

## “NOT DONE IN A CORNER”: HOW TO BE A SENSIBLE EVIDENTIALIST ABOUT JESUS<sup>1</sup>

STEPHEN J. WYKSTRA

Calvin College

”So then, King Agrippa . . . I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles”.

At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defence. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane”.

“I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner”. (Acts 26: 19-26 (NIV))

Warranted Christian Belief completes Alvin Plantinga’s warrant trilogy.<sup>2</sup> In it, he uses the externalist epistemology of his 1993 Warrant: the Current Debate and Warrant and Proper Function to undergird a Calvinist “model” of how Christian belief can have warrant. In so doing, he also returns to the critique of evidentialism that he and other Reformed epistemologists mounted in the 1980s. In that earlier phase, ‘evidentialism’ designated the assumption that belief in God needs inferential evidence to avoid being irrational. Against all evidentialists (those defending theism as well as those attacking it), Plantinga urged that it can be “entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all”.<sup>3</sup> Such belief can instead be “properly basic”, by virtue of its grounding in the immediate deliverances of a Sensus Divinitatis implanted in us by God. In Warranted Christian Belief, Plantinga expands this earlier view in three dimensions. He broadens it by considering not just belief in God, but also belief in the central claims of the Christian gospel, claims regarding creation, the fall, redemption, and the person and work of Christ. He deepens it by investigating what is needed to make these beliefs not only ‘rational’ but also warranted, drawing here on the distinction central to his earlier two volumes. And he lengthens it (so to speak) by elaborating a model on which the central claims of Christianity are grounded in a Sensus Spiritus, the “Internal

1. I am grateful to my colleagues at Calvin College for their helpful comments on this paper.
2. Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief (Oxford, 2000): in what follows, page numbers for quotations from Plantinga will refer to this volume unless otherwise indicated. The two earlier volumes of the trilogy, published in 1993, are also from Oxford University Press.
3. Plantinga, ‘Reason and Belief in God’, in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), Faith and Rationality (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 17. Here Plantinga uses the term ‘evidence’ in its narrow sense of inferential evidence. In a broader sense, the deliverances of the Sensus Divinitatis are evidence, comparable to those of memory or the senses.

Instigation and Testimony of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>4</sup> Given the proper-functionalist theory of warrant of his earlier volumes, he argues, this can suffice to make Christian belief warranted—warranted enough, indeed, to constitute knowledge.

In its positive features, I find Plantinga’s account very valuable. Especially important, I think, is his discussion of the effects of the Holy Spirit on our affections and will as well as on our beliefs and cognition. My worries concern what we might call the negative features of his account. For alongside this stress on the importance of the Holy Spirit, Plantinga intertwines a case for the unimportance or dispensability of ordinary evidence for the claims of Christianity. This is particularly striking for his treatment of the resurrection of Jesus. On his model, as we shall see, even the claim that Jesus rose from death acquires all the warrant it needs from the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, he says (p. 259), belief in the resurrection “floats free” of all historical considerations and evidence. The resurrection happened in real history; but our way of knowing it happened, on his model, “swings free” of our ordinary ways of knowing historical facts.

In taking this view, Plantinga finds considerable support in the Dutch Calvinist tradition. But here, I worry that Dutch Calvinism may be deeply flawed. In the passage from Acts quoted above, the apostle Paul is bold before King Agrippa because, he says, the events he proclaims were “not done in a corner”, and so “have not escaped the notice” of Agrippa. The gospel thus makes claims upon Agrippa—claims to being both “true and reasonable”—because its historical components engage ordinary ways of knowing. Paul also, to be sure, appeals to the Spirit-inspired prophets, but he does this in synergy with appeal to our ordinary means of knowing. If a model of Christian warrant is to preserve this synergy (as I believe it should), Dutch Calvinism may here need to learn from Scottish Calvinism,<sup>5</sup> from Calvin himself, and from a more whole-hearted application of Plantinga’s own externalist theory of warrant.<sup>6</sup>

4. Plantinga does not use the term Sensus Spiritus; sensus is perhaps misleading if taken too literally, for the “Internal Instigation of the Holy Spirit” is not by way of any specific faculty in us. I use it as a surrogate for his acronym IHS.
5. A glimpse of the divide on these matters between Dutch and Scottish Calvinists can be seen in Princeton scholar B. B. Warfield’s discussion of the Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper. While praising many aspects of Kuyper’s thought, Warfield also saw in him a striking instance of

heroes of the faith who deprecate apologetics because they feel no need of ‘reasons’ to ground a faith which they are sure they have received immediately from God. Apologetics, they say, will never make a Christian. Christians are made by the creative Spirit alone. And when God almighty has implanted faith in a heart, we shall not require to seek for ‘reasons’ to ground our conviction of the truth of the Christian religion. We have tasted and seen, and we know of ourselves that it is from God. Thus, the sturdiest belief joins hands with unbelief to disparage the defences of the Christian religion.

From Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield, Vol. 2, ed. John E. Meeter (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), p. 95.

6. I have argued elsewhere that externalism helps put evidentialism regarding theism in a more sensible and challenging form. See my ‘Toward a Sensible Evidentialism: On the Notion of ‘Needing evidence’’, in William Rowe and William Wainwright (eds.), Readings in the Philosophy of Religion, 2nd Edition (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), pp. 426–437. See also ‘Externalism, Proper Inferentiality, and Sensible Evidentialism’, in Topoi, vol. 14 (1995), pp. 107–121. The present essay attempts to put this ‘sensible evidentialism’ in a form appropriate to the key historical claims of the Christian gospel.

## 1. Plantinga's Aims, Strategy, and Model

1.1 Like his earlier 1980s work, Warranted Christian Belief seeks both to defeat 'evidentialism' and to provide an alternative to it. In Warranted Christian Belief, evidentialism takes the form of (as I shall call it) the Demure De Jure Objection against Christian theism. Those who level this objection demurely profess to have no idea whether Christian theism is true; nevertheless, they charge, acceptance of Christian theism is—due to its lack of evidence—deeply epistemically defective. An objection so combining ontic modesty and epistemic severity is not in itself incoherent: sometimes it is exactly the right thing to say.<sup>7</sup> But could it be the right thing to say about Christian theism? Plantinga thinks not: such critics, he thinks, fail to see that in this case, there are deep and fundamental links between the ontic and epistemic issues, between whether God exists, and whether believing in God in a 'basic' way (rather than on the basis of inference) could be reasonable and warranted. Appreciating these links, he thinks, is also essential for Christians seeking to understand faith as a species of knowing.

For both ends, Plantinga proposes his model of the thesis that Christian theistic belief has warrant. In essence, a 'model' is a story spelling out one imaginable way in which Christian belief might get warrant. Plantinga claims two things of his model. First, the story is "epistemically possible": given what we have to go on, we have no reason to reject it so long as we take the "demure" stance (my term) toward the truth of Christian theism. Second, if the story is true, then Christian belief does have warrant. These modest claims are enough, he thinks, to refute the demure de jure objection, for they entail that for all we know, Christian theism has warrant. Plantinga also claims that if Christian theism is true, then his model or something in its near neighbourhood is true; it is thus (p. 170) "a good way for Christians to conceive the warrant of Christian belief".

1.2 How then does his model go: on it, how does Christian belief arise, and what gives it warrant? It arises from two main sources. First, on the model God has created all humans so that they have a built-in natural disposition to form beliefs about God when triggered by various common stimuli. These beliefs about God, however, fall short of what humans need to know if their lives are to be restored to proper relation with God. Hence, God has graciously provided a special supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, both in inspiring the Holy Scriptures, and in enabling humans to see the truth of their central proclamations. These proclamations include, he says:

the affirmations that God created the heavens and the earth; that he created humans in his own image; that human beings fell ruinously into sin, from which they require salvation; that in response God sent Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, who took on our flesh (became

7. Imagine meeting some group of people with passionate convictions about intelligent extraterrestrials. After a few hours of discussion, you see how their convictions arose from experiences while on LSD. You might rightly find yourself thinking: 'I have no idea whether there is such life somewhere in the universe (it's a mighty big place, after all); but these nuts are entirely irrational in their conviction that this is so.'

incarnate), suffered, and died as an atonement for our sins, and rose from the dead, thus enabling us fallen human beings to have eternal life with God. (p. 302)

On Plantinga's model, then it is the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit that produces Christian conviction about these affirmations. Here his model importantly brings out the relation between our affective and cognitive lives. We fallen humans, on the model, have hearts whose central rebellious desire is to live autonomously from God. This central desire colours and distorts all our affections, and this in turn distorts our cognition, giving us an inveterate tendency to "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). The Holy Spirit's activity, however, renews the heart and its affections; in so doing, it removes the affective barriers to belief. But more importantly, on his model the Holy Spirit plays the positive role of directly "instigating" these beliefs, bringing the mind to a state of conviction by giving a "inner secret testimony" to the proclamations of Scripture. On Plantinga's model, this instigation is immediate and non-inferential. It is not that the Holy Spirit produces some experience that functions as evidence for the belief. Instead, Plantinga says (p. 250), it might go this way: a person simply hears or reads or encounters some teaching of Scripture (say, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself", and then, due to the Holy Spirit's inner causal activity, she finds herself thinking: "Right; that's true; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself".

