

## *Paul K. Moser and the End of Christian Apologetics as We Know It*

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### *Moser's Religious Epistemology*

Paul Moser's recent works on religious epistemology contend that arguments of natural theology do not produce knowledge of God and hence they are both unnecessary and irrelevant to one who inquires about knowledge of God. By "arguments of natural theology" Moser specifically refers to the teleological, cosmological, and the ontological arguments.<sup>1</sup> Moser offers his main reason for rejecting natural theology as follows: "My case against natural theology relies on an understanding of the title 'God' in terms of a personal agent worthy of worship."<sup>2</sup> Moser adds that his case against natural theology is not a variation on natural theology "because it does not offer, on the basis of natural sources of knowledge, an inference to the existence of a supernatural being. My case relies on a notion of God, as a personal agent

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ABSTRACT: In Paul Moser's view, philosophical arguments of natural theology are irrelevant as evidence for God's existence. I argue that embracing Moser's view would bring about the end to the project and practice of Christian apologetics as we know it. I draw out implications from Moser's work on religious epistemology for the project of Christian apologetics. I sketch what Christian apologetics would look like if one were to embrace Moser's call to eliminate arguments as evidence for God existence. The result of embracing Moser-style (Moserian) apologetics is apologetics without argument. I argue that Moserian apologetics should be rejected.

1. See Moser, "Natural Theology and the Evidence for God," *Philosophia Christi* 14 (2012): 307. Moser, however, mostly refers to arguments of natural theology without being specific as to which argument he means to refer, as the following quotation shows: "We seem to have priority given to the apologetics of Aquinas over that of Jesus and the New Testament writers. This is a recipe for trouble, from a Christian point of view. A Christ-shaped philosophy, in contrast, will keep the self-authenticating Father of Jesus front and center, and will not allow the dubious arguments of natural theology to divert attention from this unique God" (Moser, "Rejoinder to Angus Menuge on Ramified Personalized Natural Theology," <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=131>).

2. Paul Moser, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 162.

worthy of worship, but this notion does not figure in an argument for God's existence from natural sources of information."<sup>3</sup>

Moser's choice to use "God" as a titleholder, without a commitment to the existence of God, is intended to avoid begging the question against atheists and skeptics.<sup>4</sup> The notion of a morally perfect "God" is sufficiently intelligible for both theists and atheists/skeptics whether such a God exists or not. If such a God exists, and if God is perfectly loving toward all humans and seeks the redemption of all humans, including enemies of God, then it is plausible to suggest that both theists and atheists and skeptics can expect whatever kind of evidence such a God would provide. In order to evaluate all available relevant evidence for "God" Moser is committed to an inference to "a best available evidence"<sup>5</sup> such that we can anticipate what kind of evidence would be relevant and available if a morally perfect God worthy of worship exists.<sup>6</sup> Moser calls his view *volitional evidentialism*,<sup>7</sup> which is a view about *evidence* for God's existence that recognizes and emphasizes the role of *volition* in acquiring relevant available evidence for God's existence. The kind of relevant evidence from a morally perfect God worthy of worship, Moser contends, would be redemptive in the sense that it challenges the human will and involves volitional cooperation between God and humans. For Moser, the relevant evidence for God's reality comes in a direct experience of God and hence it does not require propositional evidence in the form of arguments.<sup>8</sup>

Moser frequently contrasts his view with that of the traditional arguments of natural theology to show that his view better captures the kind of relevant evidence for a morally perfect God worthy of worship. In Moser's view, natural theology arguments fail to engage the human will. The human will, Moser claims, plays a crucial role in acquiring evidence for God's reality. Typically, natural theology arguments offer propositional evidence for God's existence since arguments are inherently propositional. Moser contends that philosophical arguments for God's existence provide only a "spec-

3. Ibid.

4. Regarding the use of "God" a titleholder, Moser writes, "My account begins with the idea (but not the reality, to avoid begging the question) of a God worthy of worship" (Moser, "Natural Theology and the Evidence for God," 305).

5. Moser remarks, "Philosophical use of 'an inference to a best explanation,' or abduction, is typically inference to 'a best available explanation,' and not 'the best explanation'" (Moser, "God without Argument," in *Is Faith in God Reasonable? Debates in Philosophy, Science and Rhetoric*, ed. Corey Miller and Paul Gould (New York: Routledge, 2014), 80).

6. Moser offers his understanding of "worthiness of worship" as follows: "My robust notion of worthiness of worship, involving a notion of self-sufficient moral perfection, does very important work in distinguishing good from bad candidates for the title "God" (Moser, "Natural Theology and the Evidence for God," 305).

7. See Moser, "God and Evidence: A Cooperative Approach," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5 (2013): 47.

8. Moser's view regarding what counts as adequate evidence for God's reality is discussed in detail in the next section.

tator evidence,” since their evaluation involves a mere intellectual recognition of God’s existence without challenging the human will. Consequently, for Moser, since the conclusions of natural theology arguments do not yield the existence of a morally perfect God worthy of worship, the project of natural theology is a failure. Moser writes, “In any case, to establish the existence of God, properly speaking, the arguments [of natural theology] need to establish the existence of a personal agent who is worthy of worship and is thus morally perfect and hence perfectly loving toward all persons.”<sup>9</sup> Moser adds, “In effect, the history of natural theology has been the history of attempting to secure knowledge of God’s reality without acknowledging evidence of God’s authoritative call to humans.”<sup>10</sup> On Moser’s view, engaging in theistic arguments for the existence of God is an unnecessary distraction from what humans urgently need, redemption. He writes, “I should mention, however, that postponing the Good News message for the sake of supposed philosophical preliminaries often leaves philosophers languishing indefinitely in such preliminaries. We see this when philosophers of religion never get around to honest reflection on the vital existential and moral struggle that is human faith in God.”<sup>11</sup> Anyone familiar with the project of Christian apologetics can see problematic consequences of Moser’s core claims in his religious epistemology for Christian apologetics as we know it. I spell out below some of these consequences.<sup>12</sup>

In his paper “God without Argument”<sup>13</sup> Moser calls “argumentism” “the view that one’s knowledge of God’s existence (if it is actual) depends on one’s having some argument or other for God’s existence.”<sup>14</sup> He adds, “Many theist, atheist, and agnostic philosophers assume argumentism about God, if uncritically, and they are not alone in assuming it. Perhaps such a view is an occupational hazard for philosophers, given their preoccupation with arguments on various perennial topics of philosophy.”<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that not only does Moser call for the rejection of natural theology for the key reasons provided above, but still argues that arguments, in general, or philosophical

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9. Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 152.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Moser, “Natural Theology and the Evidence for God,” 311.

