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# A Missed Opportunity: Reply to Moser

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**Abstract:** Paul K. Moser’s objection to my paper goes as follows: My claim about what can or should count as work of *Christian* philosophy requires empirical evidence from statistical sociology. Since neither of us is qualified to evaluate such empirical claims my challenge to Moser’s conception of Christian philosophy was not a real challenge. In this paper, I provide reasons why Moser’s objection fails. Furthermore, I discuss the role of the project of natural theology in a conception of Christian philosophy. Also, I provide a sketch of a Christian philosophy that identifies the Jewish-Christian God as Creator and Redeemer without pitting the so-called “God of the philosophers” against “the God of the Scriptures.”

## 1. Dealing with real issues

In my paper<sup>1</sup> I presented a competing view on what counts as Christian philosophy to the view Paul K. Moser presents in his various publications.<sup>2</sup> My presentation of a particular conception of Christian philosophy, though thoroughly inspired by his view, was not identical to his view. In my view, I suggested Moser’s call to reorient Christian philosophy calls for more compelling reasons as to what kind of reorientation is needed to the extant literature and practice of doing philosophy by Christian philosophers. Moser called my paper an eager defense of “the guild of Christian philosophers,” which I reject. To present a competing view of Christian philosophy need not imply a defense of the guild of Christian philosophers. I did not suggest that Christian philosophy as it is practiced does not need any reorientation at all, nor did my paper imply that Christian philosophers are doing Christian philosophy in the sense that there is no room

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<sup>1</sup> “On Moser’s Christ-Centered Metaphilosophy,” available online:  
<http://www.epsociety.org/library/articles.asp?pid=131>

<sup>2</sup> Among others, “Jesus and Philosophy: On the Questions We Ask,” in *Faith and Philosophy* (2005, Vol.22, No. 3) and “Christ-Shaped Philosophy,” which is available online at the link provided above.

for reorientation. That was not my claim, nor is that a view I'm eager to defend. My challenge for Moser was to present more compelling reasons what exactly his call to reorient Christian philosophy amounts to. Careful readers would notice that toward the end of his reply to my paper Moser pointed out a few areas of Christian philosophy that he identified as the areas that need reorientation. I take that as a good gesture in the direction of meeting the challenge I issued in my paper.

Now let us deal with the real issues I presented in my paper, issues that call for serious engagement. Here is what I take to be Moser's objection, let us call it, MO, to the challenges in my paper.

**MO:** TW's claim about what should count as work of *Christian* philosophy requires empirical evidence from statistical sociology. Since neither of us is qualified to evaluate such empirical claims, TW's challenge to Moser's conception of Christian philosophy was a failure.

Let me first present a few quotations from Moser's writings that suggest that one could easily issue the same objection to Moser, an objection that requires him to support his own views from statistical sociology. In his earlier writing, "Jesus and Philosophy," Moser writes, "As for philosophers who consistently manifest the obedience mode of philosophy in their writings, they are few and far between."<sup>3</sup> More recently, in "Christ-Shaped Philosophy," hereafter, CSP, Moser writes: "A serious problem stems from the frequent divorce of Christian philosophy from the Christian foundation of the inward Christ and Gethsemane union with him."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he adds, "Some philosophers object to bringing Gethsemane union into Christian philosophy on the ground that we should keep philosophy personally impartial, and not make it confessional in any way."<sup>5</sup> And finally, Moser holds that "Many philosophers ignore or dislike Jesus, because he transcends a familiar, honorific discussion mode, and demands that they do the same."<sup>6</sup>

Clearly the claims presented in the above quotations are not *a priori* at all. All of them are empirical claims. I suggest that we can sidestep seeking an expert judgment from statistical sociology in order to make progress with the

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<sup>3</sup> Moser, "Jesus and Philosophy: On the Questions We Ask," in *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol.22, No. 3, P. 283, footnote, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Paul K. Moser, "Christ Shaped Philosophy: Spirit and Wisdom United," p. 9

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 12.

real issues that need to be addressed. Here is one way that both Moser and I can make progress with the real issues our projects require us to deal with: It is perfectly reasonable to say that Moser formed his views on the practice and state of Christian philosophy by *experience* as a professional philosopher. His experience, like everyone else's who forms similar views, could be informed by working on philosophical problems relevant to the Christian faith, observing and reflecting on the way fellow Christian philosophers practice Christian philosophy, participating in various professional meetings, etc. As for the last point here is what Moser says in his response to William Hasker in their exchanges on this EPS online symposium,

