that has as its goal (or perhaps as its result) the increasing or maintaining of the epistemic justification of a Christian worldview in whole or in part.” This clarification is helpful insofar as it goes, especially as it calls for an epistemic quality. J. P. Moreland, “Philosophical

The focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics will highlight three varied theological traditions—Reformed, Anglican-Methodist, and charismatic—that have openly entered the Holy Spirit discussion within philosophical apologetics.¹⁴ The list of these three perspectives is not to be regarded as exhaustive; indeed, other perspectives could be identified and shown to contribute to the discussion in some small, limited way.¹⁵ The perspectives here are included because of the direct and perceptible contribution of key adherents—within these traditions—in developing a sort of Spirit apologetic that distinguishes the Holy Spirit as a source for faith-inducing knowledge.¹⁶ Before delving into an examination of the apologetic role of the Spirit within these perspectives, the wise course is to first understand the overall direction of this study. In the sections below, the direction will be laid out through an examination of the following: the statement of the problem, the relationship between the Holy Spirit and apologetics, the statement of the thesis, and, lastly, the methodological rationale.

Statement of the Problem

Much has been said in the field of Christian apologetics—and its vast literature throughout the centuries—regarding specific defenses, statements,

Apologetics, the Church, and Contemporary Culture,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 124.

¹⁴The use of “charismatic” rather than Pentecostal or small-*p* pentecostal is in keeping with the accepted nomenclature. Mark Cartledge’s *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 18.

¹⁵The prospects of examining additional perspectives are promising. In fact, an area of additional study for a future project could very well pursue a Catholic apologetic as relates to the Spirit. Linda Zagzebski, ed., *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, Library of Religious Philosophy, vol. 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

¹⁶Each section will focus on one or two adherents holding to each perspective, but the key adherents will certainly be supplemented by other Christian thinkers.

methodologies, and strategies, so much so that the lack of Spirit apologetics is a glaring oversight that needs to be redressed.¹⁷ It is a given that Christian apologists briefly pay slight homage to the work of the Holy Spirit in the apologetic-epistemological task.¹⁸ But, it is also true that a full and detailed apologetic role for the Holy Spirit has been insufficiently surveyed.¹⁹ Discussions surrounding any Spirit apologetic are largely absent even in the works of the greatest of apologetic churchmen. Augustine and Thomas will serve as representative examples of this sad truth. Once this problem is demonstrated through an examination of Augustine and Thomas, the next section will further accentuate the problem by briefly surveying the Spirit's (minimal) role in the thoughts of other, contemporary apologists.

¹⁷Two recent works—focusing on apologetical *principles*—bear out this statement. The book *Five Views on Apologetics* is arguably the best compilation of strategies and methodologies —due to its varied contributors. This book not only identifies historical methodologies for approaching the kinds of arguments to use with apologetics, but also offers present-day critiques and argumentations built on the entire historical, apologetic enterprise. See Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). Also helpful in this regard is a book by Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

¹⁸As an example, James E. Taylor—in his introductory, apologetic textbook—writes about apologetics and the Spirit in a way that epitomizes the normal way of acknowledging the Spirit's apologetic role: “[J]ust as plants cannot grow solely as a result of the efforts of a gardener but also need various natural contributions beyond his or her control, so an apologist and/or evangelist cannot make a person a follower of Jesus apart from the work of the Spirit.” James E. Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics: Cultivating Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 26. Following this qualifying statement, Taylor writes his 362- page book with only sparse and insubstantial mentions of the Spirit.

¹⁹Moser, “Cognitive Inspiration and Knowledge of God,” 61. The failure to include the Holy Spirit in the apologetic task is sometimes intentional. One of the standard arguments against apologetics altogether is that it preempts or usurps the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation. More examples could be pieced together from certain apologists to affirm that reasons exist for the present lack of Spirit apologetics. Space limitations prevent a full explication here; yet, one example should illustrate this point. K. Scott Oliphint acknowledges—but does not promote—some scriptural backing for the needlessness of apologetic preparation. Citing Luke 21:12-15—where Jesus foretells of the inevitable persecution believers will endure, Oliphint quotes Jesus: “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom [via the Holy Spirit] which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.” The indication is that preparation for apologetics is futile when God intervenes (via the Spirit). But, this flies in the face of apologetics as a discipline because it is clearly intentional and preparation-necessary, and it sets aside the context of empowerment for withstanding in the face of persecution. K. Scott Oliphint, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord: The Power of Scripture for Defending Our Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 180.

Problem Illustrated: Augustine of Hippo

Augustine certainly contributed to the advancement of the Holy Spirit in terms of a greater understanding of his character and nature within the trinitarian communion.²⁰ But, did Augustine likewise contribute toward advancing the Spirit's role in apologetics? The short answer would be a qualified no. There is no question that Augustine is viewed as an apologist due to his many contests against heretics. In his works, Augustine offers some discussion whereby the Spirit is addressed, and these Spirit discussions can certainly trend toward apologetic topics—especially as they portray the Spirit in affirming the authority underlying the church and Scripture.²¹ But, Augustine's specific contribution in terms of the Spirit's direct role in epistemological conversations is either uncertain or not clearly observed.²²

What does reach the surface is Augustine's clear belief and teaching that fallen human beings have no recourse in and of themselves. In commenting on Psalm 29, Augustine writes, "This is my glory, Lord my God, that for ever I may confess to you that nothing I have derives from myself, but that all good things are from you, who are God,

²⁰ Aside from his *Confessions* and *The City of God*, Augustine's *The Trinity* ranks as one of his best-known works. It might be argued that this work is even more familiar in its Latin title—*De Trinitate*. Nevertheless, in this work Augustine devotes great attention to the person of the Holy Spirit. See his *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, pt. 1, vol. 5 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1991).

²¹ See the article by Robert Cushman for a helpful discussion on Augustine's view of authority. Robert E. Cushman, "Faith and Reason," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. by Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), especially 296-300.

²² The "Augustinian doctrine of divine illumination" is the typical designation for discussions here. In a review of the associated literature, the epistemological discussions involving the Holy Spirit are minimal. See, for examples, the following two works: Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960), especially 77-96, and Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

all in all.”²³ God here is revealed to be the only source of hope. Through God’s actions alone, man possesses grace. And, Augustine’s teaching on God’s deliverance of this grace becomes important in that he advances and relies upon what is called “admonition” as it works in conjunction with the Holy Spirit.

Augustinian “admonition.” What is widely known and accepted is that Augustine promotes divine action through man’s inner self.²⁴ What is less apparent is that Augustine embraces an actionable way in which God captivates mankind—via admonition. Admonition (or *admonitio*) is an expression used by Augustine to describe how God operates in calling and turning human beings to himself.²⁵ The admonition is an inner activity, which is wrought by the Spirit. Carol Harrison offers a helpful comment on how Augustinian admonition should be understood: “Admonition is, as it were, the way in which God nudges the soul awake from its fallen stupor, and points or calls it toward the truth.”²⁶ There is a clear sense in which humanity—as a result of the fallenness that originates in all—has departed from where it belongs. Admonition is the

²³ Augustine *Expositions of the Psalms*, 1-32, trans. Maria Boulding, *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, pt. 3, vol. 15 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2000), 299.

²⁴ Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Augustine even uses this *admonitio* when he relays the testimony of his own salvation—as described in his *Confessions*: “That text is a clear demonstration of the salutary admonition given by Your Spirit through your good and devoted servant (Paul). . . . This name, by Your mercy Lord (Ps. 24:7), this name of my Saviour Your Son, my infant heart had piously drunk in with my mother’s milk, and at a deep level I retained the memory. Any book which lacked this name, however well written or polished or true, could not entirely grip me.” Augustine *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.4.8.

²⁶ Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 243.

constituent God uses to point humanity back to himself.²⁷ As Augustine himself writes, “Moreover a certain admonition which incites us to remember God, to seek Him, and having banished pride, to thirst after Him, comes forth to us from the source of truth.”²⁸ Humanity is admonished toward God, and this admonishment could perhaps be, as some interpret Augustine to say, a particular work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and “admonition.” “A person begins to obtain faith,” Augustine writes, “when he begins to believe in God, having been moved to faith by either an internal or an external urging (or *admonitus*).”²⁹ The cognate of admonition here translates as an urging. Such movement toward belief in God is precisely the faithful knowledge of God being examined herein. Augustine continues, “In no way would he [a man] have believed, however, unless he had been called by secret urgings that his mind or spirit could perceive or by more evident ones coming to him through his bodily senses.”³⁰ Though Augustine at no time directly refers to these internal or secret urgings as the Holy Spirit, others appear more than willing to draw this conclusion. Carol Harrison argues that the secret urgings (*admonitus*) or admonitions (*admonitio*) that issue forth a call to human beings are often thought of in terms of the work of the Holy

²⁷“*Admonitio*,” according to James J. O’Donnell, “in [Augustine’s] earliest work is especially the function of the Spirit . . . , but then the task largely shifts to the second person of the trinity.” James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine Confessions*, vol. 2, *Commentary Books 1-7* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 438.

²⁸Augustine, “The Happy Life,” in *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, trans. Mary T. Clark (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1984), 192.

²⁹Augustine *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-first Century*, pt. 1, vol. 12 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2008), 185.

³⁰Ibid., 186.

Spirit.³¹ Robert O'Connell takes this teaching even further in his direct appeal to understand the Spirit and *admonitio* as one and the same: “The Holy Spirit, the divine *Admonitio*, has ordered the sensible universe into a panoply of ‘admonitions,’ to ‘bear [souls] away’ to that Kingdom of spiritual Beauty.”³² O’Connell unambiguously hoists “*Admonitio*” to a proper noun in order to equate its meaning to the Spirit as part of the triune God. And, it would also appear that Augustine follows ecclesiastical and philosophical predecessors—Saint Ambrose and Victorinus—in connecting the Spirit and admonition.³³ Chad Tyler Gerber highlights the diversity behind Augustine’s use of admonition, but he still echoes a use related to the Spirit: “The notion of admonishment litters the dialogues and can be found in a variety of contexts. Its agent—the one admonishing—can be as different as a misfortunate experience, trickling water, a friend, or the Spirit itself.”³⁴

The identity of a specific source that pushes, that urges, and that admonishes human beings to faithful knowledge could very well be the Holy Spirit. In all likelihood, Augustine himself would at least endorse in part such a role for the Holy Spirit; indeed,

³¹Harrison, *Rethinking*, 243.

³²Robert J. O’Connell, *Images of Conversion in St. Augustine’s Confessions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 291.

³³Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 34.

³⁴Chad Tyler Gerber, *The Spirit of Augustine’s Early Theology: Contextualizing Augustine’s Pneumatology*. Ashgate Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 107. Gerber continues his discussion on the direct implications and meaning for *admonitio* as relates to the Spirit of God: “The Spirit causes us to remember (*recoorder*) God. This may imply the soul’s pre-existence and thus Platonic *anamnesis* or it could bear the more general sense of ‘calling to mind’ or ‘thinking over.’ This Spirit also inspires the fallen soul to seek (*quaere*) God, a prerequisite to finding or possessing him and, as Augustine says elsewhere, a task none would undertake unless admonished: ‘God . . . whom no one seeks unless admonished.’ Thirdly, the Spirit similarly creates thirst (*sitire*) for God, a metaphor for desire or love” (108). Though Gerber refers to the Holy Spirit as “itself,” this dissertation will follow the biblical convention, which clearly refers to the Spirit in the masculine.

he was apt to acknowledge that people are able to discern matters of truth because of the Spirit's work.³⁵ Yet, there appears to be no decisively clear path at which to arrive at this interpretation—where the Spirit is equivalent to admonition—when specifically applied to Augustine's conception of obtaining the knowledge of God. What is known for certain is that Augustine viewed *fides* (faith) as the certain gateway to knowledge and understanding; indeed, he comments, “The certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge.”³⁶ In view here is the classic Augustinian view, *credo ut intelligam*, which translates “I believe in order to understand.” Man's internal union with God—where humanity is capable of passively receiving the knowledge of God—is ultimately the result of some quality outside of mere reason. It would appear that the Spirit urges man toward faithful assent. Faith then takes an epistemological priority over understanding. Augustine writes, “The grace of God is necessary for the acquisition, not, indeed, of any philosophy, but of the true philosophy.”³⁷ True knowledge of God requires some offering (urging or aid) by God.

Now, even where Augustine allows for the Holy Spirit's involvement by way of some special divine activity, he more specifically associates the knowledge of God with a Christocentric or Incarnational foundation rather than a direct emphasis on the Spirit.³⁸ This focus on an Incarnational source for knowing God is in no way intended to

³⁵In his well-known *Confessions*, Augustine states, “When people see these things [truths found in the book of Genesis] with the help of your Spirit, it is you who are seeing in them.” *Augustine Confessions*, 8.31.46.

³⁶Augustine *The Trinity*, 270.

³⁷Augustine *City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1155.

³⁸Augustine *The Trinity*, 127-46; 342-69. Augustine's Christological focus is apparent in

undermine Augustine's view of the Spirit, but it follows from this incarnational focus—and the uncertainty described in connecting the Spirit to admonition to knowledge—that Augustine is not immediately thought of as contributing to any developed Spirit apologetic discussion.

Problem Illustrated: Thomas of Aquinas

Thomas is another churchman who demonstrated a willingness to engage his contemporaries in an apologetic manner, but he likewise comes up short when developing a special role for the Spirit in conveying the knowledge of God. Like Augustine, this is not to say that Thomas failed altogether in contributing to a Spirit apologetic. To the contrary, Thomas did promote—in an embryonic way—an internal divine activity which emanates from within humanity and which aids belief in God. And, though infrequently cited in his own writings, Thomas' mention of this internal activity proves instrumental in the contemporary conversation regarding the Holy Spirit's role in imparting knowledge of God.³⁹ As such, Thomas receives further attention in the second chapter below. Yet, a few comments related to his internal understanding of the Spirit

Books 4 and 15 of *The Trinity*. Nevertheless, this emphasis is found throughout his writings. In one passage within *The Trinity*, he says, "Nowhere though do we find it written that God the Father is greater than the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit is less than God the Father; and the reason is that a created form was not assumed by the Holy Spirit to appear under the same way that the son of man was assumed by the Word of God as the form in which to present his person to the world. The son of man was not assumed simply in order to have the Word of God, like other saints and wise men only more so, *above his fellows* (Ps. 45:8); not in order to have a more ample share in the Word of God and so excel the rest in wisdom, but quite simply to be the Word of God. The Word in flesh is one thing, the Word being man another" (107). And, of the Son, Augustine describes him as the mediator between God and man (165) and also as the divine Illuminator (154). For an extended commentary on this Incarnational teaching, see Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially chap. 4.

³⁹This will become more apparent in chapter two below, which views Thomas as a precursor to the burgeoning views held by Reformed thinkers since the late twentieth century.

will also help explicate the present problem—the observed absence of Spirit apologetics in recognized theological forebears.

Thomas and internal prompting. In his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas insists that the *basis for* faith rests on divine authority rather than mere reason.⁴⁰ And, when he takes the opportunity to explain his meaning, he employs the use of a feature reminiscent of the known Reformed emphasis on the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Thomas writes, “The believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of Divine teaching confirmed by miracles, and, what is more, the *inward instinct of the Divine invitation*: hence he does not believe lightly.”⁴² An interesting note is that this Reformed teaching is most visible in the thoughts of John Calvin as a reaction against the Church—of which Thomas loyally represented. Yet, here the two theologians subsist to some degree on parallel thought paths. Thomas declares that faithful knowledge via “the inward instinct of the Divine invitation” gives believers warrant even without sufficient scientific reason to support their knowledge claims.⁴³ Now, even though he introduces this inward aspect, Thomas’ “inward instinct of the Divine invitation” does not receive

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Part II, Question 2, Article 2, Reply to Objection 2. trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1920).

⁴¹ Alvin Plantinga picks up on this emphasis while developing his A/C Model (which stands for Aquinas/Calvin). Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 168ff. For a brief, historical, and salient description of this internal emphasis on the Holy Spirit, see relevant discussion in C. Stephen Evans, *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 260-62.

⁴² *ST*, II-II, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3. Emphasis added.

⁴³ *ST*, I-II, q. 113, a. 4, ad. 2, 3. Thomas here teaches that faith is required to overcome natural knowledge: “By natural knowledge a man is not turned to God. . . . it is clear that in the justification of the ungodly an act of faith is required in order that a man may believe that God justifies man through the mystery of Christ” (*ibid.*).

further explanation or comment.

Thomas continues his discussion in *ST* but moves from the *basis for* faith to the actual *cause of* faith. Here, he offers two explanations for the “requisite” causes. First, Thomas cites the need for propositions: “The things which are of faith should be proposed to man: this is necessary in order that man believe anything explicitly.”⁴⁴ Secondly, and more to the point, faith is requisite upon man’s assent to the things which have been proposed to him. The important point—at least for present purposes—relates to this latter aspect of faith requiring assent. The reason is because Thomas maintains the need for an “internal cause” to produce or prompt said assent. Thomas remarks, “The consummation of faith is from God. . . . Therefore faith, as regards the assent which is the chief act of faith, is from God moving man inwardly by grace.”⁴⁵ Now, clearly there is no explicit reference to the person of the Holy Spirit in these words of Thomas.⁴⁶ However, the “inward” language of God’s within presence approaches an implicit reference to the Holy Spirit. And, the doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum* immediately comes to mind.⁴⁷ This point—that Thomas’ inward terminology is an implicit reference to the Spirit—is drawn out and affirmed by, amongst others, John Baillie.⁴⁸ However, it would not be accurate to offer Thomas’ teaching on this special

⁴⁴*ST*, II-II, q. 6, a. 1.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Bernard Ramm makes the point that there “is no clear doctrine of the witness of the Holy Spirit in the history of theology until the time of the Reformation.” Bernard L. Ramm, *The God Who Makes a Difference: A Christian Appeal to Reason* (Waco, TX: Word, 1972), 38.

⁴⁷For a helpful analysis of this doctrine, see R. C. Sproul’s, “The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

⁴⁸John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1939), 113-14.

divine activity as especially compelling. There exists but a subtle—perhaps elusive—contribution to the present project.

Thomas and the gifts of the Spirit. In addition to an inward prompt resembling the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*, Thomas speaks pointedly to the gifts of the Spirit.⁴⁹ An important point to recognize is that unbelievers do not possess the gifts of the Spirit. Thomas only has believers in mind here.⁵⁰ These gifts of the Holy Spirit are active principles and inclinations that dispose believers more deeply to God.⁵¹ The great significance of these gifts (the *dona Spiritus Sancti*) are twofold: ushering in a right view of salvation and ushering in a real movement toward sanctification.

The gifts of the Spirit primarily reveal the focus of Thomas on the indwelling nature of the Spirit in supplying sanctifying grace. But, apologetically, the indwelling of the Spirit could also be the focus of Thomas in explaining the consignment of divine wisdom. In his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, an apologetic work, Thomas writes,

Thus, there are the wonderful cures of illnesses, there is the raising of the dead, and the wonderful immutation in the heavenly bodies; and what is more wonderful, there is the inspiration given to human minds, so that simple and untutored persons, filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit, come to possess instantaneously the highest wisdom and the readiest eloquence.⁵²

⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.

⁵⁰Ibid., I-II, q. 106, a. 1. Thomas here specifically states that the Holy Spirit “is given through faith in Christ” and “to those who believe in Christ.” By contrast—though not under full consideration here—John Owen, the great English divine, holds a view that the gifts of the Spirit are for anyone and everyone. The *fruits* of the Spirit, however, are held in reserve for believers only. For an enlightening discussion on this topic, K. Scott Oliphint is instructive. See Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics*, 134-35.

⁵¹John Jenkins ably proposes this argument regarding the gifts of the Spirit. John I. Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 154-59.

⁵²Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, bk. 1, *God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 72.

What Thomas has in mind here is a distinction between knowledge that is available to mankind by reason alone and knowledge that is only available as revealed by the divine.⁵³ Found within this latter knowledge—the gift of wisdom—an allowance for a Spirit apologetic begins to come into view. Thomas even directly attributes this gift of wisdom to the Spirit.⁵⁴ The “highest wisdom” is that which results in true knowledge of God. Though it seems clear that Thomas views this gift of divine wisdom as available to believers through the Spirit, the question of how such divine wisdom could also be available to unbelievers—in delivering knowledge of God to them—is not considered. The present study seeks, in exploring this unaddressed question, to offer contemporary responses that allow for special divine activity that supernaturally elevates human beings—believers and conceivably unbelievers alike—toward God-knowledge.

A Summation of the Problem

Although the above points are perhaps modest and perhaps provocative, they at minimum identify a loose connection between the likes of Augustine and Thomas with the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ What has been shown up to this point is that Augustine and Thomas have both made negligible contributions to this area of study. Admittedly, their

⁵³Thomas sees a definite divide between knowledge and understanding, or wisdom. Thomas writes, “Hence to know what one ought to believe, belongs to the gift of knowledge, but to know in themselves the very things we believe, by a kind of union with them, belongs to the gift of wisdom. Therefore the gift of wisdom corresponds more to charity which unites man's mind to God.” Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q. 9, a. 2, ad. 1.

⁵⁴“The wisdom which is called a gift of the Holy Ghost,” Thomas writes, “differs from that which is an acquired intellectual virtue, for the latter is attained by human effort, whereas the latter [*sic*] is ‘descending from above’” (James 3:15). Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, II-II, q. 45, a. 1, ad 2.

⁵⁵Ramm, *The God Who Makes a Difference*, 38. Here, Ramm briefly mentions the apologetic connection between the Holy Spirit and the works of Augustine and Thomas. He references both of these men as “anticipating” a Spirit apologetic.

contributions—relating to any true Spirit apologetic viewpoints—are meager, subtle, and half-dressed, but they still hold. Two points nevertheless emerge in what has been said. First, Augustine and Thomas illustrate the significance of the problem that little has been written from these early apologetic churchmen—as representatives of a larger body of churchmen—in plainly addressing a role for the Holy Spirit in apologetics. No extended discussions on this topic are available. At the same time, they also illustrate a second point that a faint albeit little explored Spirit apologetic does exist within the writings of Augustine and Thomas. These faint Spirit apologetic insights serve as precursors or anticipations of the role of the Spirit in more recent apologetics—or at least in the emerging dialogues concerning apologetics of this sort. The takeaway point before moving to the next section is that Augustine and Thomas both acknowledge an inward element—an admonishing or prompting. This inward element moves man toward God and helps to move the present conversation forward.

Locating the Relationship between the Holy Spirit and Apologetics

A significant fissure exists between humanity’s natural condition and humanity’s faithful knowledge of God. A partial task of the apologist is to assure individuals that there is a God to be found and that he is worthy of faith and commitment.⁵⁶ In other words, a movement toward God—a closing of the gap—is necessary. But, as Alister McGrath recognizes, any movement toward God is first

⁵⁶The belief commitment in view is not of a genuine faith-producing kind. This commitment is more akin to moving these unbelievers—minimally—away from their theistic reticence. This point is made—but not endorsed—by Sproul, Gerstner, and Lindsley. R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 21.

preceded by “the movement of God toward us in advance of our movement toward him.”⁵⁷ This movement of God takes place through the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ Calvin insists that the Holy Spirit alone can shepherd an individual from unbelief to faith—resulting in knowledge, assurance, and certainty in the truth of God and his gospel.⁵⁹ Now, here is a main point for consideration: If the apologetic task aims to bridge the gap between humanity and God, the Spirit of God is directly instrumental in man’s acquisition of the knowledge of God. Yet, apologetic literature largely fails to address the Spirit. In this section, a limited examination of the salient literature will demonstrate this assertion. Then, the concept of the knowledge of God will be explored and situated in its relation to Christian apologetics.

The Paucity of the Holy Spirit in Apologetic Literature

Avery Dulles released the first edition of his *A History of Apologetics* in 1971. At that time, he commented on the “paucity” of contemporary apologetic literature—especially histories—and the need to “arouse” interest from this low point in apologetics, or what Dulles refers to as its “nadir.” By the release of its second edition in 2005, Dulles’s new preface recognizes the fulfillment of this arousal with what Dulles calls “a notable revival of apologetics, especially among Evangelical Christians, and

⁵⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God and Other Modern Myths: Building Bridges to Faith through Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 60.

⁵⁸ See for example: 1 John 5:9, 1 Thess 1:5, and 1 Cor 2:6-13.

⁵⁹ John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.7.3-5, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:76-81.

more recently among Catholics, Anglicans, and others.”⁶⁰ The revival of apologetic writings, however, does not include much discussion on the Holy Spirit.

Generally speaking, John Frame asserts, “The whole point of apologetics is to present the truth to unbelievers.”⁶¹ Irenaeus (circa AD 180) inked the same point—but with an added supernatural element—when he describes the Holy Spirit as the one “who furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth.”⁶² Most Christian apologists would affirm this role for the Spirit, but, again, very few have engaged in tangible discussions touching upon this pneumatic emphasis. A brief review of apologetic literature—on both popular and more advanced levels—bears out this assertion.

Popular-level apologetic works. Popular-level works are accessible to most all readers, and, specifically, the popular audience tends to embody those approaching the subject from surface, non-technical, and heretofore unexamined viewpoints. As is the case with Timothy Keller’s *The Reason for God*, the intended reader of popular works is often identified as those exhibiting doubts about the Christian faith—believers and skeptics alike.⁶³ These popular-level works therefore offer basic and initial exposure in apologetics to address the more personal life situations—especially to those seekers open to exploration. But, what do they offer in explaining the Spirit’s role in apologetics?

⁶⁰Dulles, *A History*, xxii-xxiii.

⁶¹John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1994), 62.

⁶²Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.33.7, trans. A. Roberts and W. H. Rambaut, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, American ed., vol. 1 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, 508).

⁶³Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

Specific to Keller's *The Reason for God*, he penned his *New York Times* bestseller with the hopes of demonstrating that "every doubt . . . is based on a leap of faith."⁶⁴ In a bit of irony, doubts transform into sets of alternate beliefs, and these in turn develop into a hidden faith within the doubter's reasoning. As pertains to a Spirit apologetic, Keller fails to mention the Spirit's involvement in supplanting the need for a leap of faith. Keller never addresses the Spirit in his role of persuading, convicting, drawing, or securing knowledge or commitment.⁶⁵ This oversight is significant in view of the success—both within the Christian community and without—that Keller's book has achieved.⁶⁶ Such glossing over of the Holy Spirit is regrettable but not uncommon.

As a second example, C. Stephen Evans wrote his popular-level apologetic book with a mind to address those who show evidence of hopelessness.⁶⁷ But, unlike Keller, Evans at least acknowledges an apologetic role for the Spirit, saying, "Many Christians claim that the Spirit of God does offer a kind of *experiential support* for the truth . . . by helping a person to see this truth in a variety of ways, including helping a

⁶⁴Ibid., xvii.

⁶⁵The definitive "never" used here is in reference only to Keller's apologetic book, *The Reason for God*. In other places, Keller is indeed willing to address the Spirit as dispensing knowledge. For example, Keller writes, "Here then is how the Spirit makes us wise. On the night before he died, Jesus told his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit and 'when he, the Spirit of truth, comes . . . he will glorify me . . .' (John 16:13-14). The Spirit does not make us wise in some magical kind of way, giving us little nudges and insider tips to help us always choose the best stock to invest in. Rather, he makes Jesus Christ a living, bright reality, transforming our character, giving us new inner poise, clarity, humility, boldness, contentment, and courage. All of this leads to increasing wisdom as the years go by, and to better and better professional and personal decisions." Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Dutton, 2012), 212.

⁶⁶Keller's *The Reason for God* reached number 7 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. See *New York Times*, Sunday, 23 March 2008.

⁶⁷C. Stephen Evans, *Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), ix-x.

person to recognize that there are good reasons for such belief.”⁶⁸ To his credit, Evans acknowledges—even if only marginally—a Spirit apologetic when he writes,

Many Christians insist that in the final analysis people are moved to faith by the Spirit of God, not by human argument. I think a positive part of this assertion is correct, and I have already agreed that many people are brought to faith by nonrational factors. Such a faith is by no means necessarily defective or inferior. The Spirit of God may, however, use intellectual argument as one means of drawing us to faith. At the very least, a reasonable case for faith can remove barriers to the work of God’s Spirit.⁶⁹

Although Evans does not here develop what this looks like, there is a clear sense in which the Holy Spirit is involved in both an ongoing (throughout the doing of apologetics) and an ultimate (credited for governing the process and delivering faith) sense. So, Evans at least acknowledges the Spirit’s role before neglecting to describe what that means.⁷⁰

A look at popular-level apologists would be incomplete without reference to Norman Geisler—arguably the popular apologist *par excellence*. Geisler has proven to be accessible to a varied group of readers, and his recent book, *The Apologetics of Jesus*, further demonstrates such accessibility. This work shows promise by including a chapter on Spirit apologetics, but his discussion primarily explores the biblical passages wherein the Spirit is found persuading people to Christ—not a full-on survey of how the Spirit operates apologetically. The closest Geisler comes to genuine commentary on a Spirit apologetic is when he asserts, “The work of the Holy Spirit works with a person’s

⁶⁸Ibid., 74. The “experiential” aspect is here emphasized as both a bridge to what was mentioned briefly above and what is further explored below. Emphasis added.

⁶⁹Ibid., 24.

⁷⁰It would be disingenuous not to call attention to Evans’s compelling arguments for the Spirit as pertains to the historical Jesus narratives. Evans engages with the Spirit as an epistemological notion, even choosing to approach the topic as “Epistemology supernaturalized.” Evans, *The Historical Christ*, 259-82. But, he describes this work as “not really a work of apologetics” (vii).

reasoning and rational capacity. . . . When men and women allow him to, the Holy Spirit reveals truth to their minds before they respond with their emotions and will.”⁷¹ Echoing Evans above, the Spirit is seen as instrumental in using apologetic arguments to bring about the conversion of sinful humanity. Geisler continues, “Only the Holy Spirit can bring a person to Christ, but he uses evidences as a means by which he convinces an individual of the need to accept Christ.”⁷² Geisler further recognizes a *prompting* element of the Spirit in conveying the knowledge of God to individuals—perhaps here he is appreciative of Thomas Aquinas. But, similar to Keller and Evans, he neither develops what this looks like nor how this occurs.⁷³

Advanced-level apologetic works. Advanced-level works related to Christian apologetics refer to those volumes written specifically for more technical and academic usage and practice—for those desiring to delve a bit deeper into the subject.⁷⁴ Advanced-level works engage apologetics from at least three different vantage points: (1)

⁷¹Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus: A Caring Approach to Dealing with Doubters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 76.

⁷²Ibid., 171. It quickly emerges in reading Geisler that—despite his focus on the Spirit—reason over and against any other feature is the aspect that rules supreme. Geisler writes, “It would be insulting to the revealed nature of God the Holy Spirit to say that he—the all-knowing, all-wise, and most rational being in the universe—would bypass reason to reach rational creatures made in his image (Gen. 1:27). In fact, it is unreasonable to disjoin a rational God from a rational process by which he wishes to reach his rational offspring” (172).

⁷³Ibid., 183.

⁷⁴What is perhaps more accurate is to describe or characterize the apologetic works under consideration as “intermediate” or “progressed.” Truly “advanced” apologetic works should probably be reserved for those works that tackle single issues—like the metaphysical problem of evil or the *kalam* cosmological argument for the existence of God or even the historical reliability of the Bible—and thoroughly examine the objections to the Christian viewpoint as well as ways to answer such objections. The works examined in this section continue the practice of discussing apologetics in a general and more theoretical way.

What is apologetics about (the art of)?⁷⁵ (2) How is apologetics put into practice (the science of)?⁷⁶ (3) And, there is often some combination of these two approaches.⁷⁷

Regarding the first type, Beilby says, “[They] discuss the nature and goals of apologetics, different approaches to apologetics, objections to the idea or practice of apologetics, and how apologetics should be done.⁷⁸ Regarding the second type, R. C. Sproul sums up the goal of works focused on practice as intending “to set forth, in a brief and non-technical way, the basic truth claims of Christianity, and to show that at its core Christianity is rational.”⁷⁹ The sheer number of these advanced works is too many to undertake a full-scale review; thus, the works discussed in this section will again comprise a limited sample. And, the sample will be limited to those works directly referencing the Spirit; indeed and unfortunately, the majority do not broach a Spirit apologetic or do so with great limitations.⁸⁰

⁷⁵See James K. Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics: What It is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

⁷⁶See, as an example, Craig’s *Reasonable Faith*.

⁷⁷For example, Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

⁷⁸Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 9.

⁷⁹R. C. Sproul, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 7.

⁸⁰That is to say, the vast majority of advanced-level works do not broach a Spirit apologetic with any substance whatsoever. For example, the following works have been reviewed, and they fail to address a Spirit apologetic even to the smallest degree: Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976); J. P Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); Alister E. McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God and Other Modern Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) ; Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics: Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); Winfried Corduan, *No Doubt about It: The Case for Christianity* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997); and H. Wayne House and Dennis W. Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope: An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011).

James Beilby's conceptual look into apologetics makes it a point to deliberately address the Spirit's role in defending the faith. Rather than focusing entirely on human reason, Beilby—to his credit—sees apologetics as requiring the Spirit. Beilby argues that the Spirit is involved in one of the following four ways: preparing the heart of unbelievers for apologetic encounters; directing the attention of believers toward certain unbelievers; helping move unbelievers from belief in God to commitment to God; and directing the entire apologetic process.⁸¹ In perpetuating the basic problem stated above, Beilby does not push beyond these surface acknowledgements of a Spirit apologetic. He simply makes passing comments that the Spirit is and should be involved, and believers need to partner with the Spirit in effective apologetic endeavors.⁸²

In a very brief chapter, R. C. Sproul discusses the testimony of the Holy Spirit in defending the faith.⁸³ The primary aim of Sproul's discussion argues for the Spirit's usefulness in bolstering the authority of Scripture. But, mixed in with the Spirit's transfer of scriptural certainty to believers, Sproul also offers this helpful comment: "The Spirit does enable the Christian to believe all objective evidences. . . . What the Spirit accomplishes, then, is a breaking down of the barriers in our minds and the hostility of our hearts, thereby enabling us to surrender to the truth."⁸⁴ Sproul's presentation of the Spirit here would benefit greatly from a deliberate and extended Spirit apologetic conversation. But, following the pattern, Sproul's thoughts on the Spirit are not

⁸¹Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 91.

⁸²Ibid., 146.

⁸³Sproul, *Defending Your Faith*, 189-93.

⁸⁴Ibid., 192. Sproul further states, "[P]eople will not be duly persuaded by such objective evidence until that evidence is reinforced by the ministry and operation of the Holy Spirit."

significantly developed. Sproul does identify one actionable role for the Spirit (the role of enabling), but there is no actual fleshing out of how the Spirit works to break down barriers and hostilities.

A third advanced-level work—William Lane Craig’s *Reasonable Faith*—is unique amidst the aforementioned works in that Craig diverges from the trend by legitimately discussing the role of the Spirit in apologetics.⁸⁵ As a foundational dialogue for his project and prior to launching into his technical arguments, Craig’s first chapter interacts with the faith-reason tension that often arises within apologetic treatises. Amidst his faith-reason discussion, Craig distinguishes two roles for the Holy Spirit in answering a key apologetic question—“How do I know Christianity is true?”⁸⁶ Craig’s answer to this question deliberately embraces—more than any other work—a role for the Holy Spirit in both *knowing* Christianity to be true and *showing* Christianity to be true.

First, and briefly, there is the Spirit’s role in *showing* Christianity to be true. According to Craig, *showing* concerns “how to prove to another person that our faith is true.” And, this *showing* facet “involves the presentation of sound and persuasive arguments for Christian truth claims.”⁸⁷ Believers are obligated to assume apologetic

⁸⁵Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 43-60.

⁸⁶Ibid., 43, 47.

⁸⁷Ibid., 51. Craig associates the *showing* aspect of the Spirit to a test for truth known as “systematic consistency.” Systematic consistency is a notion argued for most fervently and notably by E. J. Carnell. Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics: A Philosophic Defense of the Trinitarian-Theistic Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 56-62, 68-70. Carnell’s work is another introductory volume that largely glosses over the role of the Spirit. However, Carnell does interestingly preempt Craig’s use of the Spirit in this *showing* aspect, saying, “If what is being believed makes peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of experience [this is the systematic consistency test], it is faith which is prompted by the Spirit of God. If what is being believed fails to correspond with the mind of God, i.e., it is not systematically consistent, such faith is prompted by other than the Spirit of God. The Spirit can speak only the truth; it can witness only to the mind of God. . . . [I]t is the Spirit . . . which finally seals the faith to the heart” (70).

readiness in showing that Christianity is true. But, of course, believers cannot argue anyone into eternity or into a right relationship with God; therefore, the Holy Spirit is operative in using arguments to convince and draw unbelievers.⁸⁸ This *showing* aspect parallels the somewhat ill-developed and perfunctory apologetic roles already brought out in the above-mentioned works. Now, the conception of Craig's other apologetic role for the Spirit—a more epistemologically-minded aspect—bears more significantly on the present discussion.

Craig's second role for the Spirit is *knowing* Christianity to be true. This epistemic quality relies on “the self-authenticating witness of God's Holy Spirit.” Craig explains his meaning:

I mean that the experience of the Holy Spirit is veridical and unmistakable (though not necessarily irresistible or indubitable) for him who has it; that such a person does not need supplementary arguments or evidence in order to know and to know with confidence that he is in fact experiencing the Spirit of God; that such experience does not function in this case as a premise in any argument from religious experience to God; that in certain contexts the experience of the Holy Spirit will imply the apprehension of certain truths of the Christian religion . . . ; that such an experience provides one not only with a subjective assurance of Christianity's truth, but with objective knowledge of that truth; and that arguments and evidence incompatible with that truth are overwhelmed by the experience of the Holy Spirit for him who attends fully to it.⁸⁹

This self-authenticating witness of the Spirit is available to believers and unbelievers alike.⁹⁰ For believers, the Spirit indwells and allows them to know God as Father (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15-16). For unbelievers, the Holy Spirit's role—since he does not (yet) indwell them—is evidenced through convincing them of their individual sin, of the

⁸⁸Ibid., 57.

⁸⁹Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 43.

⁹⁰Ibid., 47.

righteousness of God, and of their deserved condemnation before God (John 16:7-11).⁹¹

Such an action of convincing or swaying clearly shifts the apologetic undertaking to the Spirit—to some unquantifiable degree—and away from evidence and reason. Craig leaves the details undergirding this convincing function of the Spirit to an unspecified supernatural activity.⁹² Nevertheless, his acknowledgement of a Spirit apologetic here—with an epistemic component—opens opportunities for further expansion below.