12. An anonymous referee asks: “does not the Moser critique also stick to the Christian philosopher’s work in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, ethics, philosophy of language, etc. How much of this work, even done by Christians, never arrives at the God who is worthy of worship and who is the existential ground of being?” Moser’s conception of philosophy and his religious epistemology have implications to all those areas of philosophy mentioned above in that they fail to arrive at the God who is worthy of worship. But this is a consequence of a rather narrow conception of philosophy Moser favors. Elsewhere, I address some of the problems with Moser’s conception of philosophy in my paper, “Moser’s Christ-Centered Metaphilosophy,” which is available online here: <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=164>.

13. Moser, “God without Argument,” in *Is Faith in God Reasonable?*, 69–83.

14. Moser, “God without Argument,” 70.

15. *Ibid.*, 70–1.

arguments, in particular, as evidence for God's reality are both unnecessary and irrelevant. He writes, "Inquirers about God should investigate this kind of evidence [that is, experiential evidence] and not just philosophical arguments about the existence of God."<sup>16</sup> It is important to understand Moser's chief concern when it comes to the values of philosophical arguments for the existence of God.<sup>17</sup> Standard philosophical arguments of natural theology are irrelevant for Moser, because adequate evidence for God's reality comes in the form of experience of God. The upshot of Moser's claim is that one's knowledge of God's reality need not depend on an argument contrary to argumentism, since argumentism, as Moser understands it, requires that one's knowledge of God's reality needs to depend on an argument. To underscore the value of the kind of evidence for God's reality that Moser favors, which consists in a morally transformed life of human agents, Moser writes, "This approach confirms that one's theistic belief need not be based on an argument, or a proposition, even though it (cognitively) should be based on supporting evidence."<sup>18</sup> The point is that, if relevant and adequate evidence for God's reality is available *independent of philosophical arguments*, then philosophical arguments are redundant, hence unnecessary. One can, then, conclude that Moser's view on the role of arguments in a debate about evidence for God's existence is at odds with the project and practice of Christian apologetics which typically relies on arguments for the Christian truth claims, including, most importantly the existence of God.<sup>19</sup>

Besides Moser's above reasons as to why arguments are not needed when an inquirer of God can have a direct experience of God, he offers the following reason to show an alleged shortcoming regarding arguments as evidence for God's existence. He writes, "belief that a conclusion [of an argument] is true cannot supply faith in God. Such faith, as a cooperative self-response to divine self-manifestation, would have a *de re* agent-to-agent, I-Thou feature that goes beyond merely discursive arguments and their conclusions."<sup>20</sup> Since arguments are discursive and as such lack an agent-to-agent, *de re* relationship that is essentially volition-involving, Moser contends that arguments fall short of delivering redemptive knowledge of God. One could suggest that, Moser's concern is that the goal and outcome of arguments in

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16. *Ibid.*, 77.

17. Moser claims that arguments of natural theology have some value for some people, but the value is only psychological, not epistemic. He writes, "Perhaps a bad argument of natural theology has some positive *psychological* value for a person, and God uses this feature of an argument to lead the person into new life" (Moser, "Rejoinder to Angus Menuge on Ramified Personalized Natural Theology," 4–5 (emphasis in original)). Since my concern in this paper is on the *evidential* value of arguments of natural theology, there is no need to digress to discuss the relevance of psychological values of arguments of natural theology.

18. Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 136.

19. I illustrate below the kind of apologetics practice that would be in a direct conflict with Moser-styled apologetics.

20. Moser, "God without Argument," 72.

Christian apologetics should not leave us content with “mere ‘mental ascent’ to true propositions.”<sup>21</sup> This is partly true, but it is clear that Moser argues for much more than what is suggested. He rejects arguments of natural theology in order to make a case for his view. But I argue that is a mistake that arises from a mistaken view of the scope and goal of natural theology, which I discuss below. Generally, on Moser’s view, that is, “volitional evidentialism,” adequate evidence for God’s existence must be redemptive and volition-involving in the sense that it goes beyond an intellectual recognition that God exists, which is, at most, what arguments for God’s existence yield as their conclusion.<sup>22</sup> In the next section I provide a sketch of Moserian apologetics.

### *A Sketch of Moserian Apologetics*

Let us call the rejection of the project of natural theology and arguments as evidence for God’s existence Moser’s *negative project*. Evaluation of the “negative project” is provided in the next section. Now to the question: Insofar as Moserian apologetics renders case-making functions, what is Moser’s “case” for the existence of God?<sup>23</sup> In other words, what is his *positive project*? One can see two ways how Moser’s work provides answers to these questions. It is crucial to understand the distinction Moser makes, broadly speaking, between two kinds of evidence.<sup>24</sup> The first is evidence in the form of argument, that is, propositional evidence for God’s existence. That is, since all philosophical arguments are propositional, evidence in the form of argument is essentially propositional. The second kind of evidence is nonpropositional, which is irreducible to propositions, consists in experience, and is essentially volition-involving. Since Moser generally rejects arguments as evidence for God’s reality, his key case for God’s existence consists in *experiential evidence*, which does not depend on arguments or giving any argument.<sup>25</sup> For example, a person’s experience of God counts

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21. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for raising the above point.

22. To be exact, Moser does not even grant that arguments of natural theology establish as their conclusion the existence of God. Regarding “spectator evidence,” which is Moser’s reference to arguments of natural theology, he writes that “one will lack evidence for the (Jewish-Christian) God worthy of worship, even if one has evidence for the god of deism, the god of the philosophers, or some other lesser god” (Moser, “Natural Theology and the Evidence for God,” 307).

23. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for suggesting to phrase the question this way.

24. Moser distinguishes propositional evidence in the form of arguments from experiential evidence, which is irreducible to propositions, in his *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and *The Evidence for God*, among various places.

25. A referee raised the following question regarding Moser’s view about evidence for God’s existence: “is there a pecking-order or hierarchy of epistemic desiderata for Moser concerning ‘evidence for God’s existence’?” It is hard to tell whether Moser has provided us with an

as evidence for God's reality at least for that person. According to Moser, God's intervention in the human conscience for a volitional cooperation and interaction between God and a human agent can and does count as one's experience of God and as such one's evidence for God's reality.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to bear this point in mind: One can have evidence for God's reality via one's experience of God without being able to show (by way of an argument) one's evidence for God's reality. Since experiential evidence, in Moser's view, is irreducible to propositions in the form of arguments, it does not follow from failing to meet the challenge to express one's evidence in the form of an argument that one does not have evidence for God's reality. The same holds for one's possession of knowledge of God, that is, one can have knowledge of God without being able to express one's knowledge of God by way of an argument or in terms of propositions. Moser writes, "Of course, we should not confuse the direct, firsthand evidence in question with an argument of any kind. Arguments . . . do not have a monopoly on evidence, even if evidence can be characterized and relied upon in an argument."<sup>27</sup>

Moser, however, allows a way of *showing* one's evidence for God's reality in a morally transformed life of a human agent whose life reflects, however imperfectly, God's perfect moral character, for example, when one's life changes from selfishness to participating in *agape* love, including loving one's enemies. Here is an extended passage that captures Moser's conception of evidence for God's reality that is directly relevant to application of Moser's religious epistemology to the project of Christian apologetics:

At any level . . . one's undergoing the required transformation that brings a new default motivational center will entail one's becoming personifying evidence of divine reality, wherein one willingly receives and reflects God's moral character of unselfish love and thus God's distinctive kind of moral agency for others. In other words, one's receiving a new default motivational center supplies a basic, or foundational, threshold for one's becoming personifying evidence of

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epistemic desiderata to answer this question. But one can say the following based on the chief concerns of Moser's religious epistemology: inquirers of evidence for a God worthy of worship need to stop looking for philosophical arguments (of natural theology) as evidence for God's reality. What inquirers need is redemptive evidence that involves their will and results in moral transformation of humans. Hence, redemptive evidence (as most valuable) should replace propositional evidence in the form of arguments (as the least valuable). In the next section of this paper, I take issues with Moser's rationale for this hierarchy of evidence for God's existence.