Careful reflection on “the profession of philosophy... in the real world” reveals, with no room for serious doubt, that “the profession” is fractured and polymorphic to the point of breathtaking bewilderment, if not outright embarrassment. This lesson is an empirical matter that can be confirmed decisively by attendance at any of the national meetings of the APA and SPEP (so much the better if one's university foots the considerable bill).<sup>7</sup>

Now the real question is this: Why would one need to seek expert support from statistical sociology when it comes to confirm or disconfirm what I said in my paper? Moser calls a “main claim” (MC) a view he quotes from my paper on which a large part of his objection to my paper rests. Moser writes, “MC. It is false that “the discussion mode, in most cases of philosophy done by Christian philosophers, consists only in *mere* discussion without involving any obedience.”<sup>8</sup> And he goes on to say, “MC is a claim of empirical sociology, and not philosophy or philosophical theology. It is an empirical claim about “most cases of philosophy done by Christian philosophers.” It is therefore a bold claim that calls for cautious empirical treatment.”<sup>9</sup> He also adds this remark about MC, “Perhaps TW aims to protect the guild of Christian philosophers (as he sees it) in some way, but the relevant sociological claim is far outside, and even foreign to, my own philosophical areas of theorizing.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Paul K. Moser, “Reply to Hasker.”

<sup>8</sup> Moser, “Christian Philosophy without Sociology: Reply to Tedla Woldeyohannes,” p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.2.

Now it is not clear why Moser objects that a claim he quoted from my paper needs support from sociology when his views quoted above do not escape the same need for support from statistical sociology. I invite him to say why my claim calls for statistical support while his does not. I have already provided a suggestion that I take to be perfectly reasonable how both Moser and I and any professional philosopher can form a view about a particular claim about philosophical activities in the real world without any need to seek support from statistical sociology. I ask Moser to show why my suggestion as to how we both formed our views about Christian philosophy is wrong. A clue that he cannot *consistently* claim that my suggestion is wrong can be shown by reference to his response to William Hasker.

## 2. On Moser's Objection

Let me make a few more points about Moser's objection to my view of Christian philosophy. That objection is directed at a general claim, (GC), made in my paper that it is false that "the discussion mode, in most cases of philosophy done by Christian philosophers, consists only in *mere* discussion without involving any obedience." This general claim is later elucidated by a more specific claim, (SC), which was stated as follows.<sup>11</sup>

I submit that much of the body of philosophical work produced by most of contemporary Christian philosophers, especially in the last several decades, can count, directly or indirectly, as a body of work on *Christian* philosophy. To be more specific, when I say-- "the body of philosophical work produced by most of contemporary Christian philosophers, especially in the last several decades"-- I mean to refer to the body of work done in philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, works on distinctly Christian doctrines, works on apologetics, and more recently, works in analytic theology.<sup>12</sup>

Now I don't mean to shy away from a commitment to GC but focusing on SC would lead discussion to more specific issues SC calls one's attention to, which Moser failed to do. I insist on saying "the majority of work done by Christian philosophers," "a large body of work done by contemporary

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<sup>11</sup> See, Woldeyohannes, "On Moser's Christ-Centered Metaphilosophy," p. 5, and footnote 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

Christian philosophers,” because interpreting Moser’s call to reorient work done by Christian philosophers as applying to only a few of them would be implausible. It makes sense for Moser to issue a call to Christian philosophers to reorient Christian philosophy only if the majority of Christian philosophers have failed to do robust Christian philosophy. That is exactly the reason why I say “work done by the majority of Christian philosophers,” etc., in light of Moser’s call to reorient Christian philosophy. My trilemma captures precisely these points. The trilemma I presented for Moser in my paper was this:

The trilemma is that either Moser has to concede that (a) *all* of work done by contemporary Christian philosophers can and should count as work of Christian philosophy; but this would leave his project unjustified or unmotivated since this entails that there is no reason to reorient Christian philosophy, or (b) a small class of work done by contemporary Christian philosophers needs to be reoriented; but this is implausible given the evidence presented in Moser’s writings that seems to support that, more plausibly, his call is to reorient a large body of work done by Christian philosophers, or (c) his call is to reorient a large body of work done by contemporary Christian philosophers; but for this to be the case, Moser is invited to provide more compelling reasons why his view of Christian philosophy is more plausible than the view proposed in this paper.<sup>13</sup>

I submit that Moser’s call to reorient Christian philosophy targets the body of work I specified, which now can be confirmed from what he had said in his reply to my paper: “I perceive, for instance, a real need in contemporary Christian philosophy for a reorientation from what I call “philosophical theism” (familiar from much natural theology) to...”<sup>14</sup> It is obvious to anyone who is familiar with contemporary philosophy of religion that Moser is referring, at least partially, to the same body of work that I specifically referred to. Given this clear disagreement between his conception of Christian philosophy and mine, Moser has missed an opportunity to directly engage the main issues I presented in my paper.

