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Interview with Dr. Paul Moser on Knowing God

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As a part of my [series](#) on faith and reason, I'm exploring the concept of faith in Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard who held that faith is a unique way of getting to truth about the world and, as it turns out about God. One would be hard-pressed to find a modern philosopher who has done more work underscoring the distinctiveness of a faith-centered epistemology than Dr. Paul Moser. In researching Kierkegaard's thought, I dug into Dr. Moser's latest book, *The Evidence for God*, and wanted to know more about how the arguments in that book related both to Kierkegaard's ideas and to my topic. Dr. Moser graciously agreed to discuss his views with me. Our exchange focuses on the nature of religious belief and Professor Moser's position that certain religious experiences can constitute a non-propositional, "evidential personalism" that adequately grounds belief in God (and how belief in God differs from belief that God exists). We also talked about how his position relates to Kierkegaard's views about the nature of religious experience.

Professor Moser is editor of the *American Philosophical Quarterly* and is chair of the philosophy department of Loyola University. He has authored or edited 20 books mainly in the area of epistemology and philosophy of religion and has authored dozens of articles. His full curriculum vitae is [here](#). For a list of books relevant to the present discussion, see the listing at the end of this interview.

I want to publicly thank Dr. Moser for taking time out of his busy schedule to dialogue with me about this important topic.

Philosophy News Service: *You argue in your latest book *The Evidence for God* that the problem of divine hiddenness is a human moral problem that leads to the epistemic problem. Would you say that if one had a right relationship with God, God would then not be hidden to that person? How might God make Himself known?*

Paul Moser: *The Evidence for God* and its predecessor, *The Elusive God*, contend that God hides for various reasons (not all of which we can specify in detail), and that divine hiding does not always result from a moral deficiency in the person from whom God hides. For example, Jesus's notorious cry of dereliction on the cross (Mk. 15:34) seems to involve God's hiding from him, but this was not the result of any moral deficiency in Jesus. In any case, we do not have any simple recipe for fully explaining or removing divine hiding, because God may have morally good purposes served by divine hiding and some of those purposes may be unknown to us. It should not be surprising to us in our cognitively limited situation that God's purposes may include God's making himself known to us or refraining from doing so in various ways that we would not have predicted.

Many philosophers clamor for principles that amount to intricate human explanations of God's ways, but it is arguable that we have to deal primarily with a personal God who may not honor such principles

(cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). As a result, we should expect our characterizations of God in some areas to be less “cut-and-dried” and even less adequate than we might have wished. Even so, I contend that God can, and does, make himself known via a receptive human conscience in ways that are much more personally challenging, morally robust, and spiritually vital than the esoteric arguments of traditional and contemporary natural theology.

In particular, I maintain that the voice of God can be heard in a receptive human conscience, in keeping with a recurring assumption in the biblical writings. This position fits both with Paul’s suggestion that in human conscience God bears witness to the divine moral character as represented in the law of God, thereby holding people accountable (Rom. 2:14-15), and with his suggestion that his conscience can confirm something by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9:1; cf. 2 Cor. 1:12, 5:11). One’s conscience is the inner place, one’s spiritual “heart,” where one can experience the New (and Old) Testament phenomenon of one’s directly hearing from, being called by, or being taught by God (see, e.g., Jn. 6:45, Matt. 16:17, 1 Cor. 1:9, 1 Thess. 3:11, 4:7,9, Heb. 3:7,15). The role of human conscience in knowledge of God is widely neglected by philosophers and others, and this neglect obscures the vital experiential reality of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus. It also minimizes the crucial role of prayer in evidence-conferring interaction with this God. The latter role finds its perfect model in the prayer of Jesus to God in Gethsemane: “Father, not what I will, but what You will” (Mk. 14:36). This Gethsemane attitude is central not only to life with God but also to human appropriation of evidence for God.

