The demonstrative use of names, and the divine-name co-reference debate

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This is the pre-refereed version.

For an account of the reference of divine names, I follow Bogardus and Urban (2017) in advocating in favour of using Gareth Evans's causal theory of reference, on which a name refers to the dominant source of information in the name's "dossier". However, I argue further that information about experiences, in which God is simply the object of acquaintance, can dominate the dossier. Thus, this demonstrative use of names offers a promising alternative avenue by which users of the divine names (e.g., Christians and Muslims) can refer to the same Being despite having different conceptions of God. I also respond to Burling's (2019) worship-worthiness view.

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It would be implausible to *doubt* that most Anglicans and Southern Baptists refer to the same Being when they use the word "God". One might continue making this case regarding its use among Protestants, Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox believers. However, the case becomes increasingly unclear as one considers whether the use of divine names among Christians and Muslims co-refers, that is, refers to the same referent. I follow Tomas Bogardus and Mallorie Urban (2017) in advocating in favour of Gareth Evans' causal theory of reference, on which a name refers to the dominant source of information in the name's "file". This file, or "dossier", is the set of information about the referent compiled by users of the name. I, too, will apply this theory to divine names, but I will argue further that using such names "demonstratively", connected to experiences in which a person senses God's presence (I will be assuming theism), can add crucial information to the dossier in such a way as to make co-reference more plausible. That is, this demonstrative use improves the prospects for co-reference by adding an alternative avenue by which users of the divine names can refer to the same Being, despite having different conceptions of God.

On a causal account of reference, also known as a historical explanation theory, the referent of a proper name is determined by its being the start of a causal chain that results in the uses of the proper name (uses which intend the same referent). As Kripke puts it:

> An initial "baptism" takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is "passed from link to link," the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it. (Kripke 1980: 96)

So, I might use 'Albert Einstein' having learned of him from my science teacher, whose own use, let's say, is part of a historical chain of events tracing back to an occasion in which the great physicist was given his name as a baby, by ostension.[1]

In effect, this account exploits the distinction between name, description (or "concept"), and object, requiring only a causal-historical explanation for a name to refer to an object, instead of requiring the object to satisfy the description associated with the name. Thus, this raises the prospects of the divine names being capable of referring to an identical being in spite of speakers having different conceptions (descriptions) of God associated with the names. The application of Kripkean theory to divine names might go as follows: Surrounding (Arabic-speaking) Jews and Christians passed to Muhammad the name "Allah" and its use to refer to the God of Abraham. Furthermore, Muhammad's own use of the name intended the same referent, even if Muhammad's conception of Allah was different. Muhammad passed this name-use practice down to his followers, and so according to the Kripkean account of reference, the Muslim's use of "Allah" and the Christian's use of "God" trace back to the God of Abraham.

However, even though someone who receives a name may not knowingly intend a different reference than that of the immediate transmitter of that name, the receiver may nevertheless misunderstand and thus inadvertently shift the reference of the name to something else. Of course, the possibility of such a misunderstanding is the essence of Gareth Evans's (1973) well-known "Madagascar" objection to Kripke's account. Although 'Madagascar' originally referred to a region on the African mainland (Mogadishu), when Marco Polo learned the name he mistakenly thought that 'Madagascar' was used to refer to the great African island instead. So, even though Marco Polo satisfied the intentionality condition, in that he did intend to use the same reference as the person who taught him the name, he did not succeed in referring to the original referent. The intentionality condition, then, while probably a necessary condition, is

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1 Or, less likely, fixed by a description.

not a sufficient condition for reference-passing. This presents a problem for co-reference of the divine name, because even if its use by Christians and by Muhammad had the same origin and was subsequently passed down by speakers intending to preserve the original referent, this does not guarantee that it is successfully preserved. So, the Muslim's and Christian's uses of the divine name may not co-refer, because of the possibility of misunderstanding somewhere in the chain of name transmission among, say, Muslims from Muhammad's time and the present (Bogardus and Urban 2017: 8). Or, it might appear somewhere in the chain among Christians between that time and the present, or even right at the link between Muhammad's own use and that of his Jewish and Christian contemporaries.