Moser confessed that it was puzzling for him to read in my paper a contrast I made between his conception of Christian philosophy done in an

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., see p. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> See, Moser, “Christian Philosophy without Sociology: Reply to Tedla Woldeyohannes,” p. 7.

“obedience mode” and my suggestion of Christian philosophy done in “obedient discussion mode.” I grant that my suggested mode of doing Christian philosophy, particularly in the paper which is the subject of this discussion, is largely inspired by his view of doing Christian philosophy. However, there are differences between the two conceptions as our *disagreement* over what counts as Christian philosophy illustrates.<sup>15</sup> Besides, it is important to recall that on Moser’s view the call to reorient Christian philosophy is predicated on the claim that Christian philosophers should move from a mere discussion mode to an obedience mode. But that need to move from one mode to another does not arise on my proposed mode of doing Christian philosophy, insofar as Christian philosophy is done as an obedient discussion. For Moser the concern is about mere discussion, whereas on my view that concern need not arise provided that the discussion is done in an obedient response to the Lord. My proposed view of doing Christian philosophy as “obedient discussion” dissolves the concern Moser perceives about mere discussion. It is crucial to understand that Moser’s view of doing Christian philosophy in an “obedience mode” is meant to be used in contrast with “mere discussion” which is not an issue on my conception of Christian philosophy.

The key reason for the difference between our views is that what Moser considers philosophical work done in a mere discussion mode with respect to a body of work done by Christian philosophers is not identical to what I suggested to be a body of work done by Christian philosophers. That is because on my suggested view there is no mere discussion since all obedient discussion inherently involves discussion but the discussion is obedient discussion. But this is not the case on Moser’s view since his main call to reorient Christian philosophy from mere discussion to obedience mode of doing philosophy is predicated on the clear implication from his writings that most of Christian philosophy is done in a mere discussion mode.<sup>16</sup> What other

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<sup>15</sup> William Hasker says, in personal communication, that “He [Moser] appeals to his remark that “Philosophical discussion becomes advisable and permissible, under the divine love commands, if and only if it honors those commands by compliance with them,” to claim that you have said nothing new in your paper that he had not already said. That is misleading. It is consistent with that remark of his, in the light of everything else that he says, that philosophical discussion can legitimately play only a *very small* role in the work of a Christian philosopher. At the very least, he ought to have acknowledged that you have done good work in amplifying and further explaining something to which he had given only minimal acknowledgment.”

<sup>16</sup> In personal communication, William Hasker concurs, “What he [Moser] has said clearly implies that most of what is done by most Christian philosophers is far short of

justification can one provide if that is not the case? That is the key reason behind the trilemma I presented for Moser which he did not directly address.

### 3. Spelling Out the Disagreement

Richard Brian Davis raises another way of bringing out the disagreement between Moser’s conception of Christian philosophy and the one I suggested. Davis has proposed a principle that he suggests might capture the key disagreement between Moser’s conception of Christian philosophy and mine. He states that my disagreement with Moser seems to be based on something like the following general principle:

(GP) If  $p$  implies  $q$ , and S does  $q$ -philosophy work directly, then S does  $p$ -philosophy work indirectly.<sup>17</sup>

Davis provides an example to illustrate the above principle: He writes, “[S]ince Christianity entails the existence of God, and since Bill Craig has worked directly on God’s existence, he has also worked indirectly on Christian philosophy.”<sup>18</sup> He, then, goes on to raise a worry that (GP) is “overly permissive.” He remarks that “No doubt Christianity, since it implies the existence of an external world, also implies the existence of sub-atomic particles. But those working directly on sub-atomic particles don’t seem to be working on Christian theism or Christian philosophy—even indirectly!”

I think the worry Davis raised is an interesting one that suggests that I need to be more careful about what counts as Christian philosophy. I imagine Moser being sympathetic to this worry. Anticipating a worry such as the one Davis expresses I had already said the following in a footnote in my paper:<sup>19</sup>

I’m not implying that any piece of writing a Christian philosopher produces should be counted as an example of a work of Christian philosophy. The *content* of the work, the *motive* for writing it, and the *intention* or the *purpose* for the writing will be among crucial factors to determine whether a work is an example of Christian

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being truly Christian philosophy. I don't know why he is now reluctant [in his response to TW's paper] to acknowledge that this is his view, but that is the view that is implied by what he says in his two articles ["Jesus and Philosophy" and "Christ-Shaped Philosophy"].