PNS: *In the same book, you write in regards to fideism, “The result is a kind of faith that is either necessarily false (if it is contradictory) or cognitively arbitrary (if it is lacking in a cognitive ground)...Indeed, such faith cannot be, even in principle, trustworthily commended (for adoption or practice) as correct if it is either contradictory or ungrounded.” Are you making a distinction between beliefs one knows to be true for oneself and beliefs one can commend to others as true? Is it possible, in your view, for the former to be cognitively valid without the latter being possible (for example when one experiences pain)?*

Moser: The context of the quotation is the book’s challenge to a kind of fideism (suggested by, among others, Johannes Climacus, whose views are not to be confused with those of Kierkegaard himself) implying that belief in God neither needs nor has evidential support. The point behind the quotation is that trustworthy commendation of a position, either to oneself or to others, requires a kind of evidential support that involves a truth-indicator (which amounts to evidence offered) for the position commended. The required truth-indicator will count against any fideist approach to belief in God, because it will supply a kind of evidence offered for belief in God.

Even so, we should not infer that a person’s evidence must be able to be shared by that person with others or even adequately described by that person to others. Sometimes a person lacks the resources to share some of his or her evidence with others or even adequately to describe that evidence. Having evidence should not be confused with describing or communicating evidence, let alone with giving an argument for a position.

PNS: *Suppose one directly experiences God (either synchronically or diachronically) and comes to believe in Him. Suppose further that one examines the arguments and evidence for His existence and either (1) fails to grasp their success or failure due to lack of training, intellectual immaturity, or some other reason or (2) finds evidence for and against God's existence in rough epistemic parity or (3) finds the evidence against God's existence more rationally compelling than for it and thus cannot commend the belief as true. She still believes that God exists but rational argument and evidence appears to play no epistemic role in her belief. Is it possible for this person to be in a right epistemic relationship to God?*

Moser: If the use of "finds" here is synonymous with "believes," we can answer "yes" with a qualification. If I believe in God on the basis of a direct experience of God, and the experience is salient (i.e., truly indicative of God), then there would have to be a defeater (available to me) for this experience not to yield justifying evidence. Contrary to the uncritical assumption of many philosophers, mere beliefs do not supply defeaters of evidence or justification, just as mere beliefs do not supply positive evidence or justification. Perhaps a misguided kind of epistemic coherentism leads some philosophers to hold otherwise, but a little reflection shows that such coherentism would leave us with the justification of obviously false fairy tales.

In any case, the proposed scenario would be a situation where evidence does support my belief in God, even though I would have confusing (and false) beliefs about the epistemic status of my belief in God. The latter beliefs by themselves would not undermine my evidence from the salient experience. Evidence, of course, need not be a rational argument (consider a salient experience that is not an argument at all), but it nonetheless supplies a needed truth-indicator for epistemically justified belief.

PNS: *The experience functions as evidence partly because it provides an answer to the question, "Why do you believe in God?" It provides the basis for a defeater for the person holding belief because if the person did not have the experience, (ostensibly) she would not believe. Here you say that belief that the arguments against God's existence are strong (or epistemically neutral) would not undermine her belief based on the salient experience. Why should this person give more epistemic weight to the evidence conferred by the experience over the arguments that would seem to undermine or defeat her belief?*

Moser: Actually, the salient experience itself does not answer a question, because the experience is not itself propositional and therefore is not, strictly speaking, an answer at all. The experience, however, can prompt the following question: Why am I now having the experience I am having (say, with certain features corresponding to God's moral character, such as distinctive *agape*)? God's salient intervention can give rise to a true answer to the latter question; for instance, the true answer can be that I am now having my salient experience (with certain features corresponding to God's moral character, such as distinctive *agape*) because God is intervening directly in my life. When that true answer is the best available explanation of my salient experience, in the absence of defeaters, my belief that God is intervening can be a justified true belief. (This kind of abductive approach to justified belief in general is developed in my book, *Knowledge and Evidence*.)