I. Gareth Evans's Causal Theory of Reference

A different (but influential) causal-historical account of reference can, I think, offer progress in answering the divine co-reference question. In order to properly account for reference shifts, Gareth Evans offers an account of reference that is sensitive to new information associated with a name while retaining the insights of the causal account. How? Like Kripke, Evans accepts that an object or individual can be dubbed a name by a community. However, the name-use practice in a community also serves to connect the name word with a body of information about the referent, a set of descriptions that Evans sometimes calls a dossier. The following comparison should be helpful: This dossier is like a file folder of information, labeled with the name word that was used at the dubbing ceremony. The folder is shared by the community, and over time, by way of its continued name-use practice, the community adds more bits of descriptive information about the object named, as it were. What does the name refer to? Evans's answer is that the referent is not whatever individual fits the descriptions in the dossier (or even most of them).[2] Neither is the referent simply the original individual that was dubbed in the baptism ceremony, for that would just be following the original Kripkean account. Instead, the referent is picked out by whatever is the *dominant source* of the information in the dossier (this source being responsible for the most central information in the dossier, as I will explain later). Evans's account does a good job explaining reference shifts, such as the Madagascar case. 'Madagascar' does not, as Kripke's account would assert, refer to the region of mainland Africa (Mogadishu) that was originally dubbed 'Madagascar' before Marco Polo's mistake. Instead, more plausibly, on Evans's theory it now refers to the great African island because, through Marco Polo's error, that island has become the dominant causal source of information that we connect with "Madagascar", information such as: being situated 400 km off the coast of Africa, being the world's only natural habitat for lemurs, etc. Evans's theory likewise provides a plausible handling of a fanciful yet similar example of reference shifting involving the naming of two babies switched at birth. (1973: 200).[3]

Now, on Evans's account, a name's referent is not simply the individual that is the source of the greatest quantity of information in the name's dossier. Such a source is not necessarily the dominant source of that information. What constitutes being a *dominant* source, then, is its being the source of information that becomes central to the conception (description) of that object as

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[2] Giving such an answer would be to hold a descriptivist theory, famously defended by Frege (1892), but Kripke had offered four powerful arguments against it (Kripke 75-87).

[3] "Two babies are born, and their mothers bestow names upon them. A nurse inadvertently switches them and the error is never discovered. It will henceforth undeniably be the case that the man universally known as 'Jack' is so called because a woman dubbed some other baby with the name." Over time, the dossier of 'Jack' fills up with information that originates with the wrong baby, who is the dominant source of that information. This is what explains our plausible judgement that 'Jack' refers to the person who came to be known by that name due to error.

contained in the dossier.[4] This centrality depends on the name-user's reasons for being interested in the object: "the believer's reasons for being interested in the item at all will weigh" (Evans 201). Bogardus and Urban offer the following useful treatment of how the information in a dossier is weighted, on Evans's theory:

> [Dominance is] a function of how central or important the information is to our conception of the object; If it's an object of our acquaintance, we will likely use the name *demonstratively*, weighting heavily information in the dossier containing demonstratives. If it's an object we know only by description, and not by acquaintance, we may use the name *attributively*, with an overriding intention to refer to an object bearing the relevant attributes. If it's a subject of expertise, we will likely use the name *deferentially*, weighting heavily that part of the name's dossier with relevant information about experts. And, in all these uses, there will be some "degree of fit" requirement on the application of a name: a reference fails in the event of a radical mismatch between information in a name's dossier and the source of that information (Bogardus and Urban 190-1).

In other words, there are several different types of information in a name's dossier that can be given greater priority and centrality. The common ways of weighting this information are demonstrative, attributive, and deferential name-uses. Which use is most central to that name's use will depend on the user's reasons for being interested in the object. And reference can fail in the event of a radical mismatch between the dossier and source, presumably if over time new information enters the dossier that becomes central.