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>19</sup> Woldeyohannes, “On Moser’s Christ-Centered Metaphilosophy,” footnote 12.



philosophy, directly or indirectly. It's also important to note that writings produced by philosophers who are Christians but without any relevance to the Christian faith, directly or indirectly, need not be counted as works of Christian philosophy. Such works can, at best, be deemed as works done *merely* in a discussion mode insofar as they have not been done with an intention to work out one's Christian vocation in a philosophical project that has a potential to contribute to the advancement of the Kingdom."

The above suggestion was meant to constrain the scope of work that should count as Christian philosophy. I think the above constraint on the scope of what counts as Christian philosophy, directly or indirectly, is adequate to address Davis' worry that my suggested conception of Christian philosophy is "overly permissive." Hence, I think, one can mitigate the suggested worry in light of what I have already said about what should count as Christian philosophy and what should not.

Though I think what I have already said is adequate to address the worry raised by Davis, it would be more helpful to add a few more reasons why the worry does not present a serious problem to the view of Christian philosophy I suggested. First, when a Christian philosopher works on arguments of natural theology, obviously, it is implausible to suggest that a *Christian* philosopher works on generic theism or a non-Christian understanding of God just because a Christian understanding of God, to some extent, is shared by other monotheistic conceptions of God. Also, to the extent that arguments of natural theology are successful in the sense that they establish the existence of God with *some* of the attributes of God as understood in Christianity, the success of such arguments indirectly applies to Jesus Christ as well since Jesus Christ *is* God on an orthodox Christian understanding of God. On an orthodox understanding of Christianity, Jesus Christ possesses all divine-making properties and that is what the project of natural theology is about: To establish by human reason alone the existence and nature of a divine being, God, without claiming the project of natural theology establishes *all* the divine attributes of the Christian God.<sup>20</sup> If this is

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<sup>20</sup> It is crucial to note that from a Christian perspective, unless distinctions in the Godhead are made explicit in the Bible to enable us to distinctly talk about the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, reference to "God" could plausibly be understood as a reference to the Godhead. One implication of this thought is that Christian philosophy is not *only* about Christ but also about the Triune God as "God" is understood from a Christian perspective.

the case, then it is plausible to claim that Christian philosophers, who directly work on natural theology, or arguments for the existence of God, indirectly work on Christian philosophy. To claim that a Christian philosopher *indirectly* works on Christian philosophy need not imply that such a philosopher is not working on Christian philosophy at all. In my view, the work of Christian philosophers on the project of natural theology should count as work on Christian-God-centered philosophy.

*Second*, furthermore, theistic arguments are *formulations*<sup>21</sup> of natural knowledge of God (see Romans 1:20-21); and also, obviously, the teaching of Romans 1: 20--21 and philosophical work (of natural theology) that is viewed as a *confirmation*<sup>22</sup> of the view in Rom. 1:20—21 suggests an implication of work on natural theology for work on Christian theism. The God of Rom. 1:

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Christian philosophy, properly understood, is Christian-God-centered philosophy. This idea is not in opposition to “Christ-Centered philosophy,” it is only an *amplification* of it.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Sudduth writes, “...theistic arguments are typically construed as the reflective clarification and development of the implanted and acquired natural knowledge of God. Theistic arguments have epistemic value here as contributing to *scientia dei*, a reflective or philosophical knowledge of God. Of course, this is natural knowledge of God, but natural knowledge of God acquired by way of explicit argument.” Sudduth, in *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Ashgate publishing, 2009), p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Moser denies that theistic arguments confirm the God of the Bible in the sense that “they do not yield conclusive evidence of a volitionally interactive personal God who is worthy of worship and seeks fellowship with humans.” See, Moser, *The Evidence for God*, p. 158. But this objection against natural theology arises when one thinks that theistic arguments are presented to serve as redemptively efficacious evidence for God’s reality. But this is not quite right. Moser’s objection would be valid only if those who engage in the project of natural theology intend it to deliver redemptively efficacious evidence for God’s reality. But that is not the case. Also, crucially, the project of natural theology does *not* require a commitment to the view that there is only one way to come to know God, i.e., by way of theistic arguments. That is nowhere part of the project of natural theology. A proper concern regarding the project of natural theology is to ask whether theistic arguments deliver a *complete* description of the God of the Bible. The answer to this question is, of course, “no,” they do not. But it does not follow from this that there is no *overlap* between descriptions of God as presented in theistic arguments and the description of God in the Bible. The overlap of descriptions of the God of the Bible and the God theistic arguments establish can plausibly be *explained* thus: The God who is the Creator *is* the God who is the Redeemer because creation is one source of knowledge of the Creator and the same Creator has chosen to reveal himself by way of special revelation in the Bible [and as God-Incarnate] for redemptive purposes. Sudduth writes, “Even if natural theology does not provide a proof for the existence of a being under the description of the Trinity [and worthiness of worship], neither is the denial of this description intrinsic to the project of natural theology” (Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*, p. 196).

