

raised to it, we all need to hear the rule that Marion claims “remains inviolable”: “If one believes he understands God, it isn’t God” (116).

Despite wanting to give a copy of *Givenness and Revelation* to every pastor in my country, I am not sure that I would give it to my non-Christian philosophical colleagues. This is not necessarily a problem, but it just depends on what one expects a text to do. Not all books can do everything and what Marion does in *Givenness and Revelation* is much needed indeed in contemporary theology as a guide for Christian life and social practice. It is a clearly written, exceptionally historically astute, and a deeply theologically motivated book, but if one is not already convinced of either the truth of Christian revelation, or at least of the legitimacy of blurring the lines between theology and philosophy, then this book is likely not only to be “surprising” regarding its focus, as Marion indicates in the introduction, but also frustratingly confessional regarding its conclusions.

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Paul K. Moser, *The God Relationship. The Ethics for Inquiry about the Divine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 358 pp.

In his three most recent books (*The Elusive God*, *The Evidence for God and the Severity of God*), Paul K. Moser has sought to re-orientate and critique a discipline which, he thinks, is often neglectful of the existential and ethical challenges of religious faith. As Moser sees it, the vast majority of academic philosophical and theological work engages with religious issues in a purely intellectual manner, ignoring the importance of the ethical and volitional challenges of a life of faith. The overarching aim of these recent works has been to connect issues of religious epistemology to questions concerning a person’s redemptive relationship with God. According to Moser, God’s elusiveness in the world is a result of his will for all human beings to be redeemed and reconciled to him, a purpose which would not be achievable by providing only undeniable evidence that God exists (or, ‘spectator evidence’ in Moser’s terms). Hence, for Moser, our evidence for God must be informed

by the human volition and questions concerning a person's willingness to engage in what he calls 'Gethsemane struggle'; a wresting and submission to the divine purpose.

The God Relationship is Moser's most recent contribution to this discussion. Here, he takes aim at our 'inquiry about the divine', a label which would suitably include the majority of recent work in analytic theology and philosophy of religion. Moser's argues that all divine inquiry must be informed by the interpersonal nature of human-divine relationships (4-5). Unlike scientific inquiry, of which the object of study is static, immovable and inert, the object of divine inquiry is a person with a will and specific purposes for human-beings. More specifically, Moser contends, the Christian God seeks a relationship of mutual *agápē* with human beings, or, to use a phrase that is adopted throughout, God desires a '*koinonia*' relationship with human beings (7). A *koinonia* relationship, as Moser defines it, involves 'cooperation, amity, harmony, peace, fellowship, sincere communication, kindness, mercy, empathy and sympathy as compassion' (7). In order for such a relationship to occur, however, human beings must engage in the restoration of the divine image, and hence, a *koinonia* relationship with God must be curative for the human heart and will. Moser's central claim, therefore, is that a focus on the interpersonal aims of a God worthy of worship can inform the ethics of our inquiry about God.

Moser begins by considering the implications of *koinonia* relationships for our understanding of the concept of faith. He argues that faith cannot be reduced simply to a belief in God (70); it also involves the attitudes of trust and commitment to God (70), as well as a 'cooperative self-entrustment, toward God's will, call promise, or good news' (95). At the heart of Moser's account of faith is the claim that the human-God *koinonia* relationship must be curative for humans (96). Faith is not a matter of merely believing that something is the case; it requires acting responsively to the will of God through the process of imitating God. Faith is thus a 'responsive intentional action rather than one something merely reflective or emotional' (113). Because of this, Moser thinks that all divine inquiry must be guided by certain normative principles. He argues that in responsibly inquiring about God, a person ought to consider her own moral standing in relation to God (88), she ought

to conform to God's perfect will (88) and she ought to seek out evidence of God's perfect goodness (88).

Next, Moser turns to consider the implications of the *koinonia* relationship for our understanding of religious evidence and argumentation. He argues that in light of God's purposes in seeking a mutual loving relationship with human beings, we must acknowledge that 'belief *that* a conclusion is true cannot supply faith *in God*' (122). In contrast to this, Moser argues, '[r]esponsible human seeking of God, as suggested, would be active, and not merely reflective, intellectual or emotional. It would require the exercise of one's will in actions of various sorts, including the action of gathering available evidence regarding God.' (113).

