

# IS THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE HIDDENNESS A PROBLEM FOR THE REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGIST?

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The problem of divine hiddenness, currently a much-discussed topic in analytic philosophy of religion, can be (roughly) summarized in the question, ‘Why is God not more obvious or apparent?’ Sometimes the problem is used to undermine theistic belief. Here we seek to add a unique contribution to the growing debate on this theme from the perspective of Reformed epistemology, particularly Alvin Plantinga’s construal; moreover, we do so in a way that is theologically relevant. We conclude, with assistance from Scripture and from Plantinga, that the problem of divine hiddenness is not a problem for the Reformed epistemologist.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Couldn’t God merely write in the clouds, ‘I do exist; repent and believe’? Why is God sometimes so hidden? With respect to Christian theism, consider Edward Tabash’s remarks, himself a nonbeliever:

If our entire salvation is dependent on accepting Jesus, why does God act in such a hidden fashion today? Why not two thousand years later give us more miracles, part a few oceans, fire and brimstone a few cities, maybe a few flaming chariots? If we needed two thousand years ago supernatural evidence to believe supernatural things, why is God so stingy today in denying that same supernatural evidence considering so much rides upon it?<sup>1</sup>

Is Tabash correct to call God ‘stingy’? Surely God could and would do more to vindicate his existence, especially towards those who putatively want to experience it. One might call this phenomenon, as it is often done in the analytic-philosophical literature, the problem of divine hiddenness.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we seek to add a unique contribution to the growing debate on this theme from the perspective of Reformed epistemology, but we do so in such a way that is theologically relevant.

We first offer a definition of the problem, after which we (second) briefly analyze some biblical passages pertinent to divine hiddenness. These items in place, we then (third) examine how various themes from a Plantingian-style Reformed epistemology are able to inform the contemporary analytic-philosophical discussion on the hiddenness of God. Fourth, we both consider

and offer a solution to an apparent obstacle for our position. Finally, concluding remarks will be made. If our position succeeds, then it may be the case that, as it turns out, the problem of God's hiddenness is not a problem for the Reformed epistemologist.

## II. DIVINE HIDDENNESS: DEFINING TERMS

Let us first distinguish between the *problem of*, and the *argument from*, God's hiddenness.<sup>3</sup> The *problem of* divine hiddenness, broadly conceived, tends to be more generic in nature; it may be captured succinctly in the question, 'Why is God not more obvious?' *Nonbelievers* are probably more inclined to grasp the generic problem to be the absence, or the obscurity, of God's reality, whereas *believers* may perceive it to be more of a 'shortage' of God's reality in their lives at various times.

Now the *argument*, on the other hand, typically given by only nonbelievers, attempts to exploit the generic problem towards a conclusion that God does not exist. Probably the most discussed example of this can be found in J.L. Schellenberg's 1993 five-premised argument from reasonable nonbelief,<sup>4</sup> which we will not discuss here, since this paper, however, is focused on the generic problem of, and *not* the formal argument from, God's hiddenness.

These caveats aside, we understand the problem, whatever it specifically amounts to, to be epistemic in nature; by epistemic we mean having to do with, or pertaining to, human knowledge or experience of God. 'When philosophers talk about divine hiddenness,' writes Michael Rea, 'they usually have in mind the fact that neither direct and unambiguous experience of God nor conclusive evidence of God's existence is widely available.'<sup>5</sup> To quote the Dutch atheist Herman Philipse on divine hiddenness: 'if there is any evidence for God's existence at all, the evidence is not very compelling.'<sup>6</sup> And Schellenberg: 'what a loving God has to do is provide us with evidence sufficient for belief,' the assumption being that God has not. 'Hence a perfectly loving God,' he explains, 'would have reason to ensure that everyone capable of such belief [in God]. . . was in possession of *evidence sufficient* to bring it about that such belief was formed.'<sup>7</sup>

Focusing (again) on the generic problem, and not the argument, we see in these epistemologically-charged remarks—from terms like 'experience,' or 'evidence'—that divine hiddenness is a phenomenon pertinent to human knowledge of God.

## III. SCRIPTURAL ANALYSIS: DIVINE HIDDENNESS AND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Since the authority of Scripture is important for us as Christian theists, in this section we (briefly) examine two biblical passages that are applicable to divine hiddenness. With this exercise in place, our conclusion to this portion of the paper will position us to explore how Reformed epistemology can inform the current philosophical conversation on God's hiddenness.