Assessing apologetic works. Often, very little distinguishes the advanced apologetic work from the popular-level one because both largely touch upon the same topics, ideas, and arguments. The main differentiation is often found in the intended audience of the particular work.⁹³ In regard to Spirit apologetics, a few guiding principles are observed from the works just examined. First, the specific discussion concerning popular-level works clearly uncovers a limited Spirit apologetic—ranging from scarcely a mention to token mentions of the Spirit. Where the Spirit is deemed instrumental in the apologetic task, the gist of his involvement is a few comments concerning how he (the Spirit) mysteriously uses apologetic arguments and reasoning to bring others to Christ.

⁹¹Ibid., 46.

⁹²Craig is not alone with such a contention. James E. Taylor reiterates this point, writing, “If there were a conclusive rational proof of the truth of the Christian faith, it would not be clear why submission to Christ requires a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.” And, like Craig, Taylor does not develop what this supernatural activity entails. Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics*, 23. Sin—it should be stated as a caveat to this thought—would still explain why some would reject even a conclusive proof.

⁹³On the one hand, popular-level works tend to focus on helping individuals at a basic level. They provide initial exposure to apologetic topics, and they prove helpful for two particular groups: (1) those believers that need help understanding and explaining more difficult questions and (2) those individuals—believers and skeptics—that need help dealing with doubts related to Christian faith. On the other hand, advanced-level works are intended for more pedagogical purposes. They afford opportunities for interested individuals to explore difficult questions in a thorough and more comprehensive way.

Second, the more advanced-level works fare only slightly better in their Spirit apologetic pronouncements. Advanced works undeniably speak to greater extents about the Spirit in apologetics, and they do so in a deliberate manner—devoting explicit sections and even chapters to incorporating the Spirit into apologetic theory and practice. Craig particularly proves helpful in drawing the Spirit into epistemological focus. But, upon reviewing the literature as a whole, the details continue to fall short of any substantive and helpful treatment on this topic.

A final observation is perhaps more conjecture than anything else. A pattern is possibly emerging from what has been said in this section that will continue to emerge—and even gain intensity—as readers engage the chapters below. Whereas popular-level works are found with very little Spirit apologetic material, the more advanced-level works—even if still flimsy in this area—offer more particulars. But, they too come up lacking when addressing the Spirit’s apologetic role. The final observation, or conjecture, is that the Spirit receives greater attention as readers progress from popular to more advanced levels. This pattern indeed holds true as the progression continues even further—to examining the more philosophically erudite works addressed below. Such philosophical works will be shown to move further in offering expanded, pertinent, and compelling dialogue on how the Spirit operates within apologetics. These Spirit apologetic conversations—taking place in more academic settings—need to become more available at the lower levels because they offer helpful insights and details for defending the faith.

As a summary comment, the paucity of current Spirit considerations in apologetic literature is indeed wanting and concerning. The oversight could be viewed as

an intentional separation of the Spirit from the reasonableness associated with the defense of the faith.⁹⁴ If, however, apologetics truly falls under the authority of the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit needs more deliberate recognition.⁹⁵ And, if the discipline of apologetics truly aims to bridge the gap between humanity and the faithful knowledge of God, then the Spirit's technical role in discharging the knowledge of God also deserves recognition and improvement.

Apologetics and the (Experiential) Knowledge of God

Before moving any further, a few brief words need to be said regarding *the knowledge of God*.⁹⁶ The standard Christian blueprint for knowing God is through special revelation. Gregory Thornbury writes, “The Bible clearly points out that all truth and knowledge originate from God’s revelation and Word to us. . . . The Scripture does not simply say that spiritual or theological truths are known through Christ; the text says

⁹⁴Here, one thinks first of Martin Luther, who characterized reason as the “devil’s whore.” Luther saw reason as the enemy of faith, and he rejected most all reason (apologetics) that emanates from positions apart from the attainment of faith. The Spirit belongs in the venue of faith alone. Subsequently, the apologetic camp known as fideism has been developed to declare a diminished role for formal apologetics. A helpful discussion on fideism and its view of apologetics is found in C. Stephen Evans, *Faith beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*, Reason and Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁹⁵Thomas A. Howe and Richard G. Howe encapsulate this widely held view: “While it is the Holy Spirit who enables someone to believe, he may sometimes use the presentation of evidence for the Christian faith as the means whereby someone can come to see the truth of the gospel. There is no conflict between the work of the Holy Spirit and the use of evidence and reason. The evidence and reason as such were never intended to supplant the work of God’s Spirit but rather are intended to be the means by which the Holy Spirit brings someone to faith in Christ.” Thomas A. Howe and Richard G. Howe, “Knowing Christianity is True: The Relationship Between Faith and Reason,” in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 33.

⁹⁶The “knowledge of God” is used somewhat interchangeably, or synonymously, with “faith” or “faithful knowledge.” The advantage of “knowledge of God” is to deploy epistemological undertones, which will be more directly drawn out for readers. Paul Helm deserves credit for this connection. Paul Helm, *Varieties of Belief* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), 141.

*all knowledge or truth.*⁹⁷ Even less orthodox scholars recognize the historical importance of revelation for knowing God; indeed, theologians like Luke Timothy Johnson—a self-identified liberal—recognize the difficult balance between knowledge resulting from biblical authority versus empirical authority.⁹⁸ Now, there is a clear epistemological distinction between knowing the works of God through revelation and knowing God himself.⁹⁹ Apologetics looks at the knowledge of God in both these senses, and the Spirit of God is instrumental in both.

God's transcendence means that he is wholly incomprehensible by the human mind; yet, Christians can mysteriously know and understand his mind. Bernard Ramm, in his classic *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*, described apologetics as a defense (an *apologia*) against the so-called problematic positions held by Christians—such as *proving* the existence of God or authenticating the truthfulness of Scripture. Specifically, one of the three pervasive apologetic problems Ramm identified was the “problem of the

⁹⁷Gregory Alan Thornbury, “Prolegomena: Introduction to the Task of Theology,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 17. Thornbury even points to Proverbs discussion that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). Clearly, this places knowledge of God as reliant on God’s activity. Specific to apologetics, B. B. Warfield championed this point many years ago when he described apologetics, saying, “The establishment of the reality of the supernatural factor in history, with the involved determination of the actual relations in which God stands to His world, and the method of His government of His rational creatures, and especially His mode of making Himself known to them. It issues in the establishment of the fact of revelation as the condition of all knowledge of God, who as a personal Spirit can be known only so far as He expresses Himself.” Benjamin B. Warfield, “Apologetics,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1908), 236. Warfield makes the point that one of the important facets of apologetics is to elevate and highlight the authority and authenticity of Scripture in order to promote the veracity of the means by which God makes himself known.

⁹⁸Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Bible’s Authority in and for the Church,” in *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*, ed. William P. Brown (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 62-72.

⁹⁹Ellen T. Charry, “Revelation,” in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Copan (New York: Routledge, 2007), 546.

knowledge of God.”¹⁰⁰ Christianity claims to possess knowledge of God; not mere stories, folklore, legends, or wishful thinking, but genuine, certain, life-altering knowledge. Questions about knowledge, of course, determine epistemology. And, a central epistemological question for the Christian faith is, how does humanity come to know the Christian God?¹⁰¹ The obvious answer to this question relies on revelation—God’s speaking to humanity and making himself known. But, more is still needed.

Christians certainly profess a knowledge of God—expressed through placed faith and transformed lives, but *how* do believers arrive at that point? This question about ascertaining a real and adequate knowledge of the Christian God is a preoccupation spanning past and present discourses.¹⁰² Furthermore, it runs through many biblical expositions.¹⁰³ The knowledge of God is indeed a problem that must be both acknowledged and met head-on. Why is this so? The reason is because confronting this problem from an apologetic standpoint will not only aid the comprehension and acquisition of the knowledge of God but will also help embolden individual Christian

¹⁰⁰Ramm, *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*, 12. The other two general problems that Ramm identifies are “the problem of the truthfulness of the Christian faith” and “the problem of the objectivity of the Christian claims.” He then lists ten specific problems that an *apologia* should aim to address (17-27).

¹⁰¹This question puts a specifically Christian lens on the classic yet broad treatment of epistemology framed by the likes of George Mavrodes. He states, “Questions of the form ‘How do you know that *p*?’ and the closely related ‘What reason do you have for believing that *p*?’ often occur in discussions of religious belief.” George Mavrodes, *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1970), 6.

¹⁰²A classic discussions of the “knowledge of God” is found in Calvin. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). Contemporarily, this is also a point discussed and ably made by John Frame. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 1-3, 32-33.

¹⁰³Two contributing examples to this expositional discussions of the knowledge of God are Ian W. Scott, *Paul’s Way of Knowing: Story Experience, and the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), and Mary Healy and Robin Parry, eds., *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007).

confidence and reignite the collective witness of believers. In addition, unbelievers too possess bits of knowledge about God (Rom 1:21), and an apologetic concentration can overwhelm doubts in order to provide an even greater knowledge. The role of the Spirit as revealer—as will come into sharper focus—will positively and apologetically address and supply content to the epistemological *how* question.

The key at this juncture is to see that apologetics often connects the knowledge of God with faithful belief in God.¹⁰⁴ The characteristic evidence (visible) of this faithful belief is God’s grace within, which produces piety and a transformed life.¹⁰⁵ John Baillie proves instructive here: “The great fact for which all religion stands is the confrontation of the human soul with the transcendent holiness of God. When God reveals Himself to man, then a characteristic disturbance is set up in the human soul and in the life of our human society.”¹⁰⁶ The evidence of this disturbance is knowledge of God, which did not previously present to the person now disturbed. As the knowledge of God becomes Spirit-quicken, the possibility of a truly robust belief in God increasingly materializes. Jesus himself referred to such knowledge of God:

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. . . . Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and

¹⁰⁴W. Jay Wood writes, “Many contemporary epistemologists no longer distinguish sharply between belief and knowledge. . . . Knowledge is no longer treated as a separate genus from belief, but is often characterized as adequately grounded or warranted true belief.” W. Jay Wood, “Faith,” in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Copan (New York: Routledge, 2007), 607. Apologetics is bent toward giving a rational justification for Christian *belief*. Those people professing belief in God feel compelled to confront the problem of the knowledge of God—in order to assert the legitimacy of their Christian knowledge. “Knowledge” itself is classically defined as “justified true belief.” J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 73.

¹⁰⁵Ramm, *The God Who*, 101-05.

¹⁰⁶Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, 3.

they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. (John 17:3, 7-8)

The knowledge of God is enriched and enlivened through the faithful belief of God's image-bearers.¹⁰⁷ In the resultant activity of belief, humanity necessarily responds to God's activity of revealing himself. But, of course, not all belief is produced *solely* through revelation of the biblical stripe.

In addition, revelation of the more experiential type is also required.¹⁰⁸ John Frame calls this "revelation in a subjective sense."¹⁰⁹ Of this experiential and subjective revelation, Frame explains: "[It is] what the Bible calls 'illumination' or 'enlightenment'—the work of the Holy Spirit that opens our hearts, so that we acknowledge, understand, and rightly use His truth."¹¹⁰ This subjective revelation is dependent on the Spirit's acuity in the hearts of individuals.¹¹¹

Ronald Nash further proposes an adequate answer for confronting the problem of the knowledge of God. He draws out a dichotomy between the orthodox, traditional position whereby God reveals himself through "intelligible revelation" and the "contemporary nonevangelical" position whereby God—it is claimed—is truly

¹⁰⁷ Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 71.

¹⁰⁸ It is important not to think immediately of mere subjectivistic views upon reading this statement, which is in no way an endorsement of Friedrich Schleiermacher or William James or similar thinkers. The classic view of experientialism rejects objective Christian truth, and, thereby, its adherents are left with experience as the only authority left to ground religious commitment. What is intended by this statement is much more in accord with orthodox evangelicalism.

¹⁰⁹ Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 42.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ In the fourth chapter, much of the discussion surrounding the charismatic perspective and James K. A. Smith will relate the present discussion to the Spirit of God at work in the human heart—what will be termed the *kardia*.

understood through “an inward personal experience.”¹¹² The dichotomy according to Nash results because of the nonevangelical side and its focus on replacing the Logos doctrine with “personal encounter, religious feeling, trust, or obedience.”¹¹³ Nash argues for a both/and approach rather than an approach of either/or. He states, “No evangelical theologian denies the importance of a human encounter with the living God.”¹¹⁴ So, it would appear even conservative evangelicals are more open to experiential encounters than typically thought.

Elsewhere, Nash even explicitly implicates the Holy Spirit as participating in a necessary, experiential role in the process of revealing God.¹¹⁵ However, Nash never fully develops the inward, experiential side of his approach, though; indeed, he chooses instead to revert back to and rest most securely on the standard arguments for propositional revelation as the sure way to know God.¹¹⁶ This unanswered call for experiential knowledge yet retreat to the default Logos position motivates and gives rise

¹¹²Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man: The Crisis of Revealed Truth in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 13. This discussion points out or alludes to the general epistemological extremes of rationalism and empiricism. For an interesting and early discussion of the role of rationalism and empiricism from an apologetic standpoint, see Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, especially chap. 9.

Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 12. Nash explains his understanding of the Logos doctrine: “Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos of God, mediates all divine revelation and grounds the correspondence between the divine and human minds. This eternal Logos is a necessary condition for the communication of revealed truth; indeed, it is a necessary condition for human knowledge about anything” (59). He continues, “Thus, knowledge is possible because God has created each person after his own image as a rational soul and because God continually sustains and aids the soul in its quest for knowledge” (90).

¹¹⁴Ibid., 13. It seems that the possibility of knowledge about God is denied by the nonevangelicals—whom Nash refers to in this passage as Christian agnostics—on the basis of God’s being wholly transcendent and man’s being utterly fallible.

¹¹⁵Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 143-45.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 131.

to the present study.¹¹⁷ Nash is not an isolated example in preferring revelation as the quasi-exclusive source for knowing God.¹¹⁸ Yet, now seems the proper time to highlight discussions and arguments clearly engaging a more experiential knowledge of God.¹¹⁹

The knowledge of God as used and understood in these pages is more than a propositional revelation or an affective-experiential revelation in isolation from each other. There should be usefulness in adopting both revelatory aspects in grounding true divine knowledge. Since God is personal he is capable of being known through a total response of his created persons, which is composed of propositional and experiential aspects. The possessed (believers) and potential (unbelievers) knowledge of God is enriched by revelation and experience as minds are illumined by the Spirit of God.

Statement of the Thesis

The substance for construing a thesis has been building, but a concise statement of the thesis is still necessary. As demonstrated above, there has been much

¹¹⁷This Logos position is held prominently by Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976; repr., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999). The Logos position is defined in the context of seeking the divine foundation behind revelation. Logos is understood as the agent—or Word of God—that mediates the divine self-disclosure in a transcendent (beyond the world) manner. God communicates rationally through his revelation, and humankind must rationally receive the propositions and truthfulness conveyed in Scripture. The concept of Logos sees humankind as fully capable of expounding the Bible’s content. Henry explains, “Divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test. The task of Christian theology is to exhibit the content of biblical revelation as an orderly whole” (1:215).

¹¹⁸Other examples of notable evangelicals—focusing on those with an apologetic bent—include such figures as Carl F. H. Henry, Edward John Carnell, and Gordon H. Clark. Donald Bloesch refers to this band of adherents as the “evangelical rationalists.” Making certain to point out that this is a “believing rationalism,” Bloesch describes this rationalism as a perspective where “reason prepares the way for faith and confirms faith.” He further argues that their view of reason relies on a staunch “fidelity to divine revelation.” Donald Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 34-35.

¹¹⁹This aim intends to level the proposed imbalance; not to favor or endorse some semblance of Christian mysticism or some purely fideistic approach to apologetics.

philosophical conversation and work in the branch of philosophy known as religious epistemology over the last several decades.¹²⁰ The vast majority of these works are speaking to the Judeo-Christian God in the broadest sense.¹²¹ As a direct point of departure, this dissertation intends to speak in a more specific, Christian sense. The pages herein draw attention to three distinctive theological designations—Reformed, Anglican-Methodist, and charismatic. Certain adherents from these three traditions have purposefully appended their Spirit apologetic reflections to the discussion at hand.

These perspectives are taking a corrective posture—even if not entirely conscious in so doing—to this neglected area of apologetic study. One of the purposes—albeit partial—of this dissertation is to shed light on the Spirit apologetic emanating from various thinkers as they write and debate the general topic of religious epistemology. As will become clear, the Spirit of God is instrumental within their epistemological arguments. In addition, the present work will address as its overarching emphasis the role of the Holy Spirit in grounding the Christian’s faithful knowledge, and this emphasis will rely upon the above-mentioned theological perspectives to both limit and propel this discussion. This latter task is where the narrow Christian sense of the Spirit’s apologetic role truly emerges.

¹²⁰Kevin Meeker, “Religious Epistemology: Introduction,” in *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide*, ed. William Lane Craig (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 7-8.

¹²¹Confirmation of this statement is offered through Alvin Plantinga’s *Warrant* series. See his three volumes: *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and *Warranted Christian Belief*. Although mentioning God with some frequency, the first two volumes of the *Warrant* series make no direct references to Christ. The closest connection Plantinga makes is to cite specifically Christian thinkers in developing epistemology—thinkers like Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. The implied reason for this course of action is to establish common ground with scholars outside the Christian community. The first two volumes of the *Warrant* trilogy establish Plantinga and his arguments regarding the nature of epistemic warrant as a force to be reckoned with. *Warranted Christian Belief* as its title indicates is a stark departure from the use of “God” in the broad sense.

Ultimately, the hope is that a thorough look at the contributions of philosophical apologetics within these perspectives will incite and encourage further discussion and development of a lasting and clarifying Spirit apologetic. To this end, the main thesis of this dissertation is that the Holy Spirit's epistemological role in Christian apologetics—of prompting faithful knowledge through special divine activity—is underdeveloped and lacking—despite his veiled presence in and from the suppositions, writings, and trajectories of certain convictional perspectives, and his epistemological role needs to be surfaced in order to defend the certain knowledge of God.

Methodological Rationale

As demonstrated above, there seems to be a hidden, or perhaps subreptitious, motif about the Holy Spirit, apologetics, and the experiential knowledge of God within the Christian perspective. Such a Spirit apologetic motif—as that pursued herein—is hidden but not nonexistent altogether. It is merely hidden because the Spirit discussion is—from a review of current research—already taking place, but it is only taking place in a very limited sphere. This dissertation attempts to expose and/or discover the Spirit's whereabouts within apologetic discourse.

The outset of this project recognizes that Christian apologetics is primarily concerned with the way Christians commend and defend the Christian faith to contemporaries.¹²² This task is certainly not indigenous to the present generation. Christians have always done what they could to give an account of their Christian faith.

¹²²This statement fits well with the mandate found in 1 Pet 3:15, the *locus classicus* of apologetics, which urges the believer to “always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.”

The *First and Second Apologies* of Justin Martyr, Origen's *Contra Celsus*, Augustine's *City of God*, Anselm's *Proslogion*, Thomas's *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, and William Paley's *Natural Theology* are classic examples. More modern times have produced a diverse group of thinkers the likes of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Benjamin B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, C. S. Lewis, Carl F. H. Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and William Lane Craig.¹²³ The mere mention of these different apologists evokes favorable and unfavorable feelings and emotions. And, they further demonstrate national, continental, and cultural differences, historical separateness, conservative and liberal detachments, and divergent evangelistic commitments.

The aforementioned apologists not only implemented different apologetic strategies but also approached the apologetic task from different theological perspectives.¹²⁴ Their apologetic strategies in some cases capitulate to their theological perspectives; in other cases, their respective approaches trump any denominational or convictional ties.¹²⁵ Such apologetic diversity has always existed within the church catholic.¹²⁶ In recognition of this diversity, the present project will examine thinkers from different confessional perspectives and their respective uses of the Holy Spirit in

¹²³The term “modern” is descriptive of the modern period (especially as relates to theology). Such an acknowledgment seems fitting since the lives of Paley and Schleiermacher actually overlap.

¹²⁴As will soon become clear, this idea of diverse theologies extends beyond the normal liberal-conservative perspectives that immediately arise upon hearing—in the same sentence—such influential names as Schleiermacher and Henry.

¹²⁵It is the former situation—where apologetics follows and capitulates to theological perspective—that occupies the majority of the interest here.

¹²⁶Mark Edwards et al., eds., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1, 13; Dulles, *A History*, xix-xx; and Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), xvii-xviii.

grounding faithful knowledge.¹²⁷ Reformed, Anglican-Methodist,¹²⁸ and charismatic perspectives will be the specific traditions examined.¹²⁹

The methodology of this project will portend, first and foremost, an attempt at eliciting the apologetic role of the Spirit from these three perspectives. The impending study and analysis will certainly be limited, not only by space constraints, but also by the penurious resources currently available for research. As such, this study will focus on a limited pool of philosophers and apologists who have contributed directly to this Spirit theme. With respect to the three perspectives being examined, the salient, contemporary adherents and their primary source materials will garner the majority of interest.

First, the Reformed perspective necessarily focuses on Alvin Plantinga¹³⁰ and

¹²⁷The traditional epistemological expression is not “faithful knowledge” but rather *religious belief*. But, the specific language of faithful knowledge is helpful and appropriate to the narrowing focus of this project. These expressions should be viewed synonymously.

¹²⁸A detailed explanation for combining Anglicanism and Methodism into a single perspective—beyond just space considerations—will be offered at the outset of the third chapter.

¹²⁹James K. A. Smith is a notable charismatic philosopher/apologist that prefers to speak in “pentecostal” terms. See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). An interaction with Smith’s thought will comprise a sizeable portion of the charismatic section in this study. This interaction may result in the occasional confusion whereby some scholars advocate the use of small-*p* pentecostal over the more conventional small-*c* charismatic. But, for now, let Smith himself argue for his use of small-*p* pentecostal: “So, by ‘pentecostal’ I mean to refer not to a classical or denominational definition, but rather to an understanding of Christian faith that is radically open to the continued operations of the Spirit. . . . Thus when I advocate a pentecostal philosophy, ‘pentecostal’ is meant to be a gathering term, indicating a shared set of practices and theological intuitions that are shared by Pentecostals, charismatics, and “third wavers” (xvii).

¹³⁰Plantinga’s and Wolterstorff’s teachings regarding the Holy Spirit are primarily used for buttressing their main assertion, which Plantinga identifies for his readers: “Christian belief is immediate; it is formed in the basic way. It doesn’t proceed by way of argument. . . . Christian belief is properly basic, where the propriety in question embraces all three of the epistemic virtues [justified true belief].” Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 259. As already mentioned, *WCB* is the third volume of Plantinga’s *Warrant* trilogy. The first two volumes—*Warrant: The Current Debate* and *Warrant and Proper Function*—laid the groundwork for the Reformed epistemological project, which seeks to establish true belief into Christian knowledge. In addition and preceding his trilogy, Plantinga developed his epistemic views in a number of writings: “Is Belief in God Rational?” in *Rationality and Religious Belief*, ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?” *Nous* 15 (1981); “The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 11 (1982); “On

to a much lesser extent Nicholas Wolterstorff.¹³¹ Of particular interest for this dissertation is Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*, which moves the secular, philosophical conversation—regarding knowledge generally and foundationalism specifically—to a more Christocentric focus. This move permits Plantinga to introduce his epistemic arguments for including the Holy Spirit. The collection of teachings produced from these arguments—known commonly as Reformed Epistemology—is offered as the pioneering perspective that redresses the lack of Spirit apologetics in a contemporary sense.

Second, the Anglican-Methodist view will concentrate on the significant works of William P. Alston¹³² and William J. Abraham.¹³³ Alston is quite often grouped together with Plantinga and Wolterstorff as a Reformed Epistemology affiliate, but he has indicated disapproval with the Reformed terminology.¹³⁴ Moreover, he is an

Reformed Epistemology," *The Reformed Journal* 32 (1982); and "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

¹³¹Wolterstorff too—in addition to the well-known *Faith and Rationality*, which he contributed to and edited with Plantinga—penned a number of helpful books and articles. Wolterstorff developed his epistemic views in the following: *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*; "Is Reason Enough?" *Reformed Journal* 31 (1981); "The Assurance of Faith," *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990); *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); "The Reformed Tradition," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Unfortunately, the attention given to Wolterstorff's contribution will be markedly limited.

¹³²Although a number of works could be cited from the bibliography below, the primary work for Alston is his *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹³³Two helpful books by Abraham include: William A. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), and *Aldersgate and Athens: John Wesley and the Foundations of Christian Belief* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

¹³⁴James Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology: An Evaluation of Alvin Plantinga's Religious Epistemology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 12.

Episcopalian philosopher, and he is even on record (lightheartedly) lobbying for the term “Anglican epistemology.”¹³⁵ Due to his affinities with Plantinga and Wolterstorff, he assumes a logical role for bridging the Reformed and Anglican-Methodist perspectives. Abraham is given the nod for the Methodist viewpoint—an intertwined yet offshoot denomination from discontented Anglicanism.

And, finally, the charismatic perspective draws attention to philosophical apologetics emerging from charismatics, Pentecostals, and third-wavers who prominently emphasize the Spirit’s gifts within existing liturgical and theological frameworks.¹³⁶ Historically, the charismatic view is synonymous with the importance of the Holy Spirit and his activity but without much bearing on the field of apologetics—or philosophy for that matter. A number of capable scholars are seeking to meld Spirit and philosophy and apologetics together. This approach is most clearly articulated by charismatic scholars like James K. A. Smith¹³⁷ and, in his more recently expressed views, J. P. Moreland.¹³⁸

In addition to amplifying a contemporary purview of Spirit apologetics within these three perspectives, the methodology of this dissertation will also include a number

¹³⁵William Hasker, “The Epistemic Value of Religious Experience: Perceptual and Explanatory Models,” in *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith: Essays in Honor of William P. Alston*, ed. Thomas D. Senor (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 154.

¹³⁶Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xvi.

¹³⁷For present purposes, Smith’s most important work in this regard is the above referenced *Thinking in Tongues*, which is part of a full-on effort by Pentecostals and charismatics to advance their scholarship—through the Pentecostal Manifestos series be put out by Eerdmans.

¹³⁸For example, J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit’s Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Moreland’s conversion is a rather recent event. Therefore, he will not receive significant attention herein. But, Moreland’s thoughts as a charismatic believer should, at some point, make for an interesting addendum to this view relating to those that hold encounters with the Spirit in very high regard.

of other features. Inevitably, the engagement with each perspective will require some historical analysis to establish the foundations from which these views developed—and continue to develop. Some analysis has already been undertaken with looks at Augustine and Thomas, but each perspective may require looking at particular precursors within each theological subfield and the Spirit trajectories they put into place. Once these Spirit trajectories are discovered, it will then be important to examine the consistencies and divergences—if any—that presently display. In looking at the history, the Spirit trajectory, and the resulting consistency, this dissertation will then be well-positioned to analyze the varied perspectives and gauge their usefulness and legitimacy in the apologetic enterprise.

The present work, then, seeks to address the paucity regarding the use of the Holy Spirit in grounding faith-producing knowledge. This dissertation serves as an attempt to flesh out evangelical renditions for the experience of God and the detailed work of the Spirit. If true that little work has been focused on the substantive role of the Holy Spirit within philosophical apologetics, then this investigation will necessarily pour through, scrape together, and uncover resources from an array of literature. Furthermore, it aims to draw out and analyze the recent and developing epistemological roles of the Holy Spirit being subtly championed from these different confessional perspectives.

Contemporary Academic Milieu

The Holy Spirit and his role are largely neglected within apologetic literature, methodology, and development. In order to balance the evangelical tendency toward rationalism, the outlook of this dissertation pursues apologetics keen on an active Spirit who is instrumental in grounding the knowledge of God. Biblical Christians have

something to say about perceptual experience and the Holy Spirit, and this project intends to canvass the relevant discussions.

From the outset, an obvious impediment needs to be recognized. The Spirit in general—and much more so his apologetic involvement—is disdained from *outside* the faith community. The apologetic work of the Spirit is not a well-received topic in the secular academy as a whole; thus, it is not traditionally an area where time and effort are expended.¹³⁹ Christian academicians often feel the pressure to permit non-Christian scholars to set the terms of discourse.¹⁴⁰ Christians can hold their personal views but only in their “Christian” contexts. Nicholas Wolterstorff understands this point, saying, “The Christian who is a scholar finds himself in two communities: the community of his fellow Christians and the community of his fellow scholars. Each has its own criteria for membership, its own characteristic practices, its own characteristic beliefs, its own characteristic training programs.”¹⁴¹ There is a clear secular-sacred demarcation.

¹³⁹This point is evidenced by the works of Phillip H. Wiebe. Wiebe, writing from a Christian perspective, attempts to offer arguments for the reality of spirits and arguments for the existence of God. A main contention in his work is that Christic visions and apparitions should be viewed as realistic in light of the dramatic changes that are brought about within those experiencing them. Yet, when he discusses the Holy Spirit as a possible explanation, he does so under the heading of “The ‘Holy Spirit’ Theory” and only takes four pages. First, the placement of Holy Spirit in quotation marks appears odd and unnecessary. Does Wiebe intend to present the Holy Spirit as ironical in so doing? It seems difficult to get to the bottom of his motives on this question apart from additional explanation from Wiebe. More to the point, the heading also refers to the Holy Spirit as a possible *theory*, which acknowledges that many readers will likely dismiss the Holy Spirit as mere conjecture. This isolates the problem with the Spirit when interacting with the *from without* critics. Phillip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 160-64.

¹⁴⁰Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Austin Farrer laments this reality: “But some philosophers, anyhow, are believers; so why should they not go quietly on with the work? Why should we always have our heads turned over our shoulders, watching to see how our *unbelieving colleagues* [emphasis mine] are taking it [speaking in regard to the belief and apprehension of God]?” Austin Farrer, “A Starting-Point for the Philosophical Examination of Theological Belief,” in *Faith and Logic: Oxford Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Basil Mitchell (Boston: Beacon, 1957), 11-12.

¹⁴¹Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 21.

Christian scholarship is relegated almost entirely to Christian communities. The serious discussion regarding the Holy Spirit in particular is rarely permitted in the non-Christian, scholarly community, and if he happens to surface he is quickly ridiculed from *outside* as fantasy, gullibility, and credulity.¹⁴²

Wolterstorff both concedes the split-community position that Christians find themselves in and lays down the challenge for those selfsame Christian scholars. He asserts, “Christian scholarship will be a poor and paltry thing, worth little attention, until the Christian scholar, under the control of his authentic commitment, devises theories that lead to promising, interesting, fruitful, challenging lines of research.”¹⁴³ Despite derision from the *outside*, Wolterstorff’s encouragement to press forward bears apropos on the Spirit apologetic deliberations examined here. And, Wolterstorff is not merely speaking at a theoretical, high level. He also speaks as a successful, contributing architect of Reformed Epistemology—one of the perspectives directly relating to the Spirit apologetic conversation.

Through the careful development and sophisticated argumentation found in perspectives like RE, Christian scholars meet, satisfy, and exceed Wolterstorff’s call.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²A telling example is found in Carl Sagan’s argument against the Christian community and its inane need for “special pleading” in order to make sense of the Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity. Sagan equates the belief of Christians with others who believe in channeling the dead, crop circles, and “psychic surgeons” who heal cancer. Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine, 1996), 213. The dismissive tone of Sagan is aptly implied by the title of the chapter where this discussion is found: “The Fine Art of Baloney Detection.”

¹⁴³Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds*, 106.

¹⁴⁴In the introduction to their apologetic anthology, William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint acknowledge the headway made by Wolterstorff and other Christian philosophers in rising to prominence in the academy. Edgar and Oliphint note that using their “philosophical apologetics,” the once reigning positivism no longer goes unchallenged. Instead, “faith and philosophical reasoning are joined [to the academy] once again.” William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 1, *To 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 4.

And, it is through such trailblazing perspectives that ideas—like Spirit apologetics—are more likely to take hold. This dissertation will offer RE as the first perspective to address the lack of Spirit apologetics in a contemporary sense; yet, other perspectives have been compelled to respond and participate in the conversation. RE, it is contended here, initiated much of what is discussed below, but the other perspectives were more than willing to respond. Taken together, these perspectives have laid out interesting and helpful arguments regarding the role of the Spirit in contending for the Christian faith.

CHAPTER 2

SPIRIT APOLOGETICS WITHIN REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

The Judeo-Christian God extends himself beyond mere propositional revelation in order to impart knowledge to humanity. Indeed, God offers an exceptional type of confirmatory presence of divine reality through the person of the Holy Spirit. This confirmatory presence is graciously delivered directly to humanity, and it results in the certain production of Christian faith. In other words, the Holy Spirit enables humanity to believe and appropriate the content of the Scriptures. Such a view is widely attested to in the Bible. Yet, despite its biblical prominence, the field of philosophical theology¹—particularly the category known as religious epistemology—rarely addresses this vital area.² However, a notable exception to this Spirit-Philosophy lacuna is found—within religious epistemology—in the influential work by the renowned philosopher Alvin Plantinga.³

¹Philosophical theology “is aimed primarily at theoretical understanding of the nature and attributes of God, and God’s relationship to the world and the things in the world.” Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.

²As cited above, Paul Moser acknowledges the dearth of material concerning the Holy Spirit as it relates to the field of philosophy. Paul K. Moser, “Cognitive Inspiration and Knowledge of God,” in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (New York: Routledge, 2003), 61.

³The Spirit-Philosophy lacuna is an indictment against practitioners in both theology and philosophy. Although he is addressing philosophical theology in general and not referring to the Spirit specifically, it is Alvin Plantinga that laments this present state of affairs: “Philosophical theology . . . is a matter of thinking about the central doctrines of the Christian faith from a philosophical perspective; it is a

Plantinga is best known for an array of impressive epistemic claims; most predominantly, he asserts that belief in God *might be* properly basic without the aid of foundational evidence or argumentation.⁴ On Plantinga’s religious epistemological view, what is needed is a nuanced appreciation of humanity’s cognition; whereby the warrant that generates belief (and, specifically, faith) is arrived at through what he terms “properly functioning” cognition. And, most significantly, Plantinga commissions the Holy Spirit as a vital cognitive—and corrective—mechanism.

For the purposes of this chapter, Plantinga’s development of the Holy Spirit as a special, responsive endowment to man’s malfunctioning sin problem is in view. The Holy Spirit, what Plantinga calls “the internal testimony,” “the invitation,” and “the inward instigation of the Holy Spirit,”⁵ leads humanity to embrace (with warrant) the central tenets of the Christian faith. The present chapter will approach the topic by briefly examining Plantinga’s understanding of the role of cognition for knowledge and by considering his assessment of the human predicament. Once these tasks are completed, the main objective aims to locate and critically comment on the apologetic work of the Holy Spirit in the cognitive functioning process. But, before proceeding, two important preliminary matters must first be addressed: an account of Plantinga and his

matter of employing the resources of philosophy to deepen our grasp and understanding of them. . . . Still, the theologians don’t seem to be doing the work in question. I therefore hope I will not be accused of interdisciplinary chauvinism if I point out that the best work in philosophical theology—in the English-speaking world and over the past quarter century—has been done not by the theologians but by the philosophers.” Alvin Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader*, ed. James F. Sennett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 340-41.

⁴For a detailed list of helpful resources to understand Plantinga’s epistemological position, see nn.120 and 128 from chapter 1 above. Emphasis added.

⁵Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 251.

relationship to apologetics will be examined and a précis of Plantinga's so-called Reformed Epistemology will be provided.

Plantinga and Apologetics

Plantinga's identity as a leading philosopher of religion is unchallenged.⁶ In truth, he is widely regarded as being the Christian philosopher *par excellence*. But, what about Plantinga as a Christian apologist? What is Plantinga's view of, relationship to, and legacy in Christian apologetics? Plenty has been said concerning Plantinga's contributions to Christian apologetics.⁷ Nicholas Wolterstorff, Plantinga's longtime friend and epistemological collaborator, described "the dominant theme in [Plantinga's] writing" as "responding to the charge that theistic belief in general, and Christian belief in particular, is irrational."⁸ James Beilby addresses this question by saying, "The perennial target of Plantinga's animadversions has been the evidentialist objection to belief in God, the idea that Christian belief is epistemically substandard because it lacks an appropriate kind and amount of evidential support."⁹ Plantinga's approach is plainly a

⁶In 1980, a *Time Magazine* article described Plantinga as "America's leading orthodox Protestant philosopher of God." "Modernizing the Case for God," *Time Magazine* 14, April 7, 1980, 66. Even atheist scholars like Julian Baggini recognize Plantinga's credibility through his rational positions. Julian Baggini and Jeremy Standgroom, *What Philosophers Think* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 117.

⁷The evidence for this statement is supported by the inclusion of an entire Plantingian section within Edgar and Oliphint's recent source reader for the topic of apologetics. William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 2, *From 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 585-620. For a single book-length treatment of Plantinga and apologetics, see Keith A. Mascord, *Alvin Plantinga and Christian Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006). Even more recently, a new and comprehensive apologetic book devotes a sizeable discussion to Plantinga and RE because of its wide reaching apologetic influence. John S. Feinberg, *Can You Believe It's True? Christian Apologetics in a Modern and Postmodern Era* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013) 197-248. Feinberg even goes so far as to say, "[Reformed Epistemology] has gained a hearing among both Christian and secular philosophers" (198).

⁸Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Then, Now, and Al," *Faith and Philosophy* 28 (2011): 253-66.

⁹James K. Beilby, "Plantinga's Model of Warranted Christian Belief," in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 126.

*negative apologetic.*¹⁰ Plantinga argues persuasively against objections to Christian theism with an acute readiness to defend the knowledge held by Christian believers.

Plantinga himself states,

One of my chief interests over the years has been in philosophical theology and apologetics: the attempt to defend Christianity (or more broadly, theism) against the various sorts of attacks brought against it. Christian apologetics, of course has a long history, going back at least to the Patristics of the second century A.D.; perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that, from a philosophical point of view, Christians and other theists have nothing whatever for which to apologize. I can scarcely remember a time when I wasn't aware of and interested in objections to Christianity and arguments against it.¹¹

Clearly, Plantinga feels compelled to defend Christianity against the challenges and indictments from unbelievers.¹² And, he sees an optimistic reason for doing so:

“[P]erhaps once they really see how weak their arguments are, they will be moved closer to [Christianity].”¹³

Plantinga’s view that unbelievers can be moved closer to a personalized hope (grounded in Christ) for their own condemned condition demonstrates an evangelistic tendency within his apologetic approach. He is not just concerned about fending off

¹⁰Kevin Meeker also recognizes the negative apologetic emphasis of the Reformed epistemologists: “[C]ontemporary Reformed epistemologists are especially eager to engage in ‘negative apologetics’. In other words, they enthusiastically endeavor to either rebut or undercut objections to theism.” Kevin Meeker, “William Alston’s Epistemology of Religious Experience,” *Philosophy of Religion* 35 (1994): 91.

¹¹Alvin Plantinga, “A Christian Life Partly Lived,” in *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of Eleven Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 68-69.