And on Plantinga's model, the Spirit's instigation is the proper source not just of beliefs about the theological significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but also of beliefs about the historicity of these events themselves. Our warrant for believing that Jesus rose from death has no dependence on our ordinary means of access to historical events. On the model, Plantinga writes:

I don't need a good historical case for the truth of the central teachings of the gospel to be warranted in accepting them. I needn't be able to find a good argument, historical or otherwise, for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . . On the model, the warrant for Christian belief doesn't require that I or anyone else have this kind of historical information; the warrant floats free of such questions. It isn't required to be validated or proved by some source of belief other than by faith, such as historical investigation. (p. 259)

It is to be noted that Plantinga's point here is very general: the warrant of belief in the resurrection floats free of any 'source of belief' other than the Spirit's internal instigation. 'Historical investigation' is cited as one example; but it also floats free of our ordinary disposition to believe on the testimony of other humans. Of course, on his model the Holy Spirit uses, as the occasion for instigating belief in the resurrection, words that in Scripture are portrayed as testimony from Jesus' followers. But these words do not make their epistemic claim upon us by functioning as historical testimony (that is, by engaging our ordinary dispositions to believe what other people tell us by way of testimony) or by engaging any other ordinary faculty. It is this general point that lies behind his model's aloofness toward historical studies, so far as the positive source of warrant for belief is concerned. And it is not just the individual, but the Christian epistemic community as a whole, that enjoys such aloofness. The Holy Spirit, as he puts it, gives us:

a source of warranted true belief, a way of coming to see the truth of these teachings, that is quite independent of historical studies. By virtue of this process an ordinary Christian, one quite innocent of historical studies, . . . can nevertheless come to know that these things are, indeed, true; furthermore, his knowledge need not trace back (by way of testimony, for example) to knowledge on the part of someone who does have this specialized training. Neither the Christian community nor the ordinary Christian is at the mercy of the expert here; they can know these truths directly. (p. 374)

1.3 How does the Holy Spirit provide this knowledge about historical events? It is not, on his model, that the person apprehends that the Holy Spirit is testifying to some event, senses the integrity of the Spirit, and accordingly accepts this testimony as true. Rather, his model here embodies the staunch ‘externalism’ developed in Warrant and Proper Function. On this externalist theory, the believer, to be warranted, need not realise that the Holy Spirit is producing some conviction, just as an ordinary person, to be warranted in some visual belief, need not realise that the action of photons on chemical photo-receptors is producing that belief. What is needed for warrant, on Plantinga’s general theory, is that the beliefs be produced by faculties or processes that are functioning in accord with a successful alethic design plan. So if there is a God who has designed us to form beliefs when triggered in this way by the Holy Spirit (or photons), then beliefs produced in this way do have warrant. And the warrant accrues from the ‘external fact’ that they are so produced; it does not rest on whether the subject holding the belief has any realisation or recognition of this fact.

At bottom, as Plantinga thus sees it, the demure de jure critics are wrong because they think evidentialism toward Christian theism is world-view neutral. They suppose that the proposition that God exists or that Jesus rose from death is intrinsically the sort of proposition that needs an inferential case in order to be warrantably or reasonably believed. But this is not world-view neutral at all. For if Christian theism is true, it is entirely possible—entirely epistemically possible—that when we are functioning properly, we can reliably form true beliefs about God and the Gospel without relying on anything like inferential evidence. And this is something anyone should see with a little thought; so all demure de jure evidentialist critics of Christian belief should henceforth lay down their arms and bury their hatchets. If they are agnostic about the truth of Christian belief, they should be equally agnostic about whether such belief has warrant. Evidentialist defenders of Christianity should also repent, for if Christian theism is true, the model or something close to it is true. How then can one embrace Christian theism while thinking ordinary evidence is essential for knowing its truth? If we have the Holy Spirit, what need have we of evidence?