II. Bogardus and Urban's Analysis of the Reference of Divine Names

Bogardus and Urban summarize this account of dominance using "one simple test" (191). We can determine if some piece of information in a name's file dossier is dominant and thus given maximal, "*sine-qua-non*" weight by asking: "What if nothing in the world answered to that bit of the dossier? Could the name still refer?" (191) If it could still refer, then that bit of information was not dominant, else it was. Importantly, this test can be applied in the following form to determine whether two names, n1 (e.g. "Santa Claus") and n2 (e.g. "Saint Nicholas of Myra"), co-refer: What if nothing in the world answered to the conception associated with n1, but something did answer exactly to the conception associated with n2? Might n1 still refer to n2? If the answer is yes, then even if there was added information in n1's dossier, it did not dominate—no reference shift occurred with regard to n1. If the answer is no, the names do not co-refer—the dominant information in n1's dossier originates from a different source, and so the referent either was always different or it shifted (due to new information coming into the dossier to dominate it).

> Bogardus and Urban apply this test to the question of the reference of the divine names:
> Let's begin by testing whether, from a Muslim perspective, "God" as used by Christians has shifted reference. To do so, spell out the whole story of Islam here: there's an omnipotent, omniscient creator of the world, who spoke to Abraham, sent Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, etc., but this creator is *not* a Trinity, has begotten no Son, etc. For a moment, suppose all this is true. Might "God" still refer to that being? (Bogardus and Urban 194)

That is, we ask ourselves, "What if there were no being answering to the Christian conception associated with 'God,' but there were a being answering perfectly to the Muslim conception

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4 Evans's theory is different from a theory (e.g. Searle 1958) on which a name corresponds to a cluster of descriptions which pick out the referent, because on Evan's theory it is a particular source of information (and as we shall see, the name-users's interests in the object) that explain what information becomes weighted more heavily and thus more central. Also, Evans's theory implies that another source can subsequently displace the first, but cluster descriptivism cannot easily accommodate such reference shifting.

associated with 'Allah'? Might 'God,' as used by Christians, still refer to that being?" (193) Suppose you answer in the negative, then Bogardus and Urban argue, it must be that you think that there is some information in the dossier of "God" that has maximal, *sine-qua-non* weight, and information (e.g. the Trinity, etc.) that is radically at odds with the information in the dossier for "Allah". Thus, from the standpoint of Islam, you judge that Allah is no longer the dominant source of information in the dossier of "God", and its referent has shifted from Allah to fiction. However, if you had answered in the affirmative, Bogardus and Urban argue:

> it may be because you use "God" as Thomas Aquinas, Pope Paul VI, Peter Geach, and others have used it, in this attributive way [giving some basic predicates for "God" maximal weight], and these attributes are, on the Muslim view, had by Allah. But there are other possibilities. Perhaps you use the name deferentially, taking name-users such as Aquinas and Pope Paul VI to be experts. Or perhaps, less plausibly, you use the name demonstratively, and take yourself to have demonstrated, at some point in the past, with your use of "God," the same entity that Muslims call "Allah." (195)

The test can also be run from the reverse direction, i.e., from the Christian perspective of God. That is, supposing that God is a Trinity, etc., and so there was a being answering exactly to the Christian conception associated with 'God' but nothing answering to the Muslim conception associated with 'Allah', one could ask whether "Allah" might still refer to that being. Then, one could answer in the negative or affirmative, for reasons analogous to the above.

In the previous quotation, Bogardus and Urban indicate they are *not* optimistic about the demonstrative use of the divine names, stating that one would "less plausibly" use the names demonstratively. However, I will argue that some religious experiences (where the person senses God's presence) would provide circumstances that allow someone to use a divine name demonstratively. This would raise the prospects for the co-referential use of the divine names, since God would be the dominant source of information in the name's dossier (despite peripheral information there that differs according to religion).

As Bogardus and Urban point out (190), the *demonstrative* use is nicely illustrated by this well-known example due to Keith Donnellan:

> Suppose one is at a party and, seeing an interesting-looking person holding a martini glass, one asks, "Who is the man drinking a martini?" If it should turn out that there is only water in the glass, one has nevertheless asked a question about a particular person, a question that it is possible for someone to answer. (Donnellan 1966: 287)

This, for Donnellan, is a "referential" use of a definite description, the description being *the man drinking a martini*. But suppose we introduce a name for this person such as "Captain Martini", as Bogardus and Urban do (190). Even if the person turned out to be drinking water, or even if that person was actually a woman, "Captain Martini" would still refer to that person. The reason is that in such *demonstrative* usage, what is given primary weight in the introduction of the name is the overriding intention to refer to *this person here*, i.e., this object of acquaintance.