26. A referee wonders "whether (a) God's intervention 'in the human conscience,' and (b) evidence of God's intervention in His divine acts such as miracles, which are not necessarily divine interventions in the human conscience, are epistemically necessary for Moser." As for (a), a short answer is yes, since Moser frequently refers to God's intervention in the human conscience as a way of understanding experiential evidence for God's reality. As for (b), Moser is skeptical of the value of miracles as evidence for God's reality, especially for those who are not open and actively willing to be volitionally and morally transformed; see Moser, *The Elusive God*, 128–9.

27. Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 205.

God. Such life-giving, and self-giving, evidence, rather than that of natural theology, is characteristic of a God of perfect love. In accordance with its divine source, *this personifying evidence is inherently for the sake of others*. It is therefore inherently morally significant, in being motivated by divine unselfish love.<sup>28</sup>

As I take it, the preceding passage contains the heart of Moser's conception of evidence for God's reality as personifying evidence that is irreducible to propositional natural theology arguments. Moser adds, "The best explanation of our lives then will be that God has indeed visited us redemptively, and that is evidence enough."<sup>29</sup> Moser suggests that the transformation of human life doesn't happen by mere human power but by the Spirit of God's empowering ministry. One can state Moser's key conception of adequate evidence for God's existence thus: One's experience of God is evidence for God's reality for that person; that person's morally transformed life, however imperfect, is evidence for God's reality and God's perfect moral character for others.<sup>30</sup>

Before we turn to consider implications of Moser's religious epistemology for the project of Christian apologetics, it is important to note that Moser is not totally against every argument for God's existence. He claims that he is against "all of the bad arguments"<sup>31</sup> for God's existence, and by this he means the traditional arguments for God's existence.<sup>32</sup> He goes on to provide his own argument for God's existence which he calls a *distinctive first-person perspective argument for God's existence*.<sup>33</sup> Here is Moser's argument for God's existence:

28. *Ibid.*, 209 (emphasis added).

29. Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 230. One might quibble with Moser's use of "the best explanation" in the manner he quibbles with Craig's use of "the best" explanation when he says, "Craig's language of 'the best explanation' assumes that he has surveyed all possible explanations and found one explanation to be 'the best.' Clearly, he has not done so, because he, like other humans, does not enjoy access to all possible explanations in the domains in question" (Moser, "God without Argument," 80). Moser's use of "the best explanation" above seems to suffer from the same problem.

30. Thanks to Bill Hasker for suggesting that I distinguish the two kinds of evidence in play in Moser's account of evidence for God's reality as I presented it above.

31. See Moser, "How Not to Defend Natural Theology: Reply to Woldeyohannes," <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=131>.

32. Recall that Moser claims that his case against traditional arguments of natural theology is restricted to the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments of traditional natural theology. See footnote 1 above. Interestingly, Moser nowhere in his writings that I am familiar with (see the next footnote for an exception) indicates that there is a good argument of traditional natural theology that avoids what he takes to be problems of arguments of natural theology. Some philosophers wonder, including the anonymous referee for this paper, whether Moser accepts the moral argument, and the argument from religious experience as good arguments of natural theology. Insofar as I can see, the answer is no.

33. Actually, and interestingly, in connection with his argument for God's existence, Moser writes, "I myself . . . have proposed a distinctive first person perspective *argument of natural theology*" (Moser, "How Not to Defend Natural Theology," 2 (emphasis added)). I argued else-

- (1) Necessarily, if a human person is offered and receives the transformative gift, then this is the result of the authoritative power of divine *X* of thoroughgoing forgiveness, fellowship in perfect love, worthiness of worship, and triumphant hope (namely God).
- (2) I have been offered, and have willingly received, the transformative gift.
- (3) Therefore, God exists.<sup>34</sup>

Now it is crucial to understand what this argument is supposed to accomplish. After considering and defending his argument for God's existence from possible objections, Moser concludes, "In any case, it is enough for purposes of sound argument the steps of argument one through three are true and their inference is valid. Given the previous considerations, I find no compelling reason to deny that the argument is sound or, for a suitably positioned person, rationally cogent."<sup>35</sup> It is to be noted that the application of Moser's argument is limited only to a "suitably positioned person," and hence it is relative to a person who has a direct experience of God and as such it is not intended to convince any other person by serving as evidence for God's existence. Now one would wonder about the purpose of Moser's argument for the existence of God in relation to his conception of evidence as experience of God personified in the lives of believers. As for the latter, recall that Moser suggests that "this personifying evidence is inherently for the sake of others." The argument that supposedly represents (even if not fully) one's direct experience of God, which is one's evidence for God's reality, is not intended to serve as evidence for others, but the personified evidence is for the sake of others. One would wonder what purpose Moser's argument is supposed to accomplish if it is not intended to serve as evidence for others. Here is Moser's response to this wondering:

My argument functions solely from a specific first-person perspective and therefore does not intend to deal with evidence now possessed by or readily available to all inquirers. In that key respect, it differs from the familiar arguments of natural theology, which are intended to rest on evidence readily available to all capable inquirers. So, I have not offered an argument that is intended to satisfy the requirement that it should be [cogent for a wide audience, including shrewd agnostics]. This should be no surprise, given that my argument is offered in the context of an account that accommodates God's evidential hiding and elusiveness relative to some people. I explicitly reject the view that

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where that despite Moser's claim his argument for God's existence is not an argument of natural theology. See my paper, "Natural Theology in Context: Rejoinder to Moser," <http://www.epso-ciet.org/library/articles.asp?pid=131>.

34. Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 200.

35. *Ibid.*, 209.