## 2. Scriptural Cues from Calvin

To answer this question, I shall sketch an alternative to Plantinga’s model. The alternative model will propose a broadly evidentialist story of how warrant accrues to Christian belief in the

resurrection.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it will avoid the more extreme versions of evidentialism, and preserve many positive features of his specific model of Christian belief and his general ‘proper functionalist’ theory of warrant. Of this model, I make two claims, parallel to his claims for his model. The first is that if we have no good reason for rejecting the truth of Christian theism, then we have no good reason to think the model is false. The second is that if Christian theism is true, we have reason to see this model as being somewhat closer to the truth, somewhat more verisimilitudinous, than is Plantinga’s model. This is because it comports better with some key passages of Scripture. Since these motivate our model, I shall begin with them.<sup>9</sup> In discussing them, I shall also attend to the exposition of them given by Calvin, for this provides valuable cues even if his own general views deviate from our model.<sup>10</sup>

2.1 To begin, consider II Peter 1:16–18, which grounds the apostolic proclamation in things to which the apostles were “eyewitnesses”. In Calvin’s translation, the passage reads:

For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him on the holy mount.<sup>11</sup>

In his commentary, Calvin notes, first, that Peter aims to set forth “the certainty of the gospel”, that the faithful may know they “labour in a matter which is certain”, and so “persevere” with no fear that they are “beating the air”. It is to this end, Calvin thinks, that Peter stresses the grounding of the gospel in events to which the apostles were “eyewitnesses”. And in citing the transfiguration of Jesus, Peter is choosing but “one memorable example out of many” by which “Christ displayed his divine majesty”. Of this particular miracle, Calvin says:

Three only were then present, but they were sufficient as witnesses; for they had through many miracles seen the glory of Christ, and had a remarkable evidence of his divinity in his resurrection.

8. Our evidentialist model will not say that all the components get warrant in the same way. What makes it evidentialist is that it sees ordinary evidence as a part, but a crucial or essential part, of what confers warrant on some of them. At the same time, it embraces as necessary and vital (but not normally sufficient) the non-inferential sources stressed by Plantinga’s model.
9. The appeal to Scripture here is consonant with Plantinga’s dictum (p. 200) that taking Scripture and theology seriously in a book on philosophy is “no more scandalous than the ingression into philosophy of scientific ideas from (for example) quantum mechanics, cosmology, and evolutionary biology”.
10. Though the model takes cues from things Calvin himself acknowledges in discussing the above Scriptures, the model does not purport to capture Calvin’s overall stance on these matters. As Plantinga says of his own model (p. 173): “Whatever Calvin thinks, however, it’s our model.”
11. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, trans. John Owen, in Calvin Translation Society, Calvin’s Commentaries (22 volumes), Vol. 22 Part II, (Baker Book House, reprinted 1999), p. 381. All quotations from Calvin upon this passage are found on pages 381–3.

Noting Peter's emphasis on being an "eyewitness" to the transfiguration, and relating this to his witnessing of the resurrection and other miracles of Jesus, Calvin urges that "he alone is the lawful minister of Christ, who knows the truth of the doctrine which he delivers". Peter's knowing and ministering, for Calvin, was thus grounded in the evidencing power of the events he had witnessed, events taken not in isolation but as a whole. These events are seen as crucial both to the apostles' own knowledge of the Gospel, and to their being in a position to deliver this Gospel authoritatively to subsequent generations, including us.

Calvin goes on to clarify a difference between the epistemic situation of the apostle and ourselves. The apostle's certainty rested in substantial measure upon the evidencing power of events he had witnessed himself. But our situation is different, for:

. . . not that all obtain certainty in the same way; for what Peter says is that he himself was present. . . . But we now obtain certainty in another way; for though Christ has not risen before our eyes, yet we know by whom his resurrection has been handed down to us.