20-21 is the Christian God<sup>23</sup>, no doubt, and philosophical work that has implications for the existence and nature of God, as Christians understand God, can count as work on Christian philosophy; therefore, theistic arguments, to the extent that they involve work on the existence and nature of the Christian God, can count as work on Christian philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

*Third*, I think, it is worth pointing out a general remark about the role of theistic arguments or the project of natural theology since Moser's view on what counts as knowledge of God plays crucial role in his conception of Christian philosophy. It must be noted that knowledge of creation or general revelation is not salvific, nor are theistic arguments, which are formulations of natural knowledge of God, intended to provide redemptive knowledge of God. Theistic arguments can be understood as *pointers* to the Creator, who is also the Redeemer, whose existence and nature are revealed by and in the creation. So the Psalmist writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; Night after night they reveal *knowledge*."<sup>25</sup> (Italics added). Rejection of theistic arguments, which are formulations of natural knowledge of God, amounts to rejection of one form of revelation from the same God who reaches out, in Incarnation, for a redemptive purpose. Therefore, to fault theistic arguments by claiming that they fall short of a redemptive purpose is wrong since that is not their purpose to begin with.

Yes, creation as a general revelation and theistic arguments as formulations of natural knowledge of God fail to provide redemptive knowledge of God and that is why God has provided redemptive knowledge of God that is grounded in God. Furthermore, to deny that theistic arguments can provide reflective formulation of natural knowledge of God, would, at least, imply that Rom. 1:18--21 is false, or that people cannot have natural

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<sup>23</sup> There is no reason to believe that the Apostle Paul, in Romans 1: 20-21, was talking about "generic theism" or "God of the philosophers." If the Apostle Paul was not talking about "generic theism," or "God of the philosophers," why should anyone believe that when a Christian philosopher claims that theistic arguments, to some extent, *confirm* the view in Rom. 1:20-21 that theistic arguments are only fitting for "generic theism" or "God of the philosophers"?

<sup>24</sup> It is important to note this: When the Apostle Paul wrote Romans 1:20-21, he was not doing natural theology; rather, he was describing that there is natural knowledge of God. That is why it is important to understand natural theology as an articulation, explication and development of what the Apostle Paul described as natural knowledge of God.

<sup>25</sup> New International Version.

knowledge of God.<sup>26</sup> But such a claim flies in the face of clear teachings of the Bible that people can and do have natural knowledge of God though some plainly suppress such a truth. Therefore, a proper judgment about the role or purpose of theistic arguments, then, is to say that they have a limited yet valuable role to play in an overarching story of redemption. That is, their purpose is only to point to the God of redemption. If they fail even in this limited role, then that can be the subject of another debate but that debate must be separated from the debate that is based on a categorical judgment that theistic arguments are useless or irrelevant. Considered alone, they are inadequate for redemptive purposes, but theistic arguments, in and of themselves, are not typically presented as an efficacious source of redemption.

Finally, it is the task of Christian philosophers to spell out the proper role theistic arguments are supposed to play in the redemptive program of the Christian God without claiming that natural knowledge of God, and its formulation in theistic arguments, is a *substitute* for redemptive knowledge of God that can be acquired by direct acquaintance with God. Redemptive knowledge of God is *de re*, agent-to-agent, and it transcends natural knowledge of God and *mere* propositional knowledge that God exists, that is *de dicto* knowledge of God. Also, redemptive knowledge of God is volition-involving, i.e., it cannot be had without a human agent cooperatively engaging and interacting with the will of the divine agent and as a result it is not purely intellectual. In my view, which is in agreement with Moser's views on his religious epistemology, redemptive knowledge of God is not only volition-involving but also it is morally-sensitive. One cannot receive redemptive evidence and hence knowledge of God without engaging God as a moral agent with a consequence that the human agent's moral life, when morally transformed, becomes a salient evidence for God's reality. Adequate evidence for God's reality that is efficacious for redemption goes beyond an intellectual