God has provided to all inquirers the kind of static evidence characteristic of the familiar arguments of natural theology.<sup>36</sup>

One can correctly infer, I think, that Moser's argument is inadequate as evidence for God's reality. The reason is that the argument does not capture the entire range of one's experience of God even for the one who possesses the evidence. Even if one grants that Moser's argument is adequate evidence for God's existence, its value is dubious. In this connection, Moser writes, "We could represent foundational evidence for God in a sound first-person argument, but such an argument cannot exhaust or replace the underlying experiential evidence from divine self-manifestation."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, I think, what we are left with as adequate evidence for God's existence, in Moser's religious epistemology, is the morally transformed life of a believer.<sup>38</sup> Now to the question: What would the project and practice of Christian apologetics look like if Moser's conception of adequate evidence for God's existence were to be embraced? The short answer is that the practice of Christian apologetics for a Moserian apologist would consist in a presentation of a morally transformed life of a believer as personifying evidence for the reality of a morally perfect God. Consider the following remark as to how Moser conceives the relevance of his work to the project of Christian apologetics:

A nondiscursive mode of human existing or relating can be a witness to God's redemptive character in virtue of manifesting certain properties of God's character, such as divine *agapē*, without making an assertion. This neglected point bears on an aim to manifest one's reasons for acknowledging God, including an aim to manifest a reason for the hope in God within one.<sup>39</sup> Even when a witness to God's reality includes a discursive component, that component need not be an argument. It could be a descriptive testimony to what God has done in one's life.<sup>40</sup>

Now it is clear what Moser recommends to replace the use of arguments in Christian apologetics: a Christian life that is morally transformed that serves as evidence for God's reality and sharing testimonies about what God has done in a person's life. No Christian who considered the question of God's existence and what relevant evidence there is for God's reality would dispute Moser's suggestions for evidence for God as stated above. The disagreement with Moser, for many Christian apologists, would arise regarding the value and role of arguments in Christian apologetics. In Moser's view, arguments

36. Moser, "How Not to Defend Natural Theology," 9.

37. Moser, "God without Argument," 78.

38. It is important to note that, in Moser's view, a morally transformed life of a believer is personifying evidence for God's reality for others. However, the believer in question, in virtue of her experience of God, has evidence for God's reality, but this latter notion of evidence is for the believer in question. Hence, the sense that the latter notion of evidence is person relative.

39. Moser refers to 1 Pet. 3:15.

40. Moser, "God without Argument," 78.

are not needed regarding the question of God's existence, but it is implausible, given Moser's view about arguments, to suggest that his claim regarding the role of arguments is that in some contexts they are not needed. That does not seem to be the case because Moser's main concern is to replace arguments as evidence for God's reality with human experiences of God as evidence for God's reality. In my view, there is nothing controversial about the view that there are contexts in apologetics practice that do not call for presentation of arguments regarding God's existence. But that is not the case in all contexts since there are contexts that require presentation of various arguments for God's existence and the truth-claims of Christianity. To embrace Moser's view regarding arguments for God's existence requires eliminating arguments in the practice of apologetics. Probably the only exception to the traditional arguments would be Moser's own argument for God's existence, which, however, does not serve the same function as other familiar arguments of natural theology.<sup>41</sup>

Now let us look at a longer answer Moser provides to the questions above. His longer answer emerges in the context of the debate about God's existence. I take it that his longer answer is applicable to the project of Christian apologetics. Moser writes,

As a causal agent, God could authenticate God's own reality and character for humans. This self-authentication would include God's self-manifesting his distinctive moral character to humans (perhaps in conscience) and producing traits of this character in the experiences and lives of cooperative recipients. So, as a self-manifesting agent with a unique, morally perfect character, God could be self-evidencing and self-authenticating toward humans.<sup>42</sup>

According to Moser, God provides evidence for God's reality in God's self-manifestation to those who are ready, willing, and sensitive to attend to and respond to God's intervention in their lives, be it in their conscience or otherwise. Moser adds,

The Christian God, as the supreme, perfect authority, would ultimately testify to himself, via the Spirit of the risen Christ, God's own image. Neither mere claims nor mere subjective experiences are self-attesting about objective reality in a convincing manner. As an intentional causal agent, however, God would be self-authenticating in being self-manifesting and self-witnessing regarding God's and Christ's reality and moral character.<sup>43</sup>

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41. For some reasons to reject the view that arguments for God's existence are not needed in all contexts, see my papers, "Given the Evidence, Natural Theology is Here to Stay!" and "Natural Theology in Context," <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=131>.

42. Moser, "God without Argument," 76.

43. *Ibid.*

It is clear from the preceding passages that God provides a testimony to God's (and Christ's) reality in the ministry of the Spirit of God as God self-manifests and self-authenticates God's reality to willing inquirers and recipients. Regarding the role of Christians in the advancement of the Kingdom of God., Moser remarks, "Ultimately, then, Christians do not convince people regarding God; God would do this, and Christians would contribute by being in union with God in Christ, thereby manifesting the power (beyond the mere talk) of God's own *agapē*."<sup>44</sup> I think Christians who considered the role of human beings in the debate about God's existence would agree with Moser that *ultimately* it is the work of the Spirit of God to convince people regarding God's reality. But it does not follow from this that the role of human agents is limited *only* to the role Moser suggests, that is, manifesting the power of God's *agapē*.

Furthermore, regarding the role of arguments in relation to the question of the existence of God, Moser remarks, "An argument can obscure the importance of directly knowing God, and many uses of arguments by Christian philosophers actually do this."<sup>45</sup> And regarding public debates about the existence of God, which typically involve arguments for God's existence, Moser suggests, "Finally, I recommend an end to the kind of debate at hand."<sup>46</sup> Such a debate gains us nothing, and only polarizes people."<sup>47</sup> It is clear from what I have quoted above that Moser is mostly against the use of arguments regarding inquiry about God's existence. What does Moser recommend then that should replace arguments, including arguments of natural theology? Moser answers this question by recommending that Christian philosophers and Christian apologists and other Christian academics should follow the way Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostle Paul and other biblical writers addressed the question of God. It is to be noted that Moser holds the view that Jesus and the Apostle Paul were philosophers and they modelled for Christians how to present, teach, and defend the Gospel. The following extended quotations illustrate the Moserian approach to the question of God's existence, in general, and an application to Christian apologetics, in particular:

[A]t the key places where he might have introduced an argument of natural theology as a preliminary to his Good News, he [Jesus] does not do so. For instance, he has no place for the argument of natural theology in any of his dealings with the Gentiles he confronts on his way to crucifixion in Jerusalem. There is an important lesson here if Jesus is our model for presenting, teaching, and defending the Good News. (I cannot think of a better model).<sup>48</sup>

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44. *Ibid.*, 77.

45. *Ibid.*, 77–8.