My contention is that if people have an experience where they sense God's presence (and God is thus the object of acquaintance), then the demonstrative use of the divine name is plausible. William Alston has argued that experience of God's presence can be important in a causal theory of reference by preventing reference-shift. Sets of rules, habits, and attitudes ("mystical doxastic practices") can be taught to successive generations so that they can discern when God is appearing to them (Alston 1991: 184-225). So, not only did God appear to Abraham in an initial dubbing ceremony, but "if things go right, we also attain some firsthand experiential acquaintance with God to provide still another start for chains of transmission" (Alston 1988: 119). My approach will be similar to Alston's. Let me point out two important parts of my

strategy. First, I deploy experience of God's presence in the context of *Evans's* version of the causal account.

Second, I will not require that mystical doxastic practices (or even practices specific to a particular religion) be used to experience God's presence. For there is reason to think that appearances of God may be recognized in quite *broadly spiritual* settings, i.e. settings not peculiar to a particular religion's practice[5] yet leading to some kind of experience involving God. And so I will contend that both Muslims and Christians can potentially experience God's presence in similar, broadly spiritual settings, paving the way in those circumstances for co-reference. Alvin Plantinga (1981), in effect, argues that God and his actions can be recognized in settings outside of practices specific to a particular religion, by first appealing to a class of beliefs he calls "properly basic beliefs".[6] These are beliefs not inferred from others but yet are justified beliefs—ordinary perceptual and memory beliefs being some examples (44-45). He continues by contending that humans have dispositions implanted by God such that conditions like perceiving nature or the heavens can call forth particularly *theistic* properly basic beliefs such as "God made all this". "God has so created us that we have a tendency or disposition to see his hand in the world about us." (46) Other circumstances such as encountering danger, or experiencing feelings like guilt or gratitude might also trigger theistic properly basic beliefs (such as "God disapproves of what I've done", "God is to be thanked", etc). He also asserts that a circumstance of an experience of "sensing God's presence" can call forth a theistic properly basic belief (46).

Before moving on to how such an experience of God's presence can allow a person and community to use the divine name demonstratively, let me clarify a few things about Plantinga's example of sensing God's presence, because it is a little different from his other examples. These other examples of conditions and circumstances that call forth theistic properly basic beliefs include one's: perceiving the natural world, reading scripture, feeling guilt, having confessed and repented to God, asking God for protection or help in the face of danger, and feeling gratitude (Plantinga 46). As explained above, Plantinga contends humans can then form theistic properly basic beliefs corresponding to these conditions. The condition of sensing God's presence, however, is a little different from the conditions listed above, because the ones above are mundane in the sense of being normal life experiences. In other words, it is obvious how someone could come under the circumstance of perceiving the natural world, feel guilt or gratitude, etc., but Plantinga does not elaborate upon how someone would sense God's presence in the first place. Now, Plantinga is no naturalist, so it would be fair to assume that Plantinga could be here allowing for God to supernaturally make his presence known to the person, in a vacuum as it were, albeit in a setting not specific to a particular religion's practice.

However, I think Plantinga's theory here also leaves room for the person to sense God's presence in the context of some other (antecedent) circumstance that Plantinga had listed. I argue that sensing God's presence can itself come on the heels of some other condition/circumstance

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[5] Generally speaking, these are settings or experiences that people across different religious faiths or even those who are spiritual-but-not-religious might plausibly experience, such as praying in time of need, thinking about God, or circumstances (and associated experiences) that I will mention later that Alvin Plantinga lists. In contrast, settings or experiences peculiar to a particular religion's practice are those involved in practices such as participating in or attending a church/mosque service, taking the Lord's supper, doing *salat* prayer facing Mecca five times a day, fasting during Ramadan, exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc.

