

## Overview of “Reflections on the Possibility of Revelation”

The Greek philosophers understood philosophy to be *the* right way of life for those who have the ability and the opportunity to live it. Biblical revelation poses a challenge to this understanding. In responding to the Biblical challenge, the followers of the Greek philosophers do not wish to take it on faith, inconsistently, that the way of faith is inferior to philosophy. Instead, they wish to demonstrate that revelation is impossible, or at least that belief in revelation rests on moral presuppositions that do not withstand rational scrutiny. “Reflections on the Possibility of Revelation” attempts both to clarify the idea of revelation and to show that the moral presuppositions of belief are invulnerable to philosophical critique.

Main topics covered, section by section.

1. (pp. 1 – 11) The challenge that the possibility of revelation poses to the classical conception of philosophy. Some well-known but inconclusive attempts at a refutation of the possibility of revelation.

2. (pp. 11 – 24) Attempts at a refutation of the possibility of revelation do not sufficiently clarify what revelation is. Why would a person believe that something has been revealed? The idea of revelation as found in the Bible is the idea of revelation *par excellence*.

3. (pp. 24 - 36 ) The fundamental revelation according to the Bible is two-fold: the goodness of love and the reality of sin. This fundamental revelation is presupposed by

and incorporated into higher order revelations, such as, for Jews, the giving of the Law at Sinai, and for Christians, the Trinity and the Incarnation. Belief in revelation is necessarily bound up with moral convictions. Critique of the possibility of revelation takes the form of a critique of morality.

4. (pp. 36 - 44) Criticism 1: The believer must claim to know what he believes.

But he does not know. Response.

5. (pp. 45 - 50) Criticism 2: Belief in revelation presupposes “purity of heart.” But the heart is not pure. Response.

6. (pp. 50 - 55) Criticism 3: Belief in revelation presupposes transcendent, exceptionless law. But there is no such thing, all laws admitting of dispensation in extreme circumstances. Response.

7. (pp. 55 - 63) Criticism 4: Belief in revelation presupposes radical freedom of choice. But there is no such thing, all choice being determined by the intellect’s apprehension of the good, real or apparent. Response.

8. (pp. 63 – 66) The predicament of philosophy if it cannot refute the possibility of revelation.

9. (pp. 66 – 79) *Note 1*: Did Socrates Consider the Possibility of Radically Free Choice?

10. (pp. 79 - 84) *Note 2*: Consistency, Knowledge, and Belief.

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