Any beliefs (and arguments) offered as potential defeaters of the experiential evidence in question would themselves have to be properly grounded, ultimately in something other than beliefs, because beliefs (as propositions) are not self-justifying. If any belief could be self-justifying, then every belief could (because every belief entails itself), but, of course, not every belief is self-justifying. Accordingly, no belief is self-justifying. Defeaters, then, do not arise from mere beliefs or arguments. Something nondoxastic, such as an experience, must confer an epistemic status on the alleged defeaters. Another way to put this point is to acknowledge that experiences can be foundational evidence, but mere beliefs or arguments cannot. Coherentist accounts of justification and defeat run afoul of this important lesson.

PNS: *You write in The Evidence for God, "Faith in God could not be trustworthily commended as a correct human response to be obediently lived out for the good of others if it rested just on an acknowledged contradiction or on some other kind of ungrounded commitment." Wouldn't an existentialist say that first-person, direct experience of God is a type of ground even if rational arguments are contradictory and physical evidence is not forthcoming? Must the believer have both an experiential and a rational grounding in order to be properly oriented to the truth? If so, why?*

Moser: An experiential ground for belief in God can be an epistemically rational ground, but, as just suggested, it need not be an argument of any kind. Salient experiences can be truth-indicators and therefore evidence even when experiences are not and do not include arguments. More generally, a direct experience of God can ground one's commitment to God, even when one lacks (and cannot formulate) an argument for God's existence. When one has a salient direct experience, in the absence of defeaters, one has the needed evidence; one's commitment on the basis of that evidence need not wait for a formulated argument. Accordingly, this would not be a case of an ungrounded commitment, because one's salient experience would serve as the needed ground.

In addition, it would be a mistake to demand "physical evidence" for God's existence, given that God is not physical. Here, again, we can look for experiential evidence in a suitably receptive human conscience to make good sense of talk of relevant evidence of God that is not an argument. My current book project, *The Severity of God* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2013), clarifies such evidence with an eye to some longstanding problems in religious epistemology.

PNS: *Suppose that for all people that believe in God, their belief is grounded experientially in the way you describe here. It is not grounded on physical evidence or philosophical argument (and it appears that it's not necessarily even supported by it). Would there be an impact to the role belief in God could play in the public square? If belief in God's existence is not publicly analyzable in the way that certain scientific and political facts are, wouldn't the role of God's existence be dramatically attenuated as a ground for say prescriptive moral guidance (even if each individual can be motivated to act morally based on his or her belief)? Is this a problem?*

Moser: We have no way to escape the reality that God is not in the category of either a scientific fact or a political fact. In particular, we should not expect God to be available to our casual examination in the way that many scientific and political facts are. As Isaiah recognizes: "Truly, you are a God who hides

himself" (Isa. 45:15). Similarly, Jesus thanks God for hiding certain evidence regarding God and God's intervention from unreceptive people (Matt. 11:25; cf. Lk. 10:21). This fits with the following epistemologically important remark attributed to Jesus in John's Gospel: "Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching [of Jesus] is from God or whether I [Jesus] am speaking on my own" (Jn. 7:17). The epistemological relevance of a human's willingness to do God's will, in human knowledge of God and God's intervention, contrasts the relevant evidence for God from evidence for ordinary scientific and political facts. This consideration actually heightens the moral relevance of evidence for God, because the moral responsiveness of an individual to God's call and will is central to the individual's receptivity toward the relevant evidence. Evidence regarding God, accordingly, is morally robust at least in virtue of the morally sensitive conditions for its reception. Of course, this kind of moral robustness involves the will of a personal agent, in keeping with John 7:17. It cannot be reduced to scientific or political facts.