¹²The following Plantingian comment, taken from his spiritual autobiography, further demonstrates the foundation from which Plantinga develops his apologetic engagements. Speaking about his decision to depart from Harvard and about its emphasis—or focus—on modernity, Plantinga writes, “[I came to realize] the limning of a certain kind of stance to take in the face of these objections [those objections against Christianity found at Harvard]; one could take them seriously, see what underlies them, see them as in some ways profound, understand them at that level, sympathize with the deeply human impulses they embody, and nonetheless note that they need have little or no real claim, either on a human being as such or on a Christian. All that chronological talk about ‘man come of age’ and what modern science has shown is obviously, in the final analysis, little more than bluster.” *Ibid.*, 53-54.

¹³Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy at the End of the 20th Century,” 336.

attacks but also with introducing others to a new way of seeing. He desires to prepare them for and open them up to the knowledge of God. He does so through both negative and positive apologetic emphases, but the culmination of his apologetic endeavor is that belief is epistemically adequate without being derived from propositional evidences or natural theology.¹⁴ Here, a genuinely personal and experiential aspect is palpable.¹⁵

While explaining his purpose for writing *WCB*, his magnum opus, Plantinga acknowledges his apologetic aims: “[This] book is an exercise in apologetics and philosophy of religion, an attempt to demonstrate the failure of a range of objections to Christian belief.”¹⁶ Plantinga identifies apologetics as one of the two primary projects within *WCB*—the other being philosophy from a Christian perspective. And, he points to his “extended A/C model”—to be explained below—as the “centerpiece” of his project.¹⁷ For purposes herein, Plantinga’s extended A/C model is impelling due to its emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s role in delivering faithful knowledge. The development of this Spirit aspect in Plantinga’s apologetic will garner great attention in this chapter, and, in many ways, it will advance the discussion forward into the chapters and perspectives to come.

¹⁴James Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology: An Evaluation of Alvin Plantinga’s Religious Epistemology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 27. Beilby does make a point to distinguish—as per the wishes of Plantinga—this apologetic tack from that of fideism. He writes, “Many have assumed that Plantinga’s commitment to RE [Reformed Epistemology] makes his religious epistemology fideistic in nature. This charge, however, is based on flawed understanding of Plantinga’s claims” (*ibid.*).

¹⁵Plantinga discusses his own warrant-producing experiential encounter in “A Christian Life Partly Lived.” He says, “One gloomy evening (in January, perhaps) I was returning from dinner, walking past Widener Library to my fifth-floor room in Thayer Middle. . . . It was dark, windy, raining, nasty. But suddenly it was as if the heavens opened; I heard, so it seemed, music of overwhelming power and grandeur and sweetness; there was light of unimaginable splendor and beauty; it seemed I could see into heaven itself; and I suddenly saw or perhaps felt with great clarity and persuasion and conviction that the Lord was really there and was all I had thought. The effects of this experience lingered for a long time; I was still caught up in arguments about the existence of God, but they often seemed to me merely academic. . . . On many other occasions I have felt the presence of God, sometimes very powerfully” (51-52).

¹⁶Plantinga, *WCB*, xiii.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, xiv.

Précis: Reformed Epistemology

The particulars surrounding Reformed Epistemology need to be addressed before proceeding.¹⁸ Along with Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff and, to a lesser extent, William P. Alston emerge as the leading exponents of Reformed Epistemology.¹⁹ But, the respective approaches of these thinkers do not completely align.²⁰ As such, the focus on Plantinga serves two purposes—narrowing the field of study and eliminating divergent emphases. Even singling out Plantinga’s work is too difficult for an easy summary. Nevertheless, some central directives of Reformed Epistemology prove necessary. In what follows, a brief explication of Plantinga’s views on the following will be proffered: the movement away from natural theology, the rejection of narrow (also called “strong”) foundationalism, and the proper basicality of belief in God. Understanding these views is vital to appreciating his Spirit apologetic within the Reformed perspective.

Natural Theology Exodus

Broadly stated, natural theology is a hopeless endeavor in Plantinga’s

¹⁸“Reformed Epistemology” is the most common designation for this view because of Plantinga’s own early acceptance of this phrase in his article “On Reformed Epistemology,” but it has been referred to variously. See Alvin Plantinga, “On Reformed Epistemology,” *The Reformed Journal* 32 (1982). John M. Frame, emphasizing its development centuries after the Reformers, appends the word “New” at the beginning—entitling this view as “New Reformed Epistemology.” John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 382. Moreover, it has also been dubbed “the Basic Belief Apologetic” by Christian philosopher Terence Penelhum. Terence Penelhum, *Reason and Religious Faith* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 94.

¹⁹Returning again to Plantinga’s “A Christian Life Partly Lived,” Plantinga there offered his “regret” that his epistemological project had become known as “Reformed Epistemology” or “Calvinist Epistemology” (67). He acknowledges some unnecessary divisions and disputations that resulted. And, since this dissertation discusses William Alston under a different perspective, the “Reformed” term does seem somewhat limiting and exclusive.

²⁰Roger Trigg, *Rationality and Religion: Does Faith Need Reason?* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 117.

estimation. The best found definition for natural theology—provided by Plantinga himself—is the attempt to provide proofs or arguments for the existence of God.²¹ Plantinga notes the long and impressive history of this enterprise, but he isolates Reformed or Calvinist theologians as largely adopting attitudes that “ranged from tepid endorsement, through indifference, to suspicion, hostility, and outright accusations of blasphemy.”²² And, it is not surprising that Plantinga and his Reformed epistemic views align with such unfavorable descriptions. Plantinga argues against and seeks to undermine the importance of basing one’s belief in God upon so-called proofs or evidences. As shown below, he prefers to argue instead for a natural disposition to believe in God. He asserts, “What the Reformers meant to hold is that it is entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all; in this respect belief in God resembles belief in the past, in the existence of other persons, and in the existence of material objects.”²³

Plantinga’s main issue with natural theology centers on its evidential and inferential requirements for ascertaining knowledge of God. In distancing himself from

²¹ Alvin Plantinga, “The Prospects for Natural Theology,” in *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 5, *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. James Toberlin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1991), 287. Philip L. Quinn provides a more thorough definition of natural theology: “It is, of course, one thing to elaborate a coherent concept of God; it is quite another to know, apart from revelation, that such a being actually exists. A proof of the existence of God would yield such knowledge, and it is the task of natural theology to evaluate arguments that purport to be such proofs. . . . Many have hoped that such natural religious knowledge could be universally communicated and would justify a form of religious practice that would appeal to all. . . . The history of natural theology has produced a bewildering variety of arguments for the existence of God. The four main types are these: ontological arguments, cosmological arguments, teleological arguments, and moral arguments.” Philip L. Quinn, “Philosophy of Religion,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 697.

²² Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 63. Plantinga was influenced by the Dutch Reformed attitude toward natural theology. He does not argue that all Reformed theologians dismissed the usefulness of natural theology. He writes, “A few Reformed thinkers—B. B. Warfield, for example [and most of the Old Princetonians for that matter]—endorse theistic proofs” (*ibid.*).

²³ *Ibid.*, 17.

this tradition, Plantinga turns to historical figures like John Calvin, Herman Bavinck, and Karl Barth to augment support for his central contention that belief in God is “properly basic.”²⁴ James Beilby aptly characterizes the view of the Reformed epistemologist on properly basic beliefs: “The ability to experience God and form well-grounded beliefs about his existence is an innate God-given ability, part of our natural noetic constitution, much the same as other universally accepted belief-forming practices.”²⁵ In his intentional movement away from natural theology, Plantinga undercuts classical foundationalism since the evidentialist objection to belief rests upon it.²⁶

Classical Foundationalism Undercut

Classical foundationalism is the two-category view holding that “some propositions are properly basic and some are not.” In terms of those propositions that are *not* properly basic, Plantinga states, “Those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, ultimately, to what *is* properly basic. The existence of God, furthermore, is not among the propositions that are properly basic; hence a person is rational in accepting theistic belief only if he has evidence for it.”²⁷ As noted above, Plantinga rejects the notion that belief in God is *not* properly basic; to the contrary, his primary argument is that belief in God is properly basic. Therefore,

²⁴Ibid., 71-73. For an extended discussion of Plantinga’s reference to and use of these thinkers—in buttressing his movement away from natural theology, the third section of his “Reason and Belief in God” article is helpful (63-73).

²⁵Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology*, 27.

²⁶A succinct definition of classical foundational is found in this statement: “Classical foundationalism states that only beliefs which are incorrigible, self-evident, or evident to the senses can be justified without appeal to other beliefs; beliefs not justified in this fashion must be properly inferred ultimately from those.” Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. Vanarragon, eds., *Evidence and Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-4.

²⁷Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 48. Emphasis in original.

Plantinga—and Reformed Epistemology—disburses a significant effort to undercut this classical strain of foundationalism.²⁸

Plantinga’s main argument against classical foundationalism revolves around the constraints placed on properly basic beliefs by CF adherents. According to Plantinga, the CF contention is that “*A* is properly basic for me only if *A* is self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses for me.”²⁹ The issue is not whether a proposition is properly basic if it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses—Plantinga concedes the legitimacy of that claim—but whether “a proposition is properly basic *only if* it meets this condition.”³⁰ In knocking down this CF contention, Plantinga does so in two ways. First, he provides counterexamples of beliefs that appear properly basic but are ruled out by CF—such as memory beliefs—because they are not self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. Second, Plantinga shows how the CF restrictive criterion is guilty of irrationalism itself because its operating proposition—*A* is properly basic for me only if *A* is self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses for me—is neither self-evident, incorrigible, nor evident to the senses. Thus, Plantinga levies a devastating blow to CF as possessing what he calls “self-referential difficulties.”³¹

²⁸Dewey Hoitenga provides an assessment of Plantinga’s understanding of CF. He describes Plantinga’s view as representing a conjunction of ancient and medieval foundationalism and modern foundationalism: “Ancient and medieval philosophers typically . . . restrict properly basic beliefs to what is evident to the senses and what is self-evident. What marks ancient and medieval foundationalism is not the descriptive claim that such beliefs are basic beliefs, but the normative claim that these two kinds of beliefs are the only kinds of beliefs that can be properly basic beliefs. . . . Modern foundationalism agrees with ancient and medieval foundationalism on the self-evident truths of reason, but rejects what is evident to the senses in favor of what appears to the senses. . . . What appears to the senses is different from what is evident to the senses by being ‘incorrigible.’” Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr., *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 181-82. Plantinga merges these two views together because of their restrictive criterions for what constitutes a properly basic belief.

²⁹Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 60.

³⁰Ibid., 59.

³¹Ibid., 59-62.

Plantinga's objections to natural theology and CF pave the way for his assertion that belief in God is indeed properly basic.

Proper Basicity of Belief in God

Now, the primary controversy surrounding Reformed Epistemology pertains to its insistence that Christians do not need evidentiary support for their beliefs in order to garner epistemic *justification*. Following from what has been said, Plantinga's central epistemological thesis maintains,

[T]here is no reason at all to think that Christian belief requires argument or propositional evidence, if it is to be *justified*. Christians—indeed, well-educated, contemporary, and culturally aware Christians—can be *justified*, so I shall argue, even if they don't hold their beliefs on the basis of arguments or evidence, even if they aren't aware of any good arguments for their beliefs, and even if, indeed, there aren't any.³²

As this quote reveals, Plantinga is concerned with the *justification* of belief; roughly, man “is within his epistemic rights, is not irresponsible, is violating no epistemic or other duties in holding that belief in that [the basic] way.”³³ But, differentiation must be made between this early idea of justification and what Plantinga later comes to mean by *warrant*.³⁴ This shift from justification to warrant is not fully clarified, but it appears to

³²Plantinga, *WCB*, 93 (emphasis added). The simplicity of the matter is astounding. Christians can actually be rational apart from any and all evidence for no other reason than that they hold that belief in God can be properly basic.

³³Ibid., 178.

³⁴According to Beilby, Plantinga's deliberate shift in language from justification to warrant appears in Alvin Plantinga, “Justification in the 20th Century,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (Fall 1990): 45-71. Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology*, 71. Briefly, Beilby characterizes the change: “In [his] early works, the term Plantinga used to define that which separates merely true belief from knowledge was . . . ‘positive epistemic status.’ Eventually, Plantinga came to use a term which he still uses today: ‘warrant.’ The importance of this shift is clearly seen. . . . Plantinga distinguishes between two kinds of epistemic qualities a belief can possess for a person. First, there is ‘positive epistemic status’ (which he later calls ‘warrant’), ‘a normative property that comes in degrees enough of which is what epistemizes true belief’ (i.e., converts merely true belief into knowledge). This ‘conversion property’ is contrasted with what Plantinga call ‘permissive justification’ or the species of epistemic status one has ‘such that in accepting the proposition in question he is entirely within his epistemic rights and flouting no epistemic

stem from a tactical change. Whereas Plantinga was initially interested in answering the evidentialist objection to God (playing defense against charges of belief in God as unjustified), he ultimately realized that his theological convictions necessitated a more positive, robust and comprehensive development of a strictly religious epistemology. As such, Plantinga's idea of warrant is introduced and trumpeted.

Plantinga echoes the philosophical stance commonly held since Plato's *Theaetetus* that something—some further quality—distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief. In Plantinga's own words,

What further quality or quantity must a true belief have, if it is to constitute knowledge? This is one of the main questions of epistemology. (No doubt that is why it is called ‘theory of knowledge’.) Along with nearly all subsequent thinkers, Plato takes it for granted that knowledge is at least true belief: you know a proposition *p* only if you believe it, and only if it is true. But Plato goes on to point out that true belief, while necessary for knowledge, is clearly not sufficient: it is entirely possible to believe something that is true without knowing it.³⁵

It is warrant that fulfills the need for some “further quality.” Warranted beliefs are formally defined by Plantinga as follows: “Put in a nutshell, then, a belief has warrant for a person *S* only if that belief is produced in *S* by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for *S*'s kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth.”³⁶

duty'.... The key difference lies in their relationship to knowledge. While the former is by definition intimately connected with knowledge, Plantinga came to see the latter as not" (70-71).

³⁵Plantinga, *WCB*, 153.

³⁶Ibid., 156. Richard Swinburne summarizes the main stipulations for understanding the meaning of warrant: “A belief *B* has warrant if and only if: (1) it is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly, (2) in a cognitive environment sufficiently similar to that for which the faculties were designed, (3) according to a design plan aimed at the production of true beliefs, when (4) there is a high statistical probability of such beliefs being true.” Richard Swinburne, “Plantinga on Warrant,” *Religious Studies* 37 (2001): 203.

Theistic belief therefore is properly basic without relying on evidential support from other, more fundamental beliefs.³⁷ And, these beliefs enjoy warrant—and count as genuine knowledge—when produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties that work according to a design plan.³⁸

In the sections to follow, the warrant for belief in God will be explored as it relates to the process of cognitive functionality within image-bearers. The Reformed perspective that holds influence over Plantinga will become quite apparent, and the inescapable impact of sin upon the human cognitive condition will be drawn out—introducing cognitive malfunction into the picture. The final—and most noteworthy—section will identify the Holy Spirit as *the* necessary component for cognitive renewal. This latter section on the Holy Spirit will also highlight the apologetic usefulness of Plantinga’s thoughts.

The Role of Cognition

“Knowledge or cognition,” Plantinga says likening these ideas, “involves mental entities.”³⁹ Cognition, in Plantingian conception, is inseparable from the proper

³⁷“‘Properly basic’ is simply Plantinga’s phrase to designate a belief ‘such that it is rational to accept it without accepting it on the basis of any other propositions or beliefs at all.’” Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 72. This general theistic belief will be extended below to include specifically Christian belief(s).

³⁸This idea of design plan plays a unique role in Plantinga’s thought, and it will be explored further below. But, for now, it is important to note, as Richard Gale does, that Plantinga used his first two *Warrant* books to lay the foundation for this design plan: “He [Plantinga] makes a powerful case in the two earlier *Warrant* books that such beliefs are warranted when the faculty that produces them is functioning properly in the right sort of epistemic environment according to a design plan aimed at seeking truth.” Richard M. Gale, “Evil and Alvin Plantinga,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 62.

³⁹Plantinga, *WCB*, 298.

functionality of man's cognitive faculties.⁴⁰ Knowledge (acquired) is dependent upon cognition.⁴¹ Moreover and more important for a distinctly Christian knowledge, there is another Plantingian essential that correlates with cognition: "A *design plan* that is successfully aimed at truth."⁴² Plantinga's cognitive perspective requires an immanent view of the doctrine of creation. It is in light of creation and design that Plantinga permits himself to assert and develop the Reformed emphasis on *sensus divinitatis*. These notions—properly functioning cognitive faculties, design plan, and *sensus divinitatis*—will occupy the discussion of this section.

Cognitive Faculties, Properly Functioning

Central to Plantinga's mature religious epistemology is this notion of cognitive faculties. The cognitive faculties—also distinguished as cognitive mechanisms

⁴⁰A brief explanation of what cognition means will prove instructive for reading this section and grasping Plantinga's thought. Cognition is, typically, the subject matter addressed within the field of cognitive psychology. The first complete book devoted to this area defines cognition as referring "to all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, stored, recovered and used." Ulric Neisser, *Cognitive Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), 4. More recently, it is obvious that the understanding of cognition has narrowed and spread to other fields. This shift has particularly impacted philosophical epistemology. Cognition is to psychology as epistemology is to philosophy. See Alvin Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). Plantinga's emphasis on connecting cognition and epistemology is identified through his stated aim in the Warrant trilogy: "My topic, therefore, is the theory of knowledge. In the theory of knowledge, naturally enough, we try to come to an understanding of knowledge. . . . Contemporary epistemologists seldom focus attention on the nature of this element." Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York; Oxford University Press, 1993), v-vi.

⁴¹James Ross, "Willing Belief and Rational Faith," in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, ed. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. Vanarragon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14-15. According to Ross, there is a clear reliance on cognition in supplying knowledge. He writes, "Our knowledge . . . originates in sensation that by complex biological programming turns sensation and desire into perceptive action that is instinctively aimed at [our] benefit. . . . Our own constant cognition is by habitual willing reliance on perception, memory, imagination, reasoning and action aimed at our uses and peculiarly human" (14). He continues, "We . . . rely willingly and with satisfaction on our faculties, on sight, hearing, touch, etc, and we gain things" (15). And, Ross goes on to conclude the following: "Our knowledge is . . . what we also call cognition (*cognito*), the intelligent apprehension that something is so (like knowing the date or one's age, or that one can lift the cup or climb the stairs), an apprehension that is not just accidentally related to its being so, but rather is systematically useful because it conveys what is so" (16).

⁴²Plantinga, *WCB*, 156.

and epistemic faculties—are, according to Plantinga, “my belief-forming and belief-maintaining apparatus or powers.”⁴³ Although not an exhaustive list, the following modules provide clarification on what Plantinga sees as significant units of belief-formation: “self-knowledge, memory, perception, knowledge of other persons, testimony, *a priori* knowledge, induction, and probability.”⁴⁴ He is building his cognitive argument from an accepted position within psychology on the mind’s role in generating knowledge. From a secular perspective, psychology already holds and agrees with the language and use of cognitive faculties.⁴⁵ It could be said that Plantinga is cleverly establishing common ground with psychology to broaden and spread interaction with—and hopefully respectability to—his religious epistemology.⁴⁶ Or, conversely, it could be said that Plantinga is merely pandering and undertaking a lost cause.

The important point related to cognition is the assertion that beliefs are produced and sustained through the warrant afforded by cognitive faculties. This

⁴³ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 48. Chaps. 3 through 8 in *Warrant and Proper Function* explore these faculties in greater detail. Plantinga himself acknowledges the “incompleteness” of this list (*ibid.*). For a briefer account of cognitive faculties, Plantinga gives a synopsis in *WCB* (146-47).

⁴⁵ Mario Bunge and Rubén Ardila, both secular academicians, refer to the same sort of modules—perceptions, memories, etc.—in describing the tasks of cognition. Mario Bunge and Rubén Ardila, *Philosophy of Psychology* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987), 207ff. This work was specifically chosen for two reasons. First, it predates Plantinga’s Warrant trilogy, which shows that Plantinga was inching into established psychological thought. Second, this book in particular draws a longstanding connection between philosophy and psychology: “Psychology used to be a branch of philosophy, from which it is said to have gained independence in about 1850. . . . [W]hether or not they know or like it, psychologists hold and utilize a number of psychological ideas, particularly on the nature of mind and science” (3). In reference to this latter reason, it is significant because very little psychological assessment of Plantinga is available.

⁴⁶ James Spiegel holds to such a position. In connecting Plantinga’s discussion on cognitive faculties with philosophy and psychology, Spiegel seems to hold this position, saying, “Alvin Plantinga’s *Warrant* trilogy . . . contains a surprisingly rich Christian moral psychology.” James S. Spiegel, “Wisdom,” in *Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life*, ed. Michael W. Austin and R. Douglas Geivett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 58.

discussion is vital because Plantinga will ultimately offer the “internal instigation of the Holy Spirit” as a cognitive mechanism producing warranted belief for Christians. The progression toward the work of the Holy Spirit is first initiated in the language of *proper function*.⁴⁷ Proper function is fundamental to the central ways in which people think about knowledge. Plantinga states, “These faculties or processes are the instruments or organs, as we might put it, whereby we come to have knowledge. . . . Like any other instruments or organs, they can *work properly* or *improperly*; they can function well or malfunction.”⁴⁸ Genuine knowledge—or warranted true beliefs—necessarily develops from faculties working properly. And, by someone’s cognitive faculties working properly, Plantinga understands such faculties as functioning in a way that their Creator designed them to function.

The Cognitive Design Plan

“Proper function and design,” Plantinga contends, “go hand in hand.”⁴⁹ A clear demarcation is being made between theistic and non-theistic points of view.⁵⁰ Having dismissed the necessity for natural theology and classical foundationalism, Plantinga now stakes out his ground for a legitimate religious epistemology that is not, in the words of Charles Taliaferro, dependent on vindication from “an impartial, secular

⁴⁷“Proper function” is very simply defined by Plantinga as “the absence of dysfunction or pathology.” Plantinga, *WCB*, 110.

⁴⁸Ibid., 146. Plantinga also says, “Human beings and their organs are so constructed that there is a way that they should work, a way they are supposed to work, a way they work right” (154).

⁴⁹Ibid., 154.

⁵⁰Although Plantinga’s Christian God is clearly in view, the language of “design” does not wholly imply that the Christian God—the designer—is necessary for our faculties. Plantinga also acknowledges evolution as a potential designer of our existence and our cognitive faculties. The purpose of mentioning evolution is to openly recognize different perspectives or possibilities. Ibid., 146.

review.”⁵¹ To introduce, discuss, and promote design—as Plantinga does—is to argue openly and positively from a theistic perspective.

In an article published the same year as the first two volumes of the *Warrant* trilogy, entitled “Divine Knowledge,” Plantinga refers to the relationship between faculties and design as “*the cognitive design plan*. ”⁵² Even though this has the ring of a nuanced teleological argument for God’s existence (such that would clearly contravene his animus toward natural theology), Plantinga is in no way employing such a strategy.⁵³ His invocation of “design” relies on a conditional proposition. *If* God exists, then cognitive faculties would be created to produce true knowledge.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Plantinga is not arguing for God’s existence; rather, he is subtly introducing his Reformed, theistic perspective by *assuming* God exists. The assumption Plantinga makes for God’s existence is cast in the language of a theistic perspective:

⁵¹Charles Taliaferro, *Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion since the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 371.

⁵²Alvin Plantinga, “Divine Knowledge,” in *Christian Perspectives on Religious Knowledge*, ed. C. Stephen Evans and Merold Westphal (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 53.

⁵³However, it needs to be said that Plantinga does in fact—despite any contravening statements—promote and appreciate the use of arguments for God’s existence. Rather than trying to unravel this seemingly contradictory stance, Plantinga explains himself best: “I’ve argued . . . elsewhere that neither theistic nor full-blown Christian belief requires argument for justification or rationality or (if true) warrant. . . . That said, of course, it doesn’t follow that there aren’t any good theistic arguments, and as a matter of fact . . . there are good theistic arguments—at least two dozen or so.” Alvin Plantinga, “Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203. Additionally, Plantinga has more recently written a book addressing the presumed conflict between science and religion. Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Therein, Plantinga does make a more direct connection between “fine-tuning” and biological design arguments for the existence of God and his warrant project (194, 244). He even quips, “Discounting those Humean fantasies [and other fanciful views] is in effect to endorse the proposition that if there is a designer, there is the Designer. And hence any support for design would be support for theism” (264).

⁵⁴Richard Swinburne brings this conditionality to the fore: “*If* God made us, our faculties function properly *if* they function in the way God designed them to function” (emphases added). Richard Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23.

From a theistic point of view (and who but a theist would be interested in our problem?) the first thing to bear in mind is that we human beings have been *created*, and created in the image of God. In crucial respects we resemble him. . . . He has knowledge; in fact, he has the maximum degree of knowledge. He holds beliefs (even if his way of holding beliefs is not the same as ours). He is omniscient: he believes every truth and believes no falsehoods. He therefore has the sort of grasp of concepts, properties, and propositions necessary for holding beliefs. . . .

In setting out to create human beings in his image, then, God set out to create beings who could reflect something of his capacity to grasp concepts and hold beliefs. . . . [H]is aim was to create them in such a way that they can reflect something of his capacity for holding *true* beliefs, for attaining *knowledge*. . . . God has therefore created us with cognitive faculties designed to enable us to achieve true belief with respect to a wide variety of propositions. These faculties work in such a way that under the appropriate circumstances we form the appropriate belief—better, the appropriate belief is *formed* in us (emphases in original).⁵⁵

Humanity's knowledge, in other words, depends on what God knows—namely, his design plan and how to implement it.⁵⁶ Such implementation of the design plan is actually the result of an implantation. And, this implantation leads in to Plantinga's next creational notion.

⁵⁵Plantinga, "Divine Knowledge," 50-51. This article does not primarily cover religious epistemology. But, in looking at God's knowledge, Plantinga provides a helpful contrast by first accounting for human knowledge.

⁵⁶Such assumptions seem to echo to some degree the thoughts found in presuppositionalist apologetics. K. Scott Oliphint has recently (2013) authored an apologetic book that promotes presuppositional apologetics under a new label. Rather than *presuppositional* he prefers to repackage all that this apologetic view has come to be known as under the term *covenantal*. Oliphint describes what a covenantal apologetic seeks to do: "It seeks to take the truth of Scripture as the proper diagnosis of the unbelieving condition *and* challenge the unbeliever to make sense of the world he has made. Scripture tells us that a world built on the foundation of unbelief does not exist; it is a figment of an unbelieving imagination, and thus is basically irrational." K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith*, by K. Scott Oliphint (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 46. Oliphint sounds a bit like Plantinga. Where Plantinga is talking about the design plan, Oliphint speaks similarly—only he refers to God's creation as the design. Oliphint writes, "There is a great chasm fixed between God and his creatures, and the result of such a chasm is that we, all of humanity, could *never* have *any* fruition of God, unless he saw fit, voluntarily (graciously), to descend to us by way of covenant. That covenant includes God's revealing himself in and through his creation, including his word, to man" (40-41). Oliphint calls humanity—as seems fitting—"covenant-breakers" (42). As such, man needs to embrace his covenant relationship with God in order to allow him to reestablish man's knowledge of God (43ff). Although Plantinga is on record as distancing himself from Cornelius Van Til and his brand of presuppositionalism, the related emphasis between Plantinga and Oliphint on design is an interesting conversation that could be explored further.

The *Sensus Divinitatis*

The *sensus divinitatis* stems from the Reformed emphasis that humans were designed with belief in God.⁵⁷ Plantinga attributes the original *sensus divinitatis* idea to Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. Plantinga states, “Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin concur on the claim that there is a kind of natural knowledge of God (and anything on which Calvin and Aquinas are in accord is something to which we had better pay careful attention).”⁵⁸ In actuality, Plantinga attributes the *SD* idea more to Calvin, but he does so by demonstrating that Calvin developed (advanced further) a theme first employed by Thomas. Indeed, Thomas—regarding humanity’s desire for and acquisition of knowledge—remarks, “To know in a general and confused way that God exists is implanted in us by nature.”⁵⁹ Then, making use of and expanding on Thomas’ “implanted in us” concept, Calvin writes,

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an *awareness of divinity*. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty. . . . Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that he is their maker, they are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to honor him and to consecrate their lives to his will. . . . There is, as the eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep seated conviction that there is a God. . . . Therefore, since from the beginning of the world there has been no region, no city, in short, no household, that could do without religion, there lies in this a tacit confession of a *sense of deity* inscribed in the hearts of all.⁶⁰

⁵⁷A brief explanation of *SD* is “a natural, inborn sense of God, or of divinity, that is the origin and source of the world’s religions.” Plantinga, *WCB*, 148. A good extended explanation of *SD* is offered in Paul Helm, *Faith and Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 177-204.

⁵⁸Ibid., 170.

⁵⁹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Part I, Question 2, Article 1, Reply to Objection 1. trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1920).

⁶⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.3.1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battle, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 44. Emphasis added.

Now, Plantinga, subsequent to quoting Calvin, connects the *SD* to his warranted belief in God: “[T]he basic idea, I think, is that there is a kind of faculty or a cognitive mechanism, what Calvin calls a *sensus divinitatis* or sense of divinity, which in a wide variety of circumstances produces in us beliefs about God.”⁶¹

When the cognitive faculties—Plantinga is now including the *sensus divinitatis* to faculties like self-knowledge, memory, perception, and testimony—function according to the design plan (properly), belief in God exhibits warrant over any and all atheological viewpoints.⁶² The capacity to possess knowledge of God is part of the “original cognitive equipment” with which humanity was created by God.⁶³ Central to Plantinga’s religious epistemology, as James Beilby points out, “is his insistence that the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are not inferential beliefs. One does not see a beautiful sunset and *infer* from that ‘beauty’ that ‘only God could have created all this’. Rather, the belief arises immediately and spontaneously.”⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the *SD* within mankind “has been compromised, weakened, reduced, smothered, overlaid, or impeded by sin and its consequences.”⁶⁵

⁶¹Plantinga, *WCB*, 172.

⁶²At this point, it must be said that Plantinga makes a clear distinction between theistic belief in general and Christian belief in a specific sense. The former relates to a belief in God (Jewish-Christian), and it coincides with what Plantinga refers to as the Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model. Plantinga, *WCB*, 168. It is not until Plantinga extends the A/C model that the Holy Spirit will enter into his epistemological equation—and Plantinga’s model commits to a particularly Christian sense.

⁶³Ibid., 180.

⁶⁴Beilby, “Plantinga’s Model of Warranted Christian Belief,” 129-30. Paul Helm helpfully describes Plantinga’s version of foundationalism, saying, “A person is rational, entirely within his epistemic rights, in believing that (say) God has created the world, even if he has no argument for this. Such a belief can form part of the foundations of his noetic structure.” Helm, *Faith and Understanding*, 186. Furthermore, Helm uniquely identifies this version of foundationalism as “theistic foundationalism,” and he too reemphasizes the assertion/claim of Plantinga that attributes this viewpoint to John Calvin (186).

⁶⁵Plantinga, *WCB*, 184. Ruinous damage was inflicted upon the *sensus divinitatis* as a result of original sin (198, 205). The federal headship of Adam (1 Cor 15:22 and Rom 5:15-21) is clearly in view.

The Human Predicament—“Sunk in Sin”

Plantinga’s honesty and forthrightness in discussing the problem of sin is without any pretenses or equivocation.⁶⁶ Citing Calvin, the *SD* is shown to affect—and have great impact on—humanity in multiple ways:

Lest anyone, then, be excluded from access to happiness, he not only sowed in men’s minds that seed of religion of which we have spoken, but revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him. . . . But upon his individual works he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory . . . wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory.⁶⁷

The *sensus divinitatis* (here Calvin uses a correlative term “seed of religion” or *semen religionis*) is shown to operate both internally—“sowed in men’s minds”—and externally—“in the whole workmanship of the universe.” Belief in God was the natural human condition; yet, when sin enters the world, immediately the ability of the *SD* to trigger or occasion theistic belief becomes damaged. The belief in God that was designed to arise immediately, without inference or evidence, is no longer capable of doing so according to its original design.⁶⁸ Sin disables, or perhaps incapacitates is a better term, the properly functioning awareness of God.

Plantinga stops short of calling the effects of sin irreparable. To the contrary, sin merely alters the status from “properly functioning” to “*improperly functioning*”

⁶⁶Ibid., 269. The section phrase—“Sunk in Sin”—was directly taken from *WCB*.

⁶⁷Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.1. Plantinga offers this same comment from Calvin as a part of his discussion on the manner in which humanity receives a natural disposition to occasion theistic belief. Plantinga, *WCB*, 173-74.

⁶⁸Plantinga discusses the problem, asserting, “The condition of sin involves damage to the *sensus divinitatis*, but not obliteration; it remains partially functional in most of us. We therefore typically have some grasp of God’s presence and properties and demands, but this knowledge is covered over, impeded, suppressed. We are prone to hate God but, confusingly, in some way also inclined to love and seek him.” Plantinga, *WCB*, 210.

cognitive mechanisms. “There is,” Plantinga writes, “such a thing as cognitive disease; there is blindness, deafness, inability to tell right from wrong, insanity; and there are analogues of these conditions with respect to the operation of the *sensus divinitatis*.⁶⁹” So, in the original epistemic state, humanity would enjoy (as Adam did) belief in God as part of the properly functioning *SD* faculty. As it is, however, it is unbelievers—those in the state of disbelief toward God—who chiefly display epistemic malfunction. Mankind fails to believe in God on account of dysfunction—wrought by their sin—of the *sensus divinitatis*. The *SD* is diseased and in need of a cure, which Plantinga finds in the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Internal Instigation of the Holy Spirit

As stated in the preceding pages, the cognitive design plan of God has delivered the capacity for immediate belief in God via an implanted cognitive faculty—namely, the *sensus divinitatis*. Through the entrance of sin into the human condition, man lost his Godward awareness capacity. It is therefore incumbent upon God to provide a remedy for said sin and its ruinous effects—in keeping with his covenant promises. Plantinga states, “This remedy is made available [by God] in the life, atoning suffering and death, and resurrection of his divine Son, Jesus Christ.”⁷⁰ Plantinga brings Jesus Christ, the divine Son, into his epistemological conversation for the first time. The work of Jesus is vital to understanding the *internal instigation of the Holy Spirit* because it is only through faith in Christ—mediated or facilitated by the IIHS—that true knowledge of

⁶⁹Ibid., 184.

⁷⁰Ibid., 205. Plantinga is not simply calling for a restoration of the original Aquinas/Calvin model that delivers belief in God. He is now offering the “Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model” alluded to above, n.62.

God is restored.⁷¹ Plantinga writes,

God proposed and instituted a plan of salvation: the life, atoning suffering and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate second person of the trinity. The result for us is the possibility of salvation from sin and renewed relationship with God. Now . . . God needed a way to inform us—us human beings of many different times and places—of the scheme of salvation he has graciously made available. No doubt he could have done this in many different ways; in fact he chose to do so by way of a three-tiered cognitive process [which includes Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and faith].⁷²

In bringing this chapter to a head, this final section will locate Plantinga's apologetic use of the Holy Spirit in the cognitive functioning process. The approach for this final task will center on these two areas: the IIHS and its role of renewal and the IIHS as the cognitive deliverance of faith.

The IIHS and Cognitive Renewal

Bernard Ramm credits the development of the *internal witness of the Holy Spirit* doctrine to Calvin. Rather qualifiedly, Ramm states, "Where Calvin derived this doctrine is not known. It appears only in seed form in the first edition of the *Institutes*, so we may infer that he did not enter into his Protestant faith with this doctrine fully

⁷¹The theological language of *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti* is surmised from what is being said here. Now, the *testimonium* is primarily applied for the grounding of the principle of Scripture—where the Divine revelation in Christ becomes the real actual Word to man. Indeed, Graham Cole defines the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti*: "The Spirit's witness within the believer as to the truth of scriptural revelation. Graham Arthur Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 288. Yet, such language as that of "inward work," "witness," "testimony," "inward illumination," "inward persuasion," and the like—known collectively in latin *testimonium* phrase—is most notably found in and inspired by Thomas and, especially, Calvin. Thomas writes, "The believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of divine teaching confirmed by miracles and, what is more, *by the inward instinct of the divine invitation.*" Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* II, q. 2, a. 9, reply ob. 3. As for Calvin, he more precisely states the following: "The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed *by the inward testimony of the Spirit.*" Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4. Ultimately, Plantinga—as developed above—looks to and relies on these "A/C" connections in order to advance the role of the Spirit of God in the grounding of belief.

⁷²Plantinga, *WCB*, 243.

developed.”⁷³ Yet, Plantinga sees the skeletal form of the IIHS in Thomas Aquinas.⁷⁴ In relating this IIHS development, Plantinga then moves to advance the value of—or perhaps *use of*—the IIHS for the explicit purpose of his philosophical task, which is to show that Christians are completely justified, rational, and warranted in holding specifically Christian beliefs.⁷⁵ Unlike the *SD*, which was given as a universal endowment to the human race (at creation), the IIHS is given to a particular elect in order to cognitively convey certainty regarding the central tenets of Christian belief. The fall of man ushered in severe damage to the *SD* faculty, and the resultant sin and depravity necessitated a clear and resolute remedy.

Plantinga argues not that man’s cognitive abilities were completely obliterated in the Fall; rather, they remained partially useful.⁷⁶ But, human beings should seek to transcend this damaged and partial cognitive state. On Plantinga’s model, the only possibility of transcending such damage rests on the pervasive work of the Holy Spirit.

According to Plantinga,

[T]he central divine response to our predicament is the incarnation and atonement: the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the divine son of God. . . . Another part of God’s response to our condition, however, is . . . the testimony of the Holy Spirit. . . . By virtue of the inward instigation of the Holy Spirit, we see

⁷³Bernard Ramm, *The Witness of the Spirit: An Essay on the Contemporary Relevance of the Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 12.

⁷⁴Plantinga, *WCB*, 249.

⁷⁵Plantinga recognizes the unscholarly appearance of his ideas, and he responds to his potential critics regarding his appeal to theological concepts: “[My] model, incidentally, will essentially involve such theological notions as *faith* and the work of the Holy Spirit. Some may find it scandalous that theological ideas should be taken seriously in a book on philosophy; I find it no more scandalous than the ingestion into philosophy of scientific ideas from (for example) quantum mechanics, cosmology, and evolutionary biology.” Plantinga, *WCB*, 200.