What Moser advocates instead of a kind of intellectualist argumentism is the subject of Chapter 4. Here, Moser seeks to give an account of how wisdom and philosophy should be realigned in light of God's purposes. He argues that '[f]rom a Christian point of view, speculative philosophy goes awry in not giving a primary, irreplaceable role to God's self-manifesting the divine moral character, including righteous love, particularly in the message of Christ crucified' (223-4). However, philosophical inquiry is not to be disposed of entirely, according to Moser, but rather, it must be reformed and realigned to reflect the redemptive purposes of God. For Moser, if we take seriously the implications of God's will, then we cannot engage in philosophy for philosophy's sake and intellectual argument cannot easily be dissociated from personal questions regarding the thinker's relationship to God. Moser suggests that

[i]n Christ-shaped inquiry, including philosophy, a key question is: *How* are we to pursue the questions (including philosophical questions) that attract our attention? ...Will we pursue the questions to the neglect or the disadvantage of other people? Will we thereby exclude ourselves from the divine love commands? *How* we pursue questions is not an ethically neutral matter, as if God would not care.' (230)

Finally, in Chapter 5, Moser sketches a more detailed account of what he takes to be responsible divine inquiry. Here, he draws on the ethics of companionship to help elucidate the ethics of our inquiry about God. On such a model, the agent engaged in divine inquiry must be regarded as a 'responsible' and 'self accountable' agent who is capable of relating personally to God (265).

In other words, questions regarding a person's submission to God's will, her desire for 'redemptive companionship' with God (283) and her seeking to receive the challenge of God's Spirit are central to the ethics of divine inquiry. As Moser puts it, such enquiry 'is volitional, and not merely intellectual because it concerns the direction of our wills, and not just our beliefs' (283).

Any reader of Søren Kierkegaard will not be able to miss the Kierkegaardian influence on Moser's work. The epigraph quotes Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus, and the title itself is borrowed from Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Despite this, this is not a book about Kierkegaard's religious philosophy, and Kierkegaard is only specifically mentioned in a handful of places. Yet, Kierkegaard's thought and his contribution to what Moser calls 'the ethics of divine inquiry' pervades every page of the discussion—from Moser's insights on the nature of faith, to the relationship between faith and reason, and the importance of imitation and ethical, existential challenge in the life of the believer. Arguably, Moser's work is more aligned with Kierkegaard's aims to 'reintroduce Christianity to Christendom' (or, perhaps, to 'reintroduce Christianity to theology' in Moser's case), than the majority of contemporary Kierkegaard scholarship.

Moser is deeply critical of contemporary philosophy of religion and philosophical theology, yet, despite his criticism, he appears to be disengaged with the specifics of what those who write in this tradition have to say. Frustratingly, Moser repeatedly refers to philosophy and theology as if it were one homogenous discipline that wholeheartedly neglects the importance of Christ-centred faith. Unlike Moser's astute critique of the key positions in contemporary religious epistemology in *The Evidence for God*, the vast majority of Moser's objections to contemporary philosophy and theology here are aimless. Other than a cursory take-down of some of William Lane Craig's theistic arguments in Chapter 3, Moser seldom mentions an example of the kind of philosophy and theology he is critiquing. One wonders whether this is because he finds little of value to engage with amongst the nameless philosophers and theologians. However, Moser's critique of speculative divine inquiry would be all the more compelling if he were prepared to engage with specific examples of what he takes to be 'irresponsible' engagement with God.

An example will help to illustrate this point. Whilst I am sympathetic to Moser's critique of natural theology and the inadequacy of apologetic argu-

ments, what he says regarding this issue has some obvious retorts from its main proponents. If anyone is an example of defending the school of 'argumentism' (Moser's phrase, not mine), then it is surely Richard Swinburne. And yet, even Swinburne admits that belief in the truth of a conclusion stops short of faith in God. In *Faith and Reason*, Swinburne writes that Christian faith requires a kind of trust, 'of acting on the assumption that God will provide for one what one wants or needs. If there is a God, the aim of rendering proper worship and obedience to God' (2005, 195). Similarly, William Lane Craig, one of the few writers who Moser directly refers to, notes that faith involves a volitional element: 'I think of faith as trusting something I know to be true' (Veritas Forum, 2012). For both Swinburne and Craig, faith requires not only a belief *that* God exists but also an attitude of trust and the intentional exercise of one's will in putting this attitude into practice. Admittedly, both Swinburne's and Craig's accounts of faith looks different to the account given by Moser, and much of Moser's critique of natural theology, if correct, would be fatal to what both have written. However, even thinkers who exemplify the disciplines Moser is critiquing recognise that faith is more than a belief *that* a conclusion is true. And so, if this is the case it is not clear why Moser works so hard to debunk the concept of faith as a merely propositional belief.

The questions that Moser poses regarding the ethics of our inquiry about the divine, are essential questions for the nameless 'philosophers and theologians' who are frequently alluded to, to take seriously. In a discipline that often has a hard time shaking off the worries of triviality and irrelevance, Moser makes a case for a way of engaging in philosophical theology which engages with personal, ethical and existential questions of the highest importance. Whilst this is not a picture of faith which sits neatly in the academy alongside existing philosophical work, it is drawn carefully from Scripture and its importance is never in question. Just as Kierkegaard did before him, Moser's challenge to philosophy and theology will no doubt irritate and offend those who seek to speculate about the divine in a way which is detached from the challenge of living in relationship with God. However, given the account of faith that is presented here, this is surely the greatest praise that can be bestowed on Moser's work.