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<sup>26</sup> Moser thinks that Romans 1: 20-21 does not teach that creation by itself, alone is evidence for a personal God worthy of worship. He writes, "I do not find Paul claiming in Romans 1 that creation *by itself* is such evidence. Instead, Paul claims that "God showed them" about God's reality via creation, but not via creation *alone*." Moser, *Philosophia Christi*, Vol.14, No. 2, p. 310. [Italics in the original] I disagree with Moser's interpretation of Romans for two reasons: First, I claim that creation by itself, alone is adequate for natural knowledge of God, i.e., that God exists, which does not imply that natural knowledge of God is adequate for salvific purposes. Second, the main purpose for special revelation, that is contained in the Scriptures and manifested in the Incarnation, is to provide that knowledge which is adequate for salvific purposes, of course, for those who are *willing* to go beyond recognition that God exists (i.e., natural knowledge of God) to a personal relationship with a personal God worthy of worship.

recognition or admission that God exists. Since redemptive knowledge of God is available and is grounded in a *de re*, agent-to-agent relationship with God, the needed call, for those who consider theistic arguments, is to *willingly* enter into a personal relationship with God.<sup>27</sup>

Above, I have attempted to show that Moser's call to reorient Christian philosophy, by moving the attention and focus from "philosophical theism" to the redemptive God of robust Christian theism, need not require a categorical rejection of the project of natural theology. I do not see any reason to rule out the possibility that God can allow, for some people, use of theistic arguments, as formulations of natural knowledge of God, as *pointers* to the Redeemer, who is also the Creator. To claim that theistic arguments are irrelevant suggests that God would not use a revelation of God as evidence for God's reality. That does not seem right. Also, even inconclusive evidence of natural theology, which can serve only as a pointer to God's reality, need not stand in the way of receiving conclusive evidence from God when God decides to provide such evidence for whoever is willing to receive it. It is up to the sincere seekers of God, the Redeemer, to truly examine themselves and to judge whether they are *willing* to enter into a salvific relationship with God. Now the call away from *mere* intellectual entertainment of the proposition that God exists, which natural theology can deliver, to volitional commitment to enter into a cooperative and reciprocal relationship with God, which irreducibly involves a volitional exercise, is the needed call for human inquirers of God's reality and a much needed area Christian philosophers need to pay more attention to in their work as Christian philosophers. The task of Christian philosophers is to present a coherent set of evidence for the reality of God that need not exclude any evidence, including evidence of natural theology with all its limitations.

In sum, in my view of Christian philosophy and natural theology practiced by Christian philosophers, there is no "God of the philosophers." The Creator, which natural theology delivers in the form of propositional knowledge that God exists, is the Redeemer since the same God who revealed himself in general revelation offers special revelation that is the medium for redemptive volitional fellowship with God as the Redeemer. From the perspective of robust Christian theism, there is no reason to sharply separate the Creator from the Redeemer---since the Creator is the Redeemer. The fact that propositional knowledge of God as articulated by arguments of natural theology is not a complete description of the Jewish-Christian God as

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<sup>27</sup> See more on this Moser, *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (CUP, 2008) and *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (CUP, 2010).

Redeemer need not be a reason to claim that the God natural theology presents is “God of the philosophers.”

Since to have *only* propositional knowledge that the Creator, i.e., God, exists is not sufficient for redemption and reconciliation with God as the Redeemer, there is a need for redemptively efficacious evidence for the Redeemer. Consequently, the Jewish-Christian God purposively provides redemptively efficacious evidence for those who are *willing* and seeking to enter into a volitional relationship with the Creator, who is now the Redeemer. Also, the Redeemer, who is also the Creator, can use creation as a medium to draw the attention of human beings who are willing to enter into volitional fellowship with the Creator-Redeemer God. Note that the Gospel, as presented in the New Testament, does not require rejection of the fact that the Creator is the Redeemer. The Good News or the Gospel presented in the New Testament makes it clear that the Creator is the Redeemer. Natural theology practiced by Christian philosophers should follow suit. I submit this sketch of Christian philosophy that identifies the Jewish-Christian God as Creator and Redeemer, without pitting the so-called “God of the philosophers” against “the God of the Scriptures,” is a more plausible conception of Christian philosophy than Moser’s proposal for Christian philosophy.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. A Missed Opportunity

In this concluding section I want to briefly focus on an issue I raised in my paper that Moser did not address at all, an issue which could lead to a more fruitful discussion. I claim that given a conception of Christian philosophy considering Christian philosophers as missionaries requires thinking of Christian philosophy along the line I suggested.<sup>29</sup> On Moser’s conception of Christian philosophy, Christian philosophers who engage in the development of arguments for God’s existence, particularly, in the tradition of natural theology, engage in mere philosophical discussion. Recall his statement quoted above: “I perceive, for instance, a real need in contemporary Christian philosophy for a reorientation from what I call “philosophical theism” (familiar from much natural theology) to...” Not so, on my view.