In stressing that our certainty is obtained by knowing "by whom his resurrection was handed down to us", Calvin is of course not saying it is independent of the certainty of Peter and the apostles, for it is precisely their testimony that has been handed down. But there is also a chain of transmission of this testimony. The precise details of this chain may not be fully clear, but evidently this does not, for Calvin, preclude knowing enough to have confidence in the reliability of the transmission. (This may, indeed, often be the case for historical knowledge.) In any case, the Christian's certainty today regarding things of the gospel, on Calvin's account here, rests in no small way upon historical events to which we have access by ordinary means of perceptual and testimonial faculties

This is not to say that for Calvin, the Holy Spirit plays no crucial role here. Indeed, Calvin immediately goes on to affirm the importance of the Spirit. His idea, however, is that these two sources are complementary. As if to forestall a false dichotomy between the ordinary and, the extraordinary sources of certainty here, he continues:

And added to this is the inward testimony of conscience, the sealing of the Spirit, which far exceeds all the evidence of the senses. But let us remember that the gospel was not at the beginning made up of vague rumors, but that the apostles were the authentic preachers of what they had seen. (Italics mine)

So for Calvin, our knowledge of the Gospel has two roots: it is rooted in our ordinary ways of knowing by perception and testimony, and to this is added "the sealing of the Spirit". And even while stressing the latter as more excellent, he immediately adds that this should not lead us to forget the former: "But let us remember that . . . the apostles were the authentic preachers of what they had seen".

2.2 But how, on our new model, are these two sorts of sources to be related? If we turn to Calvin's commentary on the Johannine letters, we find suggestions that the Holy Spirit's testimony is not a mere cumulative addition to ordinary sources of belief like the senses and

testimony, but something that works in intimate synergy with them. Calvin quotes I John 1:1, noting how the writer stresses the apostle's role as eyewitness:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, the Word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness to it.<sup>12</sup>

Here, comments Calvin, the apostle seeks to raise our thoughts to “the chief and only true happiness which God has conferred on us”. “The greatness of the subject,” Calvin says, “requires that the truth should be certain, and fully proved”; but “how difficult it is for us to believe, every one of us knows too well by his own experience”. It is fitting, then, that the apostle, appealing to knowledge gained by the senses, “heaps so many things together in confirmation of the gospel”, to show that “he taught nothing but what had been really made known to him”.

Calvin thus gives considerable weight to John's stress that his witness is to events known via the senses. But can we plausibly claim that such events, known through the senses, constitute evidence for his heady theological claims about who Jesus is, or about the source of his power? Calvin considers just this objection:

It may seem, however, that the evidences of the senses little availed in the present subject, for the power of Christ could not be perceived by the eyes nor felt by the hands.

Such an objection might lead one to reject any evidential appeal to historical testimony regarding Jesus' miracles as evidence as to who he was. But Calvin firmly rejects this objection. He notes that the gospel of John, like the Johannine letters, makes the same evidential appeal to Jesus' “visible works”. Calvin writes:

To this I answer, that the same thing is said here as in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, “We have seen his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;” for he was not known as the Son of God by the external form of his body, but because he gave illustrious proofs of his Divine power, so that in him shone forth the majesty of the Father, as in a living and distinct image.

Calvin thus sees the miracles of Jesus, known via the testimony of the apostles to events known through the senses, as crucial to our knowledge of who Jesus is. At the same time, however, he does not (nor will our model) divorce this evidencing role of Jesus' “visible works” from the inner testimony of the Spirit. That the resurrected Jesus was accessible to the senses is part of what gives the facticity of the resurrection its claim upon the disciples and (through their testimony) upon us. But the Spirit's role is particularly crucial in disclosing the inner meaning of Jesus' messiahship, of his relation to the Father, and of his extraordinary significance for our own lives. Commenting later on the apostle John's proclamation (I John 4: 14) that “we have

12. Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, Vol. 22 Part II, p. 156. All quotations from Calvin upon this passage are taken from pages 158–9.

seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world”, Calvin thus says (p. 243),

And by seeing, he does not mean any sort of seeing but what belongs to faith, by which they recognized the glory of God in Christ, according to what follows, that he was sent to be the Saviour of the world; and this knowledge flows from the illumination of the Spirit.

2.3 A similar account of the synergistic relation between ordinary sources and extraordinary sources of warrant can be found in Calvin’s commentary on the opening verses of Luke’s gospel, where Luke explains to Theophilus his purpose in writing. Calvin’s version is:

Forasmuch as many have undertaken to compose a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and servants of the Word; It seemed good to me also, having carefully examined all things from the beginning, to write to thee in detail, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mayest acknowledge the certainty of those things whereof thou has been instructed.<sup>13</sup>

Luke’s words here seem to highlight the importance of ordinary historical credibility to our certainty about the gospel. Commenting on Luke’s apparent emphasis on providing a reliable narrative of what was believed “among us”, Calvin again considers the objection that the writer of Scripture places inappropriate weight on knowledge by ordinary human faculties. Such a critic, Calvin notes, would fault the writer of Scripture because he

appears to make faith rest on a weak foundation, its relation to men, while it ought to rest on the Word of God only, and certainly the full assurance of faith is ascribed to the sealing of the Spirit (I Thess 1: 5; Heb 10: 22).