⁷⁶Ibid., 210. Plantinga’s argument says, “We . . . have some grasp of God’s presence and properties and demands, but this knowledge is covered over, impeded, suppressed. We are prone to hate God but, confusingly, in some way also inclined to love and seek him; we are prone to hate our neighbor, to see her as a competitor for scarce goods, but also, paradoxically, to prize her and love her” (210).

that the teachings of Scripture are true. This work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is a very special kind of cognitive instrument or agency; it is a belief producing process, all right, but one that is very much out of the ordinary.⁷⁷

It seems that Plantinga intends to contrast the *SD* and the IIHS; the former being associated with man's original epistemic faculties while the latter being associated with God's special response to man's fallenness. This contrast highlights a specific change that needs to take place within every image-bearer if knowledge about God is to be recovered and restored. However, the contrast is short-lived in the sense that the IIHS generates the renewal of man's *SD* faculty. In other words, the IIHS is not said to replace the *sensus divinitatis*—as would be expected of a distinct and separate faculty—but rather to repair it. It is through the IIHS that the cognitive knowledge of God is restored.⁷⁸ And, it must be stated that this restored knowledge of God is now a specifically Christian knowledge of God—due to a specifically Christocentric solution for man's predicament.

The IIHS becomes necessary—returning momentarily to a previous section—because the original, designed cognitive abilities of man are mangled and blunted by sin. In his graciousness, God has seen fit to offer “a very special kind of cognitive instrument or agency” to overturn man's present state of affairs.⁷⁹ The IIHS takes on the role of a belief-disposition that triggers the formation of Christian belief. The *SD* state of abeyance is reversed or, better, revitalized. This revitalization permits man's cognitive faculties to once again function properly. The IIHS acts as the mechanism by which

⁷⁷Ibid., 180.

⁷⁸Ibid., 490.

⁷⁹What is being said here—and perhaps a worthy topic for future study—is reminiscent of the *paraclete* (“helper”) passage from John 14. The Spirit is not just a remedy to the sin problem but perhaps helper—“helping” humanity to know, understand, and respond to the gospel. Plantinga, in fact, references this biblical reference a couple of times. Plantinga, *WCB*, 243, 269.

Christian belief is appropriated to humanity. In the final section, this idea will be expatiated in more detail.

The IIHS and Faith

Faith is by no means ignored by Plantinga.⁸⁰ Plantinga relies on the definition of faith as given by Calvin: “[Faith is] a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts.”⁸¹ Faith produces the certainty of knowledge—or, more specifically, belief—in “the great things of the Gospel.”⁸² It does so both to our minds (cognitive) and upon our hearts (affective). There needs to be some content toward which humanity’s cognitive renewal is directed, and the content, in Plantinga’s epistemological appraisal, is, simply stated, *faith*—or what Plantinga refers to as “the human belief that results [in a believer accepting the great things of the Gospel].”⁸³ But, how does faith work?

Faith is the principle work of the Holy Spirit. “In giving us faith,” Plantinga says, “the Holy Spirit enables us to see the truth of the main lines of the Christian gospel as set forth in Scripture. The internal invitation of the Holy Spirit is therefore a source of

⁸⁰Paul Helm—discussing the IIHS and Calvin—argues that the central issue for Calvin is the degree of, or assurance of, salvation. Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 261. This is a point that Plantinga echoes when he endorses the Heidelberg Catechism’s statement on true faith: “True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.” Plantinga, *WCB*, 247.

⁸¹Ibid., 201, quoting from Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.7.

⁸²Theologian Jonathan Edwards is the originator of this quote, and Plantinga embraces and uses it repeatedly. Plantinga, *WCB*, 80, 101, 103, 168, 249, 288, 304; Plantinga, *Where the Conflict*, 152, 175.

⁸³Plantinga, *WCB*, 250.

belief, a cognitive process that produces in us belief in the . . . Christian story.”⁸⁴ And, faith is—and this declaration is vital to Plantinga’s epistemological model—a special kind of knowledge.⁸⁵ Therefore, as a special kind of knowledge, the IIHS is offered as the special kind of instrument bringing warranted Christian belief to all humanity. The applicable beliefs are not generated by any of humanity’s original cognitive equipment; indeed, not even the original *sensus divinitatis*. Rather, as Beilby observes, they come through the supernatural means of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁶

It should be remembered that the Reformed epistemologists are eager to develop a model that *might* explain the warrant behind or for Christian beliefs. This model for warrant is significant because the introduction of supernatural language seems quite extraordinary.⁸⁷ There are and will continue to be non-takers who dismiss Plantinga at the first hint of God and divine intervening. Nevertheless, Plantinga is speaking of the internally instigated believer in particular, and he argues that the believer is completely rational and justified in holding, by faith, a commitment to the great things of the Gospel.

The final analysis as to whether the beliefs disposed by the Holy Spirit satisfy the condition for Christian warrant must briefly be engaged. Plantinga and other Reformed epistemologists are attempting to give epistemological flesh to faith via

⁸⁴Ibid., 206.

⁸⁵Plantinga, *Where the Conflict*, 178-79. Plantinga continues to own this point: “Faith is a special gift from God, not part of our ordinary epistemic equipment. Faith is a source of belief, a source that goes beyond the faculties included in reason” (*ibid.*).

⁸⁶Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology*, 183

⁸⁷Plantinga addresses anti-supernaturalist naysayers at some length—Plantinga’s whole *Warrant* trilogy is a response to some extent. The specifics of his argumentation extend well beyond the length restrictions of this chapter. They will have to await another opportunity. Though, for an abbreviated discussion, *WCB* offers a helpful dialogue. Plantinga, *WCB*, 192-98. And, Plantinga enters the foray even more directly in his most recent book. See Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*.

philosophical-theological-apologetical ideas. On their model, basic theistic beliefs are not self-evidentially true, but basic Christian beliefs are self-authenticatingly true through the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. The former are not basic due to the Fall, but the latter are basic due to the work of Christ. Faith provides “a firm and certain knowledge.” Faith, which is brought on and commended by the IIHS, is the ultimate belief-producing measure. Plantinga utilizes the conjoining of the IIHS with faith to ascribe this ultimate belief-producing measure as a “process.”⁸⁸ It is on the foundation of this process that “something [in this case, the great things of the Gospel] becomes evident (i.e., acquires warrant, has what it takes to be knowledge).”⁸⁹ The IIHS and faith become the cognitive component for all humanity that is capable of producing and defending belief in the central tenets of the Christian faith in a basic way. In this way, the Spirit operates like an apologist in that he is proactively found “demonstrating that belief in Christianity makes sense.”⁹⁰

Usefulness and Critical Comments

Christian philosophers, theologians, and, of course, apologists owe a great debt to Plantinga for his work in the epistemology of religious belief. As the world’s leading Protestant philosopher of God,⁹¹ Plantinga has reintroduced crucial Reformational concepts into the present-day, apologetic conversation. Yet, it is vital to pause and

⁸⁸Plantinga, *WCB*, 256-57, 265.

⁸⁹Ibid., 265.

⁹⁰James K. Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics: What It is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 17.

⁹¹Deane-Peter Baker, “Introduction: Alvin Plantinga, God’s Philosopher,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

explore how far these concepts can go. In what follows, brief critical comments will highlight theological areas where Plantinga's epistemological model may need work. Specifically, three distinct areas of concern will be assessed: pneumatological , ecclesiological, and, more to the present purposes, apologetical.

First, the pneumatological concern centers on the difference between the cognitive faculties and the IIHS. Whereas the former (like perception and memory) are considered parts of the original cognitive equipment of human beings, the IIHS is a special kind of cognitive instrument. It—the IIHS—is supplied by God concurrent with the deliverance of salvation. As such, there appears to be, and in fact is, a significant divide between the cognitive nature of these cognitive modules. Even Plantinga seems to acknowledge the significance of this difference when he alters the terminology for the IIHS. Instead of referring to it as a “faculty,” Plantinga opts instead for the phrase “cognitive process.”⁹² As a process, Plantinga effectively broadens the IIHS mechanism beyond the scope of the original epistemic categories. In so doing, the differentiation between faculties and processes becomes heightened at the expense of the resemblance.⁹³ This heightened sense of difference needs further clarification because the incongruence between a faculty and the Spirit mirrors the difference between those who *get it* (faith) and those who do not. The original faculties (memory, perception, reason, etc.) produce

⁹²Plantinga, *WCB*, 256-57. This criticism is explored in greater detail by Andrew Dole. Andrew Dole, “Cognitive Faculties, Cognitive Processes, and the Holy Spirit in Plantinga’s *Warrant* Series,” *Faith and Philosophy* 19 (2002): 32-46. Dole offers the view that Plantinga sought to provide warrant for beliefs based on *faculties* (in the first two volumes of the *Warrant* trilogy); yet, he switches tactics from arguing based on *faculties* to arguing based on *processes* (in the third installment of the *Warrant* series). Dole is sympathetic with Plantinga’s goal, and he offers potential correctives. The details of Dole’s assessment are a bit technical and tangential to explore at present.

⁹³Plantinga, in *WCB*, argues that the IIHS should be perceived in similar manner to the natural epistemic equipment: “[The IIHS] resembles memory, perception, reason, sympathy, induction, and other more standard belief-producing processes” (256).

the same types of beliefs in all humanity. But, on Plantinga’s conception, the IIHS is not a faculty available to all. Therefore the faculties but not processes (like the IIHS) are on equal epistemological grounds. Some but not all accept the legitimacy of the processes. This raises knowledge questions of active receipt versus passive receipt, premises for versus occasions of knowledge, and God’s sovereignty versus human freedom. Plantinga would therefore do well to explain the Spirit in these regards. Despite this call for clarification, Plantinga’s overall argument—that *the result* produced by the original faculties and likewise the IIHS—remains largely intact. The *faculties* and the *process* can be similarly presented to a person with warrant as the result.

Second, the ecclesiological concern is fairly straightforward. It seems altogether odd to rely on the IIHS with scarcely a mention of the witness of the Christian community—the church.⁹⁴ Plantinga asserts the role of the IIHS in the production of faith, but he almost completely fails to acknowledge the ecclesiastical responsibility in the formation of faith. Plantinga fleetingly acknowledges the usefulness of the Christian church in a single content footnote:

[T]his model can seem unduly individualistic. But of course it doesn’t at all preclude the importance of the Christian community and the church to the belief of the individual Christian. It is the church or community that proclaims the gospel, guides the neophyte into it, and supports, instructs, encourages, and edifies believers of all sorts and conditions.⁹⁵

If the emphasis of the IIHS is on the “internal” nature of this cognitive process, then it seems obvious that the importance of external factors have little or very limited bearing on a person’s faith formation. Once again, Plantinga would do well to offer expansion

⁹⁴James Beilby is responsible—in basic form—for this observation. Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology*, 184–85.

⁹⁵Plantinga, *WCB*, 244 n.8.

and clarification on his meaning. It would seem like his proposal could certainly find a place for the community in the belief-forming process. It is true that this ecclesiological concern is a critique from silence, but, nevertheless, it would be interesting to hear what Plantinga envisions as the epistemological role of the faithful community.

And, finally, the last area of concern relates to the present subject-matter—the apologetic concern. Only this area will more precisely offer several concerns. These concerns are not an attempt to run roughshod over Plantinga as a weak or ineffective Spirit apologist. To the contrary, Plantinga has proven a skillful Spirit-focused apologist; one sounding the clarion call for involving the Spirit of God in the apologetic task—even if not purposefully offering up his Spirit emphasis with any mindful apologetic aim. The apologetic concerns, specifically, are threefold.

First, the understandable charge of apologetic fideism is leveled against Plantinga's apologetic thought.⁹⁶ The fideistic charge stems from Plantinga's reluctance to base belief in God on argumentative or evidential grounds.⁹⁷ Very simply, if fideism is the denial of reason, then it cannot be fairly said that Plantinga is a fideist. Nevertheless, this fideistic critique will not be further explored here since this charge—and good answers to it—are well-documented elsewhere.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Plantinga—sensitive to this fideistic critique—offers the following definition for fideism: “[Fideism is] the exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical or religious truth.” Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” 87.

⁹⁷Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology*, 124.

⁹⁸See for instance the following: Kelly James Clark, *Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 154-57; C. Stephen Evans, *Faith beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*, Reason and Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 45ff; Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 276ff.; Paul K. Moser, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 125ff.; Terrence Penelhum, *God and Scepticism* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1983), 146.

Second, does arguing in a quasi-design manner undermine his outspoken aversion to natural theology? The short answer to this concern should be a qualified no. On the one hand, he qualifies his reticence by actually acknowledging the benefits of the arguments for God.⁹⁹ More recently, he has even written—as stated above—in a way to redress this concern.¹⁰⁰ He even explicitly presents the design arguments of Michael Behe as a specific form of evidence—a specific type of teleological argument.¹⁰¹ But, he only accepts these design discourses as possible intimations for theism.¹⁰² Somehow it still seems incumbent upon Plantinga to offer a more direct explanation for the Spirit as

⁹⁹Plantinga, “Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments.” See above n.53.

¹⁰⁰See Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*. Indeed, Plantinga even references Christian belief amidst his discussion on design: “According to Christian belief, God has created us in his image, which includes our being able, like God himself, to have knowledge of ourselves and our world. He has therefore created us and our world in such a way that there is a *match* between our cognitive powers and the world. To use the medieval phrase, there is an *adequatio intelectus ad rem* (an adequation of the intellect to reality)” (xiv). Plantinga here is connecting his cognitive thoughts with the created world.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 225-64. Plantinga devotes an entire chapter to laying out what he terms the “Design Discourse” (chap. 8). The whole point is to skillfully draw a distinction between design arguments and design discourses. Plantinga writes, “Fine-tuning and Behe-type arguments are ordinarily thought of as contemporary versions of a venerable theistic argument, the so-called ‘argument from design’ (although a better name would be ‘argument *for* design’ or *to* design)” (237). He continues by saying that design arguments direct “our attention to the way we are inclined to form design beliefs in certain circumstances, and trying to get us into those circumstances by describing in detail what those ‘contrivances of nature’ are like. . . . What should we call this activity? There is no familiar name; I’ll just speak of design *discourse* as opposed to a design argument” (247). Now, Plantinga does not just leave things at that general level. He ties his epistemological ideas and the Behe idea of “irreducible complexity” together with the following language regarding *proper functionality*: “This sounds as if Behe things that upon becoming acquainted with the structures he mentions, one is subject to a powerful inclination to believe that they are designed. These complex structures—the cilia, flagella, structures involved in blood clotting, and so on of *Darwin’s Black Box* and the molecular machines of *The Edge of Evolution*—these complex and beautifully tailored structures certainly *appear* to be designed. There is that great complexity joined to simplicity; there is that precise tailoring of the various parts to each other, a tailoring necessary to their performing their function at all; these things give all the appearances of devices that have been designed to produce a certain result. Indeed, we ordinarily think of them in that fashion; we speak of them as *functioning properly* or *working properly*, or *healthy*; we also speak of them as *defective*, as *unhealthy*, as *needing repair*, all of which fits in naturally with the supposition that they have been designed. These structures look as if they have been designed, and it takes considerable training and effort to resist that belief” (257).

¹⁰²Ibid., 263-64. “Behe’s design discourses,” Plantinga says, “do not constitute irrefragable arguments for theism. . . . They present us with epistemic situations in which the rational response is design belief” (264).

he relates to God's initial design plan. Perhaps there is room to acknowledge the Spirit's role in the initial design as well (Gen 1:2, Ps 33:6; Ps. 104:30, Job 26:13; Job 33:4).

The third concern is that more development and engagement of the Spirit's role in apologetics needs to be forthcoming. Not only is this concern addressed a bit in the chapters to follow, with the piecing together of additional perspectives and statements on Spirit apologetics, but it is a concern recognized by Plantinga himself.¹⁰³ Plantinga presents his apologetic as a grounding of rationality; whereby the rationality of humanity requires applying the notion of "proper function" to the supernatural belief-producing activity of the Holy Spirit as envisaged in the extended A/C model.¹⁰⁴ From a Christian vantage point, the Holy Spirit is a vital component in apologetics because the Spirit descended as the Helper to succeed the ascended Christ Jesus. Plantinga aids apologetics by introducing and articulating the view that the Spirit is involved in the cognitive process that produces warranted belief in the main lines of the Christian gospel.¹⁰⁵ But, it appears a very preliminary conversation at this point. As such, and in acknowledging the dearth of Spirit apologetics, more work (perhaps even by Plantinga) needs be done.

Conclusion

In the realm of religious epistemology, the name Alvin Plantinga is known, influential, and respected. Plantinga has ably argued for the rationality of belief in God even in the absence of evidence—the types of evidence and arguments traditionally offered for the existence of God to be epistemologically acceptable. The present chapter

¹⁰³Plantinga, *WCB*, 200.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 257-58.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 206.

sought to delineate Plantinga’s distinctively Christian approach to epistemology. More specifically, this chapter sought to locate Plantinga’s epistemic proposal as he introduces and develops the Holy Spirit as a special, responsive endowment to man’s malfunctioning sin problem. The Holy Spirit becomes the cognitive anchor that leads the believer to assent to faith on the basis of legitimate warrant. According to Plantinga, the claims of Christianity require “a separate source of warrant” if they are truly capable of being known.¹⁰⁶ Something like the internal testimony or instigation of the Holy Spirit is what ultimately meets this criterion. Therefore, the IIHS truly becomes a very special kind of cognitive instrument.

¹⁰⁶Alvin Plantinga, “Rationality and Public Evidence: a Reply to Richard Swinburne,” *Religious Studies* 37 (2001): 221.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRIT APOLOGETICS WITHIN ANGLICAN-METHODIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Reformed Epistemology contributed greatly to the epistemology of religious belief, but RE is not the only outlook around. Even though RE arguably enjoys the farthest epistemological acceptance on the contemporary scene, there are still other perspectives that deserve a clear hearing. This assertion holds not only for general, epistemological considerations but in the present Spirit apologetic discussion as well. Plantinga and RE may have led the way in speaking a burgeoning Spirit apologetic into being—as argued here and represented in the IIHS discussion in the previous chapter, but its growth has been aided through other contributions. This third chapter explores some Spirit discourses from within the Anglican-Methodist perspective.¹ And, the salient Anglican-Methodist thoughts will primarily be drawn out from two philosophers—able apologists in their own right but not apologists by strict reputation—embedded within this perspective: William P. Alston (Episcopal)² and William J. Abraham (Methodist).³

¹Reasons for permitting an Anglican (Episcopal) and Methodist alignment are detailed below.

²Descriptions of this perspective as “Anglican” rather than “Episcopal” are merely an honorific appeal to the broader, historical roots of the perspective. Alston himself makes the direct connection between his Episcopal affiliation and the broader Anglican Communion. William P. Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*, ed. Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 23. Even Alston himself uses the phrase “Anglican epistemology” to describe his direction. See n.31 below.

³Many apologists, theologians, and philosophers could be assembled to argue aspects of the AME perspective. The two thinkers examined here represent a small sample of AME thinkers.

The itinerary of this chapter will proceed through a number of considerations. First, it will be argued that a Spirit apologetic within the Anglican-Methodist perspective both emerges with—somewhat simultaneous to—and emerges from—somewhat subsequent to—the RE perspective. Whereas the simultaneity will highlight the contributions of William P. Alston, the subsequent development of an Anglican-Methodist Spirit apologetic will focus more on William J. Abraham. After the emergence of a Spirit apologetic within AME is highlighted, the ensuing section will feature the general apologetic emphases of Alston and Abraham. Following this, the next section—and main section—will identify the distinctive details for their respective Spirit apologetic approaches. However, before pursuing these discussions, it seems fitting to first make a clear association between Anglicanism and Methodism.

Excursus: Anglican-Methodist Association

The eighteenth century brought about significant changes within the Church of England.⁴ The most widely examined and significant change being the materialization of Methodism—with its birth as a societal religious movement at Oxford, known as the “Holy Club.” Methodism was initiated by a small group of Oxford students—James Hervey, George Whitefield, the brothers Wesley, Charles and most notably John, and a few others. Methodism resulted from “the rigorously ‘methodical’ and regulated

⁴Kenneth J. Collins illustrates in a partial way what is meant by significant changes: “Although the Church of England, as a vital part of the Reformation, viewed her own life and ministry as containing many of the major elements of reform necessary to revitalize the church through the inculcation of scriptural Christianity, nevertheless the Anglican doctrinal standards themselves did not explicitly recover the teaching of personal assurance—a task that was by and large left to the Methodists. Kenneth J. Collins, “Assurance,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 602-03. The Church of England operates as the so-called “mother” church of the Anglican Communion as a whole. W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 128.

character of their [the Oxford students] ascetic practices.”⁵ In its essence, Methodism began, in the analysis of J. C. D. Clark, as a movement “representing a revival of ‘real’ or ‘vital’ religion in protest against the merely ‘formal’ religion of the church.”⁶ The desire of this Methodist society was to remain within the larger Anglican order, working alongside the parishes and the brethren to renew and revivify the established church.⁷ But, alas, they were denounced as too *enthusiastic* by the ecclesial authorities—leaving them to forge a markedly Methodist sect. Dennis Campbell sums up events well:

In its early days, the evangelical revival movement led by Wesley was not intended to be a separate church, but to exist within the Church of England. His image was of groups of disciplined lay Christians within the parish structure of the Church being ministered to by ordained Anglican clergy for purposes of the sacramental ministries. Wesley’s strong evangelical gospel message called men and women to repentance and new life in Jesus Christ. Even though there was always an evangelical tradition in Anglicanism, his approach to preaching, and the content of his witness, set him apart from the dominant form of church life in eighteenth-century England. He was accused of ‘enthusiasm’ by much of the established church and charged with upsetting the conventional order of both church and society in England.⁸

Rather than examine the distinctness of Methodism from Anglicanism, or vice versa, the aim in this excursus is to look at the relatedness in order to justify an AME amalgam approach—ultimately permitting the discussion of Anglican and Methodist apologetics within the same vantage point. Several factors enable such an approach.

⁵Elie Halévy, *The Birth of Methodism in England*, trans. and ed. Bernard Semmel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 36.

⁶J. C. D. Clark, “The Eighteenth Century Context,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

⁷Dennis M. Campbell, “Ministry and Itinerancy in Methodism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 263.

⁸Campbell, “Ministry and Itinerancy in Methodism,” 263-64.

First, Methodism started within Anglicanism and only reluctantly broke away. As already mentioned, the Holy Club fully intended to work in conjunction with Anglicanism. Thomas Oden, speaking directly about John Wesley, concurs with the view that a separation was not desired: “Do we not have in Wesley’s own life a pattern of rigorous loyalty to one’s own church, even when there remain outstanding differences? Wesley stood fast as an Anglican minister until his dying day, despite many differences with its leadership. Wesleyans don’t split. They stay and work to heal.”⁹ Even William Abraham refers to the fissure between Anglicanism and Methodism as a predicament: “A clear example that comes to mind is *the predicament* faced by John Wesley and the early Methodists who challenged the prevailing theology, spirituality, morality, and evangelistic practices of the Anglican tradition.”¹⁰ There was no aspiration for a schism.

Another factor pointing to the relatedness of Anglicanism and Methodism is a largely Arminian connection.¹¹ Halévy notes, “Wesley . . . had been raised in the beliefs of the High Church; and the High Church had always been Arminian, not Calvinist.”¹² This emphasis on Arminian theology does not dismiss the Calvinistic wing of Methodism and Anglicanism, as exhibited by the likes of George Whitefield, John Stott, or J. I.

⁹Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 77.

¹⁰William J. Abraham, “Loyal Opposition and the Epistemology of Conscience,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 56 (2001): 135. Emphasis added.

¹¹Not all scholars hold to such an express connection between Anglicanism and Methodism. For a dissenting view, which denies that Anglicanism was ever truly “Arminian,” see Outler’s reference to Peter Heylyn, churchman and historian. Albert Outler, “Methodism’s Theological Heritage: A Study in Perspective,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 199.

¹²Halévy, *The Birth of Methodism*, 50. Olson isolates this Arminianism connection more geographically--to England and North America. Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 464.

Packer.¹³ But, Arminian theology today reflects the prevailing theological bent within Methodism.¹⁴ This commonality over Arminianism—past and present—further permits a more natural discussion of Anglicanism and Methodism together.

A third factor in favor of discussing Anglicanism and Methodism together is the view that in many respects Methodism is simply an amended Anglicanism—where Methodist principles have been fashioned from the foundational principles already established in Anglicanism. In other words, early framers and adherents of Methodism assumed an Anglican identity, and, thereafter, they made the necessary modifications and adjustments to distinguish their more enthusiastic resolve. On this point, Outler should be heard: “The success of Methodism as a religious society within the Church of England bolstered his [Wesley’s] sense of freedom to amend Anglican customs without rejecting the Anglican heritage.”¹⁵ Wesley sought to justify his Aldersgate experience—and similar experiences of others—into the existing Anglican triad of Scripture, reason, and tradition. Outler is again helpful here in discussing the addition of “experience” to the triad: “With this ‘fourth dimension,’ one might say, Wesley was trying to incorporate the

¹³For a brief account of the division between Whitefield and Wesley over Calvinist versus Arminian emphases, Bruce Shelley is informative. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 338.

¹⁴Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 28-29. Olson makes this point regarding Arminianism and Methodism, but he also makes the point that many of the contemporary Arminians either neglect or reject the Arminian label—for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the poor association with Charles Finney. Olson writes, “Calvinists tend to look to Finney as either the model of a true Arminian or the end point of the Arminian theological trajectory. Both are wrong. Classical Arminians adore Finney for his revivalistic passion while deplored him for his bad theology. Finney himself said of Jonathan Edwards, ‘Edwards I revere; his blunders I deplore.’ An evangelical classical Arminian might say ‘Finney I revere; his blunders I deplore’” (28).

¹⁵Albert C. Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—in John Wesley,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 27.

notion of conversion into the Anglican tradition—to make room for it for his own conversions and those of others.”¹⁶

Together with the Anglican triad, “experience” offers a fourth source for coming to certain theological conclusions. Outler—seeking to develop Wesley’s intent—popularized this theory into what is now known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Wesley’s focus on experience was attached to—and thereby able to take advantage of—the already established Anglican triadic view. Moreover to this point, Methodism as a modified version of Anglicanism is evidenced through an examination of creedal statements. The Articles of Religion (Methodism) prove to be a mere revision of the Thirty-nine Anglican Articles.¹⁷ The close association between Anglicanism and Methodism—as its offshoot or derivative—is inescapable.

And, fourthly, this Anglican-Methodist connection holds not only abroad but in America as well. In traversing continents, the new American locale afforded the opportunity to fashion a “Methodist Episcopal” church. This, according to Outler, was the first designation given to a Methodist church in America.¹⁸ Now, even though this connection between Methodists in America and the Church of England was the desired goal, it became an impossible reality to forever maintain their unified association.¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., 26-27.

¹⁷Oden, *Doctrinal Standards*, 23, 26, 34, and especially 99-105.

¹⁸Albert C. Outler, “Methodism’s Theological Heritage: A Study in Perspective,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 204.

¹⁹James E. Kirby, “Methodist Episcopacy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 229. Kirby writes, “At the end of the American Revolution, it was clear to Wesley that the old plan of associating Methodists in America with the Church of England was impossible. . . . The reality of the situation [being separated geographically from England] had impressed itself on Wesley . . . to become an independent church” (*ibid.*).

Despite this abiding chasm, the foundational relatedness between Anglicanism and Methodism does endure.

These four factors cumulatively offer a substantive link between Anglican and Methodist perspectives. They permit a permutation for discussing Anglican and Methodist Spirit apologetics into a single grouping. Abel Stevens writes, “The theology of American Methodism is essentially that of the Anglican Church in all things which according to that Church and the general consent of Christianity are necessary to theological orthodoxy or the doctrines of grace.”²⁰ If the theological emphases are so closely intertwined, it follows that the emphases of Anglican and Methodist apologetics are likewise closely intertwined. Therefore, the above points reiterate, or reinforce, that which is already in general acceptance.

The Emergence of an Anglican-Methodist Epistemology

The classification of an epistemological approach with the prefix of “Anglican-Methodist” is admittedly a borrowed idea—following from the prevalence of so-called Reformed Epistemology. Nevertheless, a designated epistemology from this AME perspective does enjoy some support.²¹ Even William Abraham—one of the key individuals discussed in this chapter—argues for thinking in analogous terms: “Just as there is a distinctive Reformed epistemology and a distinctive Roman Catholic

²⁰ Abel Stevens, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1864-1867), 2:206.

²¹ Something like what is being referred to here as AME is also supported under other designations as well—like the use of the more general and simpler phrase of “methodist epistemology” offered by Matthew Bagger. Bagger describes as his meaning for this expression as specifying “criteria to regulate doxastic progress . . . [and] enumerate principles to apply when assessing potential beliefs.” Matthew C. Bagger, *Religious Experience, Justification, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64. Bagger is even helpful in the connection and association of William Alston to this view.

epistemology, there is also a distinctive Anglican epistemology.”²² And, a part of the present argument is that this AME truly emerged both simultaneous to and subsequent to RE’s philosophical advance.

AME Emerges Simultaneous to RE

Interestingly, Alston is often—and primarily—referred to in the same conversations as Plantinga and Wolterstorff and the project of Reformed Epistemology.²³ The primary reason for Alston’s RE inclusion is his close, personal acquaintance with Plantinga²⁴ and his contribution to the penned mainstay of RE—*Faith and Rationality*.²⁵ This one book embodied the shot across the bow of conventional philosophy, which at the time held firmly to the sway of scientism (and the related principles of logical positivism)—that belief in God is irrational apart from adequate evidence. As a result of this key work and supplementary works, RE helped release epistemology from the

²²William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology: From the Fathers to Feminism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 212 n.50. In this same note, Abraham also declares, “It is surely no accident that cumulative case arguments become the hallmark of religious epistemology in the Anglican tradition” (*ibid.*). This stress on cumulative case arguments will be revisited below—n.178. Elsewhere in this same work, Abraham reiterates this point: “Reformed thinkers have been keen in recent years to develop a Reformed account of rationality and justification which draws heavily on its founding teachers. Anglicans and United Methodists have sought in their own way to articulate ways of thinking about the relationship between faith and reason which can be recognized as characteristic of their traditions” (479).

²³The occurrence of this fact is demonstrated most adequately through a quick look at Plantinga’s own *WCB*. Plantinga writes, “Most books, of course, are to one degree or another cooperative enterprises; every author is heavily indebted to others in a thousand profound ways. . . . The present book is no exception; it is very much a cooperative enterprise. This is so for the usual reasons, but also for a special reason. At several junctures, I have simply appealed to the work of others—most often William P. Alston and Nicholas Wolterstorff—for a particular building block of the argument.” Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xiv-xv.

²⁴*Warranted Christian Belief* is even dedicated to William P. Alston as Plantinga’s “Mentor, Model, Friend.” Plantinga, *WCB*, v.

²⁵William P. Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 103-34.

constraints of such ardent and overwhelming rationalism, and it proved substantial in both its garnered disputants and its considerable achievements.²⁶

Alston's contribution to and involvement with RE is generally recognized. For instance, Mark McLeod provides an apt description while writing on RE:

Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff are two central figures of this group [Reformed Epistemology]. Alston, another central figure, is not of the Reformed theological background, at least in the same sense. He has, nevertheless, worked extensively with Plantinga and Wolterstorff on the epistemology of religion. For ease of discussion, I simply baptize Alston a Reformed epistemologist.²⁷

McLeod is hardly alone in tenting Alston into the RE camp. Keith DeRose similarly writes, "This movement in religious epistemology is commonly referred to as 'Reformed Epistemology' or as 'that Alston-Plantinga-Wolterstorff stuff.'"²⁸ A quick look into some apologetic texts further demonstrates Alston's connection with RE.²⁹ Clearly, Alston's home within RE is widely acknowledged. And, though not in complete lockstep with those of the Reformed theological bent, Alston's religious epistemological approach emerged alongside and simultaneous with RE, and his approach is at the very least complimentary to RE. But, another aspect of Alston's epistemology requires mention.

²⁶The article by Wolterstorff, "Then, Now, and AI" provides an historical summary of the Plantingian works that revolutionized the trajectory of epistemology away from "God-talk" and toward "God" (256-57). Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Then, Now, and AI," *Faith and Philosophy* 28 (2011): 253-66. This article is helpful in understanding the overall success of Plantinga (and his cohorts) in making a place for Christians in philosophical conversations (especially epistemology)—especially as they diverge from the presupposed logical positivism.

²⁷Mark S. McLeod, *Rationality and Theistic Belief: An Essay on Reformed Epistemology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 6.

²⁸Keith DeRose, "Direct Warrant Realism," in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 170.

²⁹The following works illustrate this point: Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 69; Paul Helm, *Faith and Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 203; and Douglas Grootuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 64.

AME Emerges Subsequent to RE

In light of his association with RE, why the deliberate decision to discuss Alston under a separate rubric? This question can be answered in many ways, but five (brief) answers will serve to justify untying Alston and AME from RE. For starters, a decidedly non-Reformed flavor is seen in what Alston—as well as Abraham and other Anglican-Methodist adherents—has to offer, which will come into sharper focus when considered below. Second, Alston himself is said to have lobbied for an “Anglican epistemology” to represent his viewpoint.³⁰ Further, Alston registers his sincere dedication to the Episcopal Church and the *via media* principle that exemplifies Anglicanism.³¹ Fourth, the theological underpinnings of Alston’s thoughts and commitments swerve decisively from the Reformed emphases.³² Alston expresses clear Arminian leanings, and his ascription to doxastic and perceptual experiences—in the strain of John Wesley himself—highlights his irregularity within Reformed kinship.³³ And, finally and significantly, Alston is further untied to RE on the basis of his delineated

³⁰William Hasker, “The Epistemic Value of Religious Experience: Perceptual and Explanatory Models,” in *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith: Essays in Honor of William P. Alston*, ed. Thomas D. Senor (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 154.

³¹Alston testifies to his Episcopal dedication in William P. Alston, “A Philosopher’s Way Back to the Faith,” in *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 20-25.

³²In an important article for the present conversation, Alston places stress on the human agent in transformation. Any pretense of viewing Alston in a Reformed light proves difficult. William P. Alston, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 121-50.

³³William J. Abraham, *Aldersgate and Athens: John Wesley and the Foundations of Christian Belief* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 32-33. Here, Abraham discusses the interconnectedness of Alston with Wesley. Abraham draws parallels between the two regarding the perception of the divine, the importance of social and communal influencers, and the deployment of cumulative case arguments.

influences.³⁴ Whereas there is a deliberate Calvinian—and Reformed—heritage to explain RE, there is likewise a clear trail of Anglican-Methodist sources within Alston and his ilk. Leaving the others aside for the moment, Alston evinces his reliance on Anglican-Methodist provenance by citing and relying on key Anglican-Methodist sources—such as the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*,³⁵ Basil Mitchell and Ian M. Crombie,³⁶ and G. W. H. Lampe.³⁷ Choosing to build his arguments on the authority of these theologians and statements, Alston tips his hand as to his Anglican-Methodist persuasion and preference.

The above considerations permit and justify a look at Alston’s Spirit apologetic from a specifically AME perspective. The main point being offered is that Alston’s epistemological significance arose simultaneous with RE, but he also deviates a bit from the Reformed stance and deserves separate attention in relation to his Anglican inclinations—where he seems more at home.³⁸ In addition to the mild variance between Alston and his Reformed Epistemology comrades, further evidence exists of an AME

³⁴It is interesting to observe that Alston’s main contribution to epistemology—his *Perceiving God*—makes no bona fide mention of Reformed influences. William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). In fact, the lack of Reformed influences persists as a pattern with a review of his writings—even within his apparent contributions toward RE in *Faith and Rationality*.

³⁵In a couple of places, Alston references the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*—known to embody the distinctives of Anglican doctrine. Alston, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” 149, and Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 22.

³⁶William P. Alston, “Two Cheers for Mystery!,” in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 108. The gist of this article is focused on the mysteriousness of the divine, which falls within both metaphysics and epistemology. Ultimately, Alston will situate himself in a probabilistic position comfortable enough to say that the talk about God “can still be close enough to the truth” (100).

³⁷Alston, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” 133.

³⁸James Sennett, *Modality, Probability, and Rationality: A Critical Examination of Alvin Plantinga’s Philosophy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 134.

focus in the wake of RE—and its entrance onto the philosophical scene. Here, the thinking of William Abraham prominently comes to mind. Abraham will embody a more contemporary devotee of AME that is more formally distinguished from RE. So, in Alston, there exists a natural transition away from RE and to a Spirit apologetic within AME, and, in Abraham, there exists an even more robust development of a Anglican-Methodist Spirit apologetic. The next task before drawing out the specifics of the Spirit apologetic of Alston and Abraham is to look at their respective views on the general discipline of apologetics. This will provide a better launching point to fully examine the Holy Spirit in their more exact apologetical senses.

Alston, Abraham, and General Apologetics

If Alston is the initial torch-bearer from the inception of what is being described herein as the current AME Spirit apologetic, then it well follows that others have surfaced to continue and expand this tradition.³⁹ A number of able thinkers from within the Anglican-Methodist perspective could of course be considered as viable candidates for this task—Richard Swinburne,⁴⁰ Brian Hebblethwaite, and Alister McGrath to name but a few. But, again, the present work will primarily focus on Alston and Abraham as they both seek to defend the faith in their respective manners. In pursuit of this end, let the discussion proceed by focusing on the apologetic emphases of these two thinkers.

³⁹This comment is especially appropriate in that William P. Alston died on September 13, 2009. With his passing, the expression of anything that resembles an AME perspective necessitates new bearers.

⁴⁰Richard Swinburne, it should be noted, converted from Anglicanism to Eastern Orthodoxy in the middle to late nineties.

Alston and Apologetics

Very few knowledgeable and acquainted philosophers or apologists would embrace a description of William Alston as an apologist—in the strict sense. Indeed, his influence was primarily philosophical.⁴¹ Moreover, he was a relative late-comer to defending the faith—as he only came back to the faith and honed his philosophical apologetics in the latter part of his life.⁴² Yet, the weight of his work as an impetus to defend the Christian faith cannot be lost. Alston-as-apologist can be demonstrated in a general sense and a more fine-tuned sense.

Alston's general apologetic approach seeks to shift the focus away from natural theology because he does not want the total fate of God to rest on the availability of proofs for God's existence. Terrence Penelhum is a notable critic of Alston due in large measure to Alston's negative assessment of natural theology.⁴³ Penelhum does however accept the apologetic fortitude of Alston. Specifically, he compliments Alston for his refutation of the evidential presuppositions held by unbelievers: “A key part of the Apologetic [of Alston] includes the claim that when critics of theism insist on external support for beliefs about God, they are applying a double standard, since they are demanding satisfaction of a condition that is not imposed universally because it cannot

⁴¹The culmination of Alston's philosophical work resides in the following books, among others: William P. Alston, *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); idem, *Divine Nature and Human Language* (1989); *Perceiving God* (1993); idem, *A Realist Conception of Truth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); and idem, *Beyond "Justification": Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁴²Alston, “A Philosopher’s Way Back,” 21-25.