[6] As we will see below, one of the settings he describes is in regards to reading the Bible, but the other ones are not settings involving practices specific to a particular religion.

that forms a theistic properly basic belief, a circumstance such as perceiving the world or universe, being in danger, etc. Any one of these latter circumstances can call forth properly basic beliefs such as "God made all this", "God is indeed able to hear and help if he sees fit" (46), etc. In the context of such an already religious experience (albeit broadly spiritual), it is plausible that in some cases one then becomes aware of God's presence. God could be working supernaturally at that moment, but at the same time the first condition can also have set the stage for the second, by putting the person in the right spiritual state of mind. And then, the person senses God's presence.[7] Plantinga does not elaborate on this experience, but it is reasonable that since the person experiences that God is there, in their experience God is an object of acquaintance, though not visually or through the five senses.

So, I argue that a circumstance such as being out in nature and perceiving the natural world (or being in another circumstance Plantinga describes) can set the stage for sensing God's presence. Or, it is also possible that sensing God's presence can emerge in a vacuum, so to speak. Either way, let us turn now to how sensing God's presence can allow a community to use the divine name demonstratively.

III. The Demonstrative Use and Sensing God's Presence

Again, what is crucial for the demonstrative use of the divine names is an experience in which a person senses God's presence, allowing God to become that person's object of acquaintance. So, this person could use the divine name demonstratively, weighting most heavily information in the dossier containing demonstratives—*this object of acquaintance*, i.e. God, who is here—just as the demonstrative use of "Captain Martini" weights most heavily information that this is *the person here in front of me* drinking a martini.

If a religious community uses a divine name demonstratively, weighting information containing demonstratives most heavily, one might say that this information originates from the "God of experience", in a manner of speaking. A different community that weights most heavily predicates in the dossier for "God" (that are necessary and jointly sufficient for the proper application of the name) such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc., are said to use the name attributively, and information about these attributes originates from the "God of the philosophers" (Bogardus and Urban 196), as it were. Another religious community, weighting most heavily information of what experts say God is, are said to use the name deferentially, that information originating (we might say) from the "God of the experts". What I have argued is that a community whose members have sensed God's presence are able to use a divine name demonstratively, and so this usage provides an alternative way for co-reference to be achieved: this community using a divine name demonstratively would refer to the same referent as that of a different community's use of a divine name—even if by the latter community's lights the former community's conception of the one God is seriously mistaken—so long as the former community's usage refers to an object who is indeed the object of their acquaintance when they sense God's presence. Of course it would be crucial that it was God that they encountered. This is plausible when that community's demonstrative usage comes by way of encountering him via broadly spiritual settings, as opposed to practices that are specific to their particular religion. For if their experiences were under the latter circumstances, it might be argued that they encountered

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[7] In Plantinga's account there may already be a precedent of one circumstance setting the stage for the next: "Upon having done what I know is cheap, or wrong, or wicked I may feel guilty in God's sight and form the belief God disapproves of what I've done. Upon confession and repentance, I may feel forgiven, forming the belief God forgives me for what I've done." (46) This seems to suggest at very least that one circumstance calling forth a properly basic belief can be followed by another related circumstance (and properly basic belief).

a counterfeit spirit rather than God. But this is harder to argue under broadly spiritual settings like perceiving nature, when we assume theism and that God has implanted in us dispositions to see his hand (and even sense his presence) in the natural world around us, or in life events. Transmission-wise, this community would pass this divine referent down to successive generations, but given that such a community is interested in God mainly to know him directly through experience, many successive generations would also likely attain firsthand acquaintance with God "to provide still another start for chains of transmission", as Alston might put it (19).

Yet, as Bogardus and Urban point out, it may be that those belonging to one religious community (c1) reject that another community's (c2's) use of a divine name does co-refer with their (c1's) use of a divine name because c1 believes there is simply a radical failure of "fit" between core information in c2's dossier and the Deity. For instance, a Muslim community (c1) who might reject co-reference could say that from Islam's perspective there is some information in c2's (a Christian community's) dossier for "God" that c1 alleges has become central in the dossier for "God". Perhaps this is information about the Trinity or Incarnation, and so "God" could not refer to Allah (Bogardus and Urban 195). In other words, c1 alleges that specific yet important doctrinal information originating from what we may call the "God of the theologians" has dominated the Christian community's dossier.[8] As this doctrinal information is false (i.e. radically fails to fit the Deity), c1 judges that "God" fails to refer to Allah. But suppose the Christian community uses a divine name demonstratively, such that the information weighted most heavily in its dossier originates from an experience whereby "God" is simply the object of their acquaintance. Further suppose that no specifically Christian doctrine is contained in this central information. Then the Muslim community (c1) would lack grounds for judging that this Christian community's dossier contains *central* information that fails to fit Allah, even though the dossier does contain peripheral information about specifically Christian doctrines.