46. Moser refers here to the debate about God's existence between William L. Craig and Alexander Rosenberg.

47. Moser, "God without Argument," 82.

48. Moser, "Rejoinder to Angus Menuge on Ramified Personalized Natural Theology," 6.

Moser adds,

Likewise, in his reply to Nicodemus in John 3:8, Jesus makes no use of an argument from philosophy or natural theology. The best explanation of his behavior is that Jesus trusted the Spirit of God enough not to digress to lesser, needless preliminaries, such as argument from natural theology. This fits with Gethsemane epistemology, and it is needed medicine for philosophers and other academics, especially because we often lack the trust in God's Spirit that Jesus exemplifies. We often prefer to make our own way, and the result is at best questionable. Accordingly, many advocates of natural theology are unmoved by the fact that no New Testament writer depends on an argument of natural theology.<sup>49</sup>

In short, as I understand, Moser's proposal to replace arguments of natural theology and the use of arguments in an inquiry about God's existence is this: Since Jesus and the Apostle Paul are models for Christian philosophers and apologists, and since neither used arguments of natural theology, Christian philosophers and apologists should follow suit and reject arguments of natural theology and the use of philosophical arguments.<sup>50</sup> Hence, one can safely conclude that *Moserian apologetics is apologetics without argument*. But we need to be careful not to infer from this approach that Moserian apologetics is apologetics without evidence. This does not follow for an important reason that an argument for God's existence, or propositional evidence, is not the only kind of evidence and that is one of the most crucial distinctions that underwrites Moser's religious epistemology. Recall that Moser's religious epistemology is volitional *evidentialism*, and as such he is committed to evidentialism, but his evidentialism accommodates nonpropositional, that is, experiential, evidence in an inquiry regarding God's existence.

I take it that Moserian apologetics I sketched above has quite a radical implication for an inquiry regarding God's existence and the project and practice of Christian apologetics. In light of the implications of Moserian apologetics for Christian apologetics sketched above, one could won-

49. Ibid., 7. For Moser's view on "Gethsemane epistemology," see his "Gethsemane Epistemology: Volitional and Evidential," *Philosophia Christi* 14 (2012): 263–74. In this article, Moser writes, "Gethsemane is no picnic garden; instead, it is a context of human struggle with the presence of God's morally perfect character and will. The best example is Jesus of Nazareth in a place called "Gethsemane." "Gethsemane is where humans should allow God's moral power to be apprehended for what it is: divine rather than human. Humans then properly receive God's power, and thereby welcome and even become salient evidence of God's moral character and reality, aside from the speculations of philosophers and natural theologians. Humans thus can participate in God's unique moral character and even become personified evidence of God" (266–7).

50. Elsewhere, I reject this recommendation from Moser in my paper, "Given the Evidence, Natural Theology is Here to Stay!" Despite my disagreement with Moser on the value and role of arguments, I am not suggesting that arguments do not have limits, they do. But it is an entirely different claim to suggest that Christian apologists do not need arguments in their apologetics practice.

der whether there is an accommodationist approach to Moser's view that avoids putting Moser's approach in opposition to other approaches.<sup>51</sup> I think Moser's approach to Christian apologetics resists accommodation of other approaches, but other approaches can accommodate Moser's positive project that underscores the value of experiential evidence for God's reality without rejecting arguments for God's existence. Even so, I contend that embracing Moserian apologetics would bring about the end to Christian apologetics as we know it since all the major approaches to Christian apologetics use arguments that Moser recommends to eliminate. In the sections to follow, I briefly consider the common element in various apologetics approaches and a response to Moserian apologetics.

### *Arguments Are Here to Stay*

Apologetic methodology is diverse. The more prominent approaches are: Classical, evidentialist, cumulative case, presuppositional, and Reformed apologetics.<sup>52</sup> Now we can add Moserian approach to apologetics to this list since it is a distinct approach at least in one important aspect: It is a proposal that recommends eliminating philosophical arguments in the project of Christian apologetics. Detailed comparison of apologetics methodology is not the focus of this paper. My goal is to briefly discuss the use and value of arguments in Christian apologetics. Christian apologetics is broadly divided into positive apologetics, which presents evidence for the truth claims of Christianity, and negative apologetics, which presents defense of the Christian faith from various objections.

Let us take two approaches to Christian apologetics to illustrate how they use arguments in the project and practice of apologetics.<sup>53</sup> Let us first take classical apologetics. William L. Craig describes classical apologetics as follows:

The methodological approach which I shall defend in this essay is that reason in the form of rational arguments and evidence plays an essential role in our showing Christianity to be true, whereas reason in this role plays a contingent and secondary role in our personally knowing Christianity to be true. The proper ground of our knowing Christianity to be true is the inner work of the Holy Spirit in our individual selves; and in our showing Christianity to be true it is his role

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51. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for raising this point.

52. See, e.g., *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven Cowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

53. Due to limitation of space I consider only two of the prominent approaches to Christian apologetics because these approaches are typically taken to contrast the value of arguments as evidence for God's existence.

to open the hearts of unbelievers to assent and respond to the reasons we present.<sup>54</sup>

Craig adds, “Such a method, as it plays itself out in showing Christianity to be true, has been called, ‘Classical apologetics.’ This approach is comprised of natural theology and Christian evidences.”<sup>55</sup> As a classical apologist, Craig is known for his extensive work on natural theology and Christian evidences. He is especially known for the *kalam* cosmological argument, and for his work on the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. On Craig’s view, rational arguments play an essential role in *showing* Christianity to be true, which is contrary to Moser’s view regarding the role of arguments as evidence for the truth claims of Christianity. It is clear that arguments of natural theology play a crucial role in Craig’s view, which Moser rejects.<sup>56</sup>

In this connection, it is important to bear in mind Moser’s characterization of the role of arguments in an inquiry regarding God’s existence. He writes, “Arguments and their conclusions do not have intentions, even if their human proponents do; nor can they redeem humans at odds with God.”<sup>57</sup> He adds, “Specifically, arguments cannot *personally* offer redemption in a way that prompts personal indebtedness in recipients.”<sup>58</sup> Recall now Craig’s view on the role of arguments in an inquiry about God’s existence, or regarding how humans come to know Christianity to be true. Craig, like most any Christian apologist, holds the view that “the proper ground of our knowing Christianity to be true is the inner work of the Holy Spirit in our individual selves; and in our showing Christianity to be true it is his role to open the hearts of unbelievers to assent and respond to the reasons we present.”<sup>59</sup> In Craig’s view, it is clear that arguments play an essential role in *showing* Christianity to be true, but *ultimately* knowing Christianity to be true is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In a recent exchange between Moser and Craig regarding which approach to the question of God’s existence is more realistic, given the contemporary context in which the question of God is being debated, Craig writes, “Indeed, I think Moser is living in a fantasyland if he thinks that in modernist Western culture his non-argumentative approach is going to be more effective in building and sustaining the church than my approach of natural theology and Christian evidences along with an appeal to direct acquaintance

54. Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 28.

55. *Ibid.*

56. For Moser’s view on Craig’s debate with Alexander Rosenberg on the existence of God, see Moser, “God without Argument.” Also, for Moser’s view on Christian evidence regarding the resurrection, see his *The Elusive God*, 188–92.

