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Religious Disagreement and Pluralism, edited by Matthew A. Benton and Jonathan L. Kvanvig. Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. ix + 293. \$85 (hardcover).

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Interest in the epistemology of disagreement has exploded over the last two decades, with debate raging around what disagreeing epistemic peers—roughly, individuals who are cognitively and evidentially on par with respect to some proposition—are rationally required to do in response to their disagreement. Are peers epistemically permitted to hold onto their beliefs, or should they lessen their credence, or perhaps even give up their beliefs altogether? Within the broader disagreement literature, a lively discussion around specifically *religious* disagreement has emerged, owing to the existence of rampant inter-, intra-, and extra-religious disagreement and to religious beliefs' place among the most dearly held and personal of human beliefs. *Religious Disagreement and Pluralism* focuses squarely on this debate, containing eleven original essays from religious epistemologists investigating a number of questions about the impact of both peer-to-peer disagreement and widespread, systematic disagreement on the epistemic status of religious belief. The emphasis of the book is on exploring the multifaceted issues surrounding religious disagreement and diversity while, often, raising new questions about this epistemic terrain (26), as opposed to offering definitive arguments about the status of religious belief in the face of disagreement.

Some of the more interesting topics addressed in the book include the ramifications of disagreement for religious understanding (chapter 2), whether religious disagreement is distinct from generic peer and systematic disagreement (chapters 4 and 5), the import of religious experience for religious disagreement (chapter 6), an attempt to construct an inclusivist theory of salvation (chapter 9), and the significance of historical majority views in theology (chapter 11), and it is on these chapters I will focus my attention in this review. The book opens with chapter 1, an introduction to the epistemology of disagreement in general and to religious disagreement in particular by Matthew A. Benton, which also includes a brief overview of each of the essays in the remainder of the book. Benton helpfully points to three major issues arising from religious disagreement debated by epistemologists—namely, debunking arguments (according to which religious disagreement demonstrates that religious belief is unreliably formed), J. L. Schellenberg's hiddenness arguments (according to



which widespread religious disagreement is incompatible with the existence of a loving God), and John Hick's argument for religious pluralism (according to which widespread religious disagreement is best explained by pluralism). While each of the essays in the book deals with one or more of these topics, debunking arguments receive most of the attention, with hiddenness (chapter 7) and pluralism (9), receiving much sparser treatment. One consequence of this disparity is that the book somewhat lacks a sense of organization and balance, a fact which in no way detracts from the excellence of the individual essays.

Laura Frances Callahan in chapter 2 argues that understanding, "i.e., grasping a system in a holistic and flexible way that involves abilities to put information to use in theoretical and practical reasoning" (41), has import for religious believers exceeding that of knowledge and justified belief, and that suspending judgment about disagreed-over propositions is damaging for understanding. Because the object of understanding is some interconnected body of information, abandoning one belief (especially one central to that body) threatens the coherence of the whole, and thus the importance of understanding provides one with reasons not to give up belief in the face of disagreement (42). Key to Callahan's argument is the distinctive epistemic value of understanding, which stems from its practical usefulness and the superior grasp of subject matters or explanations of phenomena involved in it versus mere propositional knowledge, and which Callahan takes to exceed that of knowledge (46). Understanding is especially desirable in religious domains, Callahan argues, because understanding God is more tightly connected to right affect and action than is knowledge of God (49–51). While there can be circumstances under which one ought to defer to the beliefs of a disagreeing peer, the value of understanding is such that where possible one should avoid doing anything that threatens it, e.g., suspending judgment when met with disagreement (60–61). One potential objection which Callahan does not consider, however, is that disagreement might alert one to false beliefs that *preclude* one's understanding some subject matter, and therefore that abandoning some beliefs in the face of disagreement might lead to one *gaining* religious understanding in the long run.

The question of whether religious disagreement is unique or merely a species of more generic disagreement is the subject of chapters 4 (by Margaret Greta Turnbull) and 5 (by Richard Feldman). Turnbull argues that, despite widespread opinion to the contrary, religious disagreement is *not* unique, a fact which makes religious disagreement *less* concerning for religious believers (91). Turnbull advances this thesis by examining and then refuting two arguments for uniqueness: (1) religious belief is distinctively based on private, incommunicable evidence from religious experience, and (2) religious testimony relies on non-standard theories of epistemic credentials by which one evaluates believers (93–94). Against (1), Turnbull argues that disagreements in non-religious domains also frequently involve non-shareable evidence, e.g., evidence that plays

a causal role in one's acquiring one's beliefs but that one later forgets (96–98). Against (2), she argues that non-religious contexts also feature non-standard sets of evaluative standards, especially political and moral contexts where one typically judges as reliable only those who already share some of one's beliefs (99–101). Having responded to (1) and (2), Turnbull concludes that religious disagreement is not unique. The upshot, according to Turnbull, for non-conciliationists about disagreement in general is that they should not be suspicious of appeals to incommunicable evidence or non-standard credentials in religious contexts, whereas conciliationists about general disagreement who nevertheless wish to hold onto their beliefs in religious contexts may need to muster new arguments for the uniqueness of religious disagreement (101–5). Turnbull's argumentation is rigorous, particularly in its handling of potential objections, and proponents of the view that religious disagreement is unique will have much with which to grapple in her essay.

