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Philosophical Questions and the Unity of the Trinity: Re-engaging Christ-shaped Philosophy

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Abstract: In his Christ-Shaped Philosophy (CSP) project, Paul K. Moser calls for Christian philosophers to take the authority of Jesus Christ seriously in their intellectual pursuits. One does this, in part, by pursuing only those philosophical questions that lead one to serve and love God and neighbor. Despite Moser's refreshing and needed perspective on metaphilosophical issues, his project is not without problems. This paper argues that Moser's appeal to Mark 12:28-31 reduces and constricts the kinds of questions Christian philosophers pursue. The paper first provides a brief summary of Moser's metaphilosophy, particularly the types of questions philosophers ask. The paper then traces out the implications of Moser's view in Christian philosophy as well as other disciplines. The paper then sets forth a more robust view of metaphilosophy in regard to the questions that philosophers pursue. This is accomplished by exploring Augustine's view about the unity and truth within the Trinity, after which the implications on philosophical questioning are teased out. The paper concludes with a brief summary of the paper's main ideas.

Introduction

For over three decades, Paul K. Moser has published widely in the areas of epistemology and philosophy of religion. His name is widely recognized and respected as a philosopher in his own right. More importantly, Moser is a well-regarded *Christian* philosopher – one who boldly defends the reality of the Judeo-Christian God and Jesus Christ's exclusive claim as the only way to a right relationship with God.

Perhaps Moser's greatest contribution to Christian philosophy is his recent foray into metaphilosophical questions regarding the nature of Christian philosophy. In 2012, Moser published his article titled “Christ-Shaped Philosophy: Wisdom and Spirit United,” thus initiating the Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project (CSP) at the Evangelical Philosophical Society’s (EPS)

website. The purpose of Moser's CSP is to sound a clarion call to Christian philosophers to take seriously the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ in their philosophical pursuits. According to Moser, many philosophers who claim to be Christian have ignored or shied away from the role of Christ and his lordship in their philosophical work.¹ Yet, if a philosopher is a believer in Jesus Christ, then their philosophy should reflect "the subversive Christian message that the outcast Galilean 'Jesus is Lord.'"²

Moser's Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project is multi-faceted in its scope.³ It addresses the definition of philosophy, the method of philosophy, the questions philosophy pursues, as well as the philosopher's motive behind their philosophical work. In short, CSP is a metaphilosophical project that is long-overdue and deserving of attention.

The purpose of this paper is to engage with Moser's appeal to Mark 12:28-31 (the greatest commandment) as the rubric by which we gauge philosophical questions and their worthiness of pursuit. I argue that though Moser is correct in his claim that divine Lordship should define Christian philosophy, he unnecessarily reduces and constricts the kinds of questions Christian philosophers pursue. The paper first provides a brief summary of Moser's metaphilosophy, particularly his discussion regarding the types of questions philosophers ask. The paper then traces out the implications of Moser's view in Christian philosophy as well as other disciplines. Building upon the groundwork laid by Moser, the paper sets forth a more robust view of metaphilosophy in regard to the questions that philosophers pursue. This is accomplished by exploring Augustine's view about the unity and truth within the Trinity, after which the implications on philosophical questioning are teased out. The paper concludes by setting forth a renewed call for clarifying a

¹ Paul Moser, *The Severity of God: Religion and Philosophy Reconceived* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 168. See also Paul K. Moser, "Christ-Shaped Philosophy: Wisdom and Spirit United," *Evangelical Philosophical Society*, Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project, 2012, 2 [available at <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=118>].

² Moser, *The Severity of God*, 167.

³ It should be noted that there is some ambiguity on the part of Moser in regard to the object of his assessment—is he directing his analysis on just Christian philosophers for neglecting the reality of Christ's lordship over their philosophy, or is he addressing philosophy-at-large? I believe it is safe to say that Moser's work presumes a Christian audience, but his various works related to CSP sometimes read as if he has non-Christian philosophers in mind as well. For the sake of this paper, it is assumed that Moser is addressing his project toward professing Christians who are philosophers. The question of Moser's apparent ambiguity in regard to his intended audience is a topic that goes beyond the purpose of this paper.

Christian metaphilosophy in light of Christ's redeeming work and the reality of the Trinity.

Moser's Christ-Shaped Philosophy

Since posed by Tertullian, the question "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" has garnered the attention of many philosophers (Christian and non-Christian alike) and has received no consensus view in response. For Moser, Tertullian's quip gets to the very essence of Christian philosophy, for if Jerusalem has nothing to do with Athens, then it behooves Christian thinkers to evaluate what passes for Christian philosophy.

Germane to this paper is Moser's answer to Tertullian, for here it is where Moser identifies what sets Christian philosophy apart from the wisdom of the world. Moser defines philosophy in its classical sense—the love of wisdom.⁴ Like Plato and ancient Greek philosophy, Christianity has as its aim the attainment of truth through the *knowledge* of truth.⁵ Attaining truth is possible only through salvation, and upon reaching this end, one is able to live a "lasting good life."⁶ These similarities, while significant, fade as one clarifies what "wisdom," "truth," and "salvation" actually mean, for, according to Moser, it is only through the person and work of Jesus Christ that these concepts can be understood and attained. Thus, Plato and classic Greek philosophy go the way of modern philosophy in that they fail to find grounding in the lordship of Jesus Christ. Christian philosophy, on the other hand, should have much to do with Jesus Christ. Thus, if rightly under the authority of Christ, Jerusalem (Christian philosophy) has little to do with Athens (worldly philosophy). It is through the lens of Jesus Christ and his work that Moser develops his Christ-Shaped Philosophy and calls for an assessment of the questions Christian philosophers ask.

⁴ Moser, "Christ-Shaped Philosophy," 2. In his article "Philosophy and Spiritual Formation: From Christian Faith to Christian Philosophy," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7:2 (2014): 258-269, Moser notes that there is no universally accepted definition of philosophy, and that its classic, etymological definition is perhaps "the best we can do" (265). Moser ends up staying with this definition when contrasting worldly wisdom with Godly wisdom.

⁵ Paul Moser, ed., "Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy," *In Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

⁶ Paul Moser and Michael T. McFall, eds., "Introduction: Philosophy and Cruciform Wisdom," in *The Wisdom of the Christian Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012),

Summary of Moser's CSP

For Moser, the most ardent proponent for and expounder of Christ-Shaped Philosophy is the Apostle Paul. In his writings Paul elaborates upon what Jesus Christ manifested—obedience to the commands of God the Father and service to others.⁷ According to Moser, when Paul cautions believers in Colossians 2:8 to be wary of “philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition...and not according to Christ,”⁸ he is not warning Christians against philosophy *en toto*. Rather, Paul is distinguishing between philosophy autonomous from the authority of Christ and philosophy that is subsumed under the authority of Christ. Here, Paul calls for a philosophy distinct from that of the world—a philosophy where one belongs to God through an “ongoing union with Christ.”⁹ Christians are warned to avoid Christ-less philosophy and encouraged to pursue wisdom that’s found in Christ.¹⁰

Though Moser’s CSP is based upon a robust Christology, only two aspects relevant to the kind of questions Christian philosophers out to pursue will be expounded upon here: the believer’s Gethsemane union with Christ and the believer’s obedience to the divine love commands (DLC).