Now, it seems true to say, generally speaking, that, in analytic philosophy of religion (the usual host of the conversation on divine hiddenness), most philosophers (theistic or not) who debate this theme agree that God, if he exists, is to some extent hidden from humanity.<sup>8</sup> We deny this, for we think that his existence is clear, and that all persons can be said to know (though may not necessarily experience) something of God's reality. So, in light of the definition about the problem (and not the argument) provided above, we would like to draw yet another distinction: a distinction between God's *existence* and his *presence*. God's *presence* is subjective and so may come and go for a certain person; this is how we would interpret various psalms, for example, which speak of God's so-called hiddenness (Ps 10:1; 44:24; cf. Job 14:24;

Is 45:15). But, unlike his presence, we understand God's *existence*, as explained in Scripture (discussed more below), to be objective and clear; we prefer to interpret the former passages in light of the latter, and not the other way around.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, to support our thesis that God's existence is not hidden, we will examine Ps 19:1-2 and Rom 1:18-21, both of which are often given in support of the doctrine of general revelation—the doctrine which suggests that all persons are offered some genuine (but not salvific) natural knowledge of God from the created order.<sup>10</sup>

Consider Psalm 19:1-2, a song that celebrates God's law in Torah.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

<sup>2</sup>Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

In 19:1, here we see that “the heavens” (*hashamayim*) recount the glory of God, and so too does ‘the sky’, or ‘the firmament’ (*haraqiya*; KJV). The terms ‘declare’ (*masapparyim*, a Piel participle) and ‘proclaims’ (*maggyid*, a Hiphil participle) both denote the *ongoing* pronouncement of the heavens and the sky; in other words, the work of the heavens and the sky are on constant display of God.

Of this verse John Calvin explains that ‘there is nothing so obscure or despised, even in the most confined corners of the earth, wherein there is not some mark of God's might and wisdom to be seen.’<sup>13</sup> This is why the psalmist claims in 19:2 that God's workmanship is demonstrated ‘day to day’ (*yom layom*) and ‘night to night’ (*walaylah lalaylah*). The point is that wherever the heavens and the sky can be seen so too can God be known in his glory (cf. Ps 74:16; 97:6).<sup>14</sup> In this case, the subject would be God and, as Hans-Joachim Kraus notes, ‘knowledge concerning the Creator and his work is transmitted by the heavenly powers.’<sup>15</sup> We read in verses 3-4a:

There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.

<sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

The antecedent of ‘speech’ (*omer*), ‘words’ (*dabaryim*), and ‘voice’ (*qolam*) is ‘the heavens’ (*hashamayim*) in 19:1. While the heavens do not *actually* speak, its personified voice and words carry through the whole earth.<sup>16</sup> John Chrysostom, commenting on this passage, writes, ‘The providence of God is clearer than the sun and its rays. On every occasion and in every place you will see clear and abundant evidence of this providence’[.]<sup>17</sup>

Consider now Rom 1:18-21, the *locus classicus* text on general revelation.<sup>18</sup> Here we read that ‘God has made himself known, or at least knowable through what he has made.’<sup>19</sup> Following the eminent historian Thomas Oden, this text has been interpreted in classical Christian exegesis—from the church fathers to the Reformers—to suggest that all of humanity is offered some true (though limited and not salvific) natural knowledge of God from the created order. After having offered a prologue to his epistle (1:1-17), it is written:

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are

without excuse.<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

In 1:18, the author explains his comments from the preceding verses; he notes, as a result of mankind's ungodliness and unrighteousness, that God's wrath is poured out against all people.<sup>20</sup> Now, why is his wrath being revealed? It is revealed because mankind suppresses (*katechontōn*) the truth (of God) by his unrighteousness or wickedness.<sup>21</sup>

Why does mankind know better? (1:19) Because (*dioti*, a causal conjunction) what can be known about God (*to gnōston tou theou*) is plain—or evident (*phaneron*); here Paul justifies his comments in 1:18.<sup>22</sup> This manifest knowledge of God, though suppressed, comes from the created order; it is not, however, saving knowledge.<sup>23</sup> The term 'plain' (*phaneron*; here a nominative adjective) can be translated as 'visible, clear, plainly to be seen' or 'evident'.<sup>24</sup> The reason it is plain, or evident, is because God has *made it plain* (*ho theos gar autois ephanerōsen*); he has 'shown it to them' (1:19).