John's Gospel portrays Jesus's brothers as challenging Jesus to give a public demonstration of his status as God's powerful son. They implore Jesus: "Show yourself to the world" (Jn. 7:4). At this point, John remarks: "For even his brothers did not believe in him" (Jn. 7:5). The point here is that the kind of evidence offered by God is not a spectacle for the public domain. Instead, it is morally and volitionally sensitive evidence that invites trust *in God*, beyond mere belief that God exists. As a result, Jesus could bluntly remark: "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign" (Matt. 16:4), where the "sign" in question is morally indifferent regarding the volitional attitudes of recipients. (Chapter 2 of *The Elusive God* takes up this topic.)

PNS: *Can you talk a bit about your current project? What is the focus in this book?*

Moser: *The Severity of God* contends that philosophers and others have improperly neglected the ways in which a God worthy of worship would be severe, or difficult, in divine righteousness and grace. The idea of divine severity is common in the Old Testament, but it emerges clearly in the New Testament as well (see, e.g., Lk. 19:22, Rom. 11:22; cf. Matt. 25:24). The problem of divine severity, put concisely, is the problem of whether, and if so, why, a God worthy of worship would allow human life to be as severe, or as difficult, as it actually is. This is not a version of the problem of evil, because severity in human life need not be evil at all. Severity can consist of a kind of rigor or stress that is altogether free of evil but is nonetheless severely difficult for humans. Philosophers and theologians have written extensively on various problems of evil, but the problem of divine severity has received relatively little attention.

The book explores the bearing of divine severity on the evidence for God (Chapter 1), flux in human life (Chapter 2), human salvation (Chapter 3), natural theology (Chapter 4), miraculous divine signs (Chapter 5), and human receptivity toward God (Chapter 6). The book's method recruits some heuristic questions regarding the potential ways of God toward humans. These questions may be called *expectation-evoking*, because they are helpful in eliciting sound expectations regarding God and God's ways of intervention in human lives. One such question is the following: How would God act in relation to humans if God aimed to redeem them not just as thinkers but as volitional, *morally responsible agents* in need of a self-commitment (of the will) to God? Philosophers and theologians have given inadequate

attention to such expectation-evoking questions about God, particularly in connection with the problem of divine severity, but this book aims to correct that deficiency.

PNS: Summarize your idea of “personified evidence.” How does this differ from the notion of a direct experience of God as described by reformed epistemologists like Plantinga?

Moser: As worthy of worship and therefore morally perfect, God is inherently personal, and God’s personal character is morally robust. Discussion of this God, accordingly, moves us beyond any kind of deism or mere theism. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus, rather than the god of certain theistic philosophers. Personifying evidence of God is evidence found in the personal moral character of an agent, rather than in mere propositions, claims, or arguments. Jesus is the perfect human personifying evidence of God (as John’s Gospel and Paul’s epistles have suggested), and he is, of course, not a mere proposition, claim, or argument. As a personal agent, with definite intentions and plans, he can serve as personifying evidence for his personal divine Father, who also has definite intentions and plans. Other humans, too, can become personifying evidence of God in virtue of their receiving certain features of God’s moral character, as *The Evidence for God* contends. In this approach, involving evidential personalism, persons play a role in foundational evidence that cannot be reduced to mere propositions, claims, or arguments. In looking for principles as ultimate, some philosophers miss the distinctive point and value of evidential personalism. For instance, much of analytic philosophy of religion seems never to get around to some of the key features of Christian personalism, such as the bearing of the crucified Jesus on epistemology. We do well not to sacrifice such personalism for any kind of deism or mere theism.

PNS: You state in your paper, “Agapeic Theism” that personifying divine evidence involves development over time. Does this mean that belief in God is degreed? Can you provide an analogy or metaphor to make this idea clearer?