Gethsemane Union with Christ

Christ’s night in the Garden of Gethsemane looms large in Moser’s Christ-shaped philosophy. During that fateful night of his arrest, Jesus was under tremendous mental duress, praying three times that the Father would allow what was ordained to pass from him. So great was his agony, Jesus sweat became “like great drops of blood” (Luke 22:44). In each prayer, Jesus submits to the will of the Father, praying, “Yet, not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36).

⁷ Paul Moser, “Toward Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” in *Christian Scholarship in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Thomas M. Crisp, Steve L. Porter, and Gregg A. Ten Elshof (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 34.

⁸ All Scripture is quoted from the ESV unless stated otherwise.

⁹ Paul K. Moser, *The Severity of God*, 170.

¹⁰ Moser distinguishes worldly wisdom from godly wisdom by claiming that the former is “harmful in allowing for one’s boasting in oneself rather than in God,” and the latter “proceeds with redemption and the corresponding divine wisdom as a gracious gift, in a way that undermines human boasting in the things of the world” (“Philosophy and Spiritual Formation,” 266).

Gethsemane represents the volitional struggle of the Son of God and his obedience to the will of the Father unto death on the cross.¹¹ Christ demonstrates “willing conformity” and “humble obedience” to God’s perfect will even though it resulted in “self-sacrificial death.”¹² In doing so, Jesus Christ “exemplified the power and wisdom of God as a personal agent humbly cooperating with God.”¹³

Christ’s volitional struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane serves as the model for how we approach God. Whereas Plato called for an intellectual salvation before one can gain true wisdom, Paul claims that God, and God alone, is the source of human wisdom through the divine gift of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ One does not approach God in faith through the mere assent to true propositions;¹⁵ rather, it is “the responsive commitment of oneself to the God who sends his Spirit with *agape* and forgiveness for the sake of Gethsemane union with Christ.”¹⁶ Through the *agape* power of the Holy Spirit, the believer’s faith in God is an “ongoing resolve to receive God’s moral character and power in Christ inwardly, and to belong to God, in the reverent, self-sacrificial

¹¹ Moser, “Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” 2.

¹² Moser and McFall, “Introduction: Philosophy and Cruciform Wisdom,” 6. Moser and McFall say of Christ’s Gethsemane struggle: “here we see a conflict between a human want and a divine want but ends with a decisive resolution: a human plea by Jesus to God in resolute favor of God’s will” (“Introduction,” 7).

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Paul Moser, “Conformation Model,” in *Four Views on Christianity and Philosophy*, eds. Paul M. Gould and Richard Brian Davis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 180.

¹⁵ Though the assent to true propositions is certainly involved. For instance, in Romans 10:9, Paul instructs that one must confess “that Jesus is Lord and believe in [their] heart that God raised him from the dead.” Faith is not a content-less act; rather, one responds to the truth of the Gospel proclaimed (reference Romans 10:14). By virtue of the Gospel’s proclamation, one assents to the true propositions of the Gospel. What Moser is referring to (and rightly so) is that faith in God through Christ is not the *mere* assent to true propositions—an intellectual endeavor—for even the demons believe and they shudder (James 2:19). In “Philosophy and Spiritual Formation,” Moser asserts that faith in God is not merely an intellectual assent to a proposition “because it includes resolute obedience to God’s call, command, or Good News ..., whereby one submits one’s own will to God’s will” (260). Further, Moser states that faith in God is not identical to one’s believing or knowledge that a claim is true; rather, it is an ongoing decision to trust God—to “let God be God in one’s life” (261).

¹⁶ Moser, “Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy,” 5. Moser notes that “human faith in God presupposes a call-response dynamic that includes interpersonal mutuality, that is, an I-Thou interaction between a human and God” (“Philosophy and Spiritual Formation,” 260).

attitude of Gethsemane.”¹⁷ Like Christ, one sacrifices self to willingly and reverently submit to the perfect will of God. One’s salvation in Christ is no mere “intellectual purification”—it is the daily experience of God’s Spirit at work in the heart of the believer to transform them more and more into the image of Christ.¹⁸ The Christian philosopher, then, should exhibit this “Gethsemane union” with Christ.¹⁹

Divine Love Commands

In Mark 12:28-31, a Jewish scribe observes other scribes disputing with Jesus. Calling out above the fray, the scribe asks Jesus, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Turning his attention to the scribe, Jesus answers, “The most important is . . . ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” In one answer, Jesus Christ sums up the Law²⁰ and provides humans “a priority ranking to what [they] should love.”²¹

Because of the believer’s Gethsemane union with Christ, the very first object of one’s love must be God.²² To love God first is to submit one’s self to God’s authority in Christ. Second in priority of what one loves is their neighbor—one is to love their neighbor as themselves. Any other priority of love is “morally unacceptable.”²³

Loving God first and neighbor second “requires” that one “eagerly” serves God and neighbor “for their best interests.”²⁴ According to Moser, this

¹⁷ Moser, “Toward Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” 38.

¹⁸ Elsewhere, Moser states (referencing Pascal) that it is God who moves the human will without coercion to willingly obey him. Thus, one’s faith in God is not just reflective (belief in certain true propositions), but volitional as well (“Philosophy and Spiritual Formation,” 263).

¹⁹ Moser says of rightly knowing God, “To know God aright is to be volitionally united with God in the power of God’s Spirit, and this is to be united, in love, on the cross with God’s crucified Son” (Paul Moser, “Cognitive Inspiration and Knowledge of God,” in *The Rationality of Theism*, eds. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser [London: Routledge, 2003], 62).

²⁰ Reference Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18.

²¹ Moser, “Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy,” 14.

²² This obligation is not for believers alone (though it certainly applies), but for all humanity, for every person is created by God and in his image. It is because we love ourselves (or other things) above God that humanity stands condemned in sin and necessitates the saving work of Christ to stand justified before God.

²³ Moser, “Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy,” 14.

