

# Revelation

- Man can have true knowledge of his Creator through his experience of creation, apart from supernatural revelation.

“The same holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the origin and end of all things, can be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason from the things that he created”

(Vatican I, Dei Filius, 58)

“Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.” (Romans 1:20)

“From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.” (Wisdom 13:5)

“The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork... There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” (Psalm 19:1-4)

- Man is severely limited in his capacity to know God without the help of supernatural revelation.

“Only God possesses a comprehensive knowledge of God; for the infinite Being can be completely comprehended by an Infinite Intellect only.” (Dr. Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 1,2,3)

“Our intellect is related to the prime beings, which are most evident in their nature, as the eye of an owl is related to the sun.” (Aristotle, Metaphysics, Ia, 1)

“Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven--- what can you do?... Behold, God is great, and we know him not” (Job 11:7; 36:26)

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” (Romans 11:33-34)

“If this truth were left solely as a matter of inquiry for the human reason, three awkward consequences would follow. The first is that few men would possess the knowledge of God... Some do not have the physical disposition for such work... Some men must devote themselves to taking care of temporal matters... Finally, there are some who are cut off by sloth... The second awkward effect is that those who would come to discover the abovementioned truth would barely reach it after a great deal of time... If the only way open to us for the knowledge of God were solely that of reason, the human race would remain in the blackest shadows of ignorance. For the knowledge of God, which especially renders men perfect and good, would come to be possessed only by a few, and these few would require a great deal of time in order to reach it... The third awkward effect is this. The investigation of the human reason for the most part has falsity present within it, and this is partly due to the weakness of our intellect in judgment, and partly to the admixture of images.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, 4, 2-5)

“Our knowledge is imperfect... For now we see in a mirror dimly... Now I know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9-12)

- Man, as a fundamentally religious being, instinctively seeks revelation. In his acknowledgment of the deep mystery that encompasses him he looks for the will or the word of another to offer meaning, explanation, direction, help, assurance, salvation. This is evident in his endless and timeless pursuit of: fortune telling, horoscopes, channeling spirits, clairvoyance, magic, casting of lots, omens, oracles, signs, portents, interpretations of dreams. He seems to be aware at some base level of his limitations in and of himself, to understand the answers to the ultimate questions that haunt him.

“In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behavior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may very well call man a religious being.” (CCC, 28)

“From one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him--- though indeed he is not far from each of us. For ‘in him we live and move and have our being.’ (Acts 17:26-28)” (CCC, 28)

“You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” (St. Augustine, The Confessions, I,1,1)

- In His divine wisdom, God chose to reveal Himself in ways that far surpass mans natural ability to know Him.

“Man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone... This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God’s revelation” (CCC, 37-38)

“It was necessary for man’s salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides philosophical science built up by human reason... Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and then after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Whereas man’s whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I,1,1)

“By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation.” (CCC, 50)

“Man’s faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith.” (CCC, 35)

- God teaches and leads the human race back to Himself patiently and mercifully like a Father training up child.

“The divine plan of Revelation... involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.” (CCC, 53)

“Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.” (Deuteronomy 8:5)

- God humbles himself to speak to us in our own human language.

“In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words: ‘Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men.’ (Vatican II, Dei Verbum, 13; CCC, 101)

- God speaks to us through both *word* and *deed*.

“This economy of Revelation is realized by deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other. As a result, the works performed by God in the history of salvation show forth and bear out the doctrine and realities signified by the words; the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they contain.” (Vatican II, Dei Verbum, 2)

“The economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so orientated that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men, and of the messianic kingdom, and should indicate it by means of different types.” (Vatican I, Dei Verbum, 15)

“The ancient Jews discerned deeper currents of divine purpose and action in history. And tracing such currents calls for faith in God’s providential governance of nature and the events of history... the prophetic nature of the biblical narrative of salvation history must be understood... In other words, God ‘writes’ the world like men write words, to convey truth and love. So nature and history are more than just created things--- God fashions them as visible signs of other things... This is the purpose and value of *typology*, which studies how Christ was foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Melchizedek, Passover Lamb, temple), thereby revealing the profound unity of the Old and New Covenants. Thus, typology is what enables us to discern ‘in God’s works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son.’”