What is the content of this revelation? It is God's invisible attributes: his eternal power and his divine nature (1:20). 'God in his essence', writes Douglas Moo, 'is hidden from human sight, yet much of him and much about him can be seen *through the things he has made*'.<sup>25</sup> Further, as Moo proposes, God has given us a *sensus divinitatis*.<sup>26</sup>

For our purposes, Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his discussion of the *sensus divinitatis*, captures this scriptural text's main emphasis:

Calvin's thought . . . —which he bases in part on Romans 1—is that God has planted in every human being a disposition to believe in the existence of a divine creator [i.e., the *sensus divinitatis*], and that this disposition is triggered, or activated, by our awareness of the richly complex design of the cosmos and of ourselves.<sup>27</sup>

What is perhaps the main thrust of 1:19-20? It is that all of humanity is 'without excuse' (*anapologētos*) (1:20).<sup>28</sup> 'God has stitched into the fabric of the human mind his existence and power'.<sup>29</sup> As Calvin notes, 'It hence clearly appears what the consequence is of having this evidence—that men cannot allege any thing before God's tribunal for the purpose of showing that they are not justly condemned'. The manner in which he 'makes his glory known in his creation, is . . . sufficiently clear'.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, 'It is possible', explains Wolterstorff, for one 'to resist the workings of this disposition [the *sensus divinitatis*]. And one of the characteristic effects of sin is that we do resist it'.<sup>31</sup> Again, while the knowledge of God provided in nature (or creation) is not salvific, and though it is tainted by sin, it is knowledge *nonetheless*.<sup>32</sup>

Though other passages can be used to support the doctrine of general revelation (e.g., Ps 8; Acts 14:8-18; Acts 17:22-31), we believe that these are sufficient to support the notion that God's *existence* is not hidden from humanity. However, to make this more applicable to the hiddenness of God debate in analytic philosophy, we believe that it is not somehow inconsistent to claim that (objectively) God's *existence* is clear, or at least clear enough (e.g., Rom 1:18-21) *and*, simultaneously, that (subjectively) there are those who may occasionally struggle with a problem of God's *presence* (e.g., Ps 10:1); for such is a tension Scripture itself upholds. The latter may be more existentially relevant, but it would not override the truth of the former with respect to the clarity of his existence.<sup>33</sup> We further believe that this robust account of human knowledge of God (e.g., general revelation; the *sensus divinitatis*; etc.) sits well with contemporary Reformed epistemology, to which we shall now turn.

## IV. REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD

The chief end of this section, now that our scriptural exegesis is in place, is to briefly flesh out relevant themes within a Plantingian Reformed epistemology, and then to apply those themes more specifically to divine hiddenness. Let us first begin with an overview of Plantinga's theory of warrant, which goes as follows:

S's belief that P is warranted iff,

- 1) S's cognitive faculties are functioning properly,
- 2) S's cognitive environment is sufficiently similar to the one for which the cognitive faculties are designed for,
- 3) The design plan that governs the production of such belief is aimed at producing true belief, and
- 4) The design plan is a good one in that there is a high statistical (or objective) probability that a belief produced under these conditions will be true.<sup>34</sup>

Though knowledge has traditionally been understood to be justified true belief (JTB), there are those who propose that JTB is not enough,<sup>35</sup> and that, in order to know something, a subject has to have a bit more than this.<sup>36</sup> According to Plantinga, *warrant* is that missing ingredient.<sup>37</sup> Summarizing the above formulation, and under this assumption, what lies at the heart of knowledge is a subject having properly functioning faculties, with a design plan, aimed at producing true belief. If such conditions are in place, when a subject forms a belief, and if that belief is true, then the subject would possess knowledge. This view of knowledge becomes less restrictive than JTB. And, this being the case, Plantinga applies his theory of warrant to religious belief.

Plantinga suggests that it is epistemically possible (i.e., given what we know *could* be the case) that God exists and that he has created in humanity a cognitive faculty that, when functioning properly and when working under the right sort of conditions, is designed to produce belief in God. To demonstrate, Plantinga builds a model, named after Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin (the A/C model), which explains how bare theistic belief might have warrant. The cognitive faculty responsible for producing belief in God, according to Plantinga, is the *sensus divinitatis*.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, there are themes of general revelation (e.g., the *sensus divinitatis*, natural knowledge of God, etc.), fleshed out above, that are present in the A/C model.<sup>39</sup> Now, if this is epistemically possible—that is, if this sort of bare theism is true (on the A/C model)—, then theistic belief is probably warranted; it would satisfy conditions (1) through (4) above.<sup>40</sup>

As a committed Christian, however, Plantinga does not merely stop with this type of general (or bare) theistic belief, for he goes on to argue how full-blooded Christian belief, which accounts for humanity's fall into sin as well as specific doctrinal beliefs (the Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, etc.), could be warranted under analogous conditions; he calls this the extended A/C model.

