**The Necessity of Revelation**



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