57. Moser, “God without Argument,” 71.

58. *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

59. Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 28.

with God.”<sup>60</sup> Craig adds the following values of theistic arguments in light of Moser’s recommendation to eliminate them:

God can use [theistic arguments] to open the unbeliever’s mind to the possibility of God’s existence; such arguments can help strengthen a believer’s faith in times of doubt and spiritual dryness; and a robust natural theology has a leavening effect upon a culture, fostering a cultural milieu in which belief in God is regarded as a serious option for thinking men and women. People may not come to faith through the arguments, but the arguments give them the intellectual permission to believe when their hearts are moved.<sup>61</sup>

This preceding quotation from Craig shows a broader understanding and role for arguments for God’s existence that I contend the majority of Christian philosophers share. Just to take one example, Stephen Evans’s view on the value of natural theology serves the point I am making. Evans writes, “In the contemporary Western intellectual world, a naturalistic world view is often taken for granted, or expressly affirmed as the only respectable ‘scientific’ view of reality . . . In such a world, natural theology may have real value.”<sup>62</sup> Evans adds,

For, if it [natural theology] is successful, and there are rational grounds for belief in God, atheism as a kind of “default position” can no longer be taken for granted . . . The limits of natural theology must always be kept in mind, but within those limits it could have significant value, both for the honest atheist who wishes to give atheistic beliefs critical examination as well as for the religious believer who wonders whether his or her own beliefs are just the product of non-rational social influences.<sup>63</sup>

I submit that Craig’s and Evans’s views are widely shared among Christian philosophers.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, contrary to Moser’s claim, I am not aware of any Christian philosopher or apologist who holds the view that arguments have a redemptive value in themselves. Moser’s rejection of arguments for

60. Craig, in *Is Faith in God Reasonable?*, 161.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Evans, *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

63. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

64. It is not hard to imagine the consequences of rejecting natural theology, following Moser, in the contemporary intellectual context. Christian apologists would agree with Moser about the evidential value of a morally transformed life for the reality of God, but when the most salient evidence for God’s reality is singularly the believer’s morally transformed life, what would prevent nonbelievers from seeking a naturalistic explanation for a moral transformation of a human life? When a naturalist offers a naturalistic explanation for a “morally transformed life,” however this is understood, how would a Moserian apologist respond to such naturalistic explanation *without* engaging in some form of rational argument? I do not have space to further spell out this objection to Moserian apologetics, but it seems clear that Moserian apologetics without argument would face a serious problem.

their lacking such a function needs to target an *actual* Christian philosopher or apologist who holds such a view.

Let us now turn to Alvin Plantinga, to briefly note a Reformed epistemologist's approach to Christian apologetics. It is widely known that in Plantinga's view belief in God is properly basic and does not need evidence or argument for it to be rational, or justified. If theistic belief is true, on Plantinga's view, it can have warrant sufficient for knowledge. For a person who holds theistic beliefs to be rational those beliefs need not be based on theistic arguments. Furthermore, for a person who holds theistic beliefs, if the beliefs are true, that person is rational even if there are not good theistic arguments. Plantinga remarks that from the view just stated "it does not 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."<sup>65</sup>

On the function of theistic arguments, Plantinga writes,

For me as for most, belief in God, while accepted in the basic way, isn't maximally firm and unwavering; perhaps it isn't nearly as firm as my belief in other minds. Then perhaps good theistic arguments could play the role of confirming and strengthening belief in God; in that way, they might increase the degree of warrant belief in God has for me. Indeed, such arguments might increase the degree of warrant of that belief in such a way as to nudge it over the boundary separating knowledge from mere true belief; they might in some cases therefore serve something like that Thomistic function of transforming belief into knowledge.<sup>66</sup>

We do not need to digress to discuss the merits or shortcomings of Reformed epistemology as a religious epistemology. That is not the purpose of this paper.<sup>67</sup> The relevant point that is of interest to the present discussion is this: Theistic arguments do have some value, according to Plantinga, regarding the question of God's existence. Note that Plantinga is an antievidentialist in his epistemology. Even so, he thinks that his view on the function of theistic arguments, as described above, is compatible with his view that for a belief in God to be rational or justified it does not need to be based on an argument or any propositional evidence. Craig's version of classical apologetics and Plantinga's version of Reformed epistemology do recognize some values of theistic arguments. This is an interesting point worth bearing in mind, especially in light of Moser's *evidentialist* position that rejects

65. Deane-Peter Baker, ed., *Alvin Plantinga: Contemporary Philosophy in Focus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203 (emphasis in original).

66. Baker, *Alvin Plantinga*, 209. The quotation is from a preface to the July 2006 appendix: "Two Dozen (or So) Theistic Arguments."

67. For a useful discussion of Reformed epistemology in relation to natural theology, see Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). Also, see Linda Zagzebski, ed., *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).



theistic arguments as a source of *evidence* for God's existence. I take the two approaches to Christian apologetics I briefly discussed to be representative of the other prominent approaches I mentioned above, at least, in the sense that they share a common element with the other prominent approaches to Christian apologetics, i.e., the use of argument.<sup>68</sup> I submit that none of those approaches to Christian apologetics would sit well with Moser's call to eliminate arguments in Christian apologetics. I conclude this paper by discussing some fundamental problems that underwrite Moser's rejection of arguments of natural theology.

### *Fundamental Problems for Moserian Apologetics*

If one can provide a diagnosis with respect to Moser's take on the project of natural theology, I take it that such a diagnosis will help in the evaluation of the use of arguments in an inquiry regarding God's existence. Accordingly, I think the main problem with Moser's view on the project of natural theology can be shown by paying a more careful attention to, for example, the *scope and the goal* of the project of natural theology. Moser's religious epistemology is largely motivated to overcome what he takes to be the shortcomings of the project of natural theology regarding the existence of God. More accurately, however, it is worth noting that Moser offers his view as a better alternative to fideism, and Reformed epistemology as well.<sup>69</sup> My focus here is limited to the problems with Moser's characterization of the project of natural theology since I take this to be the most fundamental problem Moser's religious epistemology faces and consequently the same problem afflicts, insofar as I can see, Moserian apologetics.

First, it is important to introduce a distinction with respect to evidence for God *qua* creator and evidence for God *qua* redeemer. This is crucial since one can have knowledge of God *qua* creator, that is God as a transcendent divine personal agent, a source of the existence of all of contingent reality without having a redemptive personal relationship with and knowledge of God *qua* redeemer. Redemptive knowledge of God is irreducible to a mere cognitive affirmation of the existence of God *qua* creator, that is, to knowledge that God exists. Knowledge of God as one's redeemer involves more than an intellectual recognition that God exists. Such knowledge involves a volitional interaction with God as one's redeemer that can result in moral

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68. One would wonder if Moserian apologetics has any role for arguments even for negative apologetics. Thanks to Bill Hasker for raising this point. Moser's religious epistemology has resources to undermine atheistic objections against theism by pointing out that the typical objections from atheists mostly target theistic arguments, but they fail to recognize the role of volition in acquiring evidence for God's reality. Moserian apologetics, however, still needs to engage in *arguments* to undermine objections from atheists.