⁴³Terrence Penelhum, “Parity Is Not Enough,” in *Faith, Reason, and Skepticism*, ed. Marcus Hester (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 100. Penelhum is refuting Alston and Plantinga—and what he calls “the Basic Belief Apologetic” (99). The apologetic identity of Alston is further suggested in another Penelhum work as well. Terence Penelhum, *Reason and Religious Faith* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 101.

be.”⁴⁴ Two things are immediately clear from Penelhum’s avowal. First, any resistance regarding Alston-as-apologist is mitigated since Penelhum situates Alston firmly within the discipline of apologetics.⁴⁵ Second, and like Plantinga above, Alston at the very least is known for defending God via a shift away from foundationalist arguments.⁴⁶ But, Alston’s apologetic credentials extend still further.

Alston’s more fine-tuned apologetic approach moves decisively beyond the mode of establishing the knowledge without focusing on natural theology.⁴⁷ Instead, Alston targets the epistemological establishment and defense of a more experiential knowledge of God. He pinpoints an apologetic posture when he writes,

[My] central thesis . . . is that experiential awareness of God, or as I shall be saying, the *perception* of God, makes an important contribution to the grounds of religious belief. More specifically, a person can become justified in holding certain kinds of beliefs about God by virtue of perceiving God as being or doing so-and-so. . . . The intuitive idea is that by virtue of my being aware of God as sustaining me in being I can justifiably believe that God is sustaining me in being.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Penelhum, “Parity Is Not Enough,” 99.

⁴⁵ There are others as well who acknowledge his apologetic identity. A couple of examples include Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), and John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁶ For a better vantage point to understand Alston’s view of foundationalism, the following works by him are helpful: William P. Alston, “Varieties of Privileged Access,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1971): 223–41; idem, “Has Foundationalism been Refuted?” *Philosophical Studies* 29 (1976): 287–305; and idem, “Two Types of Foundationalism,” *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1977): 165–85.

⁴⁷ In his *Perceiving God*, Alston defines “natural theology” as “the enterprise of providing support for religious beliefs by starting from premises that neither are nor presuppose any religious beliefs. We begin from the mere existence of the world, or the teleological order of the world, or the concept of God, and we try to show that when we think through the implications of our starting point we are led to recognize the existence of a being that possesses attributes sufficient to identify Him as God.” Alston, *Perceiving God*, 289. Although Alston is moving beyond natural theology, he still sees “much to be said for the ontological, cosmological, and moral arguments, in certain of their forms” (*ibid.*).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1. Alston connects the “awareness of God” idea found here with the “knowledge of God” throughout this book. But, for an explicit connection between awareness, on the one hand, and knowledge, on the other, see section ix of chap. 7 (284–85).

Alston meticulously argues for equivalence between experiential perception of God (supernatural realm) and experiential sense perception (physical realm).⁴⁹ In that the latter realm is already highly regarded, Alston desires to promote the supernatural realm to a similar level of regard—where it receives wider acceptance.⁵⁰ He approaches his argument apologetically, saying, “I want to explore and defend the idea that the experience, or, as I shall say, the *perception*, of God plays an epistemic role with respect to beliefs about God importantly analogous to that played by sense perception with respect to beliefs about the physical world.”⁵¹ And, he argues for the justification of what he designates manifestation beliefs (“M-beliefs)—those “beliefs to the effect that God is doing something currently vis-à-vis the subject—comforting, strengthening, guiding, communicating a message, sustaining the subject in being—or to the effect that God has some (allegedly) perceivable property—goodness, power, lovingness.”⁵²

Now, all this is well and good, but how does it all relate to the Holy Spirit and apologetics? Alston asserts—from his Christian conviction—that “somehow what goes on in the experience of leading the Christian life provides some ground for Christian belief, makes some contribution to the rationality of Christian belief.”⁵³ In other words,

⁴⁹There is a wide debate promoted by Alston’s critics over this analogous relationship between perception of God and sense perception. The use of the word “equivalence” over and against the word “parity” is intentional in order to sidestep this debate—which is commonly referred to as the “parity thesis.” For a fuller discussion of this debate, McLeod is particularly useful. McLeod, *Rationality and Theistic Belief*, especially 1-38.

⁵⁰Deane-Peter Baker, *Tayloring Reformed Epistemology: Charles Taylor, Alvin Plantinga, and the de Jure challenge to Christian Belief* (London: SCM, 2007), 36.

⁵¹William P. Alston, “Perceiving God,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1988): 655.

⁵²Alston, *Perceiving God*, 1.

⁵³Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” 103.

believers in some sense are entitled to view their beliefs as justified. Alston speaks unapologetically in regard to the Holy Spirit as providing this justification, or confirmation, by way of God’s will, work, guidance and enablement in the Christian life.⁵⁴ Anything learned about God, he continues, “is by way of encountering the activity of God in the world.”⁵⁵ And, Alston repeatedly points to the Holy Spirit as the originator and representation of this divine activity.⁵⁶ The developed details pertaining to Alston’s asserted Spirit apologetic will be offered in the appropriate section below. But, first, it seems important to also introduce and bring to light the apologetics—related and distinctive—of William J. Abraham.

Abraham and Apologetics

The most natural characterization of William Abraham when describing his vocational specialty is Wesleyan scholar—focusing on both theology and philosophy.⁵⁷ However, as an ancillary identity, Abraham can and should also be described as an

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., 105.

⁵⁶For Alston, the Holy Spirit in Christian experience is vital to an individual’s awareness (and knowledge) of God. In his article that intends to discuss the Spirit at great length (“The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit”), Alston refers back to his well-known “Christian Experience and Christian Belief” article—his article contributed within *Faith and Rationality*, which was edited by Plantinga and Wolterstorff. He refers back to this article in order to give greater importance there to the Holy Spirit—more so than the article previously intended. He points out that readers should understand the emphasis on the Spirit in the process of coming to Christian belief. He describes the previous work as implicitly related to the Spirit. He does so with a qualification, saying, “even though the discussion there is *not explicitly* in terms of the work of the Holy Spirit.” Alston, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” 148 n.4. Emphasis added. He recalls and revisits this article—or so it appears—in order to flesh out a fuller understanding of his intent there; perhaps needing the six or so years to make a more confident pronouncement for the Spirit’s role.

⁵⁷William J. Abraham is currently Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies at Southern Methodist University’s Perkin School of Theology. His teaching specialties include Religious epistemology, John Wesley, doctrine of revelation, systematic theology, philosophy of religion, and evangelism.

apologist.⁵⁸ He himself intentionally yet reservedly writes about the role of reason and evidence—two core apologetic aims—in the Christian life: “Arguments and evidence have a critical role in resolving disputes and doubts; they can do so without being exalted into mini-deities that compete with God; it is a category mistake to think that they do.”⁵⁹ Specific to the argument in the introductory chapter above that the knowledge of God is connected to the apologetic task, Abraham too holds deliberately to such a Christian defense: “[K]nowledge of God is progressive, complex, multilayered, and informal. It is not merely a matter of propositional evidence, yet evidence and argument have a place.”⁶⁰ In holding this, Abraham is clearly no advocate of purely fideistic apologetics; indeed, he is actually classified as a cumulative-case apologist.⁶¹

In discussing the “credibility of the gospel today,” Abraham broadens his appeal to the significance of apologetics. He observes faith in terms of its credibility:

Both insiders and outsiders to the Christian faith have a host of intellectual questions that deserve attention. It is easy to be gripped by worries about credibility and truth. Christian evangelists and teachers at their best have always recognized this. They have not been diffident about developing various forms of apologetics to address the objections to belief that invariably crop up. Thus we can readily agree

⁵⁸Two articles in particular demonstrate Abraham’s apologetic clout—both written by Abraham: William J. Abraham, “Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism,” in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford University Press, 1987) and idem, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” *Journal of the Irish Christian Study Centre* 1 (1983): 84-93.

⁵⁹Abraham, *Aldersgate and Athens*, 74.

⁶⁰William J. Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion: Is There Something New,” in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 188-89. Abraham gives a sense of what he means by describing “knowledge of God” elsewhere. William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 186. He says, “[W]e can think of a claim to have personal knowledge of God in the sense of genuine acquaintance of God through personal experience of God in response to the gospel. Sometimes, drawing on the thought of Paul, this claim has been expressed in terms of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit” (*ibid.*).

⁶¹Paul D. Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 151.

that there is a place in the renewal of the church for addressing problems and queries. In due course I shall indicate how they may be tackled with flair.⁶²

Apologetics not only grounds in part the knowledge of God but it also proves helpful in countering difficult objections. Gospel credibility can hinge upon the available answers, and Abraham therefore promotes apologetic answers for both insiders and outsiders.

Elsewhere, Abraham speaks more directly toward taking the gospel to those in need of and on the cusp of conversion. He writes regarding apologetics and evangelism,

[T]here will be a place for apologetics in evangelism. All sorts of intellectual issues need to be addressed. Misunderstandings and confusion need to be cleared up; points of contact should be established; the intellectual content of the gospel must be expressed clearly and concisely; past errors have to be acknowledged and due repentance performed; and nothing should be spared in the effort to give reason for the hope that is within one. There are, in fact, considerable prospects for the renewal of an apologetics that would be of great service to the evangelist.⁶³

Here, Abraham quickly recognizes and supports a number of apologetic practices.

Apologetics is a key concept in Abraham's thought; yet, more development on his apologetic efforts is needed.

Continuing his thoughts on evangelism and apologetics, Abraham offers an apologetic role for the Spirit by declaring: "More important, apologetics cannot act as a substitute for a deep personal encounter with the living God." He continues, "Christian commitment to the kingdom is not fully or finally grounded on inferential considerations, nor is it evoked by simply clearing obstacles in the way of belief; it depends in part on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, on direct encounter with God in the inner person."⁶⁴

⁶²William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 39.

⁶³William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 206.

⁶⁴Ibid., 206-07.

Viewed in this light, Abraham is compelled to extend his efforts beyond the standard apologetic mechanisms and to hone in on the Spirit's decisive activity. Abraham refuses to dismiss the experiential aspect—what he has just called “a deep personal encounter”—for grounding an individual’s belief in God, and he intricately connects the experiential with the Spirit of the living God.⁶⁵

Indeed, underlying Abraham’s whole apologetic direction is an appreciation and pull toward the importance of religious experience. Abraham declares, “[A]wareness of God’s presence and love is vitally important both as accompanying the preaching of the Gospel and motivating Christian action in the world.”⁶⁶ More discussion related to his stress on the experience of God will follow, but Abraham, suffice it to say, will have the last word for now: “Emphasis on our experience of God has an honourable and worthy place in our heritage and it has rightly had an important role in evangelism. . . . We should seek to explain why we take our religious experience as veridical disposing in the process of standard objections to it.”⁶⁷ Abraham calls for an explanation, and such an explanation will be offered shortly.

AME and Spirit Apologetics: Locating Details

Similar to the way in which Methodism served as a continuation and development of Anglican theology, William Abraham—the Methodist—can be viewed as continuing and developing the enterprising work of the Anglican Alston. This assertion

⁶⁵ Abraham, in an interesting article, does make an extended argument for the role of religious experience within apologetics. Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 84-93.

⁶⁶Ibid., 86.

⁶⁷Ibid., 91-92.

certainly holds as relates to the apologetic thoughts of both Alston and Abraham on the Holy Spirit. What Alston helpfully launches is picked up and taken further by Abraham.⁶⁸ The remaining discussion will focus on locating and developing a robust and substantive Spirit apologetic for these two thinkers.

William Alston's Spirit Apologetic

A review of Alston's several books and articles immediately yields a cautionary truth concerning the present topic; namely, Alston is not purposefully concerned with addressing the Holy Spirit as direct apologetics. Alston certainly does not offer any book length engagement with the Spirit, and, oftentimes, no direct mention of the Spirit—at all—is found in his works.⁶⁹ In truth, he mostly makes mere passing references to the Holy Spirit when he does speak of him.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, good reasons remain for pointing to Alston when discussing an Anglican (Episcopal) Spirit apologetic. These reasons primarily emerge in progression from the following Alstonian ideas: justifying religious experience, asserting the Holy Spirit, and, most importantly, settling upon the Spirit as explanans.

Alston justifies Christian experience. Alston sets forth a compelling argument for the *prima facie* justification of religious experience; indeed, the believer's

⁶⁸An important note to keep in mind is that there is little to no direct relationship between Alston and Abraham. On the one hand, there is no apparent evidence that Alston interacted with Abraham in any form—writing or otherwise. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that Abraham was familiar with Alston. In fact, Abraham directly interacts with Alston in several key works. It therefore follows that Abraham was able to develop his own thoughts by way of first considering Alston's proposals.

⁶⁹Examples of Alston books with no mention of the Spirit include his *A Realist Conception of Truth* (1996) and his *Beyond "Justification": Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation* (2007).

⁷⁰This is the case, for instance, in Alston's *Perceiving God*—his most well-known work. The Spirit is only referenced on about 20 pages out of 300.

experience of God is justifiably understood in the sense of a direct experience of God. In his own words:

In suggesting that a belief may be *prima facie* justified solely by experience, I am suggesting that this mode of justification can suffice for rational acceptance, in the absence of sufficient overriders. But one might hold that the most a belief can get from experience alone is some lesser degree of justification. On this view, experience can *contribute* to the justification of a perceptual belief, but the belief will need additional support from other beliefs to be rationally acceptable.⁷¹

The absence of overriders means there are no sufficient considerations to the contrary.⁷²

Experience alone works to provide the believer with the grounds for defending—or justifying—Christian beliefs.⁷³ Experience exists and serves as Alston’s key component. It follows from this assertion that Alston develops what he terms M-beliefs—where ‘M’ stands for *manifestation*.⁷⁴ God is said to become manifested in a believer’s encounter or perception, and the result of such episodes yield religious experience—or a commitment to beliefs about God following God’s presenting Himself.⁷⁵ Alston himself explains and clarifies his meaning regarding the legitimization of experiential beliefs:

⁷¹Alston, *Perceiving God*, 81.

⁷²Ibid., 72.

⁷³Ibid., 1. Alston does not leave his readers to discern unaided what he intends when he uses the term ‘experience.’ He provides two alternate expressions—‘the awareness of God’ and ‘the perception of God’—which he intends to be used synonymously with ‘experience.’ Both of these alternate expressions when taken together help clarify his use of ‘experience.’ Alston draws this point out on the very first page of his *Perceiving God*. Elsewhere, Alston describes his use of ‘experience’ as that which “embraces only those experiences in which it seems God ‘appears’ or ‘presents Himself’ to one as so-and-so” (34).

⁷⁴M-beliefs, as defined by Alston, are “beliefs to the effect that God, as conceived in theistic religions, is doing something that is directed to the subject of the experience—that God is speaking to him, strengthening him, enlightening him, giving him courage, guiding him, sustaining him in being, or just being present to him.” See his “Religious Experience and Religious Belief,” *Nous* 16 (1982): 4. In his already referenced “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” Alston provides the following abridged definition for M-beliefs: “[B]eliefs as to how God’s nature and activities manifest themselves in our lives.” Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” 105.

⁷⁵Alston, *Perceiving God*, 34.

Experiential awareness of God, or as I shall be saying, the *perception* of God, makes an important contribution to the grounds of belief. More specifically, a person can become justified in holding certain kinds of beliefs about God by virtue of perceiving God as being or doing so-and-so. . . . M-beliefs are beliefs to the effect that God is doing something currently *vis-à-vis* the subject—comforting, strengthening, guiding, communicating a message, sustaining the subject in being—or to the effect that God has some (allegedly) perceivable property—goodness, power, lovingness. The intuitive idea is that by virtue of my being aware of God as sustaining me in being I can justifiably believe that God *is* sustaining me in being.⁷⁶

Alston's point is this: “[I]f the object presents itself as being or doing what it would be natural or reasonable to expect from God to be or do, and/or if one reacts as one would expect to react to the presence of God, that supports the claim that it is indeed God Who is perceptually presented.”⁷⁷ The perception of God therefore becomes a direct experiential awareness of God.

Now, what exactly does Alston mean when using the term *experiential*? A better understanding of its usage will assist in discussing Alston's Spirit epistemological pronouncements. First, Alston's use of *experiential* is inseparably connected with “an awareness”—in this conversation, of course, that awareness is of God. Second, this experiential awareness is a presentation or given-ness to an individual's consciousness.⁷⁸ Third, the presentation of the experiential awareness is “non-sensory” since “a non-sensory appearance of a purely spiritual deity has a greater chance of presenting Him as He is than any sensory presentation.”⁷⁹ Fourth, the non-sensory experiential awareness is

⁷⁶Ibid., 1.

⁷⁷Ibid., 98.

⁷⁸Ibid., 14. Alston says, “Our sources take it that something, namely, God, has been *presented* or *given* to their consciousness, in generically the same way as that in which objects in the environment are (apparently) *presented* to one's consciousness in sense perception” (*ibid.*).

⁷⁹Ibid., 20.

a “direct” presentation, which is taken to be the situation where “states of consciousness are *given* to us with maximum immediacy, not given to us *through* anything.”⁸⁰ And, finally, the direct, non-sensory experiential awareness is a presentation explained by God’s activity—via the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁸¹

Alston advances the argument that Christian experiential claims adequately serve to ground belief in Christianity. John Frame applauds Alston’s efforts while summing up this aim, saying, “[T]o believe in Christianity on the basis of ‘Christian experience’ is no less rational than to believe in physical objects on the basis of sense perception. . . . Christian experience has as much right as sense perception to being accepted as foundational or basic.”⁸² Alvin Plantinga provides further commentary to explain Alston’s view that Christian experience grounds Christian belief: “[T]his experiential awareness of God (i.e., what seems to the subject to be experiential awareness of God) makes it possible for the believer to be *practically rational* in the doxastic practices in question, and practically rational to take these practices to be a source of epistemic justification.”⁸³

Alston’s ‘mediated immediacy’ and the Holy Spirit. To discuss Alston’s incorporation of the Spirit in his thought first requires an important recognition. Alston

⁸⁰Ibid., 21.

⁸¹Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” 107. Alston also puts this another way: “In pointing out that . . . experience is a matter of something’s *presenting* itself to one’s experience, we are dissenting from the numerous theorists who construe experiences of the sort we are discussing as purely subjective feelings or sensations. Alston, *Perceiving God*, 16.

⁸²Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 387.

⁸³Plantinga, *WCB*, 286.

declares that the Holy Spirit does not work through “what we might call a purely corporate level, in such a way as to bypass the inner psychological development of each individual.”⁸⁴ The Spirit has a more thoroughly instrumental role. Alston evidently situates the Spirit into the internal process (within the individual psychological experience) of his epistemological proposal. The Holy Spirit therefore is a direct and active participant in cognitively grounding the knowledge of God.⁸⁵ This assertion brings to mind the above assertions observed in Plantinga’s thought, but Alston formulates his approach in experiential terms rather than proper basicality.⁸⁶

A sense of Alston’s experiential reliance on the Spirit of God is gleaned from statements like the following:

We sometimes feel the presence of God; we get glimpses, at least, of God’s will for us; we feel the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, guiding us, strengthening us, enabling us to love other people in a new way; we hear God speaking to us in the Bible, in preaching, or in the words and actions of our fellow Christians. Because of all this we are more justified in our Christian beliefs than we would have been otherwise. . . . [I]f I could not find any confirmation of the Christian message in my own experience, I would be less justified in accepting that message than I am in fact.⁸⁷

Here, Alston addresses the power that the Spirit exerts over the life of believers. He, the Spirit, confirms the presence and knowledge of God via guiding, strengthening, and

⁸⁴ Alston, “Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” 225. The very title of this article is reminiscent of the IIHS proposed by Plantinga. Yet, it should be acknowledged that the focus of this article is more spiritual transformation than Spirit apologetic. Alston is clear: “I am concerned with God’s work in regeneration and sanctification, work that is traditionally assigned to the Third Person of the Trinity, and I am following that language” (226). Nevertheless, Alston still carves out some epistemological discussion that is useful for apologetic reasoning. This epistemological discussion will be drawn out below.

⁸⁵ Alston, *Perceiving God*, 35.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 195-97. These few pages demonstrate how Alston views his own project in distinction from Plantinga’s formulation.

⁸⁷ Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” 103.

enabling. Such confirmation is manifestly cognitive in significance. An epistemological confidence results from the Spirit's activity within an individual's direct experiential awareness of God.⁸⁸

Alston makes use of what he calls "mediated immediacy" in order to explicate the full significance of God's direct presentation—or maybe "direct perception" fits better.⁸⁹ *Mediated immediacy* is initially explained by Alston in the following way: "One is aware of X through a state of consciousness that is distinguishable from X, and can be made an object of absolutely immediate awareness, but is not perceived."⁹⁰ Moreover, according to Alston, *mediated immediacy* is "a genuine experiential awareness of God that does not involve some other object of knowledge or perception [what Alston refers to as "mediated perception"] . . . but also is not an absolute immediacy excluding anything through which . . . one is aware of God [what he also calls "absolute immediacy"]".⁹¹ In this statement, Alston passes over what he envisions as the other options in favor of *mediated immediacy*.

The technical sense of what *mediated immediacy* portends is neither precise nor clear from Alston's writing. However, Alston is not the first to use such an

⁸⁸Alston, *Perceiving God*, 35.

⁸⁹Ibid., 21-22. Alston distinguishes between three grades of immediacy. And, as these three grades of immediacy are briefly described, it is important to keep in mind that Alston is speaking about direct—as opposed to indirect—modes of awareness. That said, the three grades of immediacy are as follows: (1) *Absolute immediacy*, which he describes, saying, "One is aware of X but not through anything else, even a state of consciousness"; (2) *Mediated immediacy*, which is Alston's favored view and what he explains in the following way: "One is aware of X through a state of consciousness that is distinguishable from X, and can be made an object of absolutely immediate awareness, but is not perceived"; and (3) *Mediate perception*, which signifies that "one is aware of X through the awareness of another object of perception" (ibid.).

⁹⁰Ibid., 22.

⁹¹Ibid., 51.

expression; indeed, *mediated immediacy* is also used by other religious thinkers.⁹² A brief look to some other explanations will perhaps prove helpful for getting at Alston's intent. On one hand, Edward Schillebeeckx—certainly not referenced for his resonance with orthodoxy or even his theological kinship with Alston—proves instructive in drawing out the meaning of *mediated immediacy*:

What we have here is not an inter-subjective relationship between two persons—two mortal men—but a mutual relationship between a finite person and his absolute origin, the infinite God. And that has an effect on our relationship to God. In other words, we are confronted with a unique instance, an instance in which the immediacy does not do away with the mediation but in fact constitutes it. Thus from our perspective there is *mediated immediacy*. Between God and our awareness of God looms the insuperable barrier of the historical, human and natural world of creation, the constitutive symbol of the real presence of God for us. The fact that in this case an unmistakable mediation produces immediacy, instead of destroying it, is connected with the absolute or divine manner of the real presence of God: he makes himself directly and creatively present in the medium, that is, in ourselves, our neighbors, the world and history.⁹³

Schillebeeckx acknowledges the infinite-finite divergence between God and man, and he promotes a view whereby God communicates himself to His finite image-bearers.

Putting aside the Barthian-like *Wholly Other* implications, Schillebeeckx's simple point in reference to *mediated immediacy* is to acknowledge the reliance of humanity upon God's direct mediation—revealing and manifesting Himself. Alston too, as pointed out above, sees the need for humanity to rely on God's direct presentation of Himself. But, it should be noted, Alston nowhere mentions his reliance upon, affinity for, or appreciation

⁹²See for example the following: John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 178; George Mavrodes, *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1970), 65; Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Seabury, 1978), 87; and Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 809.

⁹³Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 809. Emphasis added.

of Schillebeeckx. The connection between the two ends at their respective uses of *mediated immediacy*. Simply put, Schillebeeckx is but a *possible* step for understanding.

John Baillie, on the other hand, is directly mentioned in the course of Alston's *mediated immediacy* discussion.⁹⁴ There seems to be an appreciation of Baillie by Alston—as indicated by several distinct references to him.⁹⁵ The primary takeaway from Baillie is an expansion of the *mediated immediacy* topic Schillebeeckx was advertizing. Writing years before Schillebeeckx and Alston, Baillie frames his argument like so:

The kind of directness for which we have contended in our knowledge of God is thus not at all interfered with, but is rather implemented, by the fact of Christ's mediatorship. This is what I have tried to express in the conception of *mediated immediacy*. In Christ we know God not by argument but by personal acquaintance. In Christ God comes to us directly.⁹⁶

The knowledge of God, Baillie asserts, is implemented by Christ's mediatorship. This Christological explanation is much more specific than what Schillebeeckx identified. What Baillie means is God, in Christ, comes to us directly—even alluding to the epistemological concept of knowledge by acquaintance.⁹⁷ Christ, in his incarnation, becomes the direct knowledge of God but in what Baillie calls “a veiled form.” He further states, “God’s presence to our souls is mediated immediacy.”⁹⁸ The *mediated immediacy* phrase is again present. Baillie here, and seen later in Alston, advocates

⁹⁴Alston, *Perceiving God*, 26.

⁹⁵Ibid., 11, 26.

⁹⁶Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, 196-97. Emphasis added.

⁹⁷For an accessible discussion on the three kinds of knowledge—knowledge by acquaintance, propositional knowledge, and know-how knowledge—Moreland is helpful, especially as this discussion returns briefly to Moreland in the fourth chapter. J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit’s Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 126-30.

⁹⁸Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, 181.

God's directness in presenting himself to humanity—resulting in humanity's knowledge of God. Baillie attributes this direct presentation of God, particularly Christian knowledge of God, to an operation of the Spirit. Indeed, he isolates the Spirit for his deliverance of such knowledge to individual believers.⁹⁹ The incidence of God's being presented to humanity results when, “[T]he Spirit ‘sat upon each of them.’”¹⁰⁰ Here, Baillie equates the action to and quotes from Acts. Baillie's intent is to point to the Spirit as the direct source and confirmation—the *mediated immediacy*—for the presence and knowledge of God. At least, the Spirit assumes this role since the day of Pentecost.

The immediate question that arises is whether Alston similarly treats the Spirit as supplying *mediated immediacy*, or direct perception of God. An affirmative answer is the best answer. Alston indeed endorses a direct role for the Spirit of God in his conception of *mediated immediacy*. For, after defining *mediated immediacy* as an experiential awareness of God, Alston then states unambiguously that it is through mediated immediacy that one becomes aware of God by way of “the love that is infused in the soul by the action of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰¹ This activity of the Spirit is amongst the most explicit Spirit language laid out in Alston's thought. And, it helps enumerate the primary emphasis of Alston's use of the Spirit, which is found in his (the Spirit's) capacity as *explanans* for how individuals acquire the knowledge of God.

⁹⁹Ibid., 179-80.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 180. The full context of the Acts reference reads: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them” (Acts 2:1-3).

¹⁰¹Alston, *Perceiving God*, 51.

The Spirit as ‘explanans’ for knowing God. Alston demonstrates a serious reliance on the Spirit of God when discussing the grounds of religious belief. Alston cites the Christian life as the evidence of the Spirit’s work in grounding the knowledge of God. So, the activity of the Spirit—which amounts to bearing fruit in the life of a believer—manifests genuine knowledge of God. Alston refers to this transformation process as “explanatory support” for the divine activity of the Spirit.¹⁰² What does Alston mean by explanation, how does it elucidate Alston’s Spirit apologetic, and how does God choose—in Alston’s thought—to use the Holy Spirit? These three questions will be taken in turn.

First, what does Alston mean by *explanation*? As a vital note, Alston conceives of the believer in God—demonstratively possessing and professing knowledge of God—as a “passive spectator” in the epistemic process.¹⁰³ Alston seeks to *explain* this passivity, and he does so in part by examining the action of God upon the believer. For present purposes, Alston looks to offer explanations for a divine Spirit activity. Patrick Hurley speaks meaning into what is generally meant by *explanation*, saying, “An explanation is a group of statements that purports to shed light on some event or phenomenon. The event or phenomenon in question is usually accepted as a matter of fact.”¹⁰⁴ Within the group of statements, there are especially two distinct types—the explanandum and the explanans. The explanandum comprises “the statement that describes the event or phenomenon to be explained.” The explanans, on the other hand,

¹⁰²Ibid., 286-92.

¹⁰³Ibid., 304.

¹⁰⁴Patrick J. Hurley, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 9th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006), 19.

consists of “the statement or group of statements that purports to do the explaining.”¹⁰⁵ Now, this explanans aspect is what Alston relates to the action of the Spirit. Alston offers the following assessment: “The ‘explanatory’ type of experiential ground explicitly functions as an explanandum that, it is claimed, can best be explained by the action of God. The changed life one leads when one accepts Jesus Christ as one’s savior is, one claims, best explained by supposing these changes to be due to the work of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁶ The explanans here follows the “best explained by” language; namely, the view that life changes are due to the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit purports to do the explaining. The Holy Spirit therefore is viewed as Alston’s explanans for the perception and knowledge of God.

Second, how is Alston’s use of explanation helpful in elucidating his Spirit apologetic? Or, put more plainly, if the Spirit of God is the explanans that helps establish the transpiration of the knowledge of God, then how is it—according to Alston—that the Spirit likewise commands and defends such knowledge? A starting point for examining the Spirit’s apologetic activity is to first accentuate the personal agency that Alston ascribes to God. Alston asserts,

Moreover, I think of God as literally a personal agent. By a “personal agent” I mean a being that acts in the light of knowledge to achieve purposes, a being whose actions express attitudes and are guided by standards and principles, a being that enters into communication and other forms of personal relations with other personal agents.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Alston, *Perceiving God*, 292.

¹⁰⁷William P. Alston, “God’s Action in the World,” in *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 198.

God's personal agency weighs influentially over Alston's view that everything is done by God and that God brings about every effect. Nothing falls outside his purview.¹⁰⁸ This notion presumes that it is God's purpose to bring about all that occurs. This includes God's "personal dealings" with creatures, which Alston describes in this way: "God's strengthening, guiding, enlightening, empowering, and speaking to the person."¹⁰⁹ Clearly, the knowledge of God Himself delivered to humanity could fall under this activity. God's experiential presenting of Himself must in some way count toward the grounds of forming—in persons—a belief for God. Alston gives expression to these personal dealings in terms of "'special' acts of God."¹¹⁰

Regarding God and such special acts, Alston says, "He is surely in active contact with me as if he had produced the relevant effects by a direct fiat."¹¹¹ This "active contact" involves a perceptibly experienced offer of God's favor. God utilizes active contact to bring about active experiences—resulting in a procurement of knowledge and more toward Him. And, this knowledge—through and by the Spirit—is both, initially, commended and, ultimately, defended. The receiving and espousing of

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 199, 201. Although time prevents a thorough discussion, Alston references and holds to what he terms "omnidetermination." He explains, "This is the thesis that God wills, intentionally brings about, every detail of creation. . . . To say that something happens by chance is simply to say that it is not determined by some particular kind of natural causes. . . . But nothing falls outside the order instituted by the divine will" (199-200). Further reading within this article draws out the complications posed by the libertarian position, but the present study leaves these and related topics to be examined elsewhere.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 216.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 217-21. Prior to this specific discussion, Alston broaches the subject of miracles. Perhaps the discussion of "special acts of God" and the miraculous (God's direct/intervening action in the world) are placed within the same calculated discussion. The incorporation of both topics gives the impression of the Spirit taking an active role in suspending the laws of nature—both in the world and in the experiences of humanity. In both instances, beliefs (knowledge) are the result.

¹¹¹Ibid., 217.

faithful knowledge is best explained by the operation of the Spirit. In Alstonian conception, the Spirit operates to commend and defend knowledge according to his explanans. Yet, one last question remains to be addressed.

The last question seeks to understand Alston's view on how God ultimately chooses to use the Holy Spirit? Just prior to writing his *Perceiving God*, Alston would pen a salient article, aptly entitled "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," addressing this question. The direction of this article pursues the purpose of the Spirit in producing the spirituality of believers. Alston explains the Spirit's function, saying, "[I]t is the function of initiating, sustaining, fostering, and developing the Christian life of the believer, or, as we might well say, the 'spiritual' life, thinking of that term as encompassing all the ways in which the work of the Holy Spirit is manifested in the life of the believer."¹¹² Within this article, several of Alston's uses of the Spirit are observed, and he highlights a few apologetic notions that require attention: associating sanctification with epistemology, explaining God's relationship to man as interpersonal, understanding man's sharing within the divine life, and relating the Spirit's conveyance of cognitive knowledge.

Though the primary focus in Alston's article is on the spiritual life of the believer, Alston also declares that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit functions epistemologically as well. From the article's first page, Alston declares the way in which the Spirit is employed: "The Holy Spirit inspires, guides and enlightens a person. . . .

¹¹²Alston, "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," 121. The primary emphasis found in this article is the focus on the Spirit and his "transformation of the believer into a saint" (*ibid.*). Alston is explicit in assigning his purpose therein to the territory known as regeneration and sanctification within Protestant theology (223-24). Or, more to the point, Alston writes, "I have chosen to concentrate on what might be called the 'moral' aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit within the individual, the ways in which the Spirit modifies the character of the person, her values, tendencies, attitudes, priorities, and so on" (122).

[T]he Spirit acts as an internal witness to the faith, producing a sense of conviction in the mind of the believer.”¹¹³ Immediately, the internal witness terminology recalls and hints at the IIHS discussion in the last chapter. Certainly, a similarity exists here between Plantinga and Alston—as already acknowledged. But, Alston works out the Spirit’s function a bit differently. “I also believe,” Alston continues, “that the individual’s awareness of the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit constitutes a crucial part of his basis or ground for Christian belief.”¹¹⁴ Alston connects the spirituality and the epistemology borne by the Spirit. This link is a significant feature of Alston’s Spirit apologetic. Calling out the indwelling Spirit as crucial to the prospects of Christian knowledge issues forth a study into Alston’s view of Spirit as explanans.

Alston’s own explanation for how God uses the Spirit follows a path whereby God relates Himself to persons as a person. The process is interpersonal.¹¹⁵ Alston explains his meaning behind interpersonal:

Would it not be more appropriate to our God-given nature and to God’s intentions for us for God to go about our transformation in a way that is distinctively appropriate to persons, a way that would involve calling us to repentance, chastising us for our failures, encouraging us and assisting us to get started and to persevere, making new resources available to us, enlivening and energizing us, assuring us of His love, His providence, and His constant presence with us?¹¹⁶

He makes a strong case that the Holy Spirit in particular engages in such interpersonal activities as teaching, witnessing, and loving. Alston—to reinforce his argument—refers specifically to the “Advocate” characterization of the Spirit from the farewell discourse

¹¹³Ibid., 121.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 148 n.4.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 131-32.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 131.

of the Fourth Gospel (John 14:19-21; 14:26; and 15:27).¹¹⁷ God relates Himself to individuals via the interpersonal work of the Spirit. In addition to the Bible, Alston further relies on the work and study G. W. H. Lampe to prop up his argument.¹¹⁸ Lampe, in his *God as Spirit*, argues for more personal ways of thinking about the activity of the Holy Spirit. In looking into Lampe's thoughts, the following quote proves interesting: “[T]he Spirit of God is to be understood, not as referring to a divine hypostasis distinct from God the Father and God the Son or Word, but as indicating God himself as active towards and in his human creation. We are speaking of God disclosed and experienced: that is, in his personal outreach.”¹¹⁹ To Alston, as with Lampe, there is undeniably an interpersonal, or relational, Spirit aspect. But, and this point is essential to Alston's use of the Spirit, the Spirit is more than merely a relating of Himself to persons. Indeed, the Spirit also represents God as firmly internal to all persons.¹²⁰

The internality that Alston addresses flows nicely into his discussion of the indwelling Spirit because, quite logically, the Spirit indwells internally. Alston builds momentum for this assertion on a biblical foundation. He writes,

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 133.

¹¹⁹G. W. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 11. Moreover, Alston quotes Lampe when explicating his understanding of the Spirit as interpersonal: “God’s ‘creativity involves the personal interaction of divine Spirit with human spirits, by which persons who have the capacity to accept or to reject divine love are formed into the divine likeness’ (21). The Holy Spirit should be thought of as ‘forming the human personality from within by communion with it’ (22). The concept of Spirit provides material ‘for the construction of a theological framework in which to interpret our experience of God acting upon, and interacting with, thinking, feeling, and willing human persons’ (35). ‘The concept of Spirit’ is ‘more suitable as a way of thinking about personal God drawing created persons into communion with Himself’ (41-42).” Alston proves himself to be quite in tow with this interpersonal understanding of the Spirit. That said, it should be acknowledged that Lampe’s pneumatology has been called into question as “doctrinally impoverished” and “beyond the bounds of creedal orthodoxy.” Oliver D. Crisp, *Revisioning Christology: Theology in the Reformed Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 91.

¹²⁰Alston, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” 136-37.

I am struck by the way in which the work of the Spirit is so often spoken of in terms of the believer being *filled*, *permeated*, *pervaded*, by the Spirit, by love, joy, peace power, confidence, serenity, energy, and other gifts of the Spirit, and of the Spirit being *poured out* into us. (For Biblical references, see, e.g., Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:18, 3:19; Luke 1:67, 4:1; Acts 2:1-21, 10:45 . . .). The experience of the Spirit seems to lend itself to an articulation in terms of something like a *force*, a *gaseous substance*, or, to go back to the etymology of *pneuma* and *spiritus*, a *breath*, a movement of the air. One is impelled to report the proceeding in terms of one's being *pervaded* by something that provides one with new resources, new directions, new tendencies, a “new spirit.”¹²¹

The Spirit as a filling and permeating presence is fundamentally distinct from the interpersonal relationship between, say, two human persons. Alston steadily moves more toward an internal interpersonal description. Alston maintains a use of the Spirit “where one seems to be seized by a power, indeed by an agent, from without, so that what one is speaking and doing is not really being done by oneself; one is simply a means used by the agent that has taken possession of one to do *its* work.”¹²² And, although this appears to render one in an involuntary state, Alston dismisses such thinking and rather quickly proposes this internal interpersonal relationship as a “sharing model.”¹²³ “[B]y the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” Alston argues, “we ‘come to share in the very being of God’ (2 Peter 1:4; see also 1 Corinthians 1:9), we partake of, or participate in, the divine

¹²¹Ibid., 137-38.

¹²²Ibid., 139ff.