But how could there be a reliable belief-forming faculty, the *sensus divinitatis*, given diverse theistic belief in the world?<sup>41</sup> In an attempt to be faithful to his own Reformed heritage, Plantinga suggests that, with the Fall, sin has had, and continues to have, drastic consequences upon one's *sensus divinitatis* and that, because of sin—which we can roughly define as 'human resistance to or turning away from God'—,<sup>42</sup> the faculty does not work as it should; hence, there is pre- and postlapsarian human knowledge of God.<sup>43</sup> Reformed theologians have historically referred to the impairment of one's cognitive equipment for apprehending the reality of God as the 'noetic effects of sin.'<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, on Plantinga's account, it is not as if sin has so warped one's cognitive faculties such that humanity, even in its postlapsarian state, is left with just *no*

knowledge of God (i.e., by way of the *sensus divinitatis*). Rather, the faculty, though broken, can be restored; when it is restored, a more specific theism (e.g., *Christian* theism) could be warranted (which answers our above inquiry concerning theistic diversity).

Next, consider testimonial knowledge. Plantinga proposes, for instance, that when one's cognitive equipment functions properly, then one will accept the testimony of some proposition given by other (human) persons, the result of which achieves *knowledge*. Now, if this is true of (human) persons, then can it also be true of the Holy Spirit who, according to Christian theology, can testify to a person (in their postlapsarian condition) the truth of the Christian Gospel (cf. Rom 8:15-17). According to Plantinga, it seems that if the Spirit repairs one's damaged cognitive faculties, then that person who accepts such truths of the Gospel, by way of the Spirit's testimony, could be warranted and within their epistemic rights in affirming the full panoply of *Christian* theism (even if the person in view is without propositional argumentation in affirming it).<sup>45</sup>

Having now briefly articulated Plantinga's epistemology, as well as what we understand Scripture to state about the clarity of God's existence, we are now prepared to summarize why we take it that, for the Reformed epistemologist, the divine hiddenness problem has an explanation. For the Reformed epistemologist can argue that, irrespective of the change in humanity's cognitive equipment (from pre- to postlapsarian) due to sin, there has been no change, however, with respect to the clarity of God's *existence*. Though the Fall has wounded human knowledge of God, sin's consequences are not so great that humanity has been left, even in its postlapsarian condition, with just *no* knowledge of God (cf. Rom 1:18-21). Now, it may be, because of the Fall, that God's *presence* is not as obvious to various persons for various reasons, but that wouldn't undermine the clarity of his own *existence*. In other words, God's existence is not hidden even if there are those who do not acknowledge it as such,<sup>46</sup> again, we believe that this sits well with both Scripture and Reformed epistemology.<sup>47</sup>

As Plantinga himself notes in an interview:

[T]he fact is that the vast majority of the world's people do believe in God, or something like God. So it's not that God is hidden in the sense that nobody knows about him or believes in him; all kinds of people do—I suppose, as I say, the vast majority of the world's people. God isn't *as plain* to us as other people, let's say, or as trees and houses or material objects. But why think that he would have to be? . . . He might have a good reason for being relatively hidden, hidden to the degree that he is, which, as I'm suggesting, isn't all that great.<sup>48</sup>

When the faculty responsible for producing belief in God (the *sensus divinitatis*) works properly (the way that God designed it to function), then God might be (for a certain person) as evident as other minds, or the existence of the past, or the external world. If this is the case, then we believe that the hiddenness problem has an explanation, since divine hiddenness, on Reformed epistemology, amounts to a problem of *sin's* consequences, where it can be said that sin interferes with how our faculties *ought* to work; indeed, sin can distract a person's attention to the clarity of God's revelation. Take the following case as an example that can help further demonstrate our point:

Having been handed over to the Russians to be tortured for killing Russian officials, Jack becomes both blind and deaf as he lies in a prison, awaiting a slow and agonizing death. However, unbeknownst to Jack, his good friend Chloe has led a team to rescue him. Upon finding Jack, Chloe tries to talk to Jack so as to arrange his escape. And when she sees that Jack isn't responding to her, she begins to jump and to wave her hands to get his attention. Nonetheless, Jack is still unresponsive. Here it can be said that Jack isn't unresponsive due to a deficiency of objective evidence for Chloe. For it is rather the case that, due to the improper function of his own faculties, Jack lacks the epistemic ability to *recognize* Chloe.

