

Why Revelation Gives Shelter to Metaphysics¹

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METAPHYSICS in the traditional style is not much cultivated today in the lands in which it originated and once flourished. In 1998, Pope John Paul II noted this fact in *Fides et Ratio*. Speaking even of Catholic institutions, he says that Scholasticism and philosophy itself are held in “less respect,” but connects this to a broader contemporary fact, to wit: “There is a lack of trust in reason displayed to a large extent by modern philosophy itself,” he says, “so that it abandons the metaphysical search for man’s ultimate questions in order to concentrate on particular and local issues, sometimes merely formal ones.”²

John Paul also noted the fact that philosophy in the ancient high sense must remain, must survive for the sake of theology itself, as a discipline praeambulatory to theology. This is how he puts it, speaking of fundamental theology:

With its specific character as a discipline charged with giving an account of faith (cf. 1 Pet 3:15), the concern of *fundamental theology* will be to justify and expound the relationship between faith and philosophical thought. Recalling the teaching of Saint Paul (cf. Rom 1:19–20), the First Vatican Council pointed to the existence of truths which are naturally, and thus philosophically, knowable; and *an acceptance of God’s Revelation necessarily presupposes knowledge of these truths*. . . . Consider, for example, the natural knowledge

¹ An earlier and altered version of the first part of this essay appears in my *Fundamental Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017).

² Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (1998), §61 (translation mine); see also §81.

of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine Revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience. From all these truths, the mind is led to acknowledge the existence of a truly propaedeutic path to faith.³

“An acceptance of God’s Revelation necessarily presupposes knowledge of these truths,” truths about God known by the natural light. Why is it necessary? That is a first question. Showing this necessity has become more important since the Enlightenment, moreover, not only because of the role natural theology plays in apologetics, but also because it distinguishes Catholic theology from Protestant thought where it is under the influence of Emmanuel Kant and Karl Barth.

But there is also John Paul’s observation that metaphysics in the traditional style no longer flourishes as once it did. If the Church is the only place where metaphysics is cultivated in the old way, why is that so? It is not that human nature has changed. It is not that we are less capable of the wonder Aristotle evokes at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. Showing why metaphysics survives only in the Church serves to highlight not just the different ways Catholics and moderns think about being, but the different ways they think about man, too. And this is important for understanding how we fit—or rather how we do not fit—into the modern world.

So, philosophy must survive for the sake of theology—that is a first thesis; we must see why it is so. But then, if it must survive for theology, and so in that sense is “in” theology or is its forecourt as a preliminary discipline, why is that the *only* place it survives today? That is a second thing that needs an explanation.

And these are the answers this essay aims at establishing: metaphysics, and the highest part of it, a robust (i.e., successful) natural theology, must be possible if we are reasonably and so responsibly to assert the fact of revelation, the fact that God speaks to us. If God speaks, we must be able to show he *exists*. We must be able to show he exists if we are reasonably and responsibly to say that he has *spoken*. But then second, only if God *does* speak are we called on—not simply logically but also morally or “existentially”—to show he exists. Only if he speaks must we be able *rationally* to

³ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §67 (Vatican website translation; italics mine). See also *Restoring Faith in Reason: A New Translation of the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, with commentary by James McEvoy (London: SCM, 2002).

show by the natural light that he exists—that is the first issue. But also, if he does *not* speak, or if we believe he does not speak, there will be no moral pressure on us, no practical *urgency* for us, to bother about his existence.

**Question 1: Why Faith Requires the Philosophical
Demonstration of God:**

**“Intra ecclesiam colenda est metaphysica”
 (“Metaphysics must be cultivated within the Church”).**

There are two ways to get at this necessity. You can approach it from the *content* of faith. Or you can approach it from the *act* of faith. Father Thomas Joseph White has tried to show the necessity of metaphysics in its highest part, natural theology, from the content of what we confess about the Incarnation. The Christological content of faith argues that we must be capable of a robust natural theology. This he does in his recent *The Incarnate Lord*. There is also an argument from the act of faith itself.⁴ Its point of departure is the observation that the credibility of revelation depends on its reasonability. And that faith be reasonable is necessary if faith be not something that destroys but that rather perfects the intellect, as grace in all its modalities does human nature as a whole. If our nature is rational, it must be possible rationally to believe. And this means that revelation must be able to be recognized prior to faith, just as the First Vatican Council’s *Dei Filius* teaches. I offer two forms of the argument: first from Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and second from Walker Percy.