Moser: Faith in God can indeed vary in strength, as we know from human experience and from various New Testament writings. If, as I contend, faith in God is self-commitment to God, then the question becomes whether there can be varying strengths of self-commitment to God. You might commit yourself more strongly to God than I do, and therefore your faith in God would be stronger than my faith. Paul evidently endorses such a view of varying strengths of faith in his suggestion that faith can “continue to grow” (2 Cor. 10:15), and in his talk of “the measure (*metron*) of faith” a person has (Rom. 12:3; cf. 1 Thess. 3:10). Just as we can imagine one athlete being more resolved than another to win a race, so also we can imagine one’s person’s faith being more resolved, durable, and resilient than another person’s.

PNS: So the degree relates to the strength of one’s commitment but not to the acknowledgement that a being like God exists?

Moser: Different degrees of confidence can apply to the acknowledgement component in belief that God exists, but the original question concerned “belief in God.” Belief in God is irreducible to belief that God exists, because the former, unlike the latter, include a *de re* component of trust in God. Mere belief that God exists is compatible with an absence of any trust in God. It is arguable that James 2:19 aims to deflate the redemptive importance of mere belief that God exists, perhaps in an effort to correct a distorted interpretation of Paul’s influential teaching about faith.

PNS: *Would you say that evidential personalism is consistent with Kierkegaard’s religious epistemology (that is, the idea is something he would agree is a basis for his position on religious belief)? If not, how does it differ?*

Moser: Kierkegaard would shudder at the very notion of a “religious epistemology,” given his revulsion toward philosophical abstractions. Even so, he highly values a role for a “God relationship” and for “the [primary] gift as the [divine] giver” in a way that invites an interpretation in terms of evidential personalism. In a 2010 *Philosophy Compass* essay on Kierkegaard (“Kierkegaard’s Conception of God”), I try to draw out his view in this manner. I sharply dissent, however, from his view in *Judge for Yourself* (1851) that “before the Spirit who gives life can come, you must first die to [selfishness]” (p. 79; cf. p. 81). This view is Pelagian, and needs to be corrected by the Pauline view that the power of God’s Spirit is offered to humans to “put to death” selfishness and other human traits contrary to God’s moral character (cf. Rom. 8:13). We should hold, then, that even human repentance is an empowered gift offered by God. A perfectly loving God would offer to willing humans the power to “die to” selfishness as the way to exemplify life with God in *agape* toward others. Contrary to Kierkegaard’s suggestion, then, humans would not be left with their own meager power to purify themselves of selfishness before God’s Spirit could supply life-giving power. Kierkegaard mistakenly offers human self-purification as a precondition for, rather than a result of, the arrival of God’s life-giving Spirit and power. In doing so, he truncates the reach of divine grace, including in the cognitive arena. Divine grace, including divine cognitive grace, is not Pelagian in the way Kierkegaard suggests. It entails that God, in divine *agape*, intervenes *first*, as 1 John 4:19 announces. Even so, human agency and responsibility are intact, as humans are obligated to respond agreeably to God’s personal intervention.

PNS: *C. Stephen Evans describes religious knowledge in Kierkegaard’s thought as a different (I think he would say unique) type of intentional state--a religious state--that is grounded on an awareness of vulnerability and psychological recognition of brokenness and earmarked by a set of desires and actions that are expressed as commitment and love. In your view, what is missing, if anything, from this description?*

Moser: In the aforementioned *Philosophy Compass* essay, I show that he is not a fideist, at least in his mature work after 1849. In the position you describe, I see no acknowledgment of the crucial evidential role for God’s intervening Spirit and power in human experience. Until we acknowledge God’s experienced intervention in human conscience, we will be omitting something crucial to the evidence for God. Typically, philosophers – even Christian philosophers—hesitate to go there, but the apostle

Paul did not hesitate, as we know from the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians. My aim is to restore this kind of crucial evidence to an epistemology of the God worthy of worship. This approach requires that we consider a certain kind of personifying evidence as more basic than principles or propositions, and it requires that we be open to human conscience as an avenue of divine evidence, even evidence of the voice of God. Philosophy of religion becomes relatively sterile, from an existential point of view, when it neglects the presence and voice of the living God in receptive human conscience. Of course, conscience can be corrupted by a human, but this is no challenge to the value of conscience when it is not thus corrupted. God can show up, always on his perfect terms, even in cracked earthen vessels (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7).