Following this illustration, we believe that sin obscures the deliverances of the *sensus*, such that human knowledge of, and beliefs about, God (prior to rebirth and regeneration by the Spirit) can be skewed. We find this to be an appropriate theological response to those aforementioned evidentiary objections concerning God's existence raised by Tabash, Philipse, and Schellenberg above.

#### V. AN APPARENT OBSTACLE TO OUR POSITION

Now, suppose that, so far, our account, in its appeal to cognitive malfunction, successfully answers the problem of divine hiddenness; still, how can we respond to the charge that it is more probable that God, the greatest conceivable being, both could and would fix everyone's cognitive malfunction *immediately*?<sup>49</sup> To say it differently: God would, like Chloe in the above scenario, have the *desire* to correct every single person's cognitive malfunction; and, unlike Chloe, he would have the *ability* to correct such a malfunction. But since God has not healed every persons' *sensus divinitatis*, then would it not follow from this that it is irrational to continue to believe in such a God? Let us call such an objection the 'Immediate Cognitive Restoration Objection' (hereafter ICRO).

In response to this objection, we will first draw upon Plantinga's work on probabilities and defeaters, where applicable to properly basic beliefs.<sup>50</sup> Though Plantinga's work in this area is largely applied to the problem of evil, it can also be utilized as a response to ICRO. We will see that, like the problem of evil objection, a defeater from the probability of ICRO does not succeed. Moreover, when this is established, we will then conclude by briefly offering a possible reason for thinking that, given *Christian* theism, it is *not* actually probable that there would be *immediate* cognitive restoration.

Now, on the relationship between defeaters and probability, Plantinga, in the context of the problem of evil, states: "And indeed the fact is [that] most defeaters do not proceed by way of *the subject's becoming aware* of probabilistic relationships."<sup>51</sup> Let us flesh this out. To follow Plantinga, full-blown Christian belief, like bare theistic belief, can be attained in a properly basic way, perhaps analogous to beliefs arrived at by sense perception (say, the morning sunrise or even the paper that one reads this very argument on). For it could be that the Holy Spirit fulfills this role when the Spirit himself testifies to a believer the truth of Christianity, in a properly basic manner. Christian belief(s) would be based on neither evidence nor argumentation; rather, a person may just 'find herself believing', in a very firm way, with a high degree of warrant. If this is the case, then it doesn't seem obvious to us that a defeater based on *probability alone* would necessarily defeat one's own (Christian) beliefs, if such beliefs are held in a firm and highly warranted way. In fact, we believe there to be clear examples that demonstrate that this isn't the case.

Consider the following scenario, inspired (again) by Plantinga's work on the problem of evil: Suppose that Tyler is known for stealing philosophy books, and that there even exists a 'wanted' picture of him, which warns various officials of Tyler's bad habits. Now, if one day the library's entire philosophy section goes missing, with several witnesses claiming that they saw Tyler in the act, then the probability that Tyler did, in fact, steal the books would be very high. Nonetheless, if Tyler himself had a very distinct and highly warranted memory that he was at his own house, at the time that the books (allegedly) disappeared, then would Tyler have a defeater for his own belief that he was at his house, and not at the library?<sup>52</sup> One might think that this would not act as a defeater for Tyler's belief, since the degree of warrant that Tyler has in holding to this belief is very high. At the least, Tyler holds to this belief, sufficiently and firmly, such that

the probability that he himself stole the philosophy books wouldn't play any significant role in his doxastic process.

Similarly, we propose that something comparable can be applied to ICRO. For if this proposal is a plausible one, then it would seem that, for the Reformed epistemologist, ICRO doesn't constitute a defeater for Christian belief when held with a high degree of warrant. Moreover, we believe there to be reason to think that ICRO is unable to obtain, for it may be the case that, given Christian theism, one *shouldn't even expect* immediate cognitive restoration. Let us flesh this out.

