

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 8 | Issue 2

Article 10

4-1-1991

Mavrodes, REVELATION IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF

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Recommended Citation

Abraham, William J. (1991) "Mavrodes, REVELATION IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol8/iss2/10>

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higher in potential, but it is not true that for any degree of satisfaction you feel, there is a higher one. The concept of fully satisfied pig or fully satisfied Socrates is perfectly coherent. Further, we all get very much more upset by not having our desires satisfied and our actual potential realized than by not having the desires and potential of a higher being. It seems, then, that though we cannot expect an omnipotent and benevolent being to maximize our DDS on the scale of potential, he could still maximize it on the scale of satisfaction.

To my mind the most interesting chapter in the book is Chapter Seven on divine justice. Here Schlesinger raises some very interesting and neglected questions on what we might call religious luck. What determines the religious worth of a person? Different individuals have different opportunities to avail themselves of good reasons to believe in God, both in the form of evidence for theism and in the form of a religious upbringing. Yet, Schlesinger argues, those who do not believe in theism irretrievably lose something of supreme value. But their loss is at least partly a matter of bad luck. Is this compatible with the justice of God?

Schlesinger's short answer to the question "What happens to the sincere skeptic?" is that there is no such person. It would be an intolerable violation of divine justice if there were. "Consequently, those who are mature enough to have become aware to some extent of the splendour of nature and the nobility of faith, and yet refuse to embrace theism, must be people who find religious discipline unendurable and will therefore do everything to render their conscious minds oblivious to the basis of such discipline" (p. 173). This is a severe view and readers will no doubt want to take it up in future discussion.

New Perspectives on Old-Time Religion contains a number of new arguments which deserve attention in the literature. I have mentioned the ones I found most interesting, but philosophers who enjoy applying probability theory to the topics of miracles and the Design Argument should not miss Chapters Four and Five. The section on assigning prior probabilities in metaphysics (pp. 141-46) is particularly noteworthy. In addition, Chapter Three includes an interesting discussion comparing the different ways religious and secular morality treat the value of human life.

Revelation in Religious Belief, by **George I. Mavrodes**. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988. Pp. vii and 161. \$24.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by **WILLIAM J. ABRAHAM**, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

Good books on divine revelation are few and far between. This short, tightly argued work is a welcome exception. It is a model of succinct analytical work

in the philosophy of religion, deserving of the widest possible attention from both theologians and philosophers.

Mavrodes situates his discussion within the broader field of epistemology. One of his goals is to explore the bearing of revelation on the justification of religious belief. To do this, however, he takes considerable time to analyse the concept of divine revelation, exploring this by developing three of models of revelation, which he labels in turn the Causation model, the Manifestation model, and the Communication model. This in itself is useful, for there is a persistent temptation to look upon revelation as a form of communication. As we shall see, Mavrodes needs to broaden his discussion to embrace two crucial areas which remain either ignored or underdeveloped in this work, but he has opened up the whole field in a thoroughly healthy fashion.

The first chapter sets the scene. Mavrodes reviews the conventional ways of relating revelation and reason, a matter which could easily have become a short book in itself. His intention, however, is to show that the distinction between revelation and reason is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. We need a larger and more complex body of ideas to cope with the possible relations between the two. Leaving us somewhat suspended in mid air at this point, he gives a preview of the three models of revelation which then become the substance of the discussion.

By far the most difficult model to integrate into the discussion as a whole is the causation model. This is really a cover for a fascinating discussion of the possibility of an innate theology. What intrigues Mavrodes is the possibility that God may have causally given us knowledge of Himself. Both classical and contemporary philosophers outside the empiricist tradition are open to this option. Mavrodes sketches what this might look like. One of the more interesting observations at the end of this chapter is that a Reformed epistemologist could hold that belief in God is both triggered psychologically, say, by events in nature, and also based on evidence. This has interesting consequences for the debate between fideists and proponents of natural theology which deserve further exploration.

With the manifestation and communication models we are on more familiar territory. Using a wealth of illustrative material, Mavrodes provides a highly illuminating account of the concept of revelation. Crucial to this is a distinction between claiming that something is a fact by asserting a corresponding proposition and manifesting that fact by making it accessible to someone else's experience. In practice it may be difficult to find pure examples of these alternatives, but Mavrodes convincingly shows that it is very important to work through the distinction in logic at stake here. In exploring this, he provides an engaging account of the contours of the concept of revelation which should be required reading for every future student of theology. In a closing note he suggests that a person's religious knowledge might begin with

revelation construed as a form of manifestation; thereby he deftly responds to the claims of philosophers like Locke and Flew who have argued that revelation presupposes some form of natural theology or its functional equivalent.

When at last we arrive at the communication model we are ready for it. The basic issue pursued is that of construing divine revelation as analogous to a situation where one person speaks to another person. Here Mavrodes takes up such topics as the place of propositions and promises in revelation, the place of *a priori* judgement in construing the content and media of revelation, the person-relative character of revelation, and the place of mediation in the transmission of revelation. The least convincing section of the whole book is a final section where he attempts to analyse a lengthy autobiographical claim of the late John Baillie, in which Baillie says that God had spoken to him through the narrative traditions of Israel, the church, and his own family.

Theologians are wont to complain that when philosophers write about divine revelation they invariably assume an uninformed and untenable reading of the biblical traditions, fuelled perhaps by their exposure to or engagement in conservative versions of the Christian faith. This is a legitimate complaint, and those who are looking for evidence of this charge will find some here, especially in chapter four. However, it would be otiose to make much of this complaint. The task that Mavrodes has set himself here does not depend upon this or that reading of the biblical texts. Nor are his arguments overturned by drawing attention to his theological pedigree. In fact his candour on the latter is refreshingly stated, and it in no way stifles his clarity or creativity. The great merit of this whole discussion is that it helps reopen a conversation on the concept of divine revelation which is long overdue. Mavrodes is at once restrained, candid, suggestive, rigorous, and illuminating. For example, the schemata deployed in chapter three to unveil the concept of revelation is a masterpiece of lucidity. Moreover, there are suggestive insights scattered throughout this volume which deserve extensive pondering. There is one astonishing lacuna. The idea of incarnation is mentioned only obliquely. It is passing strange that a philosopher of Mavrodes' skill and theological propensity can write a whole book on divine revelation without dealing at length with the place of divine incarnation in the logic of revelation. It is also surprising that there is no extended treatment of the relation between tradition and revelation, although the final section strays into the neighbourhood of this topic.

The Ocean of Truth: A Defence of Objective Theism, by **Brian Hebblethwaite**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Pp. 165. \$34.50 (cloth), \$11.95 (paper).

Reviewed by CLEMENT DORE, Vanderbilt University.

The following quote (from pages 146-47) may appear to be a summation of