PNS: *A central idea in your religious epistemology is that the person that is properly epistemically oriented to God is one that is in the process of dying and rising with Jesus by embracing the struggle against sinful human nature and working to adopt the moral character of Jesus. You criticize Kierkegaard on this point because he seems to say that the power to do so must come from the person rather from God. If God does offer every human the power to know Him in this way, would you say that all atheists have willfully rejected God's offer? Put another way, if the power to believe in God comes from God, why are there atheists?*

Moser: Our best evidence indicates that atheists are motivated by a wide range of factors in their atheism, and that therefore there is no simple single explanation of a person's being an atheist. For instance, some people endorse atheism out of severe intellectual confusion that obstructs their attending to available evidence of God's reality, even the evidence in their own consciences. In addition, God can properly hide from some people until they are better positioned or more willing to receive evidence of God's reality. This would be to avoid "casting pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6). Many people do suppress evidence of God's call to them in conscience, but God does not coerce people to trust in God against their wills. In other words, God does not extinguish human agency in this vital area, because that would be to preclude genuine interpersonal relationships between God and humans. Otherwise, God would be notorious for depersonalizing persons, and in that case genuine divine love in relationships would not be able to be freely realized among human persons. We would be left with a fraudulent story of divine redemption of humans, because there would be no genuine human agents to be redeemed, at least in the area of trust in God.

Famously, Jesus taught that we need special "eyes to see" and "ears to hear" the arrival of God's life-giving kingdom in himself. If we do not take time to acquire those eyes and ears, or simply do not want them (because we prefer to give our eyes and ears fully to other things, such as intellectual idols), we will find ourselves at an epistemological disadvantage from the standpoint of the Christian Good News. In short, we must become willing to be known by God's on God's morally perfect terms; otherwise, our knowing God will be an empty option that is not even on our radar screen.

PNS: *An atheist or agnostic reading this might respond that they genuinely believed they were open to experiencing God. They discussed faith with believers, they attended various churches, they meditated*

and even prayed. But they might claim God never became a salient experience for them (I've heard this from many atheists I've talked to). While each person's situation is unique is there a general response you can give to such claims?

Moser: We should begin with a question of what the people in question were looking for as a salient experience of God. Were they looking for special pyrotechnics or a Zeus-like figure tearing open the sky above? This would be to look for God in the wrong places. Were they open to God's intervening via a divine call in conscience to forgive an enemy or to show *agape* to a repellent person? We are in no position to specify exactly how God must intervene, but we must be open to God's choosing to intervene via a still, small voice of conscience. We should expect a God worthy of worship to intervene on God's perfectly loving terms rather than on our dubious terms. This is a hard lesson for us to learn, as many philosophical discussions of God illustrate. (Chapter 2 of *The Elusive God* takes up this topic.)

PNS: *Russell famously claimed that he would tell God it was His fault if he died a disbeliever. I'm somewhat reluctant to use the language of culpability in this discussion but would you say that atheists are somehow responsible for their disbelief? If there is a scenario where they are not responsible, could disbelief be epistemically on par with belief when it comes to epistemic duties?*

Moser: We should not use unrestricted language of culpability here, if only because some young children can be victims of abuse in a manner that tragically confuses them and leaves them repulsed by theism. Chapter 5 of *The Evidence for God* considers a case in which an adolescent child from an isolated island in the South Pacific has not heard of theism and will not hear of it during her life on earth. This child, accordingly, is not a theist, at least in terms of her actual beliefs. Even so, we can imagine, the child's will would be genuinely open to God's will, and therefore this child would be willing to receive and to obey any well-grounded message from God. The chapter elaborates on this case in a way that fits with Matthew 25:31-45 and explains how this child is, far from being epistemically culpable, a genuine candidate for gracious divine redemption, despite her lack of theistic belief in this life. At the same time, many atheists arguably do resist appropriation of available evidence of God's reality and thereby suffer from a kind of epistemic culpability. The relevant evidence, however, comes from God's morally robust call via conscience, and therefore is not abstract and philosophical. Even so, a truth about "many" atheists" cannot plausibly be generalized to "all" atheists.