Similar to a soul-making theodicy, typically provided as a response to the problem of evil,<sup>53</sup> it seems correct to say that, in humanity's fallen state, there are vices for which a person ought to rid herself of, just as there are virtues that need to be formed. On Christian theism, God isn't merely concerned with people affirming propositional belief in his existence (since apparently even the demons believe but shudder (Jas 2:19)). Rather, he seems more concerned with radically transformed individuals who both accept the Gospel message, given by the Spirit's testimony, and who mirror the image of His Son (a virtue in itself).<sup>54</sup> With this in mind, it may be that God's Spirit will not heal a person's damaged noetic faculties if that person *herself* refuses to be radically transformed by believing in Jesus Christ. This might explain why the very process of noetic (or cognitive) healing is often slow, spanning one's entire life.

Finally, we hold to the position that God's existence is clear *irregardless of one's own conclusions* about his existence; still it can be argued that if a person does accept the means by which salvation is provided through God's Son, then it may be that God progressively provides a person with a greater sense of both God's existence *and* his presence; to follow Plantinga, when a person is converted to Christianity, she may be able to see the beauty and the glory of God in a way that perhaps she is unable to *preconversion*.<sup>55</sup> The point to be made here, at least for us as Christians, is that the hiddenness of God debate is intimately intertwined with the Gospel message itself. For if the generic hiddenness *problem* is unable to get off the ground (as we have proposed), then such reasoning may serve to block any sort of official *argument* for atheism. The Reformed epistemologist has an advantage here.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we first defined terms, after which we (second) briefly analyzed some biblical passages pertinent to divine hiddenness. Since we believe that the scriptural data sits well with Reformed epistemology, we then (third) examined how various themes from Alvin Plantinga's epistemology can inform the contemporary discussion on the hiddenness of God. Fourth, we both considered and offered a solution to an apparent obstacle for our position. In sum, the divine hiddenness problem loses its luster when understood in such a Reformed epistemological context. If this is true, then the specific argument *from* (which feeds off the generic problem *of*) God's hiddenness is also barred

### Notes

1 This was Tabash's comment toward William Lane Craig in Craig's debate with Oxford's Peter Atkins: 'What is the Evidence for/against the Existence of God? William Lane Craig vs. Peter Atkins', April 3, 1998, [http://apps.biola.edu/apologetics-store/products/videos/item/craig-vs-atkins-what-is-the-evidence-for-against-the-existence-of-god\\_DVD](http://apps.biola.edu/apologetics-store/products/videos/item/craig-vs-atkins-what-is-the-evidence-for-against-the-existence-of-god_DVD) (accessed 19 February 2014).

2 Cf. Thomas V. Morris, 'The Hidden God', *Philosophical Topics* 16 (Fall 1988): pp. 5-21; Michael J. Murray, 'Coercion and the Hiddenness of God', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1993): pp. 27-38;

Paul K. Moser, 'Divine Hiding', *Philosophia Christi* 2 (2001): pp. 439–55; Daniel Howard-Snyder and Paul K. Moser (eds.), *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J.L. Schellenberg, 'Divine Hiddenness' in Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Phillip L. Quinn (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edn (Malden: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 509–518.

3 For another attempt in the literature to distinguish between the *problem* and the *argument*, see Ebrahim Azadegan, 'Divine Hiddenness and Human Sin: The Noetic Effects of Sin', *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): pp. 69–90, esp. n.1. See J.L. Schellenberg, *The Wisdom to Doubt: A Justification of Religious Skepticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 307, where he writes:

'Take the general hiddenness argument . . . for example. Until recently there was no developed hiddenness *argument* in the literature at all. Of course, a *certain philosophical notion of Divine hiddenness and its problematic nature has been with us for a long time*, hovering like a wraith over discussions of the existence of God. Long before any of us ever came on the scene, *hints of it could be found in Hume and Nietzsche and other writers*, and there must have been many reflective women and men in times past who have wondered why God's existence is not more evident than it is'. (Emphasis added.)

4 J.L. Schellenberg, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, with a New Preface (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); p. 83:

- '(1) If there is a God, he is perfectly loving.
- (2) If a perfectly loving God exists, reasonable nonbelief does not occur.
- (3) Reasonable nonbelief occurs.
- (4) No perfectly loving God exists;
- (5) There is no God'.

5 See the comments in Michael Rea, *Evil and the Hiddenness of God* (Stamford: Cengage, 2015), vi. See also Rea's 'Divine Hiddenness, Divine Silence' in Louis Pojman and Michael C. Rea (eds.), *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, 6th edn (Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage, 2011), pp. 266–75.

6 Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 303.