¹²³Ibid., 243-44. Jean Daujat is identified by Alston as influencing his discussion here. For more on Daujat, see Jean Daujat, *The Theology of Grace*, trans. a nun of Stanbrook Abbey (New York: Hawthorn, 1959), especially chap. 3 on “Sanctifying Grace.” To demonstrate Daujat’s influence, here is an excerpt of similar talk to what Alston is saying. “[B]y ourselves we are not capable of exercising faith. It must be given us by God through the Light of God interiorly taking possession of our intellect, of which it—the Light—is the source, in order to make it believe, and by the grace of God taking possession of our will to make it desire the infinite good of revealed and believed truth. Thus, faith is God’s work in us. Faith is essentially supernatural or divine; it is a participation, by believing revelation, in the perfect knowledge that God has of himself, and therefore a communion in the life of God” (80).

nature.”¹²⁴ He then speaks to the very essence of what he means by sharing: “To my mind, all the talk of being filled, permeated, pervaded by the Spirit, of the Spirit’s being poured out into our hearts, strongly suggests that there is a literal merging or mutual interpenetration of the life of the individual and the divine life, a breaking down of the barriers that normally separate one life from another.”¹²⁵ As a result of the Spirit, Alston holds that there is a life-sharing between God and man. This life-sharing is experiential, and it results in and enhances the cognitive knowledge of God.

In drawing the discussion of Alston’s Spirit apologetic to a close, it remains to examine the Spirit’s conveyance of cognitive knowledge. One final point Alston makes regarding life-sharing is this: “Finally, certain cognitive elements—beliefs, ways of looking at things, putting the divine scheme of salvation at the center of one’s construal of the world—may be readily taken on by the individual from the Spirit.”¹²⁶ The Spirit is tasked with furnishing such cognitive knowledge to humanity. Again, the view emerges that the Spirit serves as explanans—that which purports to explain—for experientially grounding the knowledge (cognitive belief) of God. A clarity prevails in Alston’s writing that God has permitted humanity to be aware of Himself via the Spirit.¹²⁷ This awareness initiates the conative—or impulsive striving—tendencies of those obliged toward belief

¹²⁴ Alston, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” 138. Alston quickly adds a caveat to this discussion. He states, “[L]et’s set aside any mystical idea of a wholesale *identification* of the human person with God. The terms ‘share in’, ‘partake in’, and ‘participate in’ are to be distinguished from ‘is’ or ‘is identical with’” (139). The differential factor necessitating this distinction is the sinfulness of humanity. Humanity shares in the divine, but God is in no way marred by the disfiguring of sin that troubles mankind.

¹²⁵Ibid., 141.

¹²⁶Ibid., 144.

¹²⁷Ibid., 146.

in God. Such willful striving is apodictic evidence that belief has been claimed with certainty; at least, it is irrefutable to the one holding the belief. The Spirit operates as the presence of God, which initiates this knowledge (belief) within a person. The Spirit mediates said knowledge immediately—empowering recipients to hold to the knowledge and perception of God firmly and confidently.¹²⁸

In summary form, the perceptual experience of God is the “central aspect of the total fabric of Christian experience that makes up the new life promised to those who would open themselves up to the Holy Spirit and cooperate with His transforming activity.”¹²⁹ Ultimately, the direct awareness of God vis-à-vis the perceiver is the task of the Spirit and His transformative influence. The direct working of the Spirit overwhelms all doubts regarding the knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit ultimately defends the believer’s right to hold Christian beliefs. Alston details this in a fictitious account of a believer named Denise:

At some point in the process she is led to reflect on her own experience of the Christian life; her sense of communion with God in worship and prayer, her sense of renewal when she confesses her sins and receives absolution, her sense of inner support and strength when she quits trying to manage everything herself and opens herself up to the work of the Holy Spirit. And on occasion the sense of the presence of God that she frequently experiences in a mild form blossoms into a more distinct awareness as pouring out His creative love, sustaining her in being and working to transform her into the kind of person He would have her to be. She asks herself whether this personal acquaintance with God, displaying Himself to be the kind of being and to be doing the kinds of things that the Christian tradition would lead one

¹²⁸Alston, *Perceiving God*, 277. Alston makes his apologetic case with good clarity: “I have undertaken to articulate and defend one kind [of ‘believing on faith’] or experiential basis for religious belief, and that basis, I have been arguing, works basically the same way as direct experiential bases for other sorts of belief. . . . There is still need for faith, for trusting whatever we do have to go on as providing us with a picture of the situation that is close enough to the truth to be a reliable guide to our ultimate destiny” (277).

¹²⁹Ibid., 304.

to expect, is not the crucial evidence she has been looking for to support her initially blind and uncritical acceptance of the Christian faith.¹³⁰

Alston concludes this account with the following summary statement: “[S]he can fall back on her immediate, intimate sense of the presence and activity of God in her life to (rightfully) assure herself that is not all the work of human imagination.”¹³¹ The presence and activity of God in her life—and the lives of all Christian believers—is the permeating and pervading Spirit. This same Spirit therefore experientially commands and defends (in an apologetic sense) the believer’s knowledge (beliefs).¹³² This is the point attributed to Alston in the preceding sections, but Alston receives assistance in championing this type of Spirit apologetic from the AME perspective.

William Abraham’s Spirit Apologetic

Of first importance, William Abraham approaches the general topic of epistemology with caution—even warning against a full-on appeal to both God and Jesus, respectively, as epistemological resources. Speaking to the former, he writes,

Actual claims about God’s intentions and purposes are themselves a matter of dispute, so appeal to God or to divine revelation as a way of resolving these deeper [epistemological] disputes about truth and knowledge is taken to be question begging at best and logically irrelevant at worst. Consequently, any move to make God a central category in epistemology becomes implausible.¹³³

¹³⁰William P. Alston, “The Place of Experience in the Grounds of Religious Belief,” in *Our Knowledge of God: Essays on Natural and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1992), 110.

¹³¹Ibid., 111.

¹³²Fideism is not a view attributed to Alston. According to Abraham, Alston’s strategy for securing the rationality of theism is represented in the following description: “Rationality or justification can be attained by the provision of cumulative case arguments. Theism can be well supported by cumulative case arguments, therefore belief in God is rational and justified. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 7.

¹³³Abraham, *Canon and Criterion*, 17.

Now, as to the latter, he states, “To speak of the epistemology of Jesus is an oxymoron, a category mistake. . . Why should you look to Jesus for epistemological insight? Have we not already cooked the books in advance if we appeal to Jesus?”¹³⁴ Nevertheless, as will become obvious, Abraham himself travels down a road that points to a divinely grounded epistemology. In so doing, Abraham in a direct manner tackles the evangelical struggle regarding experience and its relation to apologetics:

Evangelicals are ambivalent in their attitude to religious experience. On the one hand they set great store by it. For example, it is common in evangelical circles to have testimonies; people are encouraged to give an account of their experience of God, telling how God saved them or spoke to them or guided them. Moreover, personal experience of God is often seen as the hall-mark of true faith; it is not enough to have a second-hand religion, one must have first-hand, personal experience of God’s grace and forgiveness if one is really to know God for oneself. . .

On the other hand, Evangelicals are very cautious about religious experience. It smacks of subjectivism, emotionalism and manipulation. Testimonies can easily become stereotyped, artificial monologues in the language of Zion which ignore the complexity of the journey to faith. They may even degenerate into exercises in self-glorification which detract from the glory of Jesus Christ. Hence sensitive Evangelicals are rightly cautious.¹³⁵

Although cautious and mindful of the close association between experience and liberal Protestantism, Abraham too, in a similar manner to Alston, focuses his apologetic along

¹³⁴William J. Abraham, “The Epistemology of Jesus: An Initial Investigation,” in *Jesus and Philosophy*, ed. Paul K. Moser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 149. At another point in this same article, Abraham makes the argument: “Epistemology belongs first and foremost within philosophy rather than theology.” This is important because Abraham certainly makes many philosophical pronouncements concerning epistemology where he focuses in on theological topics and conclusions. This at first sight seems to be inconsistent with his declaration that speaking of Jesus epistemologically is oxymoronic. However, on this point, there needs to be a separation between Jesus acting generally—to all—in an epistemological sense and Jesus acting specifically—to believers—in an epistemological sense. As Abraham goes on to clarify: “The relevant observation to pursue at this point is that Jesus speaks forcefully of the need for the availability of divine action in coming to believe. . . God in the end does everything” (157). God is ultimately the crucial causal agent in the specific deliverance of knowledge of Himself, but He should probably not be used in arguing generally.

¹³⁵Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 84.

an experiential tact.¹³⁶ He writes, “[Evangelicals] have little to lose from taking religious experience more seriously as part of their heritage. . . . [T]here is a valid place for the appeal to religious experience in giving a reason for the hope that is within them [believers].¹³⁷ The key component surrounding religious experience is personal awareness of God or, according to Abraham, it is “the claim to be aware of God, as it were directly, which is central . . . a marked feature of the people of God.”¹³⁸ Furthermore, Abraham relates his epistemic and apologetic views to a subjective aspect: “I am certain that an adequate epistemology will have to find room for the concept of personal judgement.”¹³⁹ The contention here and forward aims to develop these two ideas of Abraham—that of awareness of God and personal judgment—as they ultimately point directly to the Holy Spirit as the grounding epistemic factor. These three teachings of Abraham will be plotted and surveyed in the remaining pages of this chapter.

Abraham’s emphasis on personal awareness of God. Abraham declares without equivocation: “Properly articulated, there is a place for an appeal to religious

¹³⁶According to Abraham, the connection to liberal theology and experience is incontestable. He writes, “[L]iberal Protestant theism makes the appeal to religious experiences a hallmark of its identity.” Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 42. Abraham’s intent is not to embrace such liberal theology.

¹³⁷Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 85.

¹³⁸Ibid., 86.

¹³⁹William J. Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 30. Abraham makes much of this “personal judgement” idea, which he locates in and develops from Basil Mitchell. He writes, “[T]he ability to exercise personal judgement in theology requires the attainment of certain moral and spiritual capacities which themselves appear to require initiation into the Christian faith and are said to be made possible only by divine grace. Thus it is recorded that Peter was able to confess that Jesus was the Son of God only because of personal revelation, and Paul suggests that the gospel makes no sense at all to those who have not been taught by the Spirit of God. In other words, training in personal judgement involves initiation into a tradition of thought and experience” (32-33). As a clarifying point, let it be noted that Abraham sometimes follows a convention of spelling judgment as “judgement.”

experience in Christian apologetics.”¹⁴⁰ Again, there is no ambiguity here as it concerns Abraham; indeed, he is all in for granting experience a place at the table. In order to build support for this assertion, Abraham references the experiences of some notable persons in the Christian tradition. A look at these experiences will serve to illustrate Abraham’s advocacy for personal awareness of God. First, consider John Wesley’s account of his own conversion:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.¹⁴¹

Second, Abraham also refers to Jonathan Edwards and his spectacular encounter with an awareness of God:

After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars, in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers and trees; in the water and all nature; which used greatly to tax my mind. And scarce anything, among all the works of nature was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly nothing had been so terrible to me. Before I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunderstorm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoices me.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 85.

¹⁴¹ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1875), 97; quoted in William J. Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 39. Abraham also cites this quote in another writing. Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 85.

¹⁴² Jonathan Edwards, *Letters and Personal Writings*, vol. 16 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. George S. Claghorn. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 793-94. In terms of the overall goal of Abraham—which is to offer justification for religious experiences, Abraham is apt to provide this quote from Edwards: Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 40, and Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 85-86.

And, as a final example, Abraham acknowledges the experience of Robert Barclay, the well-known Quaker:

For not a few have come to be convinced of the truth, after this manner, of which I myself in a part am a true witness, who not by strength of arguments, or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine, and convincement of my understanding thereby, came to receive and bear witness to the Truth, but by being secretly reached by this life; for when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart, and, as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up.¹⁴³

Abraham presents all three of these prominent examples—Wesley, Edwards, and Barclay—to demonstrate how they share a commonality in their respective views on the personal awareness of God.¹⁴⁴ Abraham draws out this experiential commonality in the following remarks: “Each writer speaks of becoming aware of God’s presence and notes how this begins to change his outlook, attitudes and actions.”¹⁴⁵ Abraham makes it a point to differentiate these awareness experiences from natural theology, and, in so doing, he here falls somewhat into line with the thinking of both Plantinga and Alston.¹⁴⁶ But, the main thrust of what Abraham is saying follows a more formal expression; indeed, and quite explicitly, Abraham comments, “I am claiming that religious experience can be construed as a ground for religious belief. It constitutes evidence for the existence of a divine reality. It provides a reason for the hope that is within us as Christian

¹⁴³Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, Being an explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People Called Quakers*, 8th ed. (London: John Baskerville, 1765), 308. This quote—like the two previous by Wesley and Edwards—is found in both works by Abraham: Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 42, and Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 86.

¹⁴⁴Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” 85-86. Abraham declares, “These examples serve as the briefest samples of clear cases of religious experience in the Christian tradition” (86).

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

believers.”¹⁴⁷ This last statement encapsulates Abraham’s apologetic emphasis in the most succinct form.

For Abraham, the religious experience is thoroughly personal in nature, and such experiences are also indispensable in grounding, or resulting in, knowledge.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, the religious experience is fundamentally dependent on the personal awareness of the Holy Spirit. Abraham hones in on this Spirit emphasis in several places. In discussing God’s revelation of Himself, Abraham declares,

[I]t is not surprising that classical Christian accounts of coming to faith and belief are concerned to stress the inner working of the Holy Spirit as part of the total process of revelation. We cannot come to see in a deep way what Christ has done, and thereby what God has revealed through him, without a profound immersion in the Holy Spirit. . . . God is indeed revealed in, with, and through what God does; manifold and wondrous are the form and diversity thereof: and one ingredient in that diversity is the hidden work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds.¹⁴⁹

Immediately, the language from Abraham is more obviously Christocentric than that of Alston. And, God’s impartation of an awareness of Himself to persons—and of what Christ has done—is inseparable from the Spirit’s work. Abraham aligns this view with the classical understanding of the Spirit’s role, and he highlights the Spirit’s immersion

¹⁴⁷Ibid. Abraham further says, “The argument is that in the absence of good reason to the contrary we should construe religious experience as veridical rather than illusory. Moreover, I am suggesting that we take this into account when commanding the faith to unbelievers” (ibid.).

¹⁴⁸Keith Yandell devoted a full discussion to religious experience and epistemology. Keith E. Yandell, *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). His main purpose: “Our question is whether these experiences are evidence for anything besides social science generalizations about human beings and societies. Is religious experience evidence for religious belief?” (7). One of the interesting points Yandell makes is to describe questions like these as “paralysis” questions. By this, Yandell means the following: “The question *Does religious experience provide evidence for religious belief?*, like the query *How can one know anything?*, is a paralysis question. Facing it, one is likely to experience intellectual paralysis, sunk into insensitivity by a Socratic sting. Behind the paralysis often produced by *How can one know anything?* is the pair of assumptions that there must be one way of knowing, what one comes to know, and no beginning from scratch. So, given the assumptions, one is finished before one can begin” (8). Emphasis in original. Yandell’s book is thoughtful as relates to religion in general.

¹⁴⁹Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 64-65.

into a person's life. The Spirit's revealed awareness to persons proves impactful and meaningful. Abraham then writes, "We simply find ourselves aware of the reality of God in our inner experience. . . . Thus we are aware of God . . . in his speaking to us in our conscience. We experience God, as it were, straight off, as we perceive the world around us."¹⁵⁰ Persons just simply find themselves aware. Abraham, within this line of thought, reiterates that the awareness of God is made manifest by the Spirit, and he even offers scriptural precedence vis-à-vis the Pentecost events (Acts 2).¹⁵¹

In another place Abraham continues to focus on the Spirit and His connection to personal awareness. While discussing John Wesley, Abraham specifically engages the place of personal experience of God in Wesley's conception of the knowledge of God.¹⁵² Abraham writes, "The core claim at stake is a simple one: in responding to the gospel, the believer senses within his or her own heart the love of God that is manifest in the reconciling death of Jesus Christ for sinners."¹⁵³ The love of God is clearly something that is experienced, and Abraham fleshes out Wesley's intended meaning with several (three) references to the Spirit's necessary activity.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 66. Abraham relates his view here to the principle of initial credulity, which, he says, "states that things are as they appear to us to be, unless they appear otherwise." Abraham continues with a helpful illustration: "Thus we find that it appears to us that God is manifest in creation; unless we have good reason to think otherwise, we should go with our appearances" (66 n.5). The principle of initial credulity is not the main topic being explored here. For more specifics on this principle as it relates to rationalizing belief in God, see Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), especially chap. 13.

¹⁵¹Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, 31.

¹⁵²William J. Abraham, "Predestination and Assurance," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989), 232. Abraham's appreciation for John Wesley is apparent throughout his writings. As a Methodist scholar, Abraham understands and promotes the initializing and foundational role that Wesley paved in Methodist (and Arminian) thought, and Abraham even goes so far as to refer to Wesley as the "paradigm of the tradition" (*ibid.*).

¹⁵³Abraham, *Aldersgate and Athens*, 25.

First, the Spirit grants humanity the initial capacity to perceive the knowledge of God.¹⁵⁴ Abraham states, “This action of God simply provides the preparatory work for what we really need, namely, the more direct action of God by the Holy Spirit to enable us to become aware of and see for ourselves what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁵ The Spirit is viewed as the enabler pointing to an awareness of God’s love. The Spirit is a live option “speaking to us inwardly.”¹⁵⁶

Second, the Spirit testifies to the truths of the knowledge of God. Abraham turns here to John Wesley’s use of Romans 8:16 and the discussion regarding the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Abraham describes evidence supplied to the heart:

We are asked to think of the role of the Holy Spirit as that of a witness; we are invited to conceive of God speaking to us directly. . . [W]e really need to know what God knows; thus the Holy Spirit is understood as providing the best possible evidence. . . We are now acquainted with God like a child acquainted with a loving father; we have filial knowledge of God; we have knowledge by acquaintance rather than by inference”¹⁵⁷

The Holy Spirit speaks to humanity from within to offer testimony or bear witness to the knowledge of God. Again, Abraham offers up this *within* view in acceptance of the IIHS.

¹⁵⁴ Abraham, “Predestination and Assurance,” 235. In this article, Abraham writes, “[T]he witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts combines with the witness of our own spirit embodied in reflection on our lives to convince us that we truly are children of God. The former acts as the natural, psychological foundation for the latter in that we love God because He first loves us. So we are not relying on some inner voice alone; we are also appealing to phenomena that we, and presumably others, can actually *perceive*. In both cases there is an irreducible appeal to perceptual experience. This should not alarm us, for this is our normal epistemological state in cases of perceptual experience. In the end we have to trust our senses; there is nothing outside them or beyond them that we can rely on for additional evidence” (234-35). Emphasis added

¹⁵⁵ Abraham, *Aldersgate and Athens*, 26. Abraham’s discussion here is expressly referencing the well-worn Wesleyan notion of “prevenient grace.” Prevenient grace, apologetics, and the Holy Spirit would certainly comprise another useful study, but, for purposes herein, the specifics of prevenient grace are best set aside due to Abraham’s limited engagement with this topic.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 27.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 27-28.

The experiential component results when persons recognize their personal acquaintance with—or receipt of—God’s love.¹⁵⁸

As a final reference to his activity, the Spirit—according to Abraham—heightens the perception of the knowledge of God. Abraham introduces the individual possession of “spiritual sight” in order to explicate this Spirit activity. He remarks: “Just as by our ordinary physical senses we perceive the world around us, so by means of our spiritual senses we perceive the world of divine action. This faculty of spiritual sight is bedrock; either you possess it or you do not.”¹⁵⁹ The introduction here of faculties—spiritual sight being one—is interesting in light of chapter two above (and Plantinga’s use of cognitive faculties). The “spiritual sight” spoken of by Abraham appears to be tied and related to the *oculus contemplationis* notion.¹⁶⁰ Abraham makes this connection even more certain when employing—in different places—the term “bedrock” in reference to both “spiritual sight” and the *oculus*, respectively. In his *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*, Abraham writes,

¹⁵⁸ Abraham further supports this assertion in his article entitled “The Epistemology of Conversion.” There, he declares the following: “[T]he measure of our assurance and confidence is dependent on the overflowing presence and testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Hence the whole process of genuine conversion brings with it over time an awareness of God’s love and mercy not otherwise possible. This awareness is not something divorced from other avenues to our knowledge of God. On the contrary, this awareness or perception is precisely the deep, personal awareness that the love of God manifest in Jesus Christ and displayed before the world” (188).

¹⁵⁹ Abraham, *Aldersgate and Athens*, 28.

¹⁶⁰ Although Abraham does not make the direct connection in this work, he very clearly has the concept of *oculus contemplationis* in view. *Oculus contemplationis* was a concept spoken of by Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth-century. Abraham demonstrates familiarity with this concept elsewhere. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*, 66ff. The *oculus* concept, according to Abraham, highlights “the idea of perception of the divine as a basic cognitive act.” Abraham continues: “Clearly the idea of *oculus contemplationis* has affinities with the idea of *sensus divinitatis*. However, the latter has richer theological overtones” (66 n.6). The basic meaning is to perceive God’s activity with “a contemplative or spiritually discerning eye” (66).

We should without apology and embarrassment display our reliance on the *oculus contemplationis* as a bedrock capacity given us in creation to perceive the truth about God. We will, of course, have to speak of the great damage done to our cognitive faculties by sin. However, we can also lay claim to the illuminating and enlightening work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.¹⁶¹

The type of sight spoken of here is qualified as “spiritual.” Abraham, alluding to and then following and relying on Wesley, most basically requires the Spirit’s involvement in such experiential awareness of God.¹⁶² Humanity can therefore witness the Spirit through seeing him. The Spirit occupies the vital component surrounding Abraham’s discourses on an awareness of God, and these three references to the Spirit’s activity acknowledge and demonstrate as much.

Abraham’s emphasis on “personal judgement.” The preceding discussion drew out the accent of Abraham on an awareness of God, and it further described this awareness as personal. However, Abraham pushes this personal aspect more completely. He speaks pointedly in terms of what he calls “personal judgement” for arriving at justified knowledge of God.¹⁶³ Abraham explains his reliance on personal judgment in quantifying a personal acceptance of God:

¹⁶¹ Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 111. Note that “bedrock” here should tie in with n.161.

¹⁶² Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 178. Abraham is direct in making this Wesleyan point: “So talk of the spiritual senses is not some vague gesture with minimal content.” Indeed, it is something more. Abraham states, “the provision of the spiritual senses is a current work of the Holy Spirit” (*ibid.*).

¹⁶³ Abraham, “Cumulative Case Arguments,” 25. The idea of personal judgment—that Abraham is expounding on in this article—is a part of a collection of essays written to honor the late Basil Mitchell (1917-2011). The idea behind personal judgment is being used to explain some of the concepts developed by Mitchell. Yet, personal judgment is embraced by Abraham. In a very direct statement, Abraham asserts, “I am certain that an adequate epistemology will have to find room for the concept of personal judgement” (30). Although the idea of personal judgment is found in Basil Mitchell, *Justification of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), the truest proponent of this tradition is John Henry Newman. See, among other places, Newman’s *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. Ian T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

The whole argument, therefore, takes the form of an extended conversation rather than a chain of formal reasoning. It involves the patient presenting and re-presenting of a network of considerations which together co-operate in favour of a theological vision which to some extent contains elements of irreducible mystery. The interpretation of the vision, the marshalling [*sic*] of the supporting evidence, the weighing of the final outcome, all these involve a radical dependence on a large measure of personal judgement.¹⁶⁴

Abraham recognizes one of the primary critiques of personal judgment: “By its very nature it leaves the argument very elusive and it opens up the door to prejudice, whim, bias, emotion, and other non-rational factors, all of which are bound to have an adverse effect on personal judgement.”¹⁶⁵ So, how does Abraham combat the charge of personal judgment being non-rational?

Part of Abraham’s answer—to show personal judgment as rational—is to appeal to personal judgment as the type of consideration “which when taken as a whole constitute the total case which can be made out.”¹⁶⁶ This means personal judgment is a natural and pervasive measurement for recognizing and weighing evidence for and knowledge of God. But, it is natural and pervasive in different ways across all peoples—hence, personal—rather than some formal calculus shared in common by all.¹⁶⁷ Abraham continues, “Given care and an eye for self-deception the sensible person can generally notice when he or she is allowing his or her wishes, predispositions, passions, and the like to tilt the scales in a particular direction.”¹⁶⁸ It follows from this that Abraham sees

¹⁶⁴ Abraham, “Cumulative Case Arguments,” 25.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. To this point, Abraham states, “Personal judgement simply means the ability to weigh evidence without using some sort of formal calculus” (34).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

safeguards in place to monitor and regulate the legitimacy of personal judgment. And, a primary regulative determinant is the Holy Spirit.

As pertains to the Holy Spirit as a grounding epistemological factor, Abraham understands the Spirit as contributing to “a religious experience which is central to Christianity.”¹⁶⁹ Abraham even references William Alston’s discussion of M-beliefs (again, “M” for “manifestation”) as to how God actively manifests Himself in the lives of humanity. The work of the Spirit in the heart of man—described by Abraham as “the apparent work of the Spirit in our hearts”—comprises the manifesting activity of God. Abraham clarifies further, “[T]hat many people claim to be aware of God in this way is part of the phenomena which has to be either explained by the theist or explained away by the atheist.”¹⁷⁰ In other words, he sees the pronouncements of personal judgment as operative unless undermining alternate explanations are provided.

Abraham concludes his argument in favor of personal judgment with a general appeal, saying, “Ordinary people are given plenty of opportunity to exercise personal judgement of a complex nature in many areas of life. . . . [T]he believer trusts his or her own judgement.”¹⁷¹ And, the believer is grounded in his or her belief assent via the empowering work of the Spirit. As Abraham declares elsewhere—when examining some biblical affirmations regarding the Spirit, the Spirit plays a pivotal role in delivering personal confidence:

The standard inferential interpretation of this text treats this passage [referring to Rom 8:15] as speaking not about some subjective experience of God but about the

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 35.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 35-36.

testimony of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one's life made manifest. . . . What matters is that this text has given birth to a claim about certainty and assurance which invokes the possibility of a direct, inward experience of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷²

Abraham then confesses,

Subjects who experience the inner witness of the Holy Spirit are naturally inclined to treat their experience as veridical. Descriptions of their experience which construe it as an encounter with the Holy Spirit appear luminously correct to those who speak of this kind of religious experience. Thus it leads to a deep sense of certainty about the reality of God. . . . The person who has undergone this kind of experience emerges from it with a deeper level of commitment and faith than hitherto.¹⁷³

John Wesley, so it would appear, paves the way for—or influences—Abraham's conclusions.¹⁷⁴ Abraham remarks, “Wesley suggested that there was a witness that was ‘immediate and direct, not the result of reflection or argumentation.’ Such a testimony or experience was beyond our ability to put into words. We cannot adequately describe the kind of experience the believer enjoys.”¹⁷⁵ Yet, even though passable description is difficult to come by, Abraham following Wesley still holds to “a logically distinct kind of

¹⁷²William J. Abraham, “The Epistemological Significance of the Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit,” *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990): 437.

¹⁷³Ibid., 441-42.

¹⁷⁴Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 175-76. Abraham credits Wesley’s influence on many accounts: “I first read Wesley precisely because I was in search of intellectual bearings for what was happening in my tangled and confusing spiritual journey. I found his canonical sermons astonishingly helpful. His clarity, good sense, forthrightness, and honesty were not in the least archaic; he unpacked the language of justification, new birth, the witness of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, and the like, with consummate skill. His grasp of the temptations, the queries, the feelings, the intuitions, and the puzzles of the fresh convert were, for me, strikingly accurate and penetrating. The sermons spoke directly to my experience and remain landmarks in my intellectual development. As I have explored the life and work of Wesley down through the years, I continue to be surprised at how versatile Wesley can be both theologically and philosophically.”

¹⁷⁵Though the language used here would appear to support fideism, Abraham is on record as describing such an apologetic view as “implausible.” Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 102. Abraham explains, “Fideists cannot eradicate the fact that there is a cognitive dimension to religion” (103). In another place, Abraham even advocates a stronger emphasis on the use of rational arguments in that they can overcome delusions and deceitful senses. Abraham, “Predestination and Assurance,” 234.

evidence, which . . . [is] identified as the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.”¹⁷⁶ Following all this, the Spirit provides rational arguments for one’s personal spiritual position.

The conversation up to this point has been progressively building toward Abraham’s specific Spirit apologetic. In the taxonomy of apologetic schools, Abraham would fall under the cumulative-case grouping.¹⁷⁷ In his own words, Abraham states, “[T]o remain a theist one develops the kind of cumulative case offered by the soft rationalist and evaluates a complex web of religious belief to appeal to several independent threads of evidence taken together, using formal, sensitive, personal judgment to weigh its validity.”¹⁷⁸ His personal judgment aspect—just articulated—relies upon the Spirit’s work in convincing and defending the believer’s Christian commitment to the truths about God. In what follows, a more thorough presentation of Abraham’s Spirit-emphasized defense of the faith will be proffered.

Abraham’s emphasis on pneumatic grounding. In a recent volume honoring William J. Abraham, the editors—Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Douglas M. Koskela, and Jason E. Vickers—promote Abraham’s theological vision in terms of “the life-giving

¹⁷⁶ Abraham, “Predestination and Assurance,” 233.

¹⁷⁷ In addition to the support offered in the title of his article—already cited and entitled “Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism,” others sources also reference Abraham’s support for cumulative case apologetics. See, for example, Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 151. See also Harold A. Netland, “Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth,” in *Biblical Faith & Other Religions*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 39.

¹⁷⁸ Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 129. To understand the meaning behind Abraham’s use of “soft rationalist,” a careful reading of chapter 9 will prove helpful and instructive. In basic form, soft rationalism holds to the following: “[Soft rationalism] is used to describe a middle way between classical natural theology and fideism. . . . Soft rationalism is essentially a claim about the kind of argument that should take place in debates about significant religious beliefs” (104).

Holy Spirit who comes to baptize and immerse us into the life of God.”¹⁷⁹ There is an unmistakable priority on the Spirit within the scholarship of Abraham. And, this verisimilitude certainly holds up in his apologetic and philosophical efforts. Recently, Abraham is known to describe his epistemological perspective as a “supernaturalized epistemology.”¹⁸⁰ His supernatural qualification connotes veiled language for the Spirit’s work; indeed, the following statement exemplifies this point: “So deep is the human predicament from which God delivers . . . that no real progress can be made without being personally immersed in the working of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸¹ Little progress is achieved through natural processes. True progress toward convincing knowledge necessitates the work of the Spirit. Abraham remarks, “Many insights and discoveries emerge only over time, as the user applies what illumination has already been received in the practice of moral and spiritual virtue through the grace of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸² From these statements and what has previously been stated, Abraham’s supernaturalized epistemology and apologetic has already taken some shape, but a tad more work is needed to drive home his apologetic use of the Spirit. Specifically, the question regarding how the Spirit grounds, convinces, and conveys genuine knowledge about God needs to be addressed.

¹⁷⁹Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Douglas M. Koskela, and Jason E. Vickers, eds., *Immersed in the Life of God: The Healing Resources of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), vii.

¹⁸⁰Abraham, “The Epistemology of Jesus,” 167.

¹⁸¹Abraham, *Canon and Criterion*, 54. For further discussion connecting the work of the Spirit to supernatural actions, see William J. Abraham, *Celtic Fire: Evangelism in the Wisdom and Power of the Spirit* (Dallas: Highland Loch, 2012), 94.

¹⁸²Abraham, *Canon and Criterion*, 54. As already described above, Abraham offers an interesting discussion on “spiritual senses” and how they embody “a current work of the Holy Spirit.” Abraham, “Epistemology of Conversion,” 178.

In discussing the grounds of belief—or knowledge, Abraham defines grounds as “that which quite rightly rationally persuades us to believe in God without providing logical demonstration of his existence.” Abraham then adds, “Surely to speak of grounds or justifying circumstances is *ipso facto* to speak of reasons or evidence, is it not? . . . [I]f we are to appeal to such items as guilt, a sense of God’s presence, and so on, as grounds for belief in God, then this cries out for careful analysis.”¹⁸³ The analysis of Abraham’s apologetic grounds for justifying knowledge and belief uncovers a Wesleyan imprint.¹⁸⁴ Concerning Wesley, Abraham writes, “In Wesley, who is much closer to Paul in his account of the inner witness, the testimony of the Holy Spirit worked as a warrant for the claim that one is now a child of God and has received the forgiveness of one’s sins.”¹⁸⁵ Abraham too endorses a similar view when he writes, “Believers and unbelievers were baptized in the Spirit. They came to call God, ‘Abba, Father,’ through the internal witness of the Spirit; and they learned to discern the workings of the Spirit.”¹⁸⁶

Abraham likewise ties this adoptive relationship—accomplished through the Spirit’s internal work—to the child’s receipt of certainty and assurance of faith:

[W]e can think of a claim to have personal knowledge of God in the sense of genuine acquaintance of God through personal experience of God in response to the gospel. Sometimes, drawing on the thought of Paul, this claim has been expressed

¹⁸³ Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 97. Earlier in this same chapter, Abraham deals specifically with Alvin Plantinga’s proposals. Abraham sees philosophical fideism in Plantinga’s thought—despite Plantinga’s protestations, and Abraham seeks to undermine and dispatch Plantinga’s philosophical epistemology on account of this perceived fideism (92). Abraham’s main grouse revolves around the Plantingian notion “that many of our common beliefs, such as belief in the past or in other minds, are held without evidence” (88). In Abraham’s view, he writes, “It seems strange to say that someone is rational in holding a belief if that person does not have good reasons for that belief” (88).

¹⁸⁴ See n.175 above.

¹⁸⁵ Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 181.

¹⁸⁶ Abraham, *The Logic of Renewal*, 159.

in terms of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. The relevant point here is that the believer can experience a divine witness within giving assurance that one is genuinely forgiven and can address God from within as Father.¹⁸⁷

In following Wesley here, Abraham sees salvation, justification, sanctification, and the whole lot as being, what he calls, “subject to divine action.”¹⁸⁸ In the passiveness of individuals, the knowledge of God is internally delivered by the Holy Spirit. Abraham writes, “One generally comes to know God without knowing how one knows that one knows God.”¹⁸⁹ This knowledge is grounded in part by what Abraham identifies multifariously according to the following: “to know God by acquaintance,”¹⁹⁰ to stress the “place of virtue in gaining knowledge of God,”¹⁹¹ and to “exploit the epistemic significance of conversion” in supplying knowledge of God.¹⁹² Thus, the Spirit of God grounds the knowledge of God in each of these ways—acquaintance, virtue, and conversion.¹⁹³ A brief explanation of each will now be offered in turn to expound Abraham’s Spirit apologetic.

First, the Spirit grounds epistemic knowledge of God by way of acquaintance. Acquaintance, according to Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, is simply understood as

¹⁸⁷ Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 186.

¹⁸⁸ Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 184. As written out, Abraham states, “[T]o be born again, to receive the witness of the Holy Spirit, to be justified, to be sanctified, and the like, was to be subject to divine action. Primarily this action was directed to the healing of the human condition; it was divine salvation brought about by the Holy Spirit” (*ibid.*).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 189. Abraham discusses virtues in other places as well: Abraham, *Aldersgate*, 79, and Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 56.

¹⁹² Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 190.

¹⁹³ An important note is in order here. As the references to acquaintance, virtue, and conversion indicate, these three ideas are all found in Abraham’s same article—“The Epistemology of Conversion.” Yet, they are severally found in other works as well—as will become clear below.

the “perception or experience of things.”¹⁹⁴ This understanding might naturally call remembrance to William Alston’s insights since perception was a clear stress in his thought. Abraham does owe appreciation to Alston, and, yet, Abraham lays out his own explanation of perception, saying,

We may also find ourselves undergoing a variety of more particular experiences that we take to be the presence or activity of God in our lives. Here we go beyond a general sense of God in creation and find ourselves presented with the reality of God in such a way that we naturally form beliefs that God is manifest to us. Alternatively, we look back over our lives and see either particular events or a string of events as representing the providence of God. Again, we are not making inferences from data to the confirmation of a religious hypothesis; we perceive our experiences straight off in terms of God’s presence, or we read what is happening straight off as God’s providence.

Epistemologically we rightly interpret what is going on here as a form of perception of the divine. We assume in this a particular anthropology; that is, concomitantly with the interpretation we see ourselves as having the native capacity to perform basic cognitive acts of perceiving God. If we need to, we can spell out this assumption as a capacity given to us in creation, but this is by no means necessary either psychologically or logically for us naturally to read our experiences as the self-presentation of God or various stretches of events as acts of providence. We simply begin with the acts of perception themselves in ourselves or as mediated through the testimony of other human agents we know. We either trust or do not trust these acts of perception.¹⁹⁵

Undergirding his thoughts on perception is an attribution to the personal involvement of divine action. The idea of *oculus contemplationis* that was mentioned previously reemerges here. Relating perception and the *oculus*, Abraham writes the following: “We are . . . able to perceive a divine order in the universe and reliably able to describe the divine activities that arise within it. . . . [H]uman agents come equipped with an *oculus*

¹⁹⁴ Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 213. Abraham is not wedded to calling this “acquaintance;” in fact, Abraham more often uses “perception.”

¹⁹⁵ Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 68.

*contemplationis.*¹⁹⁶ Humans possess physical and moral senses, which enable them to discern and know things in their own experiences, and, so says Abraham, they know these things “straight off.”¹⁹⁷ Now, acquaintance compels the personal activity of the Spirit to ground knowledge—adding a spiritual sense.¹⁹⁸ But, Abraham’s Spirit apologetic calls for something even more personal, direct, abiding, and enduring.

Second, Abraham’s Spirit apologetic grounds the epistemic knowledge of God in intellectual virtue. He avers, “Rationality and justification are linked to practices that have a pivotal role in human welfare.”¹⁹⁹ The virtue “practices” that Abraham refers to here constitute the persons flourishing intellectually. He continues, “Intellectual virtues are directed to the proper formation, maintenance, communication, application, and revision of our beliefs.”²⁰⁰ Our beliefs, if properly functioning, require virtuous epistemology. This means that “a person of intellectual virtue will care passionately about the truth,” and it also means that the intellectual virtues “are governed by the quest for knowledge.”²⁰¹ To bolster his apologetic, Abraham places faith into this virtue category, and, ultimately, he promotes “divine assistance” and “divine initiative” as

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 69. In his use of this *oculus contemplationis* phrase, Abraham offers it synonymously with another salient phrase: “Readers more at home with the language of *sensus divinitatis* may want to substitute this notion at this point (69 n.9).

¹⁹⁷Ibid.

¹⁹⁸Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 184.

¹⁹⁹Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 173.

²⁰⁰Ibid., 174.