But, as before, Calvin finds the objection faulty for driving a wedge between these two sources of warrant. He thus continues:

I reply, if the Word of God does not hold the first rank, faith will not be satisfied with any human testimonies; but, where the inward confirmation of the Spirit has already taken place, it [faith] allows them some weight in the historical knowledge of the facts. By historical knowledge I mean that knowledge which we obtain respecting events, either by our own observation or by the statement of others. For, with respect to the visible works of God, it is equally proper to listen to eye-witnesses as to rely on experience.

Our knowledge, Calvin goes on to stress, has a two-fold source of warrant, neither of which must displace the other:

13. John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, Vol. 1, trans. Rev. William Pringle, in Calvin Translation Society, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (22 volumes), Vol. 16 Part II, (Baker Book House, reprinted 1999), p. 3. All quotations from Calvin upon this passage are taken from pages 3–7.

Besides, those whom Luke follows were not private authors, but also ministers of the Word. . . . It is a great matter that he affirms them to have been eye-witnesses, but, by calling them ministers, he takes them out of the common order of men, that our faith may have its support in heaven and not on earth. . . . It is thus evident that God has employed every method to prevent our faith from being suspended on the doubtful and shifting opinions of men. . . . But let us attend to the remarkable distinction<sup>14</sup> which our Lord has laid down, that foolish credulity may not insinuate itself under the name of faith.

Both in Scripture and Calvin, it thus seems to me, we find suggestions that in a full account of Christian warrant, our ordinary faculties and the role of the Spirit need to be, not sundered, nor merely conjoined, but synergistically linked. Such linking is also implicit in Jesus' own promise (John 14: 26) to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples to "remind you of everything I have said to you", thus working in synergy with the ordinary cognitive faculty of the disciples' memory.

### III. A Sensible Evidentialist Model

Having mined Calvin for cues, what, now, does our evidentialist model of Christian warrant say? Well, like Plantinga's model, it affirms that God the Father sent his only begotten Son into the world to reconcile and restore fallen humanity and to inaugurate a new kingdom; and it also includes much of what Plantinga's model says about the *Sensus Divinitatis* and the Holy Spirit. But instead of making these the sole source of warrant, our model goes on to stress that God, in sending his Son, also performed through him certain miraculous "visible works of God", both to attest to his Son's special status, and to manifest the character of the new kingdom. On the model here proposed, these visible works have divinely-intended evidencing and disclosing functions. To fulfil the intended function, these "visible works of God" performed through Jesus were "not done in a corner"—as Paul puts it to King Agrippa (Acts 19:31); rather, they were seen by many people, and testified to by those intimate disciples of Jesus who not only observed their factual side, but also (through the work of the Holy Spirit) came to discern their significance.

On our model, then, God's design plan for us entails an incarnational epistemology paralleling his incarnational ontology: he intends our knowledge of God to take ordinary flesh even as God himself did. By the resurrection and other "visible works" of Jesus, God means the gospel to engage the ordinary faculties of fallen humans like Agrippa. On the model, this adds a dimension

14. The "remarkable distinction" is, I take it, between Luke's affirmation of the apostles as "eyewitnesses" to events fulfilled, and his affirmation of them as "ministers [or servants] of the word". It is not entirely clear what Calvin means, in stressing that attending to this distinction is necessary to avoid "the danger of foolish credulity . . . [insinuating] itself under the name of faith". But one possibility is that he thinks we are especially vulnerable to such credulity if we wrongly neglect the first source of warrant—the "great matter" to which Luke affirms the apostles "to have been eye-witnesses". (A gospel that made extensive detailed claims about past events based entirely upon a supernatural revelation would be less like the Christian gospels, and more like the Book of Mormon given to Joseph Smith by Moroni.) To be sure, he might also mean the opposite: resting confidence on the human witness alone would be "foolish credulity". But we favour the former, and once again, as Plantinga says (p. 173), "Whatever Calvin thinks, it's our model".