²⁴ Ibid.

requires that 1) that one obeys God “to the best of their ability, and 2) one’s “eagerly contributing, so far as we are able, to the life-sustaining needs of our neighbor.”²⁵ Because one’s resources are limited in terms of time and energy, one must choose how to spend their time and energy such that some projects are excluded in favor of others. To choose a project that excludes loving one’s neighbor by serving their own “life-sustaining needs of life,” then one fails to love their neighbor. If one fails to love their neighbor, then they fail to obey God’s commands. Per Moser, “the divine love commands (DLC) do not allow us to love God to the exclusion of loving our neighbor.”²⁶

The DLC are binding on all Christians in not only their personal lives, but in all areas of their lives as well. As such, the DLC apply to Christian philosophers by serving as a rule by which to prioritize one’s philosophical projects. A philosophical project may be of great interest to an individual philosopher, or it may even seek to advance a “truth-seeking philosophical concern,” but if it fails to meet the DLC of serving God and neighbor, then one fails to “mirror God’s perfectly loving character.”²⁷

Cruciform Philosophy

When the believing philosopher is united to God through Christ, and walks in obedience to the DLC, then their philosophy is to be united with the “cruciform wisdom” of Christ. Cruciform wisdom is “the kind of spiritual wisdom manifested by Jesus in Gethsemane” and involves “an engaged personal will.”²⁸ According to Moser, wisdom is not the mere assent to certain true propositions; one is not wise just because they hold to certain beliefs. Cruciform wisdom is not “primarily about debating ideas.”²⁹ Rather, cruciform wisdom is the fruit of one’s Gethsemane union with Christ, for “it mainly concerns welcoming and conforming to divine power of the kind found in Jesus.”³⁰

Cruciform wisdom is distinct from worldly wisdom in that it engages the full person, not just their intellect or reason. Wisdom rooted in the work of Christ “aims to encourage an initially resistant human will to welcome God and

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁸ Moser and McFall, “Introduction: Philosophy and Cruciform Wisdom,” 7.

²⁹ Ibid., 8.

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

God's self-sacrificial will.”³¹ It makes “deep existential and practical demands on its recipients,” moving them “to welcome and conform to the divine power manifested in Jesus.”³² Cruciform wisdom is manifested in one’s welcoming of and obedience to God’s commands.³³

Not all Christian philosophy is united with cruciform wisdom. A philosopher may be a Christian, or a philosophy may be theistic in nature, but if the philosopher or the philosophy is divorced from the Gethsemane union with Christ, then it fails to be Christian philosophy.³⁴ Even if one talks “voluminously about Christ,” apart from the Gethsemane union with Christ, “one’s moral agency does not underwrite that talk by witnessing to the powerful agape-character within oneself.”³⁵ It is talk without the agent-power of *agape*, which results in talk that resembles the world.³⁶ Christian philosophy cannot be divorced from the work of Christ in the human person—“from questions and facts about our deepest motives and our personal standing before God in Christ”—for in doing so, it becomes as impotent as the world’s philosophy.³⁷ As such, Moser boldly asserts that “philosophy needs redeeming, and that by God in Christ.”³⁸ Thus, Christian philosophy should “center, in content and method, on the wisdom from God in Jesus Christ and in the Good News of God in Christ.”³⁹

Moser on Philosophical Questions

Paul Moser’s Christ-shaped philosophy is a robust reformulation of what it means for Christian philosophy to be distinctly Christian. Refusing to accept at face value the qualifier “Christian,” Moser roots the nature, method, value, and motive of philosophy⁴⁰ in the person and work of Jesus Christ; he who is central to the Christian faith is necessarily central to Christian philosophy.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

³² Ibid., 8.

³³ Ibid., 8.

³⁴ Moser, “Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” 9.

³⁵ Moser, “Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy,” 9.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Moser, “Philosophy and Spiritual Formation,” 267-68.

⁴⁰ Here I rely upon the work of Søren Overgaard, Paul Gilbert, and Stephen Burwood in their book, *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) where they identify three questions that metaphilosophy seeks to answer regarding the nature of philosophy: What? (the definition of philosophy), How? (the method

Though the spirit and intent behind Moser's project has been well-received, some have claimed that CSP does little by way of providing a metaphilosopical approach than just elaborating upon the Christian philosopher's motivation and purpose behind their work.⁴¹ It goes beyond the purpose of this paper to summarize the various developments of and critiques of Moser's Christ-shaped philosophy.⁴² Let it suffice, however, that Moser's CSP rightly emphasizes the status of the Christian philosopher as an aspect of metaphilosophy, for one cannot have Christian philosophy without the Christian philosopher. But, CSP does not limit itself to the philosopher, for what shapes and guides their life ought to drive and inform the what, how, and why of their work. Thus, CSP is an approach that impacts both philosopher and philosophy.

Despite the strength of Moser's project, it unnecessarily reduces and constricts the kinds of questions Christian philosophers pursue. The paper now moves to a brief discussion on what Moser says regarding philosophical questions in light of DLC, followed by a critique of his view.⁴³ In light of the

of philosophy), and Why? (the value of philosophy). The “how” question can be split into the method of philosophy and the data of philosophy (i.e. the questions that philosophy asks). I include the motive of behind philosophy as a metaphilosopical issue as philosophy cannot be divorced from the philosopher. More will be said in a footnote below regarding Moser's emphasis on the philosopher's motive in their philosophy (allowing their Gethsemane union in Christ to inform and drive their philosophy).

⁴¹ William Hasker, “Paul Moser’s Christian Philosophy,” *Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project*, Evangelical Philosophical Society (2012), available at <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=143>. Hasker claims that Moser’s CSP is primarily concerned with the “philosopher’s own union with Christ, more than with Christian philosophy as such” (3). Likewise Dave Bukenhofer, “Christ-Shaped Philosophy and Content,” *Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project*, Evangelical Philosophical Society (2012), available at <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=163&mode=detail>.

⁴² Visit the Evangelical Philosophical Society’s “Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project” page to access the various articles written in response to Moser’s “Christ-Shaped Philosophy: Wisdom and Spirit United.” You can access the page at the following URL: <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=131> (accessed November 9, 2016).

⁴³ My critique here is similar to that of Graham Oppy in his “Moser, Ambiguity, and Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” *Christ-Shaped Philosophy*, Evangelical Philosophical Society (2012), available at <http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=136&mode=detail>; however, my critique is a bit more nuanced than his. Oppy claims that if Moser’s CSP appears to require that “disciplines whose content properly does not overlap with the Christian message are misleading, obstructive, and pose ‘diversionary dangers’ to would-be Christians” (3). My critique, however, focuses more specifically on the very questions a Christian philosopher can ask—a matter that is more focused whereas Oppy’s is broader in scope.

critique of Moser's narrow view of philosophical questions, an appeal to Augustine's view on the Trinity and the unity of truth will be made to allow for a wider array of philosophical questions.

DLC and Philosophical Questions

When contrasting ancient Greek philosophy with Christian philosophy, Moser identifies the work of Socrates and Plato as a “wisdom movement” for its emphasis on humans as “cognitive and moral agents in pursuit of the good life.”⁴⁴ To achieve the good life, one must attain an intellectual salvation of sorts where one’s intellect is purified from their senses and emotions that “polluted the world.”⁴⁵ Christianity, on the other hand, inaugurated the “Good News Movement,” one in which people were offered “the power of spiritual, moral, and even bodily redemption by God”⁴⁶—one’s reconciliation unto God through Gethsemane union with Christ. The believer’s salvation in Christ involves more than their intellect—it involves the volitional struggle of submitting to the authority of God’s divine, good will. In obedience to the divine love commands, the believer’s priority of love is radically reversed from a self-centered hierarchy (where one’s will is prioritized) to a self-sacrificial hierarchy where God is one’s first priority, followed by the love of and needs of one’s neighbor. Everything one does, even the believing philosopher’s work, is impacted this Christ-modeled and commanded hierarchy. Where the Christian philosopher should see this the most is in the very philosophical questions⁴⁷ one pursues.