7 The first quote is found in Schellenberg, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, pp. 212–13; the second p. 2. See also Theodore M. Drange, 'Nonbelief vs. Lack of Evidence: Two Atheistic Arguments', *Philo* 1 (1998): pp. 105–14.

8 A few examples. Robert McKim writes in his notable book *Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) that his work 'depends on the assumption that the world is religiously ambiguous'. 'To say that the world is religiously ambiguous', he adds, 'is to say that it is open to being read in various ways, both religious and secular, by intelligent, honest people' (p. 21, p. 25, respectively).

Likewise, Paul Moser: 'The relevant available evidence is [for God], it seems, less than obvious to all reflective people, or at least it doesn't make God's existence obvious to all such people. We might thus say that God's existence is at best elusive, subtle, or incognito'. Found in *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. ix; emphasis added.

See also Chad Meister, 'Evil and the Hiddenness of God' in Chad Meister and James K. Dew Jr. (eds.), *God and Evil: The Case for God in a World Filled with Pain* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013), p. 138.

9 We mention this because there are theists in the literature on divine hiddenness who utilize various scriptural passages (e.g., Job 23:8–9) to support their position that God is to some extent hidden and who then, having committed themselves to this thesis, carry forward with why it might be the case that God is hidden from humanity (to the extent that he or she thinks that this is true). Michael Murray, for instance, begins his essay on divine hiddenness by quoting Job 23:8–9. Murray, 'Coercion and the Hiddenness of God', 27.

10 See: William J. Abraham, 'Revelation' in Ian A. McFarland, David S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby, and Iain R. Torrance (eds.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 445. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, New Edition. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 128–29; Owen Anderson, *Benjamin B. Warfield and Right Reason: The Clarity of General Revelation and Function of Apologetics* (Landham: University Press of America, 2005); Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 1: Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), chapter ten.

11 H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), pp. 176–77; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, p. 177. This psalm reflects both general and special revelation: Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 341.

12 All scriptural quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the English Standard Version.

13 Calvin, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, p. 216, as quoted in Waltke and Houston, *Psalms*, p. 347; see also: Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), pp. 70–72.

14 The noun ‘knowledge’ here in 19:2 is *daat*; *HALOT* gives a possible gloss as ‘knowledge about a subject.’ See Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1999), p. 208.

15 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 270.

16 Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 1–72*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), p. 112–13. Paul uses Ps 19:4 in Rom 10:18 (LXX = 18:5), on which see Mark A. Seifrid, ‘Romans’ in G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (eds.), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), p. 663.

17 John Chrysostom, ‘On Providence 5.2’, as cited in Craig A. Blaising and Carmen S. Hardin (eds.), *Psalms 1–50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), p. 150.

18 See his ‘Without Excuse: Classical Christian Exegesis of General Revelation’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): pp. 55–68. See also Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 230–31.

19 James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 91.

20 The term *pasan* likely represents all of humanity, not just the Gentiles (cf. Rom 3:23); see C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:105. For another perspective, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 81–83.

21 For such is the nature and danger of sin. Mankind suppresses the truth, though he knows better John Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), p. 72.

22 Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 103.

23 Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 85.

24 W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, F.W. Danker, and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), *phaneros*, p. 1047. In Gal 5:19, Paul uses the same word (*phaneros*) to argue that the works of the flesh are ‘evident’. See also Acts 4:16.

25 Moo, *Romans*, p. 105; emphasis added. For another perspective, see Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 40.

26 Moo, *Romans*, p. 123.

27 Nicholas Wolterstorff, ‘Is Reason Enough?’, R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 145.

28 The preceding Greek term is *einai*, an infinitive of result; it is combined with *eis to*. Thus, we might translate this last portion of 1:20 as “with the result that they are without excuse.” See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 594.

29 Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 86.

30 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 71.

31 Wolterstorff, ‘Is Reason Enough?’, p. 145.

32 As Bruce Demarest writes, ‘We conclude [this study], therefore, on the authority of Romans 1:19, that God in common grace grants man a knowledge of himself that . . . is ingrained in human nature as such’. See his *General Revelation*, p. 231. Sin confuses human knowledge of God. Nevertheless, even though our knowledge might be confused, some have reasoned, with Calvin’s help, that ‘while the direct realization of God can be *disrupted*, it cannot be *destroyed*’. Found in Cornelis van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God: A Diptych*, trans. Donald Mader, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 72. The author writes further (on the same page): ‘Sin and rebellion against God thus will not silence this capacity for knowledge’. The context is a discussion on Calvin’s *sensus divinitatis*.