If the discussion is obedient discussion, as I suggested, even when Christian philosophers engage in arguments for God’s existence, even including the project of natural theology, this need not be considered an

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<sup>28</sup> I develop this “sketch” further in my dissertation on religious epistemology.

<sup>29</sup> See my paper, “On Moser’s Christ-Centered Metaphilosophy” for more on the idea about “Christian philosophers as missionaries.”

exercise in mere discussion. The motive and purpose of engaging arguments of natural theology matters and makes a difference. For those who seek good reasons to believe in God, advocating “Christ-Shaped Philosophy” need not require rejecting arguments for God’s existence and arguments for God’s existence need not be considered mere talk, or mere discussion as I argued in the last section. Yes, robust Christian theism goes beyond mere theism but to work on mere theism or “philosophical theism” with *a purpose to extend* such arguments for robust Christian theism need not be seen as useless mere discussion, as Moser thinks it is.<sup>30</sup> So the burden of proof is on Moser to show fellow Christian philosophers that they need to give up philosophical projects such as the project of natural theology in response to his call to reorient Christian philosophy.<sup>31</sup>

Now one fruitful way to think of Christian philosophers as missionaries can be thought of as follows: The same Apostle, Apostle Paul, whom Moser takes as a model for Christian philosophers to emulate in their practice of Christian philosophy, writes, in 1 Corinthians 9:22: “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” I take it that one lesson contemporary Christian philosophers may learn from the above message from the Apostle Paul is this: Communicating the Good News is context and need sensitive. *All human beings need the Good News but communication of the Good News to all human beings need not be in the same way.* Philosophers, like everyone else, need the Good News but the way of sharing of the Good News with philosophers needs to be sensitive to their condition, experiences, etc. Christian philosophers, following the Apostle Paul, should be able to say that they have “become all things to all people [including philosophers] so that by all possible means [they] might save some.” Christian philosophers should also be able to be committed to saying, following the Apostle Paul, “See to it that no one takes you captive through *hollow and deceptive* philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.” (Col.2:8) [Italics

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<sup>30</sup> See Moser, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (Cambridge UP, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Recently, to his credit, Moser has produced three books: *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology* (Cambridge UP, 2008), *The Evidence for God*, see the previous note, and a new book: *The Severity of God: Religion and Philosophy Reconceived* (Cambridge UP, 2013). These three books and particularly the various essays that have become the subject of discussion on Christian philosophy are Moser’s contributions to the reorientation of philosophy, in general, and Christian philosophy, in particular. Moser’s program of reorienting Christian philosophy deserves serious engagement and my paper is a response to such a call.

added]. Note that Apostle Paul's warning targets "hollow and deceptive" philosophy, not *Christian* philosophy.<sup>32</sup> Though one can dispute that the Apostle Paul did not have in mind a conception of "Christian philosophy" at the time he wrote the above warning about "hollow and deceptive philosophy," there is no reason to believe that the Apostle Paul would issue any warning against a philosophy that is done to promote the Good News and the advancement of the Kingdom of God.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear that at the end of the day it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict sinners of their sins but the same Holy Spirit may use, as I suggested above, philosophical arguments of even natural theology as a medium for communicating the Good News. Yes, God does not need arguments to communicate the Good News.<sup>34</sup> Owing to their professional training that mostly consists in working with arguments<sup>35</sup>, philosophers might be open to the Good News if some philosophical arguments can be of some help opening

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<sup>32</sup> An audio lecture by Alvin Plantinga on what Christian philosophy is available here: <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/faculty/plantinga/>. I owe to Plantinga the suggestion regarding the most plausible view about the warning involving philosophy by the Apostle Paul.