The questions a philosopher (particularly a Christian philosopher) pursues reveal much about the priorities of the individual. What one pursues is done with “considerable time and energy.”⁴⁸ Because of one’s finite nature, energy and time that could be invested in other areas is instead devoted to

⁴⁴ Moser, “Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy,” 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See also Moser, *The Severity of God*, 22-23.

⁴⁶ Moser, “Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy,” 2-3.

⁴⁷ What exactly is a philosophical question? For the sake of time and space, this question is answered broadly—a philosophical question is one asked in relation to a philosophical concern (which falls under the broad categories of metaphysics, epistemology, morality/ethics, and aesthetics). Moser notes, “It is itself a substantial...question of philosophy to ask what, specifically, a philosophical question is” (Paul Moser, “Jesus and Philosophy: On the Questions We Ask,” *Faith and Philosophy* 22:3 [2005]: 261). Answers to this question have varied with little to no consensus, only adding more questions *ad infinitum*, making it a perennial philosophical question (261).

⁴⁸ Moser, “On the Questions We Ask,” 262.

one's philosophical work. Further, a philosopher's work gives a glimpse into one's "true cares and concerns." One may say, for instance, that their devotion is to the Lord Jesus Christ, but one's "eager commitments" betray their true devotion.⁴⁹

As stated earlier, the DLC "give a priority ranking to what humans should love."⁵⁰ For the believing philosopher, this applies to one's philosophical pursuits—one's philosophical projects are only acceptable when they satisfy the DLC.⁵¹ Thus, the questions one pursues and the projects to which one devotes their energy must "eagerly serve the life-sustaining needs" of their neighbor.⁵² If one's philosophical work blocks them from eagerly meeting their neighbors' needs, then they fail to love God and neighbor as commanded in the DLC.⁵³

But, what of the claim that "all truth is God's truth?" Could not one claim that to pursue truth (broadly speaking) provides a wider array of questions the Christian philosopher can pursue? Moser asserts that though a philosophical project may be truth-seeking, it can still fail to satisfy the DLC. A Christian philosopher's philosophical project can advance a particular truth-seeking concern, but if done so "at the expense of eagerly serving God and one's neighbor," then the truth-seeking project "runs afoul" of the DLC.

For example, Moser states, one "could eagerly pursue an intriguing, if esoteric, metaphysical truth in ways that disregard eager service toward God and my neighbor."⁵⁴ The philosopher in Gethsemane union with Christ, then, cannot pursue just any philosophical concern of interest—truth-seeking does not "trump" the DLC because it "doesn't override the requirement to mirror God's perfectly loving character."⁵⁵

Another retort to Moser's claim regarding philosophical questions is that Genesis 1:26-28 gives humanity a mandate to exercise dominion over all areas

⁴⁹ Ibid, 263. Moser uses the adjectival adverb "eagerly" when describing how some philosophers pursue their questions. However, he does so without defining what he specifically has in mind. What he seems to imply in his use of "eagerly" (and other forms of "eager" when discussing what one pursues) is that one motive is to pursue and obtain what one desires, that their thoughts are consumed by what they pursue, and that they desire to obtain what they pursue. What counts as one "eagerly" or not "eagerly" loving one's neighbor is not clear (*Ibid.*).

⁵⁰ Moser, "Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy," 14.

⁵¹ Moser, "Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy," 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

of life, including intellectual matters. Thus, pursuing philosophical questions, particularly truth-seeking questions, is one way of faithfully carrying out God's mandate to humankind.

Despite the good intentions behind the two retorts to Moser's view on philosophical questions, they still miss the mark set by the DLC. Loving God and neighbor requires one to "eagerly serve God and...neighbor."⁵⁶ By eagerly serving, one's time and energy is devoted to fulfilling the DLC; eagerly pursuing anything else falls short of obedience.⁵⁷ The believer is "morally accountable" for how they spend their time and energy; thus, the questions the Christian philosopher chooses is of utmost importance if they are to walk in obedience to Christ.⁵⁸ Only that which "genuinely honors [the divine love commands] by sincere compliance with them" counts as an "advisable" philosophical pursuit.⁵⁹

In light of his appeal to the believer's Gethsemane union with Christ and the priority-shaping DLC, Moser distinguishes between two modes of philosophy—one to avoid and one to emulate. The mode to avoid is the *discussion mode*. Here, one responds to philosophical concerns with "talk about questions, options, claims, and arguments."⁶⁰ The philosophy of Plato and Socrates are an example of philosophy in the discussion mode; philosophy of this kind fails to move one to obedience of Jesus Christ. For example, the history of philosophy "notoriously" leaves one in discussion mode, as does philosophical discussion of questions about philosophical questions.⁶¹ By remaining in the discussion mode, one postpones facing the divine love commands; further, one turns their philosophical questions into idols by detracting "from the love and trust [one owes] to God alone."⁶²

⁵⁶ Moser, "On the Questions We Ask," 264.

⁵⁷ Eagerly serving God and neighbor entails "a) our eagerly obeying God to the best of our ability and b) our eagerly contributing, so far as we are able, to the life-sustaining needs of our neighbor" (Moser, "On the Questions We Ask," 264).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 266. Why do philosophers (particularly Christian philosophers) resist to eagerly serve God and neighbor through their philosophical questions? Moser posits an answer: "we seek, as much as possible, to be in charge of our lives" (269),

⁵⁹ Moser, "Introduction: Jesus and Philosophy," 17.

⁶⁰ Moser, "On the Questions We Ask," 273.

⁶¹ Moser, "On the Questions We Ask," 274.

⁶² Moser, "On the Questions We Ask," 271-72. Moser has in mind 1 Timothy 1:3-6, where Paul exhorts Timothy to discourage believers from devoting "themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith." Those who have fallen into such speculations have "wandered away into vain discussion." See "On the Questions We Ask," 278.

The Christian philosopher ought to move beyond the discussion mode into the obedience mode. This mode “responds to an authority by submission of the will to the authority’s commands.”⁶³ Faith in God through Christ includes “an attitude of obedience,” which includes submitting to the perfect will of God the Father as exemplified by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Apostle Paul interchanges talk of obedience and of faith, while Jesus himself connects obedience to God’s will to one’s relationship with God the Father.⁶⁴ We are commanded “love from us toward God and others beyond discussion and the acquisition of truth.”⁶⁵

What counts as philosophy in the obedience mode? Moser identifies those questions that are “in eager service of the church of Jesus” as falling within the obedience mode. Philosophy needs to be “reoriented” to be used as a spiritual gift within the ministry of the church as it proclaims the Good News to a lost and needy world. As such, philosophers should direct their questions toward the needs of the church—what is “needed to build up the church as a ministry of the Good News of Jesus.”⁶⁶ Such questions may include ethical issues, but can also include “any intellectual issues” raised by the needs of the church.⁶⁷ It is not the case that any question is fair game for the Christian philosopher; instead, guided by the DLC and operating in the obedience mode, the believing philosopher focuses their pursuits to that which serves the church. A Christian philosophy gives “pride of place to Christ and hence to redemption in Gethsemane union with him.” This union in Christ, then, guides not only what we think, but how we think.⁶⁸

⁶³ Ibid., 273.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 274.