Is it even possible for a religious community to weight the information containing *demonstratives* most heavily? Recall that dominance is a function of how central the information is to our conception of the object, and so the name user's reasons for being interested in the object at all is significant. It is possible that for some religious communities, their reason for being interested in God at all is because they believe God can meet them and be known to them by experience. Of course, this sort of reason to be interested in God would seem quite radical to a different community whose members are interested in God because of the intellectually stimulating articulation of doctrines and attributes of God. But then this second community's interest would also seem quite odd to the first community. Perhaps the first community is not primarily interested in God along doctrinal lines because that aspect is too sterile and theoretical. Instead, it is interested in the closeness of knowing God (by experience), not just knowing about God.

These sorts of religious communities are not only possible, but are also plausibly actual. Such a religious community would have to fulfill two basic requirements. The first, is that the community is primarily interested in God for his presence in personal experience. The second, the reader should recall, is that members of this community would sense God's presence under broadly spiritual settings (such as in a vacuum, but also possibly when perceiving the natural world, being in danger, or etc. that are life events or part of everyday life) rather than in mystical doxastic practices or practices specific to a particular religion. This is not to exclude that members could also encounter God in the latter practices, but that the broadly spiritual settings

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8 Of course, c1 would think that this "God of the theologians" does not exist, and so is fiction. The information for this "God of the [Christian] theologians" originated from fiction and so there is no referent.

would be the more basic setting within which the community would expect all members to sometimes encounter God. Note too, that by "religious experience", I have included forming theistic properly basic beliefs (such as those pertaining to sensing God's presence) under broadly spiritual circumstances. Now, I have claimed that it is plausible that communities exist that meet both of the requirements above. Let me give an example.

Consider the Forest Church, an Anglican church made up of several smaller church locations in Gloucester, England. It describes itself this way: "Forest Church is a contemporary movement, with roots in the long Christian tradition of engagement in nature, such as the Celtic and Franciscan approaches. Those engaged in Forest Church are seeking to meet with God in and through their connection with the natural world." (Forest Church: Connecting with God par.2) Notice that the statement, especially the latter sentence, mentions two things: First, they seek to meet with God. Second, they do so through connection with the natural world. Forest Church also states the following: "Many people say that their more profound encounters with God occur outside, as they engage with God's creation. Forest Church takes this as the starting point for worship, gathering outdoors, with engagement with nature at the heart of our prayer." (The Church of England) If Forest Church is interested in God primarily to encounter him personally, and to do so through broadly spiritual circumstances, then it is a strong candidate for using the name "God" demonstratively. In addition, I think one should be optimistic about there being other Christian communities fulfilling the two requirements we have been looking for, though they are definitely not in the majority.[9] Now, suppose an objector complains Forest Church's talk of encountering God personally is ambiguous whether it refers to an experience such that God is an object of acquaintance. However, even if it does not refer to that kind of experience, it refers to something quite close, and close enough that it would be reasonable for us to think that a different Christian community could plausibly exist that does. As for Muslims, the two requirements mentioned above are broad enough such that even a Muslim community could fulfill them,[10] as a desire to encounter God is a common thing that some subset of religious seekers would yearn for, and certainly experiencing life events and being out in nature are circumstances available to most people.