PNS: *Kierkegaard was severe in his criticism of the ecclesiastical charade posing as true Christianity that he believed existed in Denmark during his time. What is your evaluation of the modern Christian church in the West? Where is the church going wrong and where do you think it's headed?*

Moser: Even if we limit our discussion to the Christian churches in the USA, we face a plethora of options, with strikingly different traditions, goals, and emphases. We must wonder why some of the churches call themselves "Christian" at all, given the actual messages they promote. (I need not name names.) The benchmark for the Christian should be the Good News of God's kingdom preached and

exemplified by Jesus and further elaborated in the preaching and teaching of Paul and other New Testament writers. This Good News message is summarized in the news of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. In short, “God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). This message, according to Paul, is not primarily a “worldview,” but is, at bottom, “the *power (dunamis)* of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16), where salvation is reconciliation to God.

Too many pastors idealize university professors or other intellectuals in a way that obscures the powerful redemptive point of the Good News and turns it into a largely intellectual position. In the very liberal churches, the message is largely ethical, and in many conservative churches, it is mainly an explanatory worldview. These extremes miss what Jesus, and Paul in his wake, were after with the Good News. They saw and identified the divine power of divine-human reconciliation at work, owing to God’s gracious intervention in Jesus, and they faithfully proclaimed this Good News. Christian philosophy should keep this Good News front and center. Otherwise, it will be threatened by intellectual idols of various sorts. We see this threat in the unfortunate fact that much work on epistemology and Christian faith never gets around to the bearing of the cross and resurrection of Jesus on a Christian epistemology. Something vital is missing from such work, just as something vital is missing from many contemporary churches. The Good News message of Jesus and Paul can correct this deficiency.

PNS: *What steps should American Christianity (you’ll forgive the gross generalization here) take to correct this problem?*

Moser: As always, the lasting solution is to appropriate, in human thought, motivation, affection, and deed, the Good News of God’s kingdom offered by Jesus and Paul. In short, the Christian church is obligated to receive and to live out, ever more deeply, the gracious gift of true life with God through Jesus and his Spirit. The only hope for obeying God in this way is for the church to be in genuine, Gethsemane-oriented communion with God, instead of trying to explain, justify, or enact positions just by hard human effort. This requires a kind of severe fellowship with God whereby we die with Christ to our own ways and idols, including intellectual idols, in order to be raised now to life with him (see Rom. 5:13). Until philosophy reorients itself to accommodate and to join this powerful Good News movement, it will fall short of promoting the kingdom of God on earth, however much it claims to be theistic or at least compatible with theism. Talk is cheap, but the Good News we humans desperately need takes us far beyond talk to a life-giving power not of our making. Christian philosophers are obligated to point to this Good News power, whatever else they do.

N.B. In researching questions for this interview, I recalled that this was not the first interview Dr. Moser did with PNS. Back in 2004, he dialogued with David Sanders on his general philosophical approach and topics ranging from divine hiddenness and the impact of a Christian worldview on the duty of the philosopher. You can read that interview [here](#).

Books and Papers by Paul Moser (referenced in this interview)



[The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined](#)



[The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology](#)



[Knowledge and Evidence \(Cambridge Studies in Philosophy\)](#)

[“Agapeic Theism: Personifying Evidence and Moral Struggle”](#)

[“Kierkegaard’s Conception of God”](#)

Paul Moser’s [page](#) at Loyola