Richard Feldman argues in a similar vein that religious disagreement is "just another topic, to be addressed like others, even if it is one of the utmost importance to so many people" (108). Feldman approaches disagreement from a conciliatory viewpoint, though he lists circumstances in which disagreement need not lead one to conciliate, such as when evidence obtained from a disagreeing peer is undermined by one's other evidence (110). While Feldman concedes that religious disagreement could be unique for epistemically superficial reasons such as its subject matter, personal significance, and potentially how people respond to it emotionally (111), he focuses on two deeper questions: Is disagreement in general governed by principles that do not apply in religious cases? And is there something about the evidence for core religious propositions that might yield different results, even if those same general principles govern religious disagreements (116)? In reply to the first question, Feldman finds no reason to think religious cases warrant an exemption from general principles about disagreement, and additionally he doubts whether there are any such principles (116–17). In reply to the second, Feldman denies that religious belief based on testimony or arguments is distinct when it is the subject of disagreement. Yet, he concedes that belief based on religious experience is tougher to assess since it is harder to form judgments about the reliability of subjects of religious experience than subjects of ordinary perception, and since religious experience seems to call for interpretation in a way that ordinary perception does not (119–21). He contends, however, that the evidential role of religious experience might be best understood as a kind of abductive argument, in which case religious disagreements are not entirely dissimilar to more familiar disputes about what best explains some phenomenon (124). Religious disagreement, then, is largely similar to other forms of disagreement. Feldman's essay in itself presents a thoughtful exploration of many potential distinctives around religious belief, particularly belief based on religious experience. As a contribution to this volume, however, it seems somewhat redundant, particularly given

its presentation immediately following Turnbull's argument for a similar, if more definitive, conclusion in the preceding chapter, an argument which also deals extensively with the evidential value of religious experience.

Jonathan L. Kvanvig in chapter 9 takes up the constructive project of developing an inclusivist picture of salvation, charting a course between religious exclusivism on the one hand, and on the other a pluralism that makes dim the prospects of finding more than a modicum of truth in any one religion. Both exclusivists (among them traditional Christians) and pluralists (such as Hick), Kvanvig argues, endorse what he calls the truth-adherence-salvation, or TAS, narrative, according to which we can explain whether a person is saved by first explaining which religion is the true one, and then whether that person is an adherent of the true religion (217). Kvanvig begins his project with the inclusivist scheme of Karl Rahner, according to which one can be an "anonymous Christian" if one has (unknowingly) accepted grace through the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, if one is not a member of a Christian sect, and if one's life is oriented toward salvation in Christ (220–23). Rahner's proposal is laudatory, Kvanvig argues, for reversing the explanatory order of exclusivism and pluralism, making salvation, rather than truth, the priority, but it fails in that it assumes the truth of Christianity. A truly inclusive scheme of salvation must be metatheoretical, i.e., neutral as to which religion is the true one (224). Kvanvig adopts Rahner's inverted salvation-adherence-truth narrative structure but substitutes Rahner's Christian, cognitive account of faith in gospel truths with a generic one, centered around one's having an affective "disposition to respond in service of an ideal" (233), a slogan he borrows from the pragmatist John Dewey. Just what is allowed to count as an ideal on Kvanvig's inclusivism is unclear; he grants that the divinities of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, etc., all qualify, as well as transcendentals like the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, but does not draw any clear boundaries (234–35). Kvanvig's inclusivism thus comes to resemble Hickian pluralism, but with an inverted order of explanation (236). Kvanvig's inclusivist system ably adapts the explanatory order proposed by Rahner into a generic metatheoretical account of salvation, potentially including many religious traditions while laying aside Rahner's assumption of Christian truth. However, truth still factors into Kvanvig's scheme, which therefore entails the same pessimistic outcome as pluralism, i.e., that we are unlikely to find more than trace amounts of truth in any one religion, leaving inclusivism with no clear advantages over pluralism on that count.

