**The Necessity of Revelation**

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Revelation’s necessity is that of final cause.

**Proposition 1: Supernatural revelation is not absolutely necessary (according to the nature of God or the nature of man)**

* God is a free, intellectual being – not required to provide revelation.
* Man’s nature cannot require something above his nature.
* Man is able to know certain things about God, and if his end is a natural one, he would be able to know at least the essentials by reason, without any revelation.
  + The existence of God
  + God is rewarder of good and punisher of evil.
  + Man’s obligation to worship.
    - Indeed we find these ideas existing universally in human history, though with deviations and corruptions.
  + Likewise, the primary principles of the natural moral law.
    - Not to kill, steal, commit adultery, etc.

**Proposition 2: Revelation is *morally* necessary for a *suitable* knowledge of natural religion.**

* “suitable”
  + Somewhere btw the bare minimum to reach the natural end and perfect knowledge
  + Fairly complete
  + Certain – without guesswork or errors
  + Accessible – one can attain this knowledge early enough in one’s life to be able to use it to govern the greater part of that life
* In this series, we have already seen the naturally attainable knowledge of God, we’ve seen the duty of religion.
  + But looking at human history, we see precious few who have attained to much of this truth only through reason.
  + The majority of human beings and even a great many cultures have no philosophy.
  + Even in those places where there were philosophers, how influential was their teaching?
  + Ancient Greece is rightly regarded as the pinnacle of unaided human reason in its philosophical exploration – the greatest of the Greek philosophers achieved a rather remarkable knowledge about God and duties toward Him.
  + But there is a long process of speculation – some 200 years of real philosophy before we get to Plato and Aristotle.
    - And even they had some errors mixed in with the truth they came to know.
      * Plato supported wives and children being held in common by all men, for example.
      * Aristotle defended scandalous images of gods being used in temples, etc.
  + And, after Aristotle, we find Greek philosophy plunging back into materialism, skepticism, or pantheism.
  + In the Middles Ages, the great majority of philosophers were well acquainted with natural truths we have discussed – I wonder why…
  + In modern times, we have a new return to materialism, along with new approaches like idealism, subjectivism, etc.
    - The loss of the sense of those natural truths.
* The history of peoples and religions
  + Shows us the same thing as the history of philosophy
  + One finds consistently among pagans, even the most civilized, a host of errors and corruptions of the knowledge of God and religion.
    - Notion of God – animism, polytheism, idolatry
    - Worship – often took licentious forms, included human sacrifice, etc.
    - The immortality of the soul was often disregarded.
    - And morality… all kinds of vicious practices were generally condoned.
      * It was the Church that checked the violence, avarice, and unbridled sexual license that characterized the ancient world.
      * Acting according to obligations of justice or charity was a rare thing before Christianity.
* Original Sin
  + A notion that belongs to revelation.
  + But there really does to be something significantly wrong with human beings.
  + There is a universal tendency to act in ways that we know to be evil.
  + We even make the conscious choice of behaviors we are fully aware will be detrimental to our own happiness.
  + This doctrine, not the easiest one for modern man to accept, is, at the very least not absurd.
  + If you think that people are generally good, you probably don’t have a lot of experience with people.
  + Chesterton: “Original sin is the only doctrine that's been empirically validated by 2,000 years of human history.”
  + Not asking you to accept this idea at this point, but simply to consider, given our inability to come to a basic knowledge of God, our duties toward Him, and the moral law, that there may be something to it.
* So, if we are going really to get this right, we need God to let us know.
  + Our own mental weakness and tendency to err
  + The laborious mental effort of getting to this knowledge
  + The corruption of the society that surrounds us, the pull of our own passions, preoccupations with providing necessities of life, etc.
* Moral necessity of assistance from God to get to this suitable knowledge of natural religion.

**Proposition 3: If God gave man a supernatural end, revelation of truths otherwise unknowable (mysteries) is strictly necessary. (conditional, Final necessity, necessary *simpliciter*)**

* Man moves himself toward an end that he chooses. He must know the end and the means to attain it.

UNIT 5: REVELATION

* The end of man is God as He is in Himself and thus is attained only in a supernatural way (the natural end of man, if it existed, would be to know God as 1st cause)
* Revelation of this truth is necessary b/c the end is not natural – we do not know it unless God tells us.
* So, assuming the hypothesis of a supernatural goal for human beings, God would need to let us know:
  + The existence of that goal – or we would be unable to direct ourselves towards it
  + The means for attaining that goal – or its achievement would be impossible.
* The Catholic Church claims that man has a supernatural goal – so, the burden of proof is on the Church to show that such a goal has been revealed to man by God.
  + But, for the moment, the following should be obvious:
    - A rational being with a goal that is above his nature needs his Creator to somehow let him know what that goal is, if he is to pursue it according to his nature.
* This elevation of man to a supernatural goal, and thus revelation, are eminently fitting.
  + On God’s part
    - b/c of his infinite goodness – goodness spreads itself
    - It would befit His goodness to give man an end that surpasses man’s own nature.
    - Something better and higher than man is capable of attaining by his unaided powers.
  + On man’s part, there seems to be a thirst for the infinite.
    - Never fully satisfied w/ any created good.
    - A desire for divinity, we can even say.

**Revelation is Recognizable**

1. If not, it would be impossible to distinguish among religions that claim it
2. Could not even know if it had happened

**Motives of Credibility/Criteria of Revelation**

1. Internal (the message)
   1. Truthfulness
   2. Moral goodness
   3. Sublimity => all 3 can be negative (unless this it cannot be) or positive (because of this, it probably or certainly is)
2. External (the messenger)
   1. Positive + coercive (or conclusive)
      1. Miracles
         1. Physical
         2. Moral
      2. Prophecies (received by:)
         1. Bodily vision
         2. Imagination
         3. Intellect
   2. Effects + history of the doctrine
   3. Holiness of the messenger