⁶⁵ Moser, “On the Questions We Ask,” 274.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 276-77. He goes on to say that philosophy in the obedience mode has its purpose in the service of the Gospel and nowhere else. Thus, philosophy should not pursue “casual or idiosyncratic intellectual concerns,” even if truth-seeking (277). Rather, Christian philosophers explore cruciform wisdom for “topics important for lives conformed to divine power” (Moser and McFall, “Introduction: Philosophy and Cruciform Wisdom,” 9).

⁶⁷ Moser, “On the Questions We Ask,” 277.

⁶⁸ Moser, “Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” 9. Moser does not restrict Christian philosophy to what he calls a “strict-content sense,” where philosophy pursues questions of explicitly Christian conceptual content. Rather, he identifies a “kingdom-enhancement sense” in which one interacts with philosophy (not just Christian philosophy) in order to draw out its contributions to the concerns of Christian philosophy. According to Moser, it would be “unduly narrow” to prohibit kingdom-enhancement content in Christian philosophy. However, he reiterates the points drawn out above that the Christian philosopher must pursue that which serves God and neighbor—not all philosophical truth is

A Critique

The spirit behind Moser's CSP is to be lauded, for he has substantively clarified what it means for Christian philosophy to be "Christian." Too often, it seems, that the qualifier "Christian" serves little purpose other than to identify the status of the philosopher (as opposed to being a secular philosopher) or to categorize the content addressed in one's philosophical work. Further, though the use of "Christian" as a qualifier for a certain kind of philosophy is commonly practiced, there is an ambiguity in what is meant by "Christian philosopher."⁶⁹ For instance, Graham Oppy notes that "Christian philosophy" can refer to either the particular content of certain philosophical ideas or theories, or it can refer to a specific "mode of engagement in a philosophical discussion."⁷⁰ Paul Moser fills a void by elaborating upon what a Christian philosophy entails in its nature, method, and value.⁷¹

"intrinsically valid or even worthy of pursuit" (Paul Moser, "Toward Christ-Shaped Philosophy," in *Christian Scholarship in the Twenty-First Century: Prospects and Perils*, eds. Thomas M. Crisp, Steve L. Porter, and Greg A. Ten Elshof [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014], 43-44).

⁶⁹ One reason for this may be that, for the most part, most people just assume others know what is meant by "Christian philosophy." In Western culture - particularly in the United States – the meaning of "Christian" is obvious. However, when one delves a little deeper into what is intended by the use of "Christian," one finds a wide array of meanings. In my dissertation (John Daniel McDonald, "Toward a Baptist View of Metaphilosophy: An Analysis of E. Y. Mullins, John Newport, Richard Cunningham, and L. Russ Bush" [PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014]), I analyzed the metaphilosophy of four Southern Baptist thinkers and found that there was little elaboration by any of these thinkers regarding the definition of or possibility of a distinctly Christian philosophy. Either one assumed the meaning of and the possibility of a Christian philosophy, or one would briefly address the question as more of a side note. Though four Southern Baptist thinkers do not represent the entire class of Christian philosophers (past and present), the dissertation does illustrate the tendency of Christian thinkers to assume what "Christian" philosophy means and the need to address this question more explicitly and thoroughly. Moser's work in Christ-shaped philosophy does just that.

⁷⁰ Graham Oppy, "Moser, Ambiguity, and Christ-Shaped Philosophy," *Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project*, Evangelical Philosophical Society (2012), 1.

⁷¹ Perhaps the most important element of Moser's CSP is his import of the human will into his metaphilosophical discussion. Too often the discussion within Christian philosophy (and faith and reason, in particular) focuses on the intellectual aspect of humanity—one's mental assent to true propositions regarding God and the world, one's refuting of false propositions, and the defense of the Christian faith. What seems largely ignored is the role of the individual's will in areas of faith, belief, and thinking. The role of

However, Moser's greatest strength in his CSP is also one of his more significant weaknesses. His emphasis on obedience to the DLC unnecessarily restricts the kinds of questions philosophers can ask in their work. Earlier it was noted that, per Moser, philosophers should pursue those questions that eagerly serve God and build up the church in its ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Moser does allow for an array of philosophical questions that fit this bill, such as ethical questions, questions about abstract entities that "merit attention in connection with the Good News of Jesus."⁷² While the intention behind such a claim is well-meaning, how does one know whether a question meets such a requirement or not?

The question just posed is not one of skepticism, but a functional one. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point.⁷³ First, take Bob, who is a Christian philosopher specializing in the history of philosophy. A particular question of interpretation regarding Plato's use of "mind" strikes Bob's interest, but after some time spent investigating the question, Bob realizes that the question has no bearing upon the mission of the church. What is one to say, then, regarding the time and energy spent on a question that ultimately proved to hinder Bob's "eagerly serving the life-sustaining needs" of his neighbor?

Second, consider Gus, a Christian philosopher of mathematics whose studies focused on the chaos theory around the theory's inception with Poincaré (1854-1912). If Gus were to follow Moser's rubric for philosophical questions, then he would have to discard his work since little was known at the time how the chaos theory could be used—the work was too new to understand its implications. In fact, according to Christian Oestreicher, it is only until recently that scientists have found use for the chaos theory in

the will is just as important as one's intellect in matters of faith, and Paul Moser's CSP incorporates this oft neglected aspect of the human person. One's Gethsemane union with Christ is both intellectual and volitional—transforming, guiding, and informing the whole person in their new life in Christ. A Christian philosophy must account for the volitional aspect of one's faith and how it bears upon their work. Specifically, one's submission to the perfect will of God directly impacts the questions one pursues in their philosophical work.

⁷² Moser, "On the Questions We Ask," 277.

⁷³ The current discussion will focus on examples of philosophical questions. However, the discussion can be broadened out to include other academic disciplines. Moser posits that his Christ-shaped philosophy can serve as a model for other academic disciplines, for the believer's Gethsemane union with Christ and the Lord's DLC impacts "all areas of our lives, regardless of our academic disciplines" ("Christ-Shaped Philosophy," 1-2). If Christ is preeminent in everything, then that includes philosophy and every other academic discipline (3).

biology, psychology, and medicine.⁷⁴ Gus would then have to find another question to pursue, for its application to serving God and neighbor was not evident. This example fails Moser's rubric in another way—how does the chaos theory allow Gus to eagerly serve his neighbor and the Gospel mission of the church? It is not immediately clear how pursuing questions regarding the chaos theory satisfies the DLC; Gus' work, then, would need to be scrapped so that he is not blocked from fulfilling the divine commands.