In the book's concluding chapter, Isaac Choi evaluates the weight that majority opinion ought to carry in theological debates. He notes that it is common for Christian theologians and philosophers (Protestant as well as Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) to appeal to the traditional view of the church across history and various cultures as evidence for or against the truth of religious propositions. Choi argues that the majority view is given too much weight in contemporary theological disagreements and should

be treated as evidence that is fairly easy to defeat by other evidence and arguments (271). His target is G. K. Chesterton's famous metaphor for Christian tradition, the "democracy of the dead" which "refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about" (274). Choi argues in retort that historical theologians have not all been on par evidentially, with relatively recent discoveries of early manuscripts, developments in textual criticism, and advancements in understanding of biblical languages putting contemporary theologians in a better epistemic position than their forebears. Things get no better if we shift Chesterton's metaphor to a democracy of the living, Choi argues; contemporary thinkers who hold the majority view might be unaware of key evidence in favor of the minority view (279) or might succumb to institutional pressures to toe the party line on some theological matter (280). One might hope that the inner witness of the Holy Spirit can be trusted to guide the majority of theologians to the truth about some disputed proposition, but the splintering of Christian denominations, each of which is characterized by doctrinal beliefs rejected by the majority of the others, means that even those thinkers who have it right affirm views that the majority of Christians living *and* dead deny (282–83). Choi suggests a more promising approach, whereby the Holy Spirit progressively increases the church's understanding of revelation throughout its history. God allows the church to grapple with theological errors and disagreements along the way, but only about truths non-essential to personal salvation, with the Holy Spirit leading Christians to believe whatever truths are soteriologically necessary (i.e., God's existence, sin's reality, individuals' need for a savior, and Christ's death for sins) (284–86). Choi's argument is both detailed and persuasive, and his appeal to progressive revelation as a response to the problem of unreliable majority opinion seems attractive. Yet, one might object that it does not go far enough, since a number of doctrinal views (such as the triunity of God, inspiration of scripture, and numerous moral claims) enjoy near-universal affirmation among Christians, suggesting that the Holy Spirit's work of granting progressive understanding extends to these claims as well as to soteriologically necessary ones.

I can only remark in passing on the remaining, excellent essays in the volume. Sanford C. Goldberg in chapter 3 argues that systematic religious disagreement provides the basis for a debunking argument against religious belief. In chapter 6, Joshua Blanchard and L.A. Paul argue that transformative experiences such as religious conversion can lead to disagreement between one's pre- and post-conversion selves, which undercuts the rationality of choosing to convert. Nathan L. King in chapter 7 offers a dilemma for Christian apologists that demonstrates the need for humility in religious disagreements. In chapter 8, John Pittard argues that possessing rational insights into the truth of one's beliefs can help one resist religious skepticism that is motivated by disagreement. Finally, in chapter 10, Katherine Dormandy argues that a believer's loyalty to God

should not keep him or her from seeking out the truth when confronted with disagreement.

Religious Disagreement and Pluralism offers a fascinating and multifaceted look at a number of problems in contemporary religious epistemology. It is not, nor does it seek to be, the definitive word on its subject matter. Though it proposes answers to the problems it raises, its most significant contribution will likely be to spur greater interest and suggest new directions of research into these issues. The book's clear and thorough introduction and accessible style throughout will make it accessible to non-specialist philosophers and graduate students in epistemology and philosophy of religion alike, and it will likely become essential reading for religious epistemologists, particularly those interested in the social dimensions of religious knowledge.

Kierkegaard on Woman, Gender, and Love, by Sylvia Walsh. Mercer University Press, 2022. Pp. 268. \$35.00 (paperback).

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Although Søren Kierkegaard's perspectives on love have enjoyed heightened attention over the last couple of decades, there has continued to be a significant and longstanding paucity of secondary scholarship engaging issues of gender and feminism in Kierkegaard's writings. Even when secondary scholarship acknowledges the contributions of feminist approaches to Kierkegaard, it does not often engage with the substance and content of these contributions. One way to account for the lack of engagement is the fact that Kierkegaard's views on gender and his resourcefulness for feminist thought and practice are complex and ambiguous at best. Sylvia Walsh skillfully navigates Kierkegaard's thought on gender in several contexts in a way that remains properly critical while simultaneously lifting up its constructive possibilities for contemporary debates on issues relevant to gender and feminism.

In this collection of essays by one of the most respected Kierkegaard scholars today, Walsh demonstrates an enviable facility with Kierkegaardian thought in terms of both breadth and depth matched by a dexterity in applying his thought to a diverse range of contexts. Her work carefully traces concepts across the corpus, treating various issues with a broad intertextual interpretation that helps illuminate the multifaceted nature of the robust concepts his thought develops. As the author acknowledges,