69. See Moser, *The Evidence for God*, chap. 2.

transformation of a human agent. However, Moser's assigning little value to knowledge of God *qua* creator leads him to downplay, mistakenly, in my view, the value of knowledge of God *qua* creator that underwrites his rejection of natural theology. In my view, cumulative case arguments of natural theology are intended to deliver knowledge of God *qua* creator. By *creator* I mean to refer to the transcendent source of all of contingent reality and cumulative case arguments for God's existence aim at showing that God is such a being in the sense that God is an intentional divine agent, a designer, the source of moral values (however this is understood), and so forth.

Here is another way of capturing the distinction introduced above: When an account of knowledge of God is offered, I suggest that the epistemology of salvific knowledge of God must be distinguished from the epistemology that underwrites reasons to believe the existence of God as the transcendent creator or the source of contingent reality. Given the scope and goal of natural theology, arguments of natural theology, even if successful, do not produce adequate evidence for salvific knowledge of God because (a) salvific knowledge requires more than an assent to the proposition that God exists, and (b) salvific knowledge of God is beyond the scope and goal of natural theology. I contend that Moser's religious epistemology fails to capture the distinction introduced in this section and that is one of the main reasons why, I think, his rejection of natural theology is mistaken.

To illustrate the value of the above distinction, consider Jesus Christ and knowledge of him. Evidence for Jesus as a historical figure would not be sufficient for experiential knowledge of Jesus as one's Lord and Savior. One can have knowledge of Jesus as a historical figure without having experiential knowledge of Jesus as one's Lord and Savior since the latter involves volitional cooperation with Jesus as one's Lord and Savior. Consequently, the evidence component for knowledge of Jesus as the historical figure is distinct from the evidence component for experiential knowledge of Jesus as one's Lord and Savior. The evidence for the former would be insufficient for the evidence for the latter because these are distinct kinds of evidence. In light of Moser's religious epistemology, it is not implausible to suppose that Moser would agree with the way distinct kinds of evidence are applied to knowledge of Jesus Christ. If he agrees with this analogy he would reject my arguments for distinct kinds of evidence for God *qua* creator from God *qua* redeemer only on pain of inconsistency.<sup>70</sup> Unsurprisingly, owing to the fail-

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70. Regarding the distinct kinds of evidence for God *qua* creator and God *qua* redeemer, a referee remarks, "For the distinction does not have much cash-value for his [Moser's] project even if it has great value for natural theology." I take it that the notion of distinct kinds of evidence in question could have value for Moser's religious epistemology as well. Moser could make use of the distinction in question to show *limitations* of arguments of natural theology without rejecting natural theology. He could then make (a) a case for experiential evidence for God's reality, and (b) show how volition plays a crucial role in coming to acquire, especially redemptive evidence for and knowledge of God, which is typically missing in the project of

ure to make the suggested distinction, Moser's account of evidence for God's reality is heavily tilted to the idea of redemptive evidence. Accordingly, his account of evidence is strongly tied to the idea that evidence for God must be volitional, and morally-involving and transformative. Natural theology's alleged failure to produce redemptive evidence in the form of personifying evidence for God's reality is the result of a failure to be sensitive to the scope and goal of natural theology.

Second, since Moser identifies "God" with the God of Christianity, and since the Christian God is understood both as a creator and a redeemer, it is ambiguous when Moser claims that arguments of natural theology fail to deliver knowledge of God. Does Moser mean to refer to knowledge of God *qua* creator or God *qua* redeemer? It is widely understood that arguments of natural theology are not intended to deliver knowledge of God *qua* redeemer since the reality of redemption is distinct from the reality of creation. Recall that the main objective of arguments of natural theology is to establish the existence of God (*qua* creator in the sense broadly suggested above) contrary to Moser's challenges to the arguments of natural theology. The requirement that Moser expects arguments of natural theology need to meet is nonstandard and outside of the scope and the goal of arguments of natural theology. Proponents of the arguments of natural theology do not mean to offer arguments with a conclusion that there is a morally perfect God who is perfectly loving toward all persons, who authoritatively calls humans for the purpose of redemption. That is nowhere within the scope or the goal of natural theology. Requiring arguments of natural theology to establish, as their conclusion, the existence of God who authoritatively calls humans for redemption or a God who is perfectly loving toward all humans is a constraint imposed on arguments of natural theology, and their failure to meet this extra-burden placed by Moser need not be a reason to declare that the traditional arguments of natural theology fail. Even if all of the arguments of natural theology do fail, their failure is not due to the reason Moser attributes to them.

Third, if God seeks divine-human reconciliation, Moser claims, then evidence for God's existence would also be redemptive. One can analogously claim: If God is the creator, that is, the source of contingent reality, then God would want to provide evidence that shows that God is the source of contingent reality. This is important in light of the fact that some inquirers of God's reality have the tendency to identify contingent reality with ultimate reality in the sense that all that is real is contingent reality thereby denying the reality of God. Think of philosophical naturalism as a case in point. At any rate, those who hold the analogous claim, under consideration, need not disagree with Moser's claim about redemptive evidence. Moser, however, overemphasizes one kind of evidence over and against the other, namely,

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natural theology. In my dissertation I develop such an approach to evidence for and knowledge of God.

redemptive evidence over evidence for the existence of God as a creator. But what justifies this overemphasis? Moser might respond by denying the suggestion that he overemphasizes one kind of evidence over the other, especially by claiming that evidence in the form of arguments for God's existence is insufficient for redemption and hence irrelevant. Also, he might add, it would not be in God's interest to want to provide evidence merely for God's existence but many atheists and skeptics tend to be satisfied only with "spectator evidence" for God's existence, which comes in the form of arguments of natural theology. A couple of responses: First, there is no reason, for example, to suggest that a Christian natural theologian would think that theistic arguments as evidence for God's existence are sufficient for redemptive purposes.<sup>71</sup> Two, it is a reasonable expectation by nonbelievers to seek evidence for God's reality first before they seek relevant redemptive evidence from God because nonbelievers who attach a very low probability to the existence of God *qua* creator may find it psychologically impossible to seek redemptive evidence.<sup>72</sup> Hence, there is no reason to suggest that God would be indifferent to the question of God's reality, as the source of contingent reality, for an honest inquirer of God's existence. After all, God's reality is not obvious for everyone!