²⁰¹Ibid., 175. Helpfully, Abraham lists a “long list” of the intellectual virtues that he has in mind, which include “wisdom, prudence, foresight, good judgment, intellectual carefulness, fair-mindedness, flexibility, thoroughness, intellectual candor, courage, apt doubt, elegance, teachability, perseverance, understanding, truthfulness, intellectual humility, open-mindedness, sincerity, studiousness, originality, appropriate trust, and the like” (175).

conveying “knowledge of and about God.”²⁰² And, such intervening help is explained as part of the Holy Spirit’s role.²⁰³

Lastly, Abraham’s teaching on the topic of conversion further grounds his Spirit apologetic with greater clarity. First of all, he is clear in offering the view that conversion characteristically takes place in stages—a view shared widely but important to note nonetheless.²⁰⁴ On account of such stages, the manner of discussing conversion herein is likely oversimplified. Nevertheless, in specifically addressing epistemology from a Wesleyan perspective, Abraham says, “What is genuinely fresh . . . is the appeal to personal religious experience of the kind associated with conversion.”²⁰⁵ Perhaps the best direct statement regarding what conversion is is encapsulated in the following: “Christian conversion involves the appropriation of a whole network of concepts, virtues, dispositions, doctrines, and practices that are derived from that form of the Christian faith into which one is initiated.”²⁰⁶ Abraham also offers the following explanation for understanding conversion:

In conversion, we rely on the promises of God; we hear the voice of God within through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit; we begin to perceive the truth about ourselves and about God, as it is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; we see the

²⁰²Ibid., 187.

²⁰³Ibid., 111. Abraham draws the reader’s attention to what he sees as the “promise of God,” which is “to grant the Holy Spirit to the church and lead it into truth” (*ibid.*).

²⁰⁴Ibid., 115. By way of explaining, Abraham writes, “Sometimes we can identify where and when we have consciously come to believe this or that proposition or come to accept a network of propositions. However, even the acceptance of single propositions often carries with it commitment to a cluster of associated or background beliefs that are tacitly below the surface” (*ibid.*).

²⁰⁵Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 179.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 184. If an understanding of what Abraham intends by “initiated” is desired, the curious reader would do well to interact with Abraham’s discussion elsewhere on the initiation into the Kingdom of God. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, 92-116, 142-45.

power of God at work in others; and we begin to experience the power of God, however feebly, in ourselves. In the end we encounter the full splendor of God in the special revelation of His Son brought home inwardly through the secret action of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁷

From reading Abraham, a two-story paradigm emerges regarding conversion.

On the first story, Abraham—following Wesley—equates conversion and being born again with directly receiving the Spirit’s witness, being justified, being sanctified, and, in an all-encompassing sense, being subject to divine action.²⁰⁸ This passive subjection to divine action is bedrock in the teaching of Abraham—especially as it concerns conversion. Then, and on the second story, Abraham acknowledges a tendency to focus on the evidence brought by conversion. Abraham again credits Wesley: “Wesley was fascinated by the reality of religious experience in part because he thought that it implicitly supplied the crucial evidence for the truth of the Christian faith.”²⁰⁹ The evidence of conversion—such as moral change—also grounds the knowledge of God.

So, the first story is a passive knowledge where the divine action of the Spirit is exercised upon a person or persons. An element of spiritual empiricism is detected here—whereby the spiritual senses are activated by the Spirit’s doing. However, the second story is more active knowledge where the divine action is recognized in the observance of tangible evidence that produces assurance and certainty.²¹⁰ Here, the

²⁰⁷ Abraham, *Aldersgate and Athens*, 79.

²⁰⁸ Abraham, “The Epistemology of Conversion,” 184.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

²¹⁰ Something like this active story is what Abraham means by “crossing the threshold of divine revelation.” Persons cross the threshold when they no longer see divine revelation as an aversion but instead as opening up a new world of intellectual pursuits. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 89. And, additionally, they begin to see themselves “in a whole new world of beauty, moral endeavor, intellectual richness, and spiritual nurture” (121).

empiricism just mentioned seems balanced with a deliberate appeal to rationalism and evidence. Now, for his part, Abraham is dissatisfied with either option—that is, taken in isolation. He prefers a both/and approach, and he describes this as his soft rationalist approach. He writes,

What is vital to realize is that there is no formal calculus into which all the evidence can be fitted and assessed. There is an irreducible element of personal judgment, which weighs up the evidence taken as a whole. Moreover, there is no agreed starting point, and there may well be dispute about what is to count as evidence, but this does not vitiate the process. What matters is not where you start but the total case you make out. Dispute about what is not evidence is to be weighed by sensitive personal judgment.²¹¹

This comment brings Abraham's apologetic full circle. If the two-story paradigm proposed here is correct, then the epistemic significance related to conversion results from both passive and active knowledge. This would follow Abraham's cumulative-case approach in that he wishes to genuinely and rationally assess all—passive and active—arguments.

In view of the Spirit, Abraham's account of knowledge, rationality, and justification is consistent with his emphases on awareness and personal judgment.²¹² The passive element relates more to Abraham's awareness of God emphasis while the active element relates more to his personal judgment emphasis. The passive awareness of God (Spirit-initiated) grants a subject the capacity to perceive anew. This involves spiritual senses that change the subject's outlook, attitudes, and actions. The active personal judgment (also Spirit-initiated) permits a subject to measure and weigh evidence for the

²¹¹ Abraham, *An Introduction to the Philosophy*, 106.

²¹² Abraham defines epistemology broadly, "By epistemology, I mean here a systematic account of rationality, justification, and knowledge." Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold*, 24.

knowledge of God. This implicates the Spirit as a regulative power in defending Christian belief commitments. Both elements offer the Spirit as vital in giving reasons and making defenses for the hope within.

Conclusion

The RE perspective presented in the second chapter argued for the Spirit (the IIHS) as a cognitive faculty that anchors Christian belief in the great things of the gospel to warrant. The IIHS was shown to be a special kind of cognitive process—something similar to memory or perception—that delivers Christian knowledge. In the present chapter, the AME perspective has received a lengthy hearing. Here, personal experience gains momentum. William Alston was examined first due to his close affinity with RE. Alston, it was demonstrated, argues for the experiential awareness of God, or what is known as the *perception* of God. He offers the Spirit as the direct mediator (“mediated immediacy”) of faithful knowledge. According to Alston, a person becomes aware of God—situated with confidence in such a belief—because of “the love that is infused in the soul by the action of the Holy Spirit.”²¹³ Ultimately, according to Alston, persons are merely “passive spectators” in relation to how the Spirit operates in his convincing function.²¹⁴ William Abraham was offered next as a more contemporary Anglican-Methodist Spirit apologist. Abraham seeks to propose his Spirit apologetic as a significant rung in a holistic cumulative-case stratagem.²¹⁵ Like Alston, he views

²¹³Alston, *Perceiving God*, 51.

²¹⁴Ibid., 304.

²¹⁵Abraham, “The Epistemological Significance,” 447-49.

persons as passive participants in their awareness of God. But, he adds an active role of personal judgment that allows persons to weigh and measure evidences for faithful knowledge—under the Spirit’s authority. So, thus far, there seems to be a largely passive emphasis—as relates to human subjects—regarding the apologetic use of the Spirit that flows from Plantinga and RE to Alston and AME and through Abraham. However, with Abraham, there also seems to be a slight change toward the ability of human subjects to actively engage the Spirit in seeking evidences for belief—one part of the two-story paradigm that emerges from conversion. The resulting balance between passive and active Spirit emphases offers promise for pushing Spirit apologetics forward. And, such a balance also holds true to a *via media*—traversing extremes. One of the decisive events with Anglican-Methodist history relates to the perception of enthusiasm. For, as already described, this was *the* charge levied against John Wesley and others, which ultimately led and gave birth to the Methodist denomination.²¹⁶ What a tremendous difference a couple of centuries makes in the perception of enthusiasm—as will become clear in the next chapter.

²¹⁶See above, n.9.

CHAPTER 4

SPIRIT APOLOGETICS WITHIN CHARISMATIC EPISTEMOLOGY

Writing over thirty years ago, the late Howard M. Ervin referred to the need for a “pneumatic epistemology.”¹ Here, the pivotal charismatic idea Ervin promotes, at least in the mind of James K. A. Smith, is that charismatic spirituality is fundamentally an “affective, narrative epistemic practice.” Or, explained more simply, such an idea states, “[K]nowledge is rooted in the heart and traffics in the stuff of story.”² A charismatic theologian—such as Ervin—who writes about pneumatic epistemology seems both redundant and oxymoronic. It seems redundant because of the almost persistent stress of charismatics on the Spirit’s activity. It seems oxymoronic because of the unanticipated effort of a charismatic—of all people—even to broach a subject like epistemology.

Historically, charismatic believers do not enjoy a reputation for vigorous or established scholarship.³ Nevertheless, there are charismatic individuals who are

¹Howard M. Ervin, “Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option,” *Pneuma* 3 (1981): 11-25. Ervin is known widely within charismatic circles even though he historically came from a Baptist background—having served in a Baptist church before becoming a professor at Oral Roberts University. In this article, Ervin simplifies an understanding of his views when he directly states that his writing is “from a charismatic or Pentecostal perspective” (15). So influential were his contributions within charismatic thought that he was even honored with a Festschrift. Paul Elbert, ed. *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985). Within this Festschrift, Erwin is highlighted for being “in constant demand as a charismatic” and as carrying “a formidable dignity and weight of biblical scholarship illumined by a life in the Spirit” (xii).

²James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 43.

³Ibid., xiii.

currently seeking to remedy this general perception.⁴ So, in exploring the Spirit apologetic views within charismatic treatises of knowledge, the present hope is to uncover genuine charismatic contributions to the defense of the faith. Such charismatic contributions will be extrapolated from two apologetic directions: a general direction—looking at the broad charismatic influence within apologetics—and a specific direction—looking at the pioneering, affective emphases of James K. A. Smith and others. However, the groundwork for pursuing this course first requires that a gathering term, “charismatic,” be established as the applicable designation for understanding the collective association of the multifarious renewal movements.

“Charismatic” as the Gathering Term

There exists a sense in which the terms *pentecostal* and *charismatic* are used synonymously or interchangeably.⁵ However, significant differences exist—both theological and ecclesiastical—between these two terms.⁶ Stanley Burgess offers a succinct yet understandable synopsis of the differences—including details concerning what is known as the neocharismatic movement as well:

A theological differentiation can be found especially in the doctrine concerning Spirit baptism (also called the baptism in, or of, the Holy Spirit). It is

⁴William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, the recognizable Christian publisher, is currently producing a series of books from the perspective of Pentecostal scholarship. The aim of The Pentecostal Manifestos series is to move beyond the internal scholarly conversations—amongst Pentecostal and charismatic theologians—to “an outward-looking agenda” that engages the external conversations “in theological and cultural analysis of a variety of issues from a Pentecostal perspective.” The firm commitment is to become more outward-focused. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, i.

⁵Telford Work, “What Have the Galapagos to Do with Jerusalem? Scientific Knowledge in Theological Context,” in *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences*, ed. James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 20.

⁶Peter D. Hocken, “Charismatic Movement,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 515-17.

oversimplified, but perhaps useful, to say that Pentecostals subscribe to a work of grace subsequent to conversion, in which Spirit baptism is evidenced by glossolalia (speaking in tongues); for some, this baptism must also follow another act of grace, namely, sanctification. Charismatics, on the other hand, do not always advocate either the necessity of a second work of grace or the evidence of glossolalia as an affirmation of Spirit baptism. Yet both emphasize the present work of the Spirit through gifts in the life of the individual and the church.

Ecclesiastical differentiation is based on denominational affiliation. Thus, *Pentecostals* refers to those participating in classical Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Church of God in Christ, the United Pentecostal Church, and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. *Charismatics*, on the other hand, refers to persons outside these classical Pentecostal denominations but with connections to mainline denominations. *Neocharismatics* are participants in independent, postdenominational, nondenominational, or indigenous groups or organizations, such as the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.⁷

Viewed in this light, the uniqueness of the pentecostal, charismatic, and neocharismatic movements becomes clearer; yet, what also becomes clear is that these movements—taken together—possess some common emphases that, broadly speaking, tie them together.⁸ As such, and for simplicity, a common designation—or gathering term—will be necessary as different thinkers from the various perspectives are discussed below.

The designation of “charismatic”—with the lower case “c” should be noted—has a long and established use for referencing pentecostal, charismatic, and even neocharismatic adherents. Referring to the several distinct terms, Mark Cartledge echoes the above assertion on interchangeability, but he also promotes “charismatic” as a gathering term. Cartledge writes, “The terms ‘Pentecostal’ and ‘Charismatic’ are often used interchangeably to refer to denominations, experiential phenomena or a particular

⁷Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), xxi.

⁸Hocken, “Charismatic Movement,” 514-15. Hocken identifies nine characteristics that he promotes as constant emphases within and across the pentecostal, charismatic, and neocharismatic movements: (1) Focus on Jesus, (2) Praise, (3) Love of the Bible, (4) God Speaks Today, (5) Evangelism, (6) Awareness of Evil, (7) Spiritual Gifts, (8) Eschatological Expectation, and, finally, (9) Spiritual Power.

kind of theology. . . . The term ‘charismatic’ (lower case ‘c’) will be used in conjunction with the . . . terms ‘spirituality’ and ‘tradition.’”⁹ So, the lower case designation refers to either the tradition in general or the essence of charismatic spirituality, which finds its identity in spontaneous encounters of the Spirit.¹⁰ The convention of using small-c charismatic will be followed below, but it needs to be recognized that different expressions or terms will be used as different scholars are brought into the discussion. If and when this creates mild confusion, a clarification will often be offered that points to the gathering term—*charismatic*.

Apologetics and Charismatic Influence

The significance of a charismatic influence within apologetic conversations is to a large extent limited. General apologetic works from the charismatic perspective are just not available. John Stackhouse acknowledges this point and provides the primary reason. Stackhouse states, “Many (but not all) . . . charismatic Christians . . . opt out of apologetics.” He continues:

Since the fundamental problem is human sinfulness, and the only remedy is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, these Christians see no point in the labor of intellectual engagement. Rightly grasping that conversion is fundamentally spiritual and therefore the province of God’s Spirit, they go on to conclude . . . that apologetical conversation is, strictly speaking, beside the point and therefore a waste of time.¹¹

If Stackhouse is correct, the predominate charismatic view is dismissive regarding

⁹Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 18.

¹⁰Ibid., 19

¹¹John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 125. Stackhouse does not reference charismatic Christians in complete isolation. He also attributes this opt out to “mystical” Christians as well (*ibid.*).

apologetics in favor of a non-explicated and gratuitous (or predictable) Spirit attribution—whereby any defense of the faith is simply “the province of God’s Spirit.” Against such a stream, the availability of charismatic literature on apologetics is virtually nonexistent; nevertheless, virtually nonexistent does not mean absolutely nonexistent.

Rick M. Nañez, in his book *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds?*, states, “Pentecostal-Charismatic scholars are making marked headway in their various disciplines, but it seems there is a gap in the literary market between academic endeavors and the call to intellectual spirituality on the lay level.”¹² Nañez laments, “We [Pentecostals and Charismatics] are a substantial subculture that, for the most part, has mass-produced an army with supernatural aspirations, while at the same time allowing many to maintain superficial intellectual lives.”¹³ He therefore takes on the following task: “My aim is to admonish my Pentecostal and Charismatic brothers and sisters to reconsider some of the popularly-held misconceptions concerning the intellect in order that we as a movement may modify some of our thinking about thinking and change our minds about the importance of the ‘life of the mind.’”¹⁴

Nañez himself falls short of providing or developing a full-on charismatic apologetic, but he in essence paves the way and calls for a charismatic apologetic to take root. Indeed, he even intimates that he might undertake this pursuit at a later time. Nañez writes,

I originally intended to write this book to be a manual of apologetics for Pentecostal-Charismatic believers. As I pondered that undertaking, I realized that

¹²Rick M. Nañez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds? A Call to Use God’s Gift of the Intellect* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 9.

¹³Ibid., 15.

¹⁴Ibid.

though some within our movement might be ready for a Pentecostal handbook as such, the majority might not have even grappled with the validity of the subject. Then I was disquieted by a subsequent realization that beyond the necessity of providing a defense for apologetics, I had to lay the groundwork first by defending the intellectual life. . . . The importance of the life of the mind is the key to accepting the validity of apologetics.¹⁵

So, it would appear that a charismatic engagement with apologetics is perchance forthcoming. If not Nañez himself, then it seems that the charismatic momentum toward advancing charismatic scholarship would still at some point yield an intentional charismatic apologetic.¹⁶

Another charismatic thinker—James K. A. Smith—has gone a bit further than Nañez in both his breakthrough scholarship and his wide appeal.¹⁷ Smith is certainly one of the charismatic scholars that Nañez referenced as currently making headway.¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid., 164. Nañez affirms a consistent view of what apologetics entails, saying, “Christian apologetics means to provide responses for the essential question, ‘Is Christianity rationally defensible?’” (164-65). Although short of a full-length treatment of the subject, Nañez does put together twelve reasons why Christians should be prepared to defend the faith (165-70).

¹⁶As an aside, Nañez carries out his *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds?* effort with great appreciation for evangelical theologians, philosophers, and apologists. An apologetic coming from his charismatic perspective will very likely align on many points with the existing evangelical literature. For instance, his apologetics chapter—all nine pages of it—makes reference to several evangelicals, including Edward John Carnell (163), Colin Brown (165), F. F. Bruce (167), Lee Strobel (169), John Warwick Montgomery (169), Frank Morrison (170), and Josh McDowell (170). Conversely, he mentions no one within his own charismatic understanding. The charismatic contribution and direction coming from Nañez would be interesting, to say the least.

¹⁷James K. A. Smith’s scholarly involvement is evidenced though his numerous published articles in peer-reviewed journals. Examples—being limited here to the present philosophical apologetic subject—include: James K. A. Smith, “Reforming Public Theology: Two Kingdoms, or Two Cities?,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 47 (2012): 122-37; idem, “Formation, Grace, and Pneumatology: Or, Where’s the Spirit in Gregory’s Augustine?,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 39 (2011): 556-69; idem, “Naturalizing Glossolalia? Prospects for a More Radically Pentecostal Ontology,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 19 (2010): 28-33; idem, “Epistemology for the Rest of Us: Hints of a Paradigm Shift in Abraham’s Crossing the Threshold,” *Philosophia Christi* 10 (2008): 353-61; idem, “What Hath Cambridge to do with Azusa Street? Radical Orthodoxy and Pentecostal Theology in Conversation,” *Pneuma* 25 (2003): 97-114; idem, “Advice to Pentecostal Philosophers,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11.2 (2003): 235-47.

¹⁸James K. A. Smith, “Thinking in Tongues: The Past and Future of Pentecostal Theology,” *First Things* (2008), 27. Smith too acknowledges the poor reputation associated with charismatic believers. He writes, “Pentecostalism is a tradition of preachers and evangelists, not scholars and doctors” (27). And

Specific to his charismatic influence on apologetics, Smith, like Nañez, has not written a full-on work in the area of apologetics, but he has intentionally engaged and promoted apologetics—even if tangentially—in many of his writings.¹⁹

Smith contends that charismatic believers hold a faith and reason position in a similar vein as Augustine; yet, they expand Augustine's view. Whereas Augustine adhered to the well-established faith seeking understanding view, charismatics adhere more to a “faith seeking understanding of the experience of the Spirit’s surprising ways.”²⁰ Smith comments on his meaning: “[T]he Spirit is a spirit who surprises us by continuing to speak, heal, and manifest God’s presence in ways that counter the shut-down naturalism of modernity.”²¹ The manifestation of God’s presence is a familiar expression as pertains to previous chapters, and, as such, this manifestation idea—along with ideas like the “Spirit’s surprise” and the Spirit’s affective mode of knowing—will be drawn out below.²² Smith exercises what he describes as a “performative apologetic”—which sincerely develops his affective epistemological ideas—through his more recent work, and it is to his affective thoughts and ideas that the Spirit-specific discussion

yet, he stills perceives his tradition as worthy of greater scholastic recognition, saying, “Pentecostalism . . . produces a position of theological and philosophical significance” (28). He opines that this significance was for many years implicit but that in recent years it is being made more explicit (28). And, he ultimately concludes that Pentecostal theologians are now “taken seriously” (31). Additionally, Smith admits to the anti-intellectualist participation of charismatics in other places as well. James K. A Smith, “Scandalizing Theology: A Pentecostal Response to Noll’s *Scandal*,” *Pneuma* 19 (1997): 226.

¹⁹The support for this statement will become clear as Smith’s works are specifically referenced in this chapter.

²⁰Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” 27.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 29. The idea behind the “Spirit’s surprise” is easy enough to understand. The Spirit is not constrained by humanity’s desires. To the contrary, he is often found doing new things in surprising ways. And, as such, charismatics are focused with a continuous expectation of supernatural phenomena.

progresses toward below.²³ But first, a few more charismatic adherents deserve a brief mention—for their active promotion of Christian defense proclamations.

With Nañez and Smith, the presence of a modest charismatic apologetic is already beginning to come into focus. But, several additional influences within charismatic circles also seek to stand firm in defense of the faith. J. Rodman Williams wrote a systematic theology text from the charismatic perspective. In so doing, he proposed that apologetics is vital in setting forth reasons for supporting the systematic understanding of theology.²⁴ Michael Welker, as another example, put together an edited volume with both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars to champion and legitimize and uphold the thoughts of the charismatic viewpoint.²⁵ Within this edited work, the Spirit is seen—as argued by Amos Yong—as continually active in human creation.²⁶ In his own essay, Welker argues for the usefulness of the Spirit in an apologetic-like manner, saying, “The Spirit enables people to gain an immediacy to God, even a unity not only with one another but above all with Christ himself and with the divine Creator.²⁷ With the interaction of faith and science presently en vogue within apologetic

²³Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xii. The “performative apologetic” expression is an original expression to Smith.

²⁴J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, vol. 1, *God, the World, and Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 18.

²⁵Michael Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

²⁶Amos Yong, “*Ruach*, the Primordial Chaos, and the Breadth of Life: Emergence Theory and the Creation Narratives in Pneumatological Perspective,” in *The Work of the Spirit*, ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

²⁷Michael Welker, “The Spirit in Philosophical, Theological, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives,” in *The Work of the Spirit*, ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 227. Much of Welker’s Spirit discussion is wrapped in epistemological terminology like “truth-seeking,” truth-claims,” “certainty,” and even the need for “insight”—or the improvement of insights (230-32).

conversations, there is also a deliberate effort for charismatic believers to enter into the faith-science conversation. Evidence of the charismatic engagement with science becomes apparent through several, salient articles written from the charismatic view.²⁸

Other thoughts and statements to support the apologetic influence of charismatic believers could likewise be mentioned.²⁹ But, the primary point in need of emphasis here is that there is no full or exhaustive apologetic treatment from charismatics. In the next section, the beginnings of what may be a more promising apologetic effort—by the so-called charismatics—will be explored. And, the epistemological proposals emerging from within this viewpoint will be highlighted as the key contemplations for what may transfer into a more comprehensive apologetic.³⁰

Spirit Apologetics and Affective Emphases

Jonathan Edwards—in his *Religious Affections*—speaks about and describes affections as “the spring of men’s actions.”³¹ He writes,

Such is man’s nature that he is very inactive, any otherwise than he is influenced by some affection, either love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other. These affections we see to be the springs that set men a-going, in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits: these are the things that put men forward, and carry them along, in all their worldly business. . . . It is affection that engages

²⁸James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong, eds., *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

²⁹Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” 28-29, 31. In arguing for the explicit and growing intellectual influence of charismatics within academia, Smith indirectly draws out a few charismatic names that have implicitly engaged in charismatic apologetics.

³⁰In terms of epistemological statements from a charismatic perspective, Mark Cartledge offers a very preliminary conversation. Mark J. Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2003), 45-52. Cartledge presents three epistemological formulations: The Yada and Praxis Approach (held by Cheryl Bridges Johns); The Cultural-Linguistic Approach (held by Joel Shuman); and The Carry-over of Value Approach (held by Amos Yong).

³¹Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961), 29.

the covetous man, and him that is greedy of worldly profits, in his pursuits; and it is by the affections that the ambitious man is put forward in his pursuit of worldly glory; and it is the affections also that actuate the voluptuous man in pursuit of pleasure and sensual delights. The world continues, from age to age, in continual commotion and agitation. . . . And as in worldly things worldly affections are very much the spring of men's motion and action; so in religious matters the spring of their actions is very much religious affections: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.³²

To Edwards, the affections are what drive humankind toward spiritual things, and especially to God. Edwards is most often thought to resonate with the Reformed tradition in terms of his apologetics.³³ Nevertheless, he evidently saw the usefulness of affections as well in order to demonstrate, evidence, or display the genuine commitment of one's existing knowledge of God.³⁴ The Spirit certainly occupies a role in Edward's epistemology, but his grounding of knowledge is primarily on revelation and the doctrine of inspiration.³⁵ Charismatic thinkers, in contradistinction to Edwards, rely more undoubtedly on the affective aspect in order to ground the knowledge of God. The demonstration of this assertion will receive support from a more vigorous explication of James K. A. Smith.

³²Ibid., 29-30.

³³Three helpful works on the apologetic thoughts of Edwards are the following: Scott Oliphint, "Jonathan Edwards: Reformed Apologist," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995); Stephen J. Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty: The Holy Spirit and the Apologetics of Jonathan Edwards* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003); and Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), especially chaps. 9 and 10.

³⁴Jonathan Edwards defines affections as "the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul." And, the soul, according to Edwards, is "endued" with "two faculties. The first faculty of the soul is "understanding," which "is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and views, and judges of things." The second faculty of the soul is "that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is in some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined *to* them, or is disinclined and adverse *from* them; or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting." This latter faculty is referred to variously as inclination, will, and heart. Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 24.

³⁵Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty*, 3.

The Spirit Apologetics of James K. A. Smith

A real connection exists—even equivalence—between apologetics and epistemology in the philosophical outworking of Smith. Smith, speaking in passing about apologetics and postmodernism, makes a direct appeal to readers that epistemology and apologetics are correlates: “I don’t wish to engage in polemics . . . except insofar as it impacts epistemology (the theory of knowledge) and hence apologetics.”³⁶ This apologetic-epistemology connection is an important note in order to set the stage for the development of Smith’s Spirit apologetic.

Now, Smith—as already indicated—has not as of yet published a manuscript dedicated specifically to Christian apologetics. Instead his apologetic considerations are interspersed throughout his writings. Sifting through these works will prove valuable in coming to an adequate understanding of Smith’s pneumatological apologetics. In so doing, the following ideas will afford corporeality to Smith’s Spirit apologetic: affective epistemology, elevating the heart, and the Spirit’s access.

Affective epistemology. Smith speaks directly about an “affective epistemology” in his writings.³⁷ What is affective epistemology?³⁸ In setting up his

³⁶James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*, The Church and Postmodern Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 27 n.17.

³⁷Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” 29. Although an earlier example may perhaps be found, the earliest known example of Smith’s use of “affective epistemology” is located in a 2003 article. James K. A. Smith, “What Hath Cambridge to do with Azusa Street? Radical Orthodoxy and Pentecostal Theology in Conversation.” *Pneuma* 25 (2003): 111. Yet, uses of “affective epistemology” are found and explicated in some of Smith’s later work. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 12, 14, 43-4, 71.

³⁸Although the options for further understanding appear limited, the interested reader may nonetheless pursue more about affective epistemology. See, for example, Georg Brun, Ulvi Doğuoğlu and Dominique Kuenzle, eds. *Epistemology and Emotions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

intent for an affective epistemology, Smith writes, “Embedded in the embodied practices and spirituality of pentecostalism are elements of a latent but distinctive *understanding* of the world, an affective ‘take’ on the world that constitutes more social imaginary than a cognitive framework.”³⁹ One of Smith’s co-collaborators, Amos Yong, offers his own explication of Smith’s meaning behind this affective epistemology: “Pentecostals are spiritually and, in some respects, supernaturalistically oriented, but they are engaged with these dimensions of reality through the concreteness of their embodiment, the sensitivities of their affections and emotions, and the rationality (not rationalism) of their experiential, empirical, and pragmatic orientation.”⁴⁰ Smith seeks to develop this affective epistemology from the pentecostal perspective; his mindset is attuned to those who are insistent on expecting Spirit encounters and their emphasis on affections.⁴¹

At least from the vantage of charismatics, the affective sapience which undergirds Smith’s epistemic pedagogy seems to relate to that which conditions humanity’s most fundamental construal of the world. Or, as Smith explains,

³⁹Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 31. Smith follows Charles Taylor on “social imaginary (29, 120). According to Taylor, “social imaginary” means: “The ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deep normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.” Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

⁴⁰Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 11.

⁴¹In hopes to avoid confusion of terms, a word on Smith’s use of small-p pentecostal is in order. Whereas the convention within this dissertation—following the likes of Mark Cartledge above—is to apply “charismatic” as the gathering term for Pentecostals, charismatics, and Third Wavers, Smith prefers to use the small-p designation of “pentecostal.” He asserts, “The shared sensibility of Pentecostal and charismatic traditions is often described under the umbrella of small-*p* pentecostalism.” Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” 27. For an extended discussion of Smith’s preferred small-p designation, Smith himself works to provide clarity. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xvi-xvii. In this discussion, Smith acknowledges Cartledge’s use of “charismatic,” and he explains his intentional deviation: “I have opted to not simply use the term ‘charismatic’ since the lexical range of the term seems just a bit too expansive such that a ‘charismatic philosophy’ might simply be taken to be an ‘enthusiastic’ philosophy” (xvii n.14).

Implicit in pentecostal experience is a unique understanding of the nature of human persons—what we could call a philosophical anthropology. Because of an emphasis on the role of experience, and in contrast to a rationalistic evangelical theology (which reduces worship to a didactic sermon, and conceives of our relation to God as primarily intellectual, yielding only ‘talking head’ Christianity), pentecostal spirituality is rooted in affective, narrative epistemic practice.⁴²

The role of experience as it relates to Smith’s explanation of affectivity pushes readers and interpreters of Smith to acknowledge his “radical openness” to God’s activity.⁴³ In describing his intended meaning behind this openness, Smith comments, “This [radical openness] engenders an emphasis on the *continued, dynamic presence, activity, and ministry of the Spirit.*”⁴⁴ Smith refers to this experiential activity as “revolutionary” in that it disrupts or subverts the status quo, and it occupies a first principle in organizing his thoughts.⁴⁵ He explains further through a look at Acts 2: “I think Pentecost is really about radical openness to God—especially an openness to a God who exceeds our horizons of expectation and comes unexpectedly.”⁴⁶

Moving the charismatic discussion toward the experiential is predictable. Even Smith admits this in asking: “What could be more pentecostal than experience?”⁴⁷ But, just so the direction is clear, the true connotation of Smith’s intention behind experience needs to be fleshed out. Here, Smith does not leave his readers to speculate. He states,

⁴² Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 43.

⁴³Ibid., 32-39. Smith devotes an entire subsection of this book to the “Radical Openness to God” idea; indeed, he even refers to this idea as one of the key elements of a distinctively charismatic worldview (32).

⁴⁴Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” 29.

⁴⁵Ibid., 30. The example offered as an illustration for this revolutionary aspect is the Azusa Street revival. Smith writes, “The Azusa Street revival remains, for Pentecostals, *the paradigm*” (ibid.). Emphasis added.

⁴⁶Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 34.

⁴⁷Ibid., 71.

“The folk discourse of pentecostal spirituality will often speak of being ‘moved by the Spirit,’ and without question, charismatic spirituality is moving and emotive (for which it is often denigrated).”⁴⁸ Accordingly, what is evident here is both a real sense of Spirit initiation and a real sense of emotional response—by the person or persons being receiving the Spirit’s initiation. “Experience,” Smith continues, “and its activation of emotion is precisely what reaches the core of the human person.”⁴⁹ This emotive-generated experience is an interesting and crucial point because Smith ultimately views said experiences as producing knowledge of God and even creating its own meaning.⁵⁰ This means that the affective nature of image-bearers precedes their thinking nature. Smith elsewhere writes, “The point is to emphasize that the way we inhabit the world is not primarily as thinkers, or even believers, but as more affective, embodied creatures who make our way in the world more by feeling our way around it.”⁵¹

Smith pursues this more experiential course at the expense of—or, perhaps better, to destabilize or reverse or balance—the prevailing rationalistic (cognitive) models of knowledge. In explaining Descartes’s reference to humanity’s essence as a “thinking thing”—a “mind,” Smith laments this majority perception. Why is this so? The main reason is because Smith simply sees humanity as operating from a “passional

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., 73.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 47. A fuller explanation is offered by Smith: “Like the blind men pictured in Rembrandt’s sketches, for the most part we make our way in the world with hands outstretched, in an almost tactile groping with our bodies. One might say that in our everyday, mundane being-in-the-world, we don’t lead with our head, so to speak; we lead out with our heart and hands” (ibid.). So, the experiential elements of humanity’s existence—hearts yearning toward and hands reaching out for—pull humanity toward knowledge.

orientation.” And, Smith chooses to answer the question even more thoroughly, “The point is to affirm the primacy of the heart and affections as the *basis* for a rational, intellectual engagement with and interpretation of the world.”⁵² In other words, true understanding or knowledge requires an expansion of “the slimmed-down reductionism of modern cognitivism.”⁵³ Smith employs stronger language to undermine the veer away from rationalism; indeed, he states that the charismatic emphasis constitutes “an enacted refusal of rationalism.”⁵⁴ “We are fundamentally,” Smith argues, “noncognitive, affective creatures.”⁵⁵ And, with this last statement in view, his *affective epistemology* comes into sharper focus:

Implicit in Pentecostal practice is a distinct epistemology that privileges an affective mode of knowing. This intuitive, even emotional knowing (“I know that I know that I know” is a common Pentecostal testimony) is more literary than logical; we are the kind of creatures who make our way in the world more by metaphor than by mathematics. The way we know is more like a dance than a deduction.⁵⁶

Smith continues in his explanation: “What primes us to be so oriented—and act accordingly—is a set of habits or dispositions that are formed in us through affective, bodily means, especially bodily practices, routines, or rituals that grab hold of our hearts.”⁵⁷ The heart then becomes an essential discussion point for Smith. Indeed,

⁵²Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 59.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid. The word used here—“charismatic”—is not precisely in keeping with how Smith speaks. He prefers “pentecostal spirituality” as the label to communicate the same charismatic ideas.

⁵⁵Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 53. Smith explains, “The *telos* to which our love is aimed is not a list of ideas or propositions or doctrines; it is not a list of abstract, disembodied concepts or values. Rather, the reason that this vision of the good life moves us is because it is a more affective, sensible . . . picture of what the good life looks like. . . . Because we are affective before we are cognitive” (*ibid.*).

⁵⁶Smith, “Thinking in Tongues,” 30.

⁵⁷Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 63.

Smith's stated view of the heart—and what he sees referred to as *kardia* in the New Testament—is ultimately foundational to humanity's embodied existence.⁵⁸ He writes, “Our being-in-the-world hinges fundamentally on the heart.”⁵⁹ For the heart is where the *formative* view of the world takes hold within persons, and, here, commitment to one’s constellation of beliefs become oriented. But, this heart-orientation idea will need further fleshing out—especially as it relates to Spirit conversations.

Elevating the heart. The expansion beyond mere rationalism that Smith envisions and promotes requires an acknowledgement of his emphasis on the heart—and not solely the mind. He declares, “Knowledge is rooted in the heart.”⁶⁰ Or, elsewhere, he reaffirms his heart-over-mind emphasis: “We are not defined by thinking; rather we are primarily affective: the center of the person is not the mind, but the heart.”⁶¹ What does Smith intend by tying knowledge together with the heart? His answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand, Smith’s answer is quite familiar in that it recalls Pascal’s famous phrase, “the heart has reasons of which Reason knows nothing.”⁶² Yet,

⁵⁸Ibid., 18. The heart is both contrasted with the head and offered as a necessary next step—alongside of or in addition to the head—in order for a person to get hold of something, or in order for ideas, knowledge, pedagogy and others things to be grasped. Smith equates—in a very unique way—the heart with the “gut.” He explains the significance of equating the heart and gut (or stomach, as he also interposes for gut) in Aristotelian terms (57-62). Smith’s explanation is interesting, but it has little comportment on the present discussion.

⁵⁹Ibid., 215.

⁶⁰Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 43.

⁶¹Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, 136-37. In the discussion here, Smith clarifies the “primarily affective” elevation of the heart in order to still promote a place for rationality. He states, “That’s not to say we are irrational, but only that rationality [mind] is relative to what Augustine calls ‘the right order of love’—the direction of the heart.”

⁶²Pascal’s phrase—as has recently been argued—is probably more directly original within the work of Saint Augustine. See James R. Peters, *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

on the other hand, his answer is strikingly focused upon the Spirit's work. It will prove helpful to examine both of these aspects in more detail as these two considerations will flesh out Smith's pronouncements on the heart and the Spirit.

First, Smith falls in line with a long tradition of theologians, philosophers, and others in insisting on the central role of the heart in the knowledge enterprise.⁶³ He states, “This [knowing by the heart] is a way of ‘knowing’ the world that cannot be reduced to cognition or intellectual perception—and certainly not to ‘data’ or facts.” This entails a clear movement away from the standard epistemological pursuit of propositional knowledge. Smith continues by clarifying what he means in speaking of the heart:

What we’re calling the “heart” or “affections” does not simply reduce to the emotions, so we’re *not* setting up some kind of dichotomous opposition, between head and heart, between love and knowledge, between affection and cognition, between thinking and passion. . . . Rather, the point is to affirm the heart and affections as the *basis* for a rational, intellectual engagement with and interpretation of the world.⁶⁴

In this remark, and for the first time, the equating of “heart” and “affections” is noteworthy. But, of course, the crucial point is seeing the heart and affections as the *basis* for knowledge and understanding. And, additionally, Smith himself references

⁶³In addition to Christian theologians and philosophers like Augustine and Pascal, the list of advocates emphasizing the heart and knowledge is too long to identify exhaustively. One immediately thinks to various extents of Martin Luther, Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth and Donald Bloesch to name a few. Suffice it to say even the mystical branch within Islam, known as Sufism, acknowledges the centrality of the purified heart in establishing knowledge. Huston Smith, *Islam: A Concise Introduction* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 81-86. Huston Smith writes, “Love mysticism yields ‘heart knowledge,’ and ecstasy ‘visual or visionary knowledge,’ because extraterrestrial realities are seen; but intuitive mysticism brings ‘mental knowledge,’ which Sufis call *ma’rifah*, obtained through an organ of discernment called ‘the eye of the heart’” (81-82). For the heart is what intuits and sees the surety of knowledge. This unlikely reference—to Sufism—highlights the multifarious emphases found that stress a heart element.