33 We owe the reference to the clarity of God’s existence to Owen Anderson, *The Clarity of God’s Existence: The Ethics of Belief after the Enlightenment* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

34 Cf. Joseph Kim, *Reformed Epistemology and the Problem of Religious Diversity: Proper Function, Epistemic Disagreement, and Christian Exclusivism* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), p. 19.

35 Cf. Edmund Gettier, ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’ *Analysis* 23 (1963): pp. 121–123.

36 Or perhaps a bit less; but we will not debate that here.

37 Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

38 For critiques of Plantinga, especially with respect to his interpretation of Calvin, see: Derek S. Jeffreys, 'How Reformed is Reformed Epistemology? Alvin Plantinga and Calvin's 'Sensus Divinitatis'', *Religious Studies* 33 (1997): pp. 419–31 (See also *WCB*, 204 n.7.); Michael Sudduth, 'Plantinga's Revision of the Reformed Tradition: Rethinking Our Natural Knowledge of God' in Anthony Ellis (ed.), *Philosophical Books: Symposium on Warranted Christian Belief*, Alvin Plantinga (April 2002); J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 165–69.

39 On this point, see Kevin Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karth Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014), p. 143 n.1.

40 See Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 178–180; hereafter *WCB*.

41 Here, we just have in mind that there exist theists of all sorts, such as Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, and so on.

42 Ian McFarland, 'The Fall and Sin', in John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 140.

43 We are aware that the traditional doctrine of the Fall has been challenged in both biblical studies and in contemporary biology. However, these challenges need not detain us, since our argumentation here is not contingent upon the precise historicity of the Fall. For a summary of pre- and postlapsarian human knowledge of God in Plantinga's epistemology, see James Beilby, 'Plantinga's Model of Warranted Christian Belief' in Deane-Peter Baker (ed.), *Alvin Plantinga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 125–65.

44 Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of How Sin Affects Our Thinking* (Lanham: Lexington, 2000), p. 1–26. We use 'noetic' and 'cognitive' interchangeably. See *WCB*, p. 206.

45 Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 257. For other work on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, see See Paul K. Moser and Douglas Geivett (eds.), *The Testimony of the Spirit: New Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

46 For this point, see Paul Helm, 'John Calvin, the *Sensus Divinitatis*, and the Noetic Effects of Sin', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998): pp. 87–107.

47 For, in recounting the injury done to mankind's cognitive faculties, Paul (assuming his authorship) argues that, due to sin, "no one understands God" (*ouk estin ho ekzētōn*) (Rom 3:11), for they (i.e., the Gentiles) are "darkened in their thinking" (*eskotōmenoi tē dianoia*; our translation) (Eph 4:18) and "their minds are hardened" (*epōrōthē ta noēmata autōn*) (2 Cor 3:14); surely just as the mind distracted by 'fleshly' things (*sarkos*) is "hostile to God" (*echthra eis theon*) (Rom 8:7), so too is the natural person, before conversion, incapable of accepting the things of God, for he is autonomously "unable to understand them" (*ou dynatai gnōai*), because they are discerned spiritually (1 Cor 2:14).

48 Lawrence Kuhn, 'Arguing God's Existence?' (Alvin Plantinga)', (video), <http://www.closertotruth.com/video-profile/Arguing-God-s-Existence-Alvin-Plantinga-/1264> (accessed 26 February 2014); emphasis added.

49 Instead of formulating this probability in a more formal way (e.g. by Bayes theorem), we opt to leave it ambiguous so as to focus more on an intuitional pull about probability, which is a simpler and a more powerful way to present this objection.

50 By properly basic we just have in mind those beliefs that one believes which are not based on propositional argumentation but nonetheless are warranted by way of proper cognitive function. See, for instance, Plantinga, 'Is Belief in God Properly Basic?' *Noûs* 15 (1981): pp. 41–51.

51 Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 482; emphasis added.

52 This example is based off of similar examples that can be found in Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 180.

53 For a seminal work on soul-making theodicy, see John Hick, 'A Soul-Making Theodicy' in Chad Meister (ed.), *The Philosophy of Religion Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 537–49.

54 For a similar view on this point, see Paul K. Moser, *The Elusive God*; 'Cognitive Idolatry and Divine Hiding' in Daniel Howard-Snyder and Paul K. Moser (eds.), *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 120–48; Moser, 'Gethsemane Epistemology: Volitional and Evidential', *Philosophia Christi* 14 (2012): pp. 263–74

55 Plantinga, *WCB*, p. 303.