(Dr. Scott Hahn, A Father Who Keeps His Promises, 21-23)

“This catechesis unveils what lay hidden under the letter of the Old Testament: the mystery of Christ. It is called ‘typological’ because it reveals the newness of Christ on the basis of the ‘figures’ (types) which announce him in the deeds, words, and symbols of the first covenant. By this re-reading in the Spirit of Truth, starting from Christ, the figures are unveiled. Thus the flood and Noah’s ark prefigured salvation by Baptism, as did the cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea. Water from the rock was the figure of the spiritual gifts of Christ, and manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, ‘the true bread from heaven’.” (CCC, 1094)

- Faith is required of us to embrace this Divine Revelation, but this faith rests on the absolute authority of God as the One who is revealing.

“What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe ‘because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive or be deceived.’” (CCC, 156)

“Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but ‘the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives.’” (CCC, 157)

“That your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God... we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification... God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned... But we have the mind of Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 2:5-16)

- The Characteristics of faith:

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”. (Hebrews 11:1)

“Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*.” (CCC, 150)

“*Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him*.” (CCC, 153)

“Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, II-II,2,9)

“Man’s response to God by faith must be free, and... therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.” (Dignitatis Humanae, 10)

“Faith is man’s response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life.” (CCC, 26)

“To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be ‘working through charity’ (Galatians 5:6), abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.” (CCC, 162)

- Faith and reason are complimentary and mutually beneficial in coming to knowledge of God. They both ultimately arrive at the same truth, but one through the supernatural help of grace and the other through our own natural efforts.

“The proofs of God’s existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.” (CCC, 35)

“Faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I,2,2)

“Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” (Vatican Council, Dei Filius, 4)

“For although faith is above reason, still there can never be found a real opposition or disagreement between them, since both take their origin from one and the same source of unchangeable and eternal truth, the great and good God; and thus they are mutually helpful. As a result, right reason demonstrates, safeguards, and defends the truth of faith, while faith frees reason from all errors and wonderfully enlightens it, strengthens it, and perfects it with a knowledge of divine things.”

(Pope Pius IX, Qui Pluribus, 1635)

“‘Faith seeks understanding’: it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens ‘the eyes of your hearts’ to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation... In the words of St. Augustine, ‘I believe in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe.’” (CCC, 158)

“And Trypho said, ‘Look, my friend, you made yourself master of these truths with much labor and toil. And we accordingly must diligently scrutinize all that we meet with, in order to give our assent to those things which the Scriptures compel us to believe’” (St. Justin Martyr, The Dialogue with Trypho, 68)

- In God’s plan of Revelation he willed that there be aspects that remain accessible to our natural power of reason in order to confirm us in our faith.

“So that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit. Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church’s growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all; they are ‘motives of credibility’, which show that the assent of faith is by no means a blind impulse of the mind.” (CCC, 156)

“The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father’s works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God.” (CCC, 548)

“That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about the things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him... And he said to them, ‘O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!...’ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself... They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?’” (Luke 24:13-35)

“There existed, long before this time, certain men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers, both righteous and beloved by God, who spoke by the Divine Spirit, and foretold events which would take place, and which are now taking place. They are called prophets. These alone both saw and announced the truth to men, neither reverencing nor fearing any man, not influenced by a desire for

glory, but speaking those things alone which they saw and which they heard, being filled with the Holy Spirit. Their writings are still extant, and he who has read them is very much helped in his knowledge of the beginning and end of things, and of those matters which the philosopher ought to know, provided he has believed them. For they did not use demonstration in their treatises, seeing that they were witnesses to the truth above all demonstration, and worthy of belief; and those events which have happened, and those which are happening, compel you to assent to the utterances made by them, although, indeed, they were entitled to credit on account of the miracles which they performed, since they both glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed His Son, the Christ [sent] by Him: which, indeed, the false prophets, who are filled with the lying unclean spirit, neither have done nor do, but venture to work certain wonderful deeds for the purpose of astonishing men, and glorify the spirits and demons of error.” (St. Justin Martyr, DT, 7)

- Jesus Christ is the fullness of Revelation.

“The Christian faith is not a ‘religion of the book,’ Christianity is the religion of the ‘Word’ of God, not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living.” (CCC, 108)

“Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely.” (CCC, 102)

“Christ’s whole earthly life--- his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking--- is *Revelation* of the Father.” (CCC, 516)

“No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:27)

“No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” (John 1:18)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him.’” (John 14:6-7)

“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

“For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Ephesians 1:9-10)

“In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything all at once in this sole Word--- and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior, but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.”

(St. John of the Cross, The Ascent of Mount Carmel, 2,22,3-5)

*“God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.” (CCC, 1)*