⁶⁴Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 58-59.

postmodernism as holding a corresponding position to his own.⁶⁵ To this latter point, he writes, “Thus postmodernism lowers the core of human identity, as it were, from the head to the heart. This, of course, is not some advanced theoretical excuse for kissing our brains good-bye.”⁶⁶

Stanley Grenz legitimizes this point about postmodernism in his discourse on how postmodernism should be understood. “Postmodernism,” Grenz says, “questions the Enlightenment assumption that knowledge is certain and that the criterion for certainty rests on our human rational capabilities.” He then adds—in what serves as a precursor to Smith—the following: “In a similar manner, the Christian faith entails a denial that the rational, scientific method is the sole measure of truth. We affirm that certain aspects of truth lie beyond reason and cannot be fathomed by reason.”⁶⁷ Then, in further support of Smith’s thinking, Grenz offers the following point regarding the heart:

A post-noeticentric Christian gospel emphasizes the relevance of faith for every dimension of life. It refuses to allow commitment to Christ to remain merely an intellectual endeavor, a matter solely of assent to orthodox propositions. Commitment to Christ must also take its lodging in *the heart*. In fact, the postmodern world provides the occasion for us to reappropriate the older pietist belief that a right head has no value apart from a right *heart*. The Christian gospel is concerned not only with the reformulation of our intellectual commitments but also with the transformation of our character and the renewal of our entire lives as believers.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Smith demonstrates a vested interest in postmodern conversations. There is a clear and yet reserved acceptance of postmodernity—and its inevitable trajectory—in his writings. In addition to Smith’s *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, he has also written *After Modernity? Secularity, Globalization, and the Re-enchantment of the World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

⁶⁶Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 58. Smith offers a very helpful and engaging look at how he pictures postmodernism. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, 18-26. His first task is to “unpack the primary philosophical impulses behind postmodernism” (21). After doing this through a look at Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault, Smith then seeks to demonstrate that their respective thoughts have “deep affinity with central Christian claims” (22).

⁶⁷Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 165-66.

⁶⁸Ibid., 173. Emphases added.

Smith aligns, offers, and labels his charismatic heart emphasis as a kind of “performative postmodernism,” which he characterizes as “an enacted refusal of rationalism.”⁶⁹

The heart, the *kardia*, in this conception is—it should be rather evident—intended to correct what in Smith’s thinking is a misguided direction of modern rationalism. Or, put succinctly by Smith,

[T]he philosophical anthropology embedded in pentecostal faith and practice does not yield merely a ‘thinking thing,’ but rather an embodied heart that ‘understands’ the world in ways that are irreducible to the categories and propositions of cognitive ‘reason’ . . . In pentecostal experience there are construals of the world and an understanding of God that are irreducible to the tidy categories of cognition. That does not constitute a rejection of cognition or propositional truth; but it does situate and relativize that particular mode of knowing.⁷⁰

Smith’s primary critique of what he describes as cessationist evangelicalism is that such a rationalistic approach reduces “the human person to a disembodied thinking mind.”⁷¹ The embodiment of creatures—Smith insists—needs to be understood as an essential feature in making up their identity. He reiterates this point while relating it to worship,

[W]e need to appreciate that there is an incipient philosophical anthropology at work in pentecostal worship—a tacit, assumed model of human persons. The reason why pentecostal worship is so affective, tactile, and emotive is because pentecostal spirituality rejects “cognitivist” pictures of the human person that would

⁶⁹Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 59.

⁷⁰Ibid., 62. Smith rejects what he calls “the thin, reductionistic picture of the human person bequeathed to us by modernity” (*ibid.*). Specifically, he is thinking about rationalism. As an alternative, postmodernism, Smith argues, hones in on a better understanding of the “embodiment and materiality that characterizes pentecostal worship” (60). This is an interesting point for sure, but it is not a point that will occupy further discussion in this work.

⁷¹Ibid., 58. Smith offers more development around this idea of the embodiment: “So rather than reducing the human person to a disembodied thinking mind, postmodernism revalues embodiment, and in so doing it offers an account of knowing that revalues what, in the philosophical tradition, has been referred to as the ‘heart’” (*ibid.*). J. P. Moreland submits a simple definition for “cessationism”: “Cessationism is the idea that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy, healing, miracles, and tongues (see 1 Cor. 12:8-10; 13:8-10), ceased with the death of the apostles and, thus, are no longer available today. J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit’s Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 175.

construe us as fundamentally “thinking things.” Pentecostal worship is “experiential” because it assumes a holistic understanding of personhood and agency—that the essence of the human animal cannot be reduced to reason or the intellect. Or, to put it otherwise, rather than seeing human action and behavior as entirely driven by conscious, cognitive, deliberative processes, pentecostal worship implicitly appreciates that our being-in-the-world is significantly shaped and primed by all sorts of precognitive, nondeliberative “modular” operations. In short, we *feel* our way around the world more than we *think* about it, *before* we think about it.⁷²

Smith then concludes his thought in this way: “This is why the ‘experience’—which taps the embodied, affective, and emotional aspects of the person—is not just a superfluous addition, an emotivist add-on. Rather, the experience and its activation of emotion is precisely what reaches the core of the human person.”⁷³ And, as attention now shifts to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit ultimately primes—or accesses and rouses—individuals for knowledge acquisition, redirection, and renewal.

The Spirit’s access. Knowledge not only proceeds first from the heart but, secondly, it necessitates the Spirit’s operation. Smith endorses an idea of the Spirit’s operation as “opening up the core of our affections to redirection.”⁷⁴ Such redirection relates to what can be known. The type of knowledge that Smith envisages and supports is categorized as “affective knowledge,” and this category of knowledge is characterized as a species of “know-how” knowledge.⁷⁵ This know-how type of knowledge is clearly

⁷²Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 72.

⁷³Ibid., 73. The idea of emotion as a grounds for belief is gaining credibility. Clifford Williams, *Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires and Emotions for Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011). Williams says, “Emotion, rightly understood, is a legitimate component of faith. Because the satisfaction of need involves having emotion, this conception of faith fits with the thesis that satisfaction of need contributes to acquiring and maintaining faith” (16).

⁷⁴Ibid., 77 n.2.

⁷⁵Ibid., 71.

relian on some experiential aspect.⁷⁶ For instance, a law enforcement officer possesses know-how knowledge when it comes to firearms. The officer knows how to fire his weapon. This knowledge is derivative of experiences. Similarly, but for the charismatic, Christian knowledge is derivative from the Spirit's access into the experience of a person. The charismatic embrace of such an epistemology follows logically; after all, what could possibly be more charismatic than an experience of the Spirit?

Now, a charismatic perspective of epistemology almost certainly requires the incorporation of the Holy Spirit via a genuine experience, or experiences. For Smith, “experience”—as already shown above—is said to “tap the embodied, affective, and emotional aspects of a person.”⁷⁷ Again, Smith even describes his epistemological view as an “affective epistemology.”⁷⁸ Of utmost concern for this section, Smith at one point directly addresses the epistemic operation of the Spirit in the “granting of ‘access’” to knowledge. The focus here on the access by the Spirit “is less *what* is known and more a matter of *how we know.*” Smith describes this experiential knowledge in an emphatic assertion: “[T]here *is* a means of ‘knowing’ before and beyond propositions.”⁷⁹ Smith

⁷⁶The idea of “know-how” knowledge is certainly not new to studies relating to the theory of knowledge. Nicholas Rescher, identifies four primary sorts of knowledge: (1) Knowledge-that, (2) Adverbial knowledge, (3) Knowledge by acquaintance, and (4) Performatory—or know-how—knowledge. As can be seen from this last option, Smith is not necessarily chartering new paths. This performative, or experiential, knowledge has an established following. In fact, the performatory type of knowledge is the book-length focus of Rescher’s work—not simply a passing reference. Nicolas Rescher, *Epistemology: An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), xv. Also, as a more pertinent example, J. P. Moreland also discusses know-how knowledge. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle*, 120-21.

⁷⁷Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 73.

⁷⁸Smith, “What Hath Cambridge,” 111. Though the contents of this article refers to “affective epistemology,” such is a minimal reference. Smith does not explain nor detail what he means when he identifies his epistemology in this way.

⁷⁹Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 68. Emphasis added.

offers what he calls “narrative knowledge” as a needed type of knowledge that is distinct from the standard, propositional understanding of knowledge.⁸⁰ The standard, propositional knowledge, according to Smith, “is usually understood (philosophically) as ‘justified true belief,’ where ‘belief’ is understood as assent to propositions, or at least characterized by a propositional attitude.”⁸¹ Smith’s “narrative knowledge” is of necessity quite different. He writes,

What is distinctive about narrative knowledge is found in the connection between narratives and emotions. Narratives articulate a kind of ‘emotional understanding’; a narrative ‘means something to an audience in emotional terms.’ But what does that mean? What’s the connection between narrative and emotion? . . . [I]t is twofold: First, the claim indicates that the way narratives work is affective. A narrative makes sense of a life, a series of events, or an experience by a ‘logic’ that is not deductive but affective. The linkage and production of meaning are not the result of a cognitive inference but rather of an affective construal. . . . But, second, narrative works on this affective register precisely because the emotions are themselves already ‘construals’ of the world. The emotions themselves are already hermeneutic filters . . . doing the work of interpreting the world.⁸²

The knowledge in view here is characterized by true understanding. For Smith, this narrative knowledge is related to the affective experience of emotions—“affective” as established in sections above—but also as interpretive appraisals of these same emotive experiences. The emotive experiences serve as “filters” that operate in interpreting the world; Smith even says here that “one is almost tempted to fall back on the old language

⁸⁰Though Smith is no doubt sympathetic with postmodernism, he argues that “narrative” as he uses it is not to be equated with postmodernism in a strict sense. James K. A. Smith, “Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? A Response to the ‘Biola School,’” in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, ed. Myron B. Penner (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 218-26.

⁸¹ Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 64.

⁸²Ibid., 65-66.

of ‘faculties’ to try to describe this.”⁸³ Such experiential knowledge is constituted by the experienced activity of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴

Smith asks a penetrating question to clarify his thinking: “What are we naming when we talk about experience?”⁸⁵ In a roundabout way, Smith ultimately offers direct expression in answering thus: “If we are oriented by a kind of affective ‘engine,’ then the Spirit’s transformation must tap our emotional core.”⁸⁶ As such, those who are subjected to the Spirit and his working are presented with an effacement of the cognitive, and they become overwhelmed—or “surprised”—by the operation of the Spirit. With such an operation, subjects meet the Spirit in such a way that desires are redirected and new understandings—knowledge—are thereby accessed. Smith relates this Spirit access to what he calls “the Spirit’s gracious epistemic operation.”⁸⁷

To be clear, the access spoken of here is a recognition that the messages associated with understanding the things of the Spirit (or brought about by the Spirit) are true. In his *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, Smith acknowledges the following: “Revelation informs our horizon. However, even the (objective) provision of a revelatory interpretation does not guarantee that everyone will read the event in this way. One must (subjectively) accept this revelatory interpretation, which requires faith—and such faith

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., 69, 71. Smith writes, “A feature of the strange and fantastic world of pentecostal spirituality is a sense that the miraculous is normal, that the surprises of the Spirit are normal” (98).

⁸⁵Ibid., 71.

⁸⁶Ibid., 76.

⁸⁷Ibid., 69.

requires the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁸ He adds precision to this line of thinking in *Thinking in Tongues*:

The work of conviction and transformation is not just an intellectual matter; rather, repentance has to seat itself in the core of the person. In order for this to really effect transformation, what’s needed is not just a change of mind but a change of *heart*, a reorientation of one’s comportment to the world, to others, to oneself. And if our most basic comportment to the world is pre-cognitive and affective, then such transformation has to be channeled through affective, embodied means. [A person] has perhaps been “convinced” for weeks that he needs to make a change; that is, he has “known” (cognitively, intellectually) for a long time that his behavior is inconsistent with his confession. But mere intellectual conviction has not effected change because the “driver” of our behavior is not just (or even for the most part) intellectual. This “experience” . . . is not just a superfluous addition, an emotivist add-on. Rather, the experience and its activation of emotion is precisely what reaches the core of the human person.⁸⁹

Though the Spirit is not directly mentioned in this comment, Smith writes these thoughts under a discussion related to being moved by the Spirit. Surely his talk of conviction and transformation relates to this Spirit movement. And, the experience of the Spirit in view touches the *kardia* which then actualizes knowledge—in a cognitive sense—and moves subjects toward genuine understanding—in an affective sense.

Conclusion

James K. A. Smith sets about to defend the possibility that charismatic thinkers can overcome the anti-intellectual perception that is so widely leveled against them. He labels his effort a “performative apologetic” in that it seeks to counter the groundswell of opposition against taking charismatic—what he terms small-*p* pentecostal—scholarship

⁸⁸Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, 48. Here, Smith’s thoughts on regeneration follow John Owen’s discussion. Smith cites Owen in order to buttress his objective-subjective epistemological emphasis (48-49).

⁸⁹Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 72-73.

seriously.⁹⁰ As should be expected from an advocate of the charismatic perspective, Smith is intent on justifying those Spirit encounters that move the affections of humanity. Smith insists upon a charismatic Spirit apologetic that “constitutes more social imaginary than a cognitive framework.”⁹¹ By this, he means that the experiences of mankind should define their deliberate commitments more than mere doctrines or beliefs. In other words, charismatic epistemology aims its apologetic focus on the believing person as opposed to focusing on the beliefs. Smith advocates that his manner of apologetic is actually an *unapologetics.*⁹² He explains the issue,

Our beliefs are encapsulated in “statements of faith” that simply catalog a collection of statements about God, Jesus, the Spirit, sin, redemption, and so on. Knowledge is reduced to biblical information that can be encapsulated and encoded. And so, in more ways than one, our construal of the Christian faith has capitulated to modernity. . . . But isn’t it curious that God’s revelation to humanity is given not as a collection of propositions or facts but rather within a narrative.⁹³

So, he finds the apologetic solution in the narrative, not demonstration. “Crucial,” he comments, “is [our] being able to write ourselves into the story of God’s redeeming action in the world—being able to find our role in the play, our character in the story.”⁹⁴ The narrative must be “kerygmatic” and “charismatic,” and the end goal is performative in “proclaiming the story of the gospel in the power of the Spirit.”⁹⁵ Such a performative end requires the Spirit’s access into the heart, which results in radical openness to God’s

⁹⁰Ibid., xii.

⁹¹Ibid., 31.

⁹²Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, 74.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., 75.

⁹⁵Ibid., 74.

activity. And, such activity pinpoints knowledge in the heart (via affections) and not merely in the mind (via cognition).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

John Frame identifies three primary works associated with the Holy Spirit that are readily presented in Scripture: power, authority, and presence.¹ In view of his work of presence, the Spirit of God is an abiding and mediating presence. Frame relates the Spirit's presence as applied to individuals to what he calls "existential justification."² Existential justification is the element within apologetics and reasoning that persuades. Frame explains, "In the traditional philosophical definition, persuasion represents the term *belief*, for we do not fully believe something unless we are persuaded of it."³ So, the Spirit—on Frame's view—even from a theological perspective is central to an existential apologetic by subjectively satisfying the justification of beliefs held by individuals.

In what has already been written, something like this existential apologetic—which is more understood above in terms of experiential knowledge of God—is found to different extents across all perspectives. And, the common constituent is activity of the person of the Holy Spirit. This dissertation has argued that there is an underdeveloped emphasis on the use of the Spirit in apologetics. But, it has also been argued that such an

¹John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 925.

²Ibid., 738.

³Ibid. This talk of "existential justification" is consistent with what was already said above—in the first chapter—regarding Frame's allowance for revelation in a subjective sense.

underdeveloped engagement is primed for correction. Alvin Plantinga, William Alston and William Abraham, and James Smith all promote the Spirit in their efforts to ground genuine belief in and knowledge of God. And, indeed, a latent Spirit apologetic exists within their respective Reformed, Anglican-Methodist, and charismatic approaches.

First of all, Alvin Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology offered a Spirit trajectory that initiated compulsory responses and development. Plantinga’s claim that religious beliefs are—in part—grounded in such Spirit experiences is bedrock to the present discussion. Based off these experiences, Plantinga asserts that belief in *the great things of the gospel* are “properly basic.” And, as such, these core Christian beliefs and commitments can be received without having to establish their legitimacy upon other beliefs. Their receipt necessitates a role for the Spirit as IIHS—as internal instigation of the Holy Spirit—that informs the cognitive situation of humanity regarding salvific affirmations. The Spirit therefore is a source of belief producing the requisite warrant to qualify as knowledge. There is little need for formal apologetic arguments or evidence as long as the Spirit is viewed in light of his usefulness in acquiring knowledge. He functions as a special cognitive source—capable of repairing sin’s damage to mankind’s original epistemic condition, the *sensus divinitatis*. And, he offers a defense to individual hearts and minds to sustain the main lines of the Christian gospel.

Now, prior to Plantinga and Reformed Epistemology, conversations surrounding any purported Spirit apologetic were nebulous and indistinct. However, as argued herein, the onset of RE encouraged others to register their epistemic thoughts as related to the Holy Spirit. William Alston highlights a second Spirit trajectory for grounding belief in God. As a close associate of RE, the discussion of Alston under the

“Anglican-Methodist” moniker seems amateurish. Nevertheless, he certainly shared his recognition of the Spirit in producing a defense for Christian belief. Alston promotes a perceptual model of belief whereby experiential awareness of God—or *perception* of God—leads subjects to justifiably sustain their beliefs in God. The meaning of “experiential” that was argued above includes: (1) an awareness of God, (2) given to an individual’s consciousness, (3) through non-sensory means, (4) by direct presentation, and (5) explained by Spirit activity.

Now, in view of the Spirit’s activity, Alston promotes a delivery of knowledge of God via mediated immediacy, which results from “the love that is infused in the soul by the action of the Spirit.”⁴ Alston describes subjects as “passive” spectators in this Spirit’s epistemic process, and Alston describes the evidence of such passivity in terms of transformed lives. The changed life is a tangible demonstration of the Spirit as explanans—functioning as a personal agent in strengthening, guiding, enlightening, empowering, and speaking to persons. And, the Spirit continues to initiate, guard, and defend Christian knowledge via his indwelling presence.

Though Alston serves as a logical bridge from RE to what is here being called AME, he does not carry the mantle alone. William Abraham—noted Methodist scholar—provides beneficent assistance. The key component motivating Abraham’s insistence on religious experience is “the claim to be aware of God.”⁵ The awareness of God emerges from the availability of “spiritual sight” or “spiritual senses.” Abraham’s

⁴William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 51.

⁵William J. Abraham, “Religious Experience and Apologetics,” *Journal of the Irish Christian Study Centre* 1 (1983): 86.

grounding of belief offers the *oculus contemplationis* notion—a contemplative or spiritually discerning eye—as an experiential sense connection provided by the Spirit. Through the *oculus*, subjects are able to witness the Spirit’s activity. Such experiential awareness of God—so says Abraham—requires the Spirit’s involvement.

But, Abraham’s Spirit apologetic is especially felt in his arguments for the Spirit’s immersion into a person’s life. Abraham insists on a subjective aspect that is nonnegotiable, which he refers to as personal judgment. As defined by Abraham, personal judgment “involves the patient presenting and re-presenting of a network of considerations which together co-operate in favor of a theological vision.”⁶ The subject should be able to trust his or her own judgment—as supplied by the Spirit—just as ordinary people are given opportunity to exercise judgment in the natural course of their lives. Individuals, according to Abraham, are not without help in this process; indeed, they may possess the apparent work of the Spirit as *the* manifesting activity of God. Upon experiencing the inner witness of the Spirit, subjects are inclined to treat their experiences as veridical and certain. They come to knowledge of God by real acquaintance, and they in turn offer up said knowledge with virtuous integrity.

Abraham’s Spirit apologetic also relies on an understanding of his view of conversion. For Abraham, and from what seems to follow logically, personal religious experience is necessarily linked with and to conversion. It was proposed herein that Abraham’s view of conversion exhibits a two-story paradigm. The first story displays a passive subjection to divine action—whereby the Spirit operates in manner to overwhelm

⁶William J. Abraham, "Cumulative Case Arguments for Christian Theism," in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 25.

persons. This results in the receipt of a passive knowledge. The second story, however, displays active evidences—whereby the subject observes evidences from religious experience (like beauty, moral striving, and spiritual nurture). This results in the exercise of an active knowledge. Abraham champions the embrace of both passive and active knowledge, and he does so through a soft rationalist approach. And, this seems fitting for his cumulative-case approach since passive knowledge relates to his awareness of God emphasis and active knowledge relates to his personal judgment emphasis.

Finally, the charismatic structure—as primarily represented herein by James K. A. Smith—embraces an affective approach to Spirit apologetics. The charismatic mindset necessarily charts a view that stresses religious experience in grounding the knowledge of God. Such an assertion includes *necessarily* because, as Smith asks, “What could be more pentecostal than experience?”⁷ By its very nature, the epistemic direction of charismatic thinking will be supernaturalistically oriented. Smith harps on the need for experience to provide rationality as subjects become moved by and sensitive to affections and emotions. The charismatic Spirit apologetic involves a radical openness to God’s activity—a continued, dynamic presence, activity, and ministry of the Spirit. Smith’s utter priority on this openness arises because, in his view, experience activates emotion, and this emotion reaches *the core* of persons. With that, Smith then affirms the primacy of the heart—the *kardia*—as the interpreter of all things. For, the heart is where knowledge is rooted, and it is the Spirit that opens the heart to redirection. Smith refers to this as the epistemic operation of the Holy Spirit in the “granting of ‘access’” to

⁷James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 71.

knowledge, especially knowledge of God. Ultimately, Smith promotes a defense that focuses less on thinking our way through the world (cognitive) and more on feeling our way through the world (affective).

This study into and through the differing approaches to Spirit apologetics proves helpful in overcoming the dearth of conversations related to this subject. If the Holy Spirit does function—even minimally—in the biblical ways relayed by John Frame (power, authority, and presence), then it is incumbent upon general apologetic study to assess and understand his role in apologetic theory and practice. The probing thoughts explored in this dissertation have principally unveiled the Spirit's role of presence in offering compelling arguments for defending and grounding the knowledge of God. Perhaps there is no deliberate, calculated, or full-orbed treatment of the Holy Spirit's role in Christian apologetics, but, hopefully, the present study has offered some semblance of a correction and some Spirit-initiated reasons for the hope that is within. In what follows, a thought experiment—on what a Spirit apologetic encounter should look like—will be proffered to apply the seriousness of the Holy Spirit in the evangelistic mandate.⁸

The Spirit as Apologist and Evangelist

Often, the typical apologetic treatise begins with biblical references to establish the legitimacy of examining apologetic theory and practice—imploring Christians to heed the call to defend what they believe. Thereafter, the apologetic author moves rapidly into providing reasonable arguments that can cognitively *convince* or *persuade* believers and

⁸For a helpful study into the specifics of the Holy Spirit's power in leading sinners to Christ and through Christ to God, see David F. Wells, *God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

unbelievers of the rational acceptability of faith commitment. The net effect of this notion tends to promote reason and intellect over the life and death consequences of humanity's depravity. Now, the conversations surrounding apologetics do seek to qualify the association with mere rationalism. As Douglas Groothuis states, "None of this [apologetic reasoning] can be accomplished in ways pleasing to the Lord apart from the in-filling and direction of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth."⁹ However, as has been argued, there is rarely much thought—if any—given to what this *in-filling* actually looks like in the midst of an apologetic/evangelistic encounter. This section will seek to examine the Spirit's role as he indwells a believer, Faith, as she seeks to apologetically connect with an unbeliever, Destiny.

Faith is a fully devoted follower of Christ. She evidences true and genuine signs of regeneration, and she wholeheartedly believes in the truthfulness and authority of Scripture.¹⁰ She has also been praying for an opportunity to discuss *the great things of the gospel* with her friend, Destiny. Faith's starting point for such a conversation is her belief that the Holy Spirit operates in some sense like an evangelist—which is an indication that the Spirit not only delivered the very truths found in the Gospel message, but also moves within the hearts of hearers to prompt a response. She grounds this belief in Scripture:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the

⁹Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 650.

¹⁰Truthfulness is equated here with and should be understood as relating to *inerrancy*. For a more robust connection between these terms, see Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by *the Holy Spirit sent from heaven*, things into which angels long to look. (1 Pet 1:10-12)

For, the Holy Spirit operates as a herald—announcing momentous and joyous news to the world through those who speak with boldness. Faith knows (believes) she can be used by the Holy Spirit in this way; indeed, as a Christ-follower, she recognizes that the Spirit of God grants her the privilege and responsibility of participating in the unmistakable activity of God.

Destiny, on the other hand, is somewhat familiar with Christianity but only in the cultural sense—where belief in God is held and affirmed by the majority of the people in her life. But, the concept of knowing God in a personal way—through the person of Jesus Christ—is foreign and even awkward. Recently, Destiny experienced a tragic death in her family, which was unexpected and thoroughly shook Destiny. Though she is sympathizing and consoling in her interaction with Destiny, Faith is hopeful that the despondency felt by Destiny will open up an opportunity for discussing the good news. When Destiny opens up and inquires as to *why God would allow this tragedy* to occur, Faith seizes the opportunity.

At first blush, Destiny’s question might seem to call for a simple presentation of the gospel. However, in her hopelessness, Destiny is really asking the *If God, Why Evil* or *Why do bad things happen to good people* question. For, she relates this untimely death of a family member to personal pain and evil. Though Faith has been praying for an opportunity to speak the gospel to her friend, she recognizes Destiny’s *why* question for what it is—a challenge. Whereas she would much rather pounce on the potential opening for God’s salvific offer, the Spirit instead prompts Faith to immediately

recognize and initially respond to this challenge of God's benevolent character.¹¹ In other words, Faith—in her desire to connect with Destiny—is Spirit-led to answer Destiny with appropriate abstract ideas and not some off-putting Christian *evangelistic strategies* or some pithy Christian *gobbledygook*. Destiny is confused and flummoxed, and she needs someone like Faith to actually hear and understand her plight. Then, and only then, Faith is ready to respond to her with truth and love.

In capitalizing on this Spirit-initiated realization, Faith is Spirit-positioned to offer up salient questions, identify real obstacles to the gospel, and map out areas of common ground that may ultimately lead to the gospel. In essence, she is able to navigate the contours behind Destiny's current belief system, but Faith can only do this rightly and effectively when undergoing her own genuine experience and awareness of God. Whatever the terminology—whether spurred on by something like Plantinga's use of the IHS, Alston's use of the Spirit as *mediated immediacy*, Abraham's use of the Spirit with personal judgment, Smith's use of the Spirit in supernaturalistically orienting *hearts*, or some other explanation—all genuine experiences of God require spiritual growth and discipleship. It is through ever-growing spiritual formation that the good news is continually linked to Faith's own belief system, which is given by the Spirit and manifested by her character, in her values, and through her modeled life.

Up to this point, the discussion in this section has already built toward several principles for engaging via Spirit apologetics. First, and of primary importance, the

¹¹Norman and David Geisler describe this event: "Although we want to always . . . focus on listening to what others really believe and hearing their sour notes, where we go next depends on our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading as He gives us a greater awareness of the needs of the person we're attempting to reach." Norman Geisler and David Geisler, *Conversational Evangelism: How to Listen and Speak so you can be Heard* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009), 38.

apologist must be connected with the Holy Spirit in *spiritual practices*—like prayer and Bible reading. Faith had been praying specifically for the opportunity to speak with Destiny. If we are certain that the Spirit alone can draw wayward and sinful hearts to God, then prayer to that effect is absolutely necessary. James Beilby confirms, “It is crucially important to pray both for those we will speak with and for ourselves. We pray for others in the hope that the Holy Spirit will protect them from our errors in speech or action, and we pray for ourselves that we will take full and appropriate advantage of all of the apologetic opportunities given us by the Spirit.”¹² Since the Spirit equips saints like Faith for communing in prayer with God, it follows that he would lead the saints to reach others with Christ. As for Bible reading, Christians know the Bible to be a product of God’s inspiration. And, just as the Spirit first communicated the Word of God to certain writers, its truth is still communicated by the Spirit today. Indeed, God’s Spirit confirms the truth of Scripture to believers like Faith and even to unbelievers. For this reason, Faith would do well to make reference to God’s Word—seeing how the Spirit may use such references to persuade Destiny.

In addition to spiritual preparation, a second principle for Spirit apologetics is observed in how Faith *fairly listens* to what Destiny asked—and with true understanding. Faith heard Destiny’s challenge, and she was able to respond accordingly. The apologist must exercise dependence upon the Spirit to enlighten him or her of the issues, needs, and crises being encountered by others. Groothuis says, “The savvy apologist must shift through this welter of conflicting beliefs through intent listening. . . . The apologist

¹²James K. Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics: What It is and Why We Do It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 182.

should reveal that he or she is trying to understand what the unbeliever’s beliefs are, how these beliefs relate to each another and how they are connected to the external world and the individual life.”¹³ Of this listening enterprise, Gregory Ganssse argues that “as a people who aim to be faithful followers of Jesus, we need to cultivate our diagnostic skills so we can identify and articulate exactly how the remedy Jesus brings will meet the crucial need.”¹⁴ A proper diagnosis requires focused observation, and focused observation is best achieved as the Spirit imparts understanding.

In addition to spiritual formation and Spirit-empowered listening, a final principle observed in Faith’s encounter with Destiny relates to *speaking*. The gospel advanced so irresistibly in the first-century. Early believers were overwhelmed by the Spirit-initiated movement within their lives and communities. Evangelism was natural—not coerced—in that there was a legitimate need for believers to be ready and prepared to give a reason for the hope within (1 Pet 3:15). As believers were questioned, the content of the gospel was communicated. In a similar manner, when Faith was met with the *If God, Why Evil* question, she was being asked to give a reason for her hope. In speaking to her friend, Faith has the occasion to reveal the truth with gentleness, respect, and love. Through her spiritual preparation and desire to listen to Destiny with understanding, Faith—being led by the Spirit—now answers the question with hopefulness. For the saving knowledge of God is communicated through Word and Spirit together. It is a process that is attributable to God alone. Therefore, if Faith does not see evidence of any

¹³Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 43.

¹⁴Gregory E. Ganssse, “Making the Gospel Connection,” in *Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 7.

change in Destiny, she need not grow disheartened. Instead, she should trust that she has contributed to God's plan as one who is but one part of the body of Christ, the church universal. The Spirit functions as apologist and evangelist in that he guides into all truth. As David Wells says,

Experience of the Spirit comes spontaneously and directly but reveals its authenticity by creating an immediate awareness of the presence of the Christ of the gospel in love and power, and by evoking a heartfelt response of confession, celebration, repentance, obedience, and praise. Those who share this experience . . . will know that they have received the Spirit.¹⁵

Wherever the Wind Blows

Several relevant and related questions inevitably arise from this look at Spirit apologetics from different perspectives. One question that immediately comes to the fore concerns whether other perspectives should also be engaged. Reformed, Anglican-Methodist, and charismatic perspectives are certainly not the only outlooks worth consideration. From a strictly sociological viewpoint, the most obvious exclusion would be the Catholic perspective, especially since it is the largest denomination in the world. How does the Spirit of God fit within a distinctively Catholic approach?¹⁶ Or, what about other smaller perspectives like that of Lutheranism?¹⁷ Is there a Spirit apologetic in Lutheran epistemology? This question of addressing other perspectives could very well enhance this discussion.

¹⁵Wells, *God the Evangelist*, 8.

¹⁶Linda Zagzebski, ed., *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, Library of Religious Philosophy, vol. 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

¹⁷Perhaps a scholar like Paul K. Moser would be a good spokesperson from the Lutheran perspective. See Paul K. Moser, *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, or idem, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

This study may also be helped by asking about the theological significance of the nature of the Paraclete (John 14) in philosophical discourse. Plantinga¹⁸ and Alston¹⁹ both allude to the significance of the Advocate, the Helper. If wisdom and knowledge are truly from above, then a reasonable conclusion is that the Spirit's function includes his *presence* in delivering such knowledge. As Christ ascended, the Spirit descended to offer his assistance to those needing to know God and know God more fully. This Paraclete *presence* idea also connects with—in addition to Plantinga and Alston—Abraham and Smith, and it would be an interesting study indeed to see where else it similarly connects.

In *Aldersgate and Athens*, Abraham comments, “In prevenient grace God irresistibly and universally restores in us the initial capacity to perceive the truth.” Abraham’s discussion here is expressly referencing the well-worn Wesleyan notion of “prevenient grace.” But, prevenient grace in conjunction with apologetics and the Holy Spirit would certainly comprise another useful study. Where pray tell does the preparatory work of prevenient grace cease in order for the Spirit’s activity—enabling persons to be aware of God—to come into play?

Surely more questions need to be raised and answered in relation to a true Spirit apologetic. But, for now, let the words of Paul K. Moser be repeated in order to spur further Spirit apologetic conversation and development:

¹⁸Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 243, 269.

¹⁹For example: Alston, *Perceiving God*, 63, and William P. Alston, ““The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit” in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 131.

The Jewish-Christian God goes beyond revelation as the imparting of information and experience. This God offers a distinctive kind of evidence of divine reality, a kind of evidence widely overlooked in philosophical and theological discussions of God's reality. The evidence is the *imparting of God's Spirit* to humans. Such evidence . . . calls for attention, in religious epistemology, to the human conditions for receiving the Spirit of an all-loving God.²⁰

An Assessment of Spirit Apologetics

At this final juncture, an important question needs to be addressed: how should the above discussion—running through the several perspectives—be assessed? In general, a few comments can be offered to tidy up—for now—this apologetic discourse. When looking at the influence of Reformed Epistemology and the resultant exchanges, it becomes apparent that the Spirit motif is now firmly *planted within* the apologetic conversation. A quick look to some recent apologetic texts is evidence for this assertion. Just one year following the release of Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*, a counterpoints book on apologetics was also published.²¹ In addition to offering expected statements for Classical, Evidential, Presuppositional, and Cumulative Case apologetics, Cowan's work also included Reformed Epistemology as its own separate branch or taxonomy of apologetic engagement. This is significant indeed. Whereas the other branches have a long history of development and argumentation, RE does not. And, yet, RE was almost immediately recognized for its usefulness. And, one of RE's staple arguments relates to the Spirit—the IIHS. Just over a dozen years later, a number of apologetic texts have since been added, and Reformed Epistemology continues to garner

²⁰Paul K. Moser, “Cognitive Inspiration and Knowledge of God,” in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (New York: Routledge, 2003), 61. Emphasis added.

²¹Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

attention within their pages.²² And, RE's influence includes specific Spirit references in order to complete the approach that Plantinga and others champion.

Now, RE was offered as the initializing approach with recent Spirit apologetic discourse, but it has now been demonstrated that other approaches also concern their thinking with declarations about the Spirit. The question that now must be asked is whether any patterns—across all perspectives—are discerned? The answer to this question is most certainly “yes”. And, an explication of this affirmative answer will surround discussions of the following: faculty-like language, an internal apologetic, and subject passivity.

First, in assessing the various deliberations above, there is a clear pattern whereby the “faculties” language bespoke by Plantinga also arises in the Anglican-Methodist and charismatic perspectives as well. As a reminder, Plantinga equates the cognitive faculties to “my belief-forming and belief-maintaining apparatus or powers.”²³ And, the resulting beliefs count as genuine knowledge when produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties that work according to a design plan. Plantinga identifies memories and perceptions as examples of cognitive faculties that produce belief, and, ultimately, he incorporates the IIHS as something similar to a cognitive faculty—at least in that the IIHS too produces belief. This recap is necessary because Plantinga is not alone in making this argument. From the Anglican-Methodist perspective, Abraham seems more than willing to offer faculty-like language in pushing for “spiritual senses”

²²See, for example, the following: William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 2, *From 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 585-620; Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 64-69; John S. Feinberg, *Can You Believe It's True? Christian Apologetics in a Modern and Postmodern Era* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013) 197-248.

that permit persons to perceive God—even connecting “spiritual sight” and *oculus contemplationis*. From the charismatic perspective, Smith also introduces a faculty-like element that produces beliefs. According to Smith, the “emotions” function as faculties in that the emotive experiences serve as “filters” that operate in interpreting and producing belief. This pattern again evinces the significance of RE to the overall Spirit apologetic discourse.

A second pattern presents fairly quick when assessing the views above. The Reformed, Anglican-Methodist, and charismatic emphases all promote what should be seen as an internal Spirit apologetic. With Plantinga, the IIHS terminology leaves little doubt as to his internal apologetic. With Alston, the focus on the Spirit’s indwelling also permits a resolve to understand his apologetic internally. With Smith, the whole discussion related to the core—the heart, or the *kardia*—is demonstrable language for an internal apologetic. Taken in pattern together, this internal apologetic aspect and the Spirit appear hand in hand.

A final pattern that is observed relates to the reception of the Spirit’s confirmatory epistemic presence. A passivity relationship between the Spirit and subjects exists. Persons, especially on account of their sinful existence, are unable to initiate the Spirit’s presence but rather the Spirit comes upon subjects. This passivity on the part of subjects is especially prevalent in the thinking of Smith—where he insists upon being “surprised” by the Spirit. But, this passivity was also seen in the two-story conversion paradigm ascribed to Abraham, and passivity must be in view with all Plantinga’s discussion of knowledge being revealed to minds.

²³Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.
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Where a Spirit apologetic approach is detected, it seems correct to conclude that the Spirit is truly active and the persons involved are undeniably passive. Also, Spirit apologetics seems equivalent to internal apologetics. Perhaps, in the end, the interested apologist should wonderfully rest in the following Plantingian comment: “This work of the Holy Spirit . . . is a belief producing process, all right, but one that is *very much out of the ordinary.*”²⁴

²⁴Plantinga, *WCB*, 180.

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN
RECENT APOLOGETIC THOUGHT

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This dissertation examines the influence and role of the Holy Spirit in the task of apologetics. The first chapter recognizes the historical dearth of apologetic engagement dealing with the Spirit, and it lays out the need to intentionally correct this scarcity. This chapter in particular acknowledges that certain perspectives—Reformed, Anglican-Methodist, and charismatic—have already begun to reengaged the essential work of the Spirit in apologetics. And, finally, this chapter argues that various thinkers within these perspectives will shed light on developing a more robust Spirit apologetic.

Chapter 2 highlights the impetus for re-engaging the Spirit as he relates to apologetics Alvin Plantinga, and so-called Reformed Epistemology, have reintroduced a place for the Spirit in apologetics, focusing primarily on the experiential component of the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, which operates as a special kind of cognitive equipment.

Chapter 3 discusses the Spirit and apologetics as relates to the Anglican-Methodist perspective. This chapter begins by connecting these two perspectives—Anglican and Methodist—into a fused perspective. Two key thinkers within this perspective—William Alston and William Abraham—are then examined for their

contributions to the Spirit and his experiential deliverance of knowledge. The key part of this Spirit apologetic hones in on the perception or awareness of God .

Chapter 4 discusses the charismatic contribution to philosophy in general and the Spirit in particular. As the newest perspective to engage Spirit apologetics, the charismatic chapter begins with a justification for including this perspective in this project. This chapter also examines thinkers—like James K. A. Smith—as they isolate a Spirit apologetic more bent toward affective or emotional epistemic grounding.

Chapter 5 concludes this dissertation with a summary of these three perspectives. The Spirit is discussed briefly for his role as an apologist and evangelist, and a concise discussion is included concerning further areas of research and suggestive comments that may be drawn from the conclusions. In addition, this chapter offers a brief and evaluative discussion—based on observations from all perspectives—on the main trajectory of Spirit apologetics.

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