Preface

This book is an investigation into an issue at the intersection of epistemology, the philosophy of religion, and religious pluralism: the problem of religious diversity. The problem of religious diversity claims that in cases of peer disagreement with respect to religious beliefs, one should give equal weight to the opinion of an epistemic peer (someone who is alike epistemically in every way in terms of intelligence, honesty, thoroughness, exposure to the issues, etc.) and to one's own opinion. Given this, mutually exclusive religious propositions serve as defeaters for one another. A belief P defeats belief Q if P gives one a good reason to give up belief Q, thus it is not tenable to hold to any one particular religious proposition over another. If the argument for the problem of religious diversity is sound, then this is a serious problem for the Christian exclusivist.

The primary thesis of my book is that the problem of religious diversity does not succeed in providing a defeater for Christian exclusivism. In arguing against the problem of religious diversity, I offer a Reformed Epistemological defense of Christian belief. Rather than reference a single argument, Reformed Epistemology is the stance that belief in God is properly basic. This is the view that one need not give a positive argument for the existence of God to be warranted in holding the belief that God exists. Reformed Epistemologists typically reject evidentialism, the view that one cannot hold to any religious belief unless there is conclusive evidence for it. The most prominent defenders of Reformed Epistemology include philosophers such as Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, and Nicholas Wolterstorff. This book's focus will be on the epistemological issues concerning Plantinga's account of warrant as proper function in connection to his defense of Christian belief.

Warrant is that quality and quantity that distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief. A true belief must be warranted to count as an instance of knowledge since true beliefs that are only accidentally true do

not count as knowledge. Plantinga construes warrant in terms of proper functionality. A belief B has warrant for subject S if and only if the relevant processes that produce belief B are functioning properly in a cognitive environment sufficiently similar to that for which S's faculties are designed; and the modules of the design plan governing the production of B are (1) aimed at truth, and (2) such that there is a high objective probability that a belief formed in accordance with those modules (in that sort of cognitive environment) is true. Plantinga argues that a properly functioning cognitive faculty can produce warranted Christian beliefs.

There have been a number of objections to Plantinga's defense of Christian belief, the majority of which are aimed at his account of warrant as proper function. Some of the more well known objections seem to argue that Plantinga's defense fails because of his epistemic externalism, and thus seem to presuppose that epistemic internalism is required to provide a tenable defense of Christian exclusivism. Other objections argue that Plantinga's defense is incoherent and claim that mutually exclusive religious belief systems can utilize Plantinga's defense of Christian belief to argue for their own religious belief system. Throughout this book, I will argue that none of these objections succeed in providing a defeater for Plantinga's Reformed Epistemological defense of Christian belief.

I have tried to organize this book so that anyone with an interest in the topic, including professors and students, may benefit from the discussion. Since chapters 2, 4, and 5 are more technical, someone without much background in philosophy can start with chapters 1, 3, and 6 before turning to the more technical chapters. Where relevant, I have tried to explain some of the more technical words in the footnotes section for those who are unfamiliar with the philosophical terms used by epistemologists.