Fourth, it is crucial to distinguish relevant evidence for the existence of God from the relevant evidence for God's seeking the redemption of humans. Note that the question, "does God exist?" is a distinct question from "does God seek to redeem human beings?" Seeking evidence for the former does not entail seeking evidence for the latter since these are distinct questions. Understandably, one who does not believe in the existence of God would not care to pursue an answer to the question whether God seeks human redemption. Making this distinction as to which question an inquirer is seeking an answer to is crucial. Moser fails to distinguish these questions and this mistake negatively affects his characterization of evidence for God's reality. Given the view of the Judeo-Christian God, it is important to develop an account of knowledge of God in the salvific or redemptive sense, but this

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71. Regarding whether theistic arguments have redemptive value, Stephen Evans writes, "Whether something has value or is to be judged a failure without value depends on the purposes to which it is being put . . . an estimate of the value of theistic arguments, or natural theology in general, depends on what one is trying to accomplish via natural theology. If one is seeking what Christians call 'salvific' knowledge of God, the kind of knowledge that is religiously adequate because it makes it possible to relate to God properly, then theistic arguments, by themselves, will not do the job" (Evans, *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God*, 10). Evans adds to the preceding by remarking, "However, few proponents of natural theology, if any, have ever thought of it as accomplishing such a task. The goals of natural theology are modest. The main goal may be simply to make belief in God a 'live option,' to use William James's term, by removing intellectual barriers to faith" (*ibid.*, 10–11). Evans's point underscores the value of being clear about the scope and goal of natural theology. That is one of my major concerns with Moser's critique of natural theology.

72. Thanks to Bill Hasker for alerting me to clarify the second response.

account of knowledge of God need not rule out inquiry regarding the question of God's existence as one of the fundamental questions regarding God.

Fifth, Moser claims that in order to avoid begging the question against the adequacy of experiential evidence for God's existence such evidence should be allowed in the inquiry about God's existence. But those who are committed to the view that arguments can serve as adequate source of evidence for God's existence could also claim that Moser is question begging against them if he insists that experiential evidence is the only kind of relevant evidence for God's existence. Note that those who are committed to the view that adequate evidence for God's existence can come in the form of arguments need not be committed to the view that arguments are the only kind of evidence adequate for God's reality for everyone. Moser's claim would have been more plausible if he suggested that experiential evidence for God's reality should not be ruled out as a kind of adequate evidence for God's existence. If that was Moser's claim, then that would allow for different kinds of evidence for God's reality for different people since evidence is person relative. Why should we be monolithic about one kind of evidence for God's existence for everyone? Moser's recommendation to eliminate arguments for God's existence is unconvincing for reasons I have provided above.

Finally, regarding the role of theistic arguments Moser remarks, "If a perfectly redemptive God is available for direct human experience, as many responsible humans testify, then we should expect significant implications for knowing God's reality. In that case, we need not be limited to arguments for our evidence for God's reality, because we could rely on our experience of God as basic, foundational evidence for God."<sup>73</sup> In response to Moser's take on the role of arguments for God's existence one can propose the following distinction: (1) In our inquiry regarding evidence for God's existence, we need not be limited to arguments as evidence for God, and (2) arguments are the only relevant evidence for God's reality. Those who hold that arguments can play a role in acquiring knowledge of God's existence need not be committed to (2). Since there are equally responsible, and rational people, including theists, whose religious experience does not make the value of arguments irrelevant, Moser's argument against the role or the value of arguments fails. Moser's argument can work effectively against those who hold (2). But why hold (2) and who holds (2)?

In conclusion, it is not clear what Moser's view is regarding the role of arguments as evidence for God's existence: If his view is that arguments have no evidential value for everyone, then it does not seem to be correct to say that evidence for God's reality need not be limited to arguments. Those who hold the view that arguments can and do have some value for God's reality for some people can and do embrace the idea that there can be other sources

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73. Moser, "God without Argument," 73.

of evidence for God for some people such that arguments are not needed for such people. But this way of thinking about the value of arguments as evidence for God's reality does not imply that arguments are the only kinds of evidence for God's reality. Now it's not clear which view Moser is against.

### *Concluding Remarks*

A careful understanding of Moser's methodology that underwrites his religious epistemology is crucial. Moser's methodology is based on an understanding of the title "God" in terms of a personal agent worthy of worship. "God" as a titleholder is used to avoid question-begging against atheists and skeptics. Moser then proposes that moral perfection be a requirement for worthiness of worship, and he then proceeds to identify "God," the titleholder, with the God of Christianity. The way he proceeds to identify "God" with the God of Christianity is not different than the methodology of natural theologians. On a methodological level, generally, natural theologians claim that we can arrive at some important divine attributes by human reason alone without appeal to purported special divine revelation. This is to avoid question-begging against the atheists and skeptics. Then a natural theologian claims to find in the special divine revelation a confirmation of what human reason alone could discover about the God of the Bible. Recall that Moser proposes to use the term "God," the titleholder as an idea without assuming the existence of the titleholder in reality in order to avoid question-begging against atheists and skeptics. He then proceeds, that is, abductively, based on all available evidence, to identify "God" with the Christian God, but this is on a par, methodologically, with what a Christian natural theologian does. Both aim at avoiding question-begging against atheists and skeptics and claim that all available evidence indicates that the Christian God is the true God. Hence, methodologically, at the foundational level, Moser's strategy on which his religious epistemology is based is not different than the strategy employed by natural theologians. Therefore, contrary to his claim, on closer examination, Moser's methodology which he uses to show the alleged shortcomings regarding the methodology of the natural theologian is not fundamentally superior to its rival. A proponent of natural theology could claim that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander to suggest that if there is a methodological deficiency with natural theology the same holds true for Moser's religious epistemology. Therefore, based on methodological parity, Moser's claim that his religious epistemology fares better than the project of natural theology is unjustified.

Finally, regarding the idea of "worthiness of worship" for God, it is important to clarify the notion of "enemy-love," which Moser takes to be a requirement for worthiness of worship since, as Moser remarks, "in the

absence of enemy-love, a candidate for being God will always fall short.”<sup>74</sup> But one would wonder: why “enemy-love” is such a unique property of a God worthy of worship? Consider this about the Judeo-Christian God: Before creating humans, and anything for that matter, the Judeo-Christian God was still God. In precreation state (God *sans* creation) there was no actual enemy for God in the absence of creatures who turned against God. Does Moser’s suggestion imply that God *became* worthy of worship *after* creation when God’s enemies became real? If in the absence of “enemy-love” God would not deserve to be a candidate for worthiness of worship, then it seems to follow that before God’s enemies came to be real, God was not worthy of worship. But this seems to be wrong. Also, without creation, Moser’s suggestion seems to imply that God was *potentially* love and *potentially* worthy of worship since there was no enemy yet for God to love. But this idea seems to go against the deeply held traditional understanding of God, that is, God is love and God is worthy of worship for so many other reasons. In Moser’s view, does it mean that God acquired worthiness of worship upon creation and afterwards? Moser’s answer to this question does not seem to be clear.<sup>75</sup>

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74. Moser, “God without Argument,” 70.

75. I would like to thank Bill Hasker and an anonymous referee whose comments have significantly contributed to an improvement of the paper. Also, I would like to thank Joe Gorra for suggesting the relevance of Stephen Evans’s work to this paper and Betty Talbert for her extensive suggestions to improve this paper.