Moser's appeal to the DLC as the test for one's philosophical is not the problem here; rather, it is his application of these commands to one's work. It assumes a level of omniscience on the part of the philosopher (or the Christian(s) holding them accountable) in being able to know how the philosophical question does (or does not) satisfy the DLC. One must be able to know the question's immediate implications (or lack thereof) for the church, or to be able to accurately forecast future implications (or lack thereof) for the church. Though one may be able to rightly judge some questions as within the DLC or beyond its reach, to do for every question assumes a level of knowledge and foresight that is idealistic, but limited and inconsistent.

Further, who determines whether a philosopher's question satisfies the DLC or not? A well-intentioned believing philosopher may believe that they are eagerly serving God and neighbor in their investigation of a particular philosophical question. But, a believing friend (who is not a philosopher), upon hearing of the philosopher's current project, judges the question to be contrary to the divine commands. Who is right? By what standard, or authority, does one arbitrate between conflicting views? In an effort to avoid "speculation" and "vain discussion," Moser's appeal to the DLC descends into subjectivism as philosophers (and believers) quibble over the relevance of a philosophical question to the DLC.

The questions of how one applies the DLC in practice and how one arbitrates between conflicting views are of importance if Moser's CSP is to be employed as is. There is a way forward that, if correct, allows one to hold to the essence of CSP while avoiding the problem of narrowing what the philosopher can investigate. In the following section, Augustine's view on unity and on the Trinity supplies a means to understand how one can approach every truth-seeking endeavor. It will be shown that the belief that "all truth is God's truth" does not potentially lead one to disobeying the DLC, but rather to fulfilling it.

⁷⁴ Christian Oestreicher, "A History of Chaos Theory," *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 9, no. 3 (Sep 2007): 286-87, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3202497/>.

Thus pursuing truth-seeking concerns that may not have a direct impact on neighbor and church still demonstrates the believer's love for God primarily and for neighbor secondarily.

Augustine, the Trinity, and the Unity of Truth

One of Augustine's lasting influences on the church (particularly the Western church) is his doctrine of the Trinity. Though *De Trinitate* is Augustine's most explicit and comprehensive work on the Trinity, the doctrine of the triune God saturates his work and thought throughout his ministry. More importantly, Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity informs his theological views, such as creation, ecclesiology, and anthropology. Essential to his Trinitarian thought is Augustine's emphasis on unity and its implications for the believer,⁷⁵ in particular regarding truth and the human pursuit of wisdom. What follows is, first, a discussion on Augustine's view of wisdom, followed by a discussion of our relation to truth as mirrored in the Trinity. Finally, the section concludes with the observation that Augustine's grounding the human pursuit of wisdom in his doctrine of the Trinity provides the philosopher a wider array of questions one can pursue.

Augustine on Wisdom

Augustine views the nature of philosophy, like Moser, in its etymological sense—as the love of wisdom.⁷⁶ The philosopher, then, is one who pursues wisdom—a pursuit that is less an academic discipline and more a “whole way of life” dedicated to this pursuit.⁷⁷ Augustine notes that Scripture only mocks philosophy that is of this world, not all philosophy. Thus, anyone who “condemns philosophy as a whole condemns nothing less than wisdom itself.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ For instance, throughout his anti-Donatist writings (which span the first two and a half decades of his ministry), Augustine appeals to the unity within the Trinity as the foundation for the unity of the church. See J. Daniel McDonald, “The Holy Spirit, *Caritas*, and the Bond of Unity in Augustine’s Anti-Donatist Writings,” *Fides et Humilitas* 3 (Winter 2016): 84-110, available at <http://www.ancientchristianstudies.com/fides-et-humilitas/>.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *On Order* I, 2.32, trans. by Silvano Borruso (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), 43.

⁷⁷ Roland J. Teske, *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of St. Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 7.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *On Order* I, 2.32, 45.

What is this wisdom that is the object of the philosopher's pursuit? Augustine identifies wisdom with God⁷⁹ and personified in Christ.⁸⁰ To pursue wisdom is to pursue God himself. The *true* philosopher, therefore, is one who loves God, for he who loves wisdom loves God.⁸¹

Though the philosopher seeks after wisdom, not everything counts as wisdom. Augustine appeals to 1 Corinthians 12:8 when he distinguishes between wisdom and knowledge.⁸² In *The Trinity*, Augustine defines wisdom as “the knowledge of things divine.”⁸³ Thus, wisdom includes matters of faith like God’s nature, the Trinity, and Christ’s nature and work, among other matters revealed by God’s word and believed by faith.⁸⁴ Knowledge, on the other hand, refers to that “of things human.” This kind of knowledge does not refer to everything that one can know. For instance, it does not include “superfluous frivolity and pernicious curiosity.” Rather, knowledge of human things refers to “anything that breeds, feeds, defends, and strengthens the saving faith which leads to true happiness.”⁸⁵ For instance, all that “the Word made flesh did and suffered for us in time and space belong” to knowledge. Christ plants faith in us about temporal things, and presents to us the truth of eternal things. “Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ.”⁸⁶ Therefore, the knowledge of this world that is true points to Christ, and the wisdom of God is Christ—both of which make up truth. It is this truth that finds its author in God,⁸⁷ and through which all things came into being.

Though true knowledge of God comes only through faith in God through Christ, Augustine does not disparage or downplay the role of reason in one’s pursuit of true wisdom. Augustine says of human reason,

⁷⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, VIII.1, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 298.

⁸⁰ Note Augustine, *The Trinity* VII, 1.1-2.6, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill [Kindle Edition] (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010).

⁸¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, VIII.1, 298. See also Teske, *To Know God and the Soul*, 7.

⁸² “For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:8). See Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII, 6.24.

⁸³ Augustine, *The Trinity* XIV, 1.3, 371.

⁸⁴ “Among eternal things the supreme truth is rightly attributed to the Word of God,” (Ibid., XIII, 6.24, 363).

⁸⁵ Ibid., XIV, 1.3., 371.

⁸⁶ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII, 6.24, 362-64.

⁸⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, VIII.1, 298.

For if man has been so created as to attain, through the special excellence in man's being, to that excellence which is superior to all other things, that is, to the one true God of supreme goodness...we should find him in whom for us all things are certain, we should love him, in whom is found all goodness.⁸⁸

Reason, “the special excellence in man’s being...looks for truth as it is revealed to enlightened intelligence.”⁸⁹

Reason, then, is not to be neglected in favor of faith. When Consentius appeals to a faith-only approach when speaking of matters like the Trinity,⁹⁰ Augustine instructs:

“Heaven forbid...that God should hate in us that by which he made us more excellent than the other animals. Heaven forbid, I say, that we should believe in such a way that we do not accept or seek a rational account, since we could not even believe if we did not have rational souls.”⁹¹

Elsewhere, Augustine asserts that one can use “temporal things” so that they can attain and enjoy eternal blessings.⁹² The truths of this world, known through reason, are useful to the believing philosopher (and to the believer) in the pursuit of wisdom only when they turn one “to the praise and love of the one God from whom...it all proceeds.”⁹³

⁸⁸ Ibid., VIII.4, 304.

⁸⁹ Ibid., XI.17, 448.

⁹⁰ Augustine, Letter 119, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 2 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003).

⁹¹ Augustine, Letter 120, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 2 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 131.