[9] Forest Church's first quoted statement alluded to the Celtic and Franciscan traditions, and I leave it to others to pursue those possibilities. I'm also aware of a project associated with Wesley Theological Seminary in the United States that has published study material entitled "Nature: Our first way of knowing God". A self-description of the publication states this: "Today, we live largely separate and disconnected from the Earth and its ecological processes, and yet this knowing of God in and through God's creation is still embedded deep within us. We experience it in a sunrise or a sunset, an awe-inspiring mountain range or a gentle stream. […] This seven-week study is meant to awaken this visceral knowing of the Creator through the creation, reconnect us with the sacred landscapes we call home, encourage us to provide space and time for spiritual reflection in nature, and to live in greater harmony with God's Earth." (Norcross 2021)

[10] There are Muslims who report a deeper connection with or awareness of Allah when out in nature: "We also see the greatness of Allah, our creator in the beauty and perfection of nature. Through a continued observation and immersion in nature, I've developed a deeper connection with Allah." (Hadafow) "[T]aking autumn-color pictures, I was overwhelmed by a fantastic feeling. I felt as if I were a tiny piece of something greater, […] It was wonderful! I had never ever felt like this before, totally relaxed, yet bursting with energy, and above all, totally aware of God wherever I turned my eyes." ("A photographer finds Allah in nature"). Likely, it is easier to find further documentation in Arabic (or other languages) about Muslim communities that are primarily interested in Allah in order to encounter him (in broadly spiritual settings).

Now for such Christians or Muslims, since they are primarily interested in God for his presence in religious experience, it is plausible that they would take the demonstrative use of a divine name. That is, they would give information containing demonstratives the central place in their dossier for "God", experiential information of God's acquaintance being central, while theological doctrines remain in the dossier but are not dominant. So, this improves the prospects for co-reference. For suppose we run Bogardus and Urban's test—for example, assume the Christian perspective of God (that God *is* a Trinity, etc.), and so there was a being answering exactly to the Christian conception associated with 'God' but nothing answering to the Muslim conception associated with 'Allah'. We then ask if the Muslim's use of "Allah" could still refer to that being. The demonstrative use of divine names provides an alternative avenue to answer that question *in the affirmative*: the reason is that, as I have argued, the demonstrative use of a divine name (e.g. "Allah") when sensing God's presence allows the user of that name to refer to God, the object of their acquaintance—because this demonstrative information would take central place in the name's dossier, even though there are other (distinctively Muslim) conceptions of Allah in the dossier that figure much less prominently. Thus, co-reference would hold between Muslims (who use a divine name demonstratively) and Christians. The test can also be run assuming the Muslim perspective of Allah, and would allow for the Christian's use of "God" to refer to Allah, with co-reference holding between Christians (who use a divine name demonstratively) and Muslims, for similar reasons.[11] These are very interesting results.[12]

IV. Hugh Burling's Descriptivist "Worship-Worthiness" Account

Let's compare another recent theory of the reference of divine names with the version that I have defended above that uses Evans's theory of reference. Hugh Burling (2019) offers a version of descriptivist theory in order to explain the reference of "God". On descriptivism, what any proper name refers to is determined by the definite descriptions associated with the name. Thus, it is the speaker's conception of the name (articulated by definite descriptions) that picks out the referent. On Burling's version of descriptivism, however, there is only one definite description associated with "God": the being who is worthy of worship. This view, Burling argues, has the virtue of making the use of "God" more accessible, because the name-use is not vulnerable to reference-shifts that plague causal accounts. Second, he argues that the worship-worthiness view allows for the proper scope of the use of "God", such that people who disagree about the nature of God can nevertheless be talking about the same referent. However, I think we

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11 If we assume that either Christianity or Islam is true, but we don't pick a particular perspective, we can still conclude that co-reference would hold at least between Muslims and Christians who *both* use a divine name demonstratively (under the conditions mentioned before). For as already argued, if we assume the Muslim perspective of Allah, the Christians using a divine name demonstratively would refer to the same being as any Muslim (both those using a divine name demonstratively and those not). This implies the Christians just mentioned refer to the same being as Muslims using a divine name demonstratively. If instead we assume the Christian perspective of God, the Muslims using a divine name demonstratively would refer to the same being as Christians using a divine name demonstratively, by reasoning parallel to the above. So whether we take the Christian or Muslim perspective, the same conclusion is reached.