<sup>33</sup> For Moser's view regarding the warning about philosophy by the Apostle Paul in Col. 2:8, see his, "Christ-Shaped Philosophy," p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Moser writes about a possibility that God may use theistic arguments thus: "God provided the needed evidence directly, or so one could argue abductively, if my account holds. Accordingly, mere *de dicto* natural theology is dispensable for knowledge of God, even if it happens to have some *psychological* value for some people in some situations. "[Italics in the original]. See, Moser, *Philosophia Christi*, Vol. 14, No. 2. P. 308. A couple of points: First, recall that in my view, natural knowledge of God, which can also be expressed by way of arguments of natural theology, is not sufficient for redemptive purposes. But it does not follow from this that "mere *de dicto* natural theology is dispensable for knowledge of God," if "knowledge of God" is meant to refer to natural knowledge of God since Rom. 1:20-21 teaches that people possess such knowledge and I don't see a need to dispense with it. It is, hence, ambiguous what Moser means when he says "mere *de dicto* natural theology is dispensable for knowledge of God." If he means, "mere *de dicto* natural knowledge is dispensable for knowledge of God" in the sense that such knowledge is insufficient for redemptive purposes, that is also my view. But it is not clear why a claim for redemptive evidence requires that natural knowledge of God be dispensable. Two, in my view arguments of natural theology provide *epistemic* reasons for belief that God *exists*, of course, that is their purpose since what theistic arguments deliver is not adequate evidence for salvific purpose. But in Moser's view theistic arguments have *psychological* value, which does not seem right when we talk about natural *knowledge* of God and theistic arguments as *reasons* for belief in the existence of God. "Knowledge" is an epistemic concept if anything is and theistic arguments are presented as *epistemic reasons or evidence* for the existence of God.

<sup>35</sup> Think of "arguments" as philosophers' *lingua franca*.



their minds to what the Good News is all about. Even to call the attention of philosophers that arguments do not save and it is God's personal revelation and one's personal relationship with God that is indispensable for knowledge of God needs to be presented to philosophers in some form of argument. In this context I'm thinking of arguments as a *medium* of communication among philosophers. But I am not suggesting that philosophers cannot be addressed without arguments. The Holy Spirit transcends any medium of communication, including human languages. But we also know that the Holy Spirit uses human languages to communicate the Good News. Obviously, the Bible is written in human languages. Philosophical arguments need not be exceptions. My view of Christian philosophers as missionaries to their fellow philosophers is sensitive to the needs of philosophers and it does not call for doing away with arguments for God's existence, especially arguments of natural theology. Speaking of philosophical arguments I am not suggesting philosophical arguments must be *primary* in the process of communicating the Good News. The value of philosophical arguments is context sensitive; not everyone needs them, nor are they of value in every context. But it does not follow that they are of no value in any context.

The view I have just presented can be contrasted with Moser's view he identified as one of the areas that needs reorientation. He writes,

A reorientation of philosophy away from the *primacy* of philosophical arguments (and God as an explanatory postulate based on such arguments, including those of traditional natural theology) to the importance of the spiritual discernment of God's agapeic self-manifesting disclosures in human lives (and direct human acquaintance and companionship with this elusive personal God who is not the conclusion of an argument).<sup>36</sup>  
[Italics in the original]

It is clear now that Moser holds that arguments of natural theology need not be the primary means to obtain knowledge of God, who is willing to reveal himself to human inquirers in a direct manner such that one can experience God in a direct acquaintance that need not involve philosophical arguments. I think, even if a philosopher cannot experience an encounter with God by means of philosophical arguments, it is not impossible for a philosopher to be *willing* to encounter God experientially if arguments for God's existence play

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<sup>36</sup> Moser, "Christian Philosophy without Sociology: Reply to Tedla Woldeyohannes," p. 7.

some role in helping one to become willing to consider a personal encounter with a divine agent. Also, yes, it is correct to say that God is not a conclusion of philosophical arguments. But then philosophical arguments have a proposition as a conclusion but obviously God is not a proposition. And there is no reason to think that those Christians who engage in theistic arguments of natural theology suggest that God is a proposition. Conclusions of theistic arguments point to “God,” as I have argued, in saying that they are *pointers* to the Creator who is also the Redeemer. Furthermore, it is plausible to suggest that God, who is not a proposition and hence cannot be identical to conclusions of philosophical arguments, is also *elusive* in the sense that God, as the Redeemer, cannot be captured by philosophical arguments. Philosophical arguments can, at most, point to God as the Creator who reaches out to humans as God the Redeemer.

Finally, I have shown that, for Moser and myself, there is a disagreement over what counts as work of Christian philosophy and also the goal of natural theology and its role in Christian philosophy. The challenge I issued for Moser to provide more compelling reasons why Christian philosophy needs reorientation, in the sense he suggests and in light of what I presented as an alternative view of Christian philosophy, has not been addressed.<sup>37</sup>

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