⁹² Augustine, *The City of God*, XI.25, 458. Also, in *On Free Choice of the Will* II, VI.55, Augustine says of reason, “And God Himself has given your reason the power to think so devoutly and truly about Him” (Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* II, VI.55, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff [New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1964], 49).

⁹³ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* II, 38.57, trans. Edmund Hill, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. I, vol. 11 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 158.

Finally, one cannot attain true wisdom—knowledge of God—unless one has been saved through faith in God through Christ. One must be “purified” in order to “enjoy that truth which is unchangeably alive.” Only through the purification that comes through Christ’s atoning work is one then able to perceive the light of God’s wisdom and “to cling to it once perceived.”⁹⁴ Once saved, though, the purification of one’s mind is not completed instantaneously.⁹⁵ Christ, God’s Word incarnate, has given humanity an example of how to live,⁹⁶ and the purification of the believer’s mind is like a journey—one’s purification is attained over time “by honest commitment and good behavior.”⁹⁷

Augustine emphasizes that both true wisdom and true knowledge finds its source in God through faith in Christ. Though knowledge is of temporal things and wisdom of eternal things, both are united in one Truth⁹⁸—a unity that finds its source in the Trinity.

Truth, Unity, and the Trinity

The end of man is happiness, an end that is found only in the one true God. Like the Greek philosophers before him, Augustine identified happiness in the attainment of wisdom. Unlike the Greek philosophers, Augustine roots wisdom in the triune Godhead, personified in Jesus Christ. One means that God uses to make himself known is true knowledge (of temporal things), and it is through reflecting on aspects of creation that one ascends a ladder “to things that are immortal and last forever”—God’s wisdom.⁹⁹ For Augustine, then, there exists a unity between knowledge and wisdom.

The nature of this unity is not a mere epistemological one. Nor is this unity imagined or conjured. Rather, it has ontological grounding in the Trinity,

⁹⁴ Ibid. I, 10.10, 110.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. I, 11.11, 110.

⁹⁷ Ibid. I, 10.10, 110.

⁹⁸ At this point, it will be helpful to use “Truth” to represent the combination of knowledge and wisdom as distinguished by Augustine. It appears that Augustine does use “truth” to represent at times wisdom and knowledge, whereas other times it is equated with wisdom. For the sake of clarity in this paper, “Truth” indicates the totality of all wisdom and all knowledge that points to God and participates in his truth.

⁹⁹ Augustine, “True Religion” 29.52, trans. Edmund Hill, in *On Christian Belief*, ed. John E. Rotelle, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, pt. I, vol. 8 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 64-65.

for the source of truth is God. God is a “Trinity of eternity, truth, and love.”¹⁰⁰ The Father is eternal, who eternally begets the Son. The Son is identified with wisdom; he is the incarnate Word of God. The Son teaches children of God divine truth through giving believers the Holy Spirit—the goodness of both Father and Son. Augustine also identifies as the unity of the triune Godhead. In *The Trinity* XV.5, Augustine argues that the Holy Spirit is the *caritas* that serves as the Trinity’s bond of unity. Each Person of the triune Godhead is distinct yet one in essence and divinity,¹⁰¹ unified in one God.¹⁰²

For Augustine, the Trinity is mirrored in the very creation of God. When God created the universe, all of creation was declared to be good. Augustine posits, then that “if this goodness is rightly interpreted as the Holy Spirit, then the whole united Trinity is revealed to us in its works.”¹⁰³ Elsewhere, he asserts that “the world was made great by the goodness of God, made great and good by the sovereign and unmade good, and that all things in the world were made very good according to their nature.”¹⁰⁴ One can find a “hint of the Trinity in the description of God’s creative works, expressed somewhat enigmatically, so as to exercise our speculations.”¹⁰⁵ The reality of the Trinity is also reflected in other aspects of the created world. In the human person, there is a trinity of one’s rational creation, sensual creation, and vital creation.¹⁰⁶ Even the ancient philosophers recognized a trinity in philosophy itself. The tripartite nature of philosophy—physics, logic, and ethics—were discovered to have already be within creation.¹⁰⁷ Finally, by virtue of being created in the image of God entails that humanity bears the image of the “Supreme Trinity” in that one exists, one

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*, XI.28, 463.

¹⁰¹ For the idea that the Holy Spirit is the bond of unity of the Trinity, reference Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.

¹⁰² Augustine, *The City of God*, XI.24, 456-57.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 457.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *To Orosius in Refutation of the Priscillianists and Origenists*, 8.9, trans. Roland J. Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. I, vol. 18 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), 109.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Creation is effected by God’s speaking by means of his Word—Christ. The goodness of creation corresponds with the goodness of his intent to create. Augustine interprets this goodness of God’s intent as the Holy Spirit. If this is so, then the Trinity is revealed to us in God’s creative works.

¹⁰⁶ Augustine, *To Orosius* 8.11, 110.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, XI.25, 458. That is, the ancient philosophers did not determine themselves what consisted of the tripartite nature of philosophy; rather, they found it to be so already. All philosophical questions fall under the three-part division of philosophy.

is glad of their existence, and one knows that they are glad of their existence.”¹⁰⁸

The reflection of the Trinity within creation serves as the link between knowledge of temporal things and that of eternal things. God has woven all things—all of his works—“together through [Wisdom] into one final gracefulness and glory.”¹⁰⁹ God imparts his divine wisdom in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Mankind, created in the image of the triune God, attains true knowledge through reason. True knowledge participates in Truth, which is the aim of human reason and is not a mere product of the reasoning.¹¹⁰ The believer, in his pursuit of God, encounters both true knowledge (reflected in God’s creative work) and true wisdom (as revealed in God’s word), and finds Truth in Christ by faith. Truth, then, is the unity of both knowledge and wisdom. Truth does not exclude nor minimize the role of knowledge (as understood by Augustine) in one’s pursuit of wisdom; rather, Truth incorporates knowledge as an essential step toward the attainment of the wisdom of God.

Thus, the saying “all truth is God’s truth” is, for Augustine, more than attempt to justify one’s desire to pursue certain truth-seeking questions (as implied in Moser’s discussion of this appeal). Rather, it illustrates Augustine’s conviction that all truth, wherever it is found, belongs to God.¹¹¹ In *Teaching Christianity*, Augustine advises young believers who fear the Lord and seek after him “should not impetuously and unconcernedly pursue any teachings that can be had outside the Church of Christ, as though these can ensure them a happy life.” Even still, they should not neglect those disciplines and studies that are “of value for a proper social life.”¹¹² Though the liberal arts are not for everyone, Augustine concedes that those who have a strong grasp on the liberal arts “can soar on to divine realities not rashly and by faith alone, but contemplating, understanding, and retaining them.”¹¹³ The study of history aids the believer in understanding what is told in Scripture, while geography and biology are valuable for “solving the riddles of Scripture.” Even astronomy,

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, XI.26, 459.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, “True Religion” 39.73, 79.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 39.72, 78.

¹¹¹ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* II, 18.28, 144.

¹¹² Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* II, 39.58, 158-59.

