

PHILOSOPHIA CHRISTI

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Editor's Introduction

I am always grateful for the work of the special guest editors of our print symposiums. Engaging a bright EPS colleague to gather scholars and superintend the process of putting together a specialized interchange on a fascinating topic has become a welcome regular feature of the journal. Indeed, as you will see again in this issue, the featured symposium adds depth and dimensions to the publication that keeps *Philosophia Christi* as a pacesetter of our discipline.

But this is only possible with colleagues like Brad Seeman of Taylor University who coordinated the stimulating symposium on Paul Moser's religious epistemology. Thank you, Brad. And I'm sure Brad will join me in thanking Paul Moser and our respondents for jumping in so enthusiastically.

Of course, the rest of the intellectual fare on the menu for this issue is worth every bit of ink and paper expended. Now that the weather has cooled off, start a roaring blaze in the fireplace in your university office—we all have them at Biola, don't you?—make some tea, cancel office hours, and read every page. Then, consider how you might join in on the fun.

We have some special issues planned and the calls for papers are out. Just go to www.epsociety.org/philchristi and you will find the details for our issues on "Neuroscience and the Soul" and "Ramified Natural Theology." Note now, though, that the deadlines for submissions are March 10, 2013, and March 31, 2013, respectively.

While you are prowling around at the EPS website, go to <http://bit.ly/ChristShapedPhilosophyProject> and consider participating in our ongoing "Christ-Shaped Philosophy" web project that features *your* interaction with a paper by Paul Moser. If you are stimulated by our featured symposium in this issue, you'll want to join the discussion.

Craig J. Hazen
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Symposium on
Paul Moser's
Religious
Epistemology

Guest Editor's Introduction

John Calvin famously opened the *Institutes* by insisting that “the knowledge of God and that of ourselves are connected.”¹ Although Paul Moser looks askance at much of Calvin’s theology, Moser’s rigorously developed religious epistemology may helpfully be viewed through the lens of Calvin’s insight that our religious epistemology is irreducibly personal, both on the part of the knower and the known. Thus, when we inquire whether any personal being deserves the “maximally honorific title” of God, “we shouldn’t remove volitional autobiography from epistemology,” for I am a personal, volitional being asking about another personal, volitional being, and it is possible that our wills may collide.² Indeed, Moser argues that when I take my volitional autobiography into account, I may well find that “*I myself*, in terms of the direction of my will, am the biggest obstacle to my receiving purposively available conclusive evidence of God’s reality.”³ An honest look at myself might reveal that I am given to a moral pride that rejects “Love’s Demand” that I turn outward toward God and other people in love, preferring to have my own self-protective, self-promoting ways go unchecked in the face of others.⁴ In such a case, One who insists on the inviolability of right relationships would will that any knowledge of Him that I gain would not feed my swollen self, but would tend to weave me back into relationships of self-giving love. In short, God would seek my redemption, and my knowledge of God would come on His terms, taking His nature and purposes into account. As Moser observes,

It is naïve, if not arrogant, for us humans to approach the question of whether God exists as if we were naturally in an appropriate moral and cognitive position to handle it aright. Careful reflection on the redemptive purposes inherent to a perfectly loving God recommends an approach less presumptuous. We are, after all, inquiring about a very special kind of agent with distinctive redemptive purposes in virtue of being perfectly loving, and not a household object or a laboratory specimen.⁵

Moser argues rigorously that in the very nature of the case religious epistemology must take into account the wills of both the knower and the known,

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.1.

2. Paul K. Moser, *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18, 23.

3. *Ibid.*, 23 (emphasis in original).

4. *Ibid.*, 43–4.

5. Paul K. Moser, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 263.

and that this reorientation “changes virtually everything in inquiry about knowledge of God’s existence.”⁶

Moser’s work to reorient religious epistemology has gained wide hearing, and in February 2012 was the focal point of a well-received EPS symposium at the Central Division Meeting of the APA. Paul Moser presented his paper, “Gethsemane Epistemology,” and responded to comments by Charles Taliaferro and Kate Waidler. The editors of *Philosophia Christi* expressed interest in the papers, and they are published here in revised form, along with a new contribution by Harold Netland. In different ways, each of the comments on Moser’s “Gethsemane Epistemology” latches on to an implication Moser finds in his work: “The kinds of ‘evidence’ proposed in traditional first-cause, design, and ontological arguments for God’s existence are logically independent of a personal authoritative call. . . . They lack an authoritative demand, or call, to us to yield our selfishness to the unselfish will of a perfectly loving God for the sake of divine-human fellowship.”⁷ While Netland, Taliaferro, and Waidler resonate with the main insight of Moser’s arguments, they each seek to divorce that insight from Moser’s arguments against natural theology. Moser’s reply clarifies his position that evidence for God must be personal evidence that speaks to God’s moral perfection, rather than nonpersonal evidence that lays no claim on our will—the only sort of evidence afforded by natural theology, according to Moser.

However one understands these issues to fall out, in the end I think the reader will find here a helpful dialogue that contributes to important and ongoing work in the field of religious epistemology, as well as a reminder that “God’s call to humans . . . should be kept front and center in philosophy of religion.”⁸ This call precipitates a volitional conflict, a conflict for our own good—and one whose epistemological dimensions can be resolved only as we take into account the nature and purposes of both parties to the conflict.

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6. Moser, *The Elusive God*, 4.

7. *Ibid.*, 52.

8. Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 173.