12 The question may arise whether, according to my account, a Hindu or Buddhist community's divine-name use could co-refer with, say, that of a Christian community's. The answer would depend on whether the Hindu or Buddhist community even worships a god (some varieties of Buddhism have no deity), and on factors already mentioned in the foregoing analysis such as whether the god can encounter them in broadly spiritual settings (e.g. not just in a temple or before a shrine/idol, etc.) such as through nature or in life events (perhaps some Hindu or Buddhist gods can indeed interact with humans and human lives in these personal ways).

have two reasons to be hesitant about accepting Burling's worship worthiness view (hereafter, also 'WW').

First, according to the view, what picks out God as the referent of "God" is the definite description *the being who is worthy of worship*. However, notice that like any descriptivist account of reference, this description must be the conception that users of that proper name associate with it, in order for the name to refer to the object picked out by that description. But this would exclude persons who plausibly participate in religious life but are too young to have associated with the divine name the conception that God is worthy (or unworthy) of worship. Perhaps a preschooler knows that God loves them, can hear prayers, and can give us things we ask for. But that child's parent can love them, hear what they say, and give things that are requested, without being the object of worship. Thus, it is possible that the child just thinks of "God" with the former attributes but without the latter (being the object of worship); God is just a more powerful version of their parents. Indeed, even if the child understood that God was the object of worship, the concept of *being worthy* and deserving of that worship must also be understood (at least implicitly) in order for "God" to refer. But it is likely that young children do not even implicitly think of God in those terms, and so on WW their use of the name would not refer.[13] However, it is more plausible that such a preschooler can participate in the religious life of that community, and that these children's use of "God" does refer to God. After all, according to Christianity, the kingdom of God is supposed to belong to "such as these" (e.g. in Matthew 19:14), and so it is plausible that these young children can use "God" to refer to God in their speech (e.g. in prayer, questions to parents about God, etc.). Burling concurs that children's use of divine name should not be at a referential disadvantage (346). Causal theories of reference (such as Evans's) have a straightforward explanation for this, as the referent could simply be passed down from their parents or others in the religious community (so long as the dominant information in the dossier remains constant). So, this is one reason to prefer that account.

The second reason to be hesitant about the worship-worthiness view has to do with its account of how the *unique* divine being is picked out, and again whether this allows young children's "God"-use to refer to God. In order to grant the uniqueness thesis, WW requires that "God"-users must also have an implicit understanding of worship such that worship is to be given to only one object. This is a sophisticated concept, and Burling brings up interesting examples of "nearby" concepts of worship that do not include worshiping one unique object. These examples include hero or popstar worship. They even include more exotic ones in which a wanderer has a religious experience convincing them of a wonderful being ("Jim") seemingly unique in its excellence, but which then tells him there is another equally excellent being ("Tim"). On a conception of worship that includes uniqueness, he should worship neither of them. But on a conception of worship that does not include uniqueness, Burling argues, the wanderer could appropriately worship both or perhaps whichever he chooses. Burling continues:

> What the Worship-Worthiness view needs is for the former conception to reflect a moral practice to which we have easy access through socialization into praise-giving practices. Then WW can be built on that practice, even if there is another nearby alternative we might also call "worship," which does not include uniqueness. (Burling 2019: 363)

However, this is an implied concept of worship that is quite nuanced. Even if most adult "God"-users do learn such a concept through socialization in religious ceremonies, it is doubtful that

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13 After all, it is plausible that even some adult "God"-users have not thought of God being worthy and deserving of our worship, even though their conception of God is that he is the object of their worship.

many young children have such a nuanced concept of worship, yet it would be implausible to suppose that their uses of a divine name never successfully refer.

In contrast, a causal theory of reference would have no problem explaining how young children's "God"-use is no less successful at referring than the "God"-use of adults in the religious community. On Evans's causal theory, so long as the dominant information in the name's dossier has not changed, the name and its reference can be passed down to young children just as it can be passed link by link to other members of the community. Thus, this is a good reason that the worship-worthiness view is not superior to Evans's causal theory, as Bogardus and Urban have applied the latter theory to the problem of the co-reference of divine names. In addition, I argued that it is plausible that some broadly spiritual experiences could allow one to use a divine name demonstratively, experiences in which God is the object of one's acquaintance. So, information in the name's dossier containing such demonstratives would be weighted most heavily. In this article I have argued that this provides an alternative way for co-reference to be achieved, thus improving its prospects despite divine-name-users having different conceptions of God.

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