¹¹³ Augustine, *On Order* II, 16.44, trans. Silvano Borruso (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), 109. Regarding his caution to those desiring to study the liberal arts, Augustine states, “Getting acquainted with the liberal arts, however, whether pursued for the sake of usefulness or for the sake of knowledge and contemplation, is extremely difficult” (*Ibid.*).

though practically no help for the believer in regard to understanding Scripture, has some practical value in its ability to describe “present realities” and, from the stars ordered movements, to understand their past courses.¹¹⁴

Finally, even philosophy has value if philosophers have said anything that is true and agreeable with Scripture. Rather than being afraid of philosophers, believers must “claim back for our own use what they have said.”¹¹⁵ In short, while pagans say much that contradict Christianity, “they also contain liberal disciplines which are more suited to the service of truth, as well as a number of most useful ethical principles, and some true things are to be found among them about worshipping only the one God.”¹¹⁶

Augustine and the DLC

What has been discussed of Augustine up to this point is the idea that all Truth points to God; when the believer pursues Truth, they seek God. In doing so, one is doing as God created them to do, and therefore obeying God’s command to seek after him. And, according to John 14:15, obeying the Lord’s commandments is evidence of one’s love of God. But what of loving one’s neighbor? Does seeking after Truth satisfy the second command of the DLC?

Augustine does speak to the greatest commandments in *Teaching Christianity*. Unlike Moser, Augustine’s application of the commandment to love one’s neighbor is a bit nuanced.¹¹⁷ That is, Augustine asserts that “all people are to be loved equally,” but since an individual cannot serve everyone equally, they then have to care for those to whom they are closest.¹¹⁸ Further, there will be individuals for whom one can “confer no benefits.” Even still the believer should desire that all people love God, and for those one can help, they are helped with the end of their coming to love God.¹¹⁹

Augustine does not explicitly link one’s academic pursuits to the second of the DLC; however, he does allude how one’s studies serves others. When opening Book I of *Teaching Christianity*, Augustine notes two goals of studying

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* II, 28.43-29.46, 151-53.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., II, 40.60, 159.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 160. In II, 41.62, Augustine reminds the believer to take heed of 1 Corinthians 8:1—if one studies the liberal arts or other secular disciplines, remember to object of their worship and to whom their study of truth points to—Jesus Christ. To study the liberal arts for the sake of studying puffs one up in knowledge.

¹¹⁷ That is, Moser asserts that the believer is to eagerly serve one’s neighbor without qualification.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* I 28.29, 118.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. I 29.30, 119.

Scripture: 1) to discover what the believer must understand, and more pertinent to the topic of this section 2) to be able to “put across to others” what has been understood in the Scriptures.¹²⁰ One does not study Scripture for one’s own understanding; rather, their study is to benefit others as well.

One can infer from the dual purpose of studying Scripture the benefit any truth-seeking discipline has for one’s neighbor. Earlier it was pointed out that Augustine asserted that all truth in the liberal arts and other disciplines belong to God, and are beneficial in helping the believer to understand Scripture and to live a proper social life. If the believer seeks to understand Scripture, then their understanding can be enhanced or supplemented by other studies where truth is found. The understanding believer can then turn to their neighbor and “put across” to them what has been understood. In this way, one fulfills the second command of the DLC.

Augustine and Philosophical Questions

What, then, would Augustine say of philosophical questions? Like Moser, Augustine does not condone the idea that all questions are fair game, nor does he see value in the pursuit of truth just for the sake of knowledge. Rather, all truth-seeking ought to be done first and foremost for the worship of and glory of God, since all Truth points to him. Thus, any truth-seeking question should be pursued with the right motive—to know and worship God.

Where Augustine parts ways with Moser is in that he does not restrict the kinds of questions the believer can pursue (granted their motive is right). Because all Truth is God’s Truth—knowledge and wisdom united in the Trinity—the believer is free to pursue any truth-seeking question. Any truth-seeking endeavor first and foremost is a participation in seeking after God himself. For Augustine, a believer’s seeking after God is of most importance; one cannot properly love one’s neighbor unless they seek after and love God.

Whether the result of the truth-seeking question benefits one’s neighbor does not seem to be a significant concern for Augustine. That is, he does not make this point explicit. However, because Augustine identifies the value of the liberal arts in their preparing an individual for a proper social life,¹²¹ it can be inferred from this claim that pursuing truth-seeking questions has *at least* an indirect benefit to one’s neighbor. Seeking after truth helps to shape the

¹²⁰ Ibid., I 1.1, 106.

¹²¹ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* II 39.58, 159.

individual such that they can be a better person in all facets of their life.¹²² And in so doing, one serves their neighbor both indirectly and directly, thus fulfilling the second command of the DLC.

For the believing philosopher then, Augustine would implore them to pursue philosophical questions not for the sake of knowledge alone but instead to know and seek after God. With the right motive and aim, though, the Christian philosopher is free to pursue truth-seeking questions because all truth finds its source in Truth—God himself. The Christian philosopher seeking after Truth walks in obedience, for to seek after Truth embodies the love of wisdom, which is the love of God himself. And in pursuing, reflecting upon, and understanding the answers to truth-seeking questions, the believer serves their neighbor either directly or indirectly through “putting across” what is learned or by living a proper social life.

Finally, what of avoiding speculations and vain discussions? Like Moser, Augustine warns the believer (and germane to this paper, the Christian philosopher) from fruitless discussion that does not point one to God, but instead puffs up knowledge. It takes a continual volitional action to work in a manner that is God-directed. With the proper motive and aim of seeking after God, one’s questions are framed for one’s proper end. Thus, if there appears to be a time where a believing philosopher has remained in discussion mode, then there ought to be a reevaluation of the individual’s motive and aim behind their pursuit of the philosophical questions, resulting in either the abandonment, postponement, or continuation of the philosophical question.

Conclusion: Christ-Shaped Philosophy and Philosophical Questions

Paul Moser’s Christ-Shaped Philosophy Project fills a void that has lingered for far too long in Christian philosophy. He has provided clarity, substance, and biblical grounding for what it means to be a “Christian” philosopher and what is distinctive about “Christian” philosophy. Moser rightly points to the volitional act of one’s Gethsemane union with Christ as the distinctive feature that determines the content of Christian philosophy and the motive and aim of the Christian philosopher.

¹²² The idea here is that seeking after truth helps one to grow as an individual such that they can become a better family member, a better citizen, and a better worker. One seeking after truth (with the right motive) helps one to become more well-rounded person, which benefits everyone around the individual.

Despite its strength, Moser's CSP has its weaknesses, particularly when it comes to philosophical questions. Moser views the divine love commands as restricting philosophical questions to only those that meet the needs of neighbor and church. Out of the right desire to obey the DLC, Moser unnecessarily restricts the questions a Christian philosopher can pursue.

However, if the truth-seeking endeavor of philosophy is viewed from the Augustinian lens of the Trinity and the unity of Truth, then Moser's CSP opens up to the believing philosopher a wider array of questions that can be pursued in the love of God and of neighbor, and in the service of the church.

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