Garrigou-Lagrange sets forth in careful detail how the divine origin of Christianity, the fact of revelation, can be certainly known.⁵ Moral certitude is sufficient for the individual believer,⁶ but there is a need for scientific demonstration for the collective faith of the Church as a whole.⁷ Now, nothing is rationally credible for divine faith except it be evidently and not merely probably credible.⁸ And nothing is evidently rationally credible for divine faith unless it appears to reason from certain signs to be supernaturally revealed by God.⁹ For this minor, three things are required: first, that something be known as in fact revealed by God; second, that God be

⁴ Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology*, Thomistic Ressourcement 5 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), chapter 4 (203–35; see esp. 224–32).

⁵ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *De Revelatione per Ecclesiam Catholicam Proposita*, 2 vols., 4th ed. (Rome: Desclée, 1950), 1:491–97.

⁶ *De Revelatione*, 1:494–97.

⁷ *De Revelatione*, 1:515.

⁸ *De Revelatione*, 1:491.

⁹ *De Revelatione*, 1:491.

known to be truthful; and third that God be known to be infallible.¹⁰ That something be known as revealed, moreover, follows as Vatican I taught from the knowledge of miracle and other signs. Therefore, prior to faith, there must in principle be possible the knowledge of God's existence, of his nature as veracious and all-knowing, and of the possibility of miracles. As to the last, Garrigou-Lagrange says: "God is the free and omnipotent cause from which depends the application of all the hypothetically necessary laws, nor is he bound to them."¹¹ So we are heavily involved in a natural theology that will know God's existence, his knowledge and truthfulness, his power and freedom.

It is a good argument Garrigou-Lagrange offers, and many people have admired his *De Revelatione* as a whole. Pope Benedict XV wrote an endorsement for it in 1919; it stayed in print for half a century, and its fourth edition appeared in 1945. In 1959, and so within shouting distance of Garrigou-Lagrange, the American Catholic philosopher and novelist Walker Percy wrote an essay entitled "The Message in the Bottle." It suggests another way to get at the necessity of natural theology from considering the act of faith. "The Message in the Bottle" has us imagine a castaway who receives messages in bottles washed up on the shore.¹² Some of the messages count as knowledge, knowledge that is in principle verifiable by the canons of the modern empirical sciences. Some of the messages count as news: matters of fact, but all of them contingent truths, not scientifically necessary truths, but some of them crucial for the prospect of getting off the island and finding one's way back home. However important the message may be for homecoming, Percy expects us to see that the bare presentation of the message by itself as found in the bottle is not sufficient for us to assent to it; rather, a piece of news "requires that there be a newsbearer."¹³ However detachable the bearer of scientific knowledge from the knowledge he brings—the empirical test has nothing to do, in the end, with who first enunciates or repeats the knowledge in question—the piece of news is not in that way detachable from its bearer. At least we must have the apostle, the one sent, personally present to us. An apostle is not a genius, and "we believe him because he has the authority to deliver the

¹⁰ *De Revelatione*, 1:492.

¹¹ *De Revelatione*, 2:49; for three orders of miracles, see 2:65–72.

¹² Walker Percy, "The Message in the Bottle," in *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is; How Queer Language Is; and What One Has to Do with the Other* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1982), 119–58. The essay first appeared in *Thought* 34 (1959–1960): 405–33.

¹³ Percy, *Message in the Bottle*, 136.

message,” and only so.¹⁴ Percy declares he means to gainsay nothing of the traditional apologetic discourses on the historical evidences for the authenticity of Christ and the Church, and recognizes they must be accompanied by philosophical approaches to God and his nature.¹⁵ But he suggests an interesting line of reflection for us.

Suppose we alter Percy’s story just a little, and say that, rather than a message in a bottle, we have a message in a book—or let us say the book, the whole book, arrives in a bottle—a rather large bottle, to be sure, since the book is the Bible. But the supposition is basically the same: we are supposing that all we have is the message itself: a word that presents itself to us as God’s word. Will an evangelist—not an original apostle but a contemporary evangelist—have any success presenting it to us so? Think of the epistemic situation we would find ourselves in.

“Here’s a message for you from God about your eternal destiny.”

“God? Eternal destiny?”

“Yes; pay attention—it’s in this Book.”

“But who is ‘God’?”

“The maker of heaven and earth, who can give you eternal life, just as the Book explains.”

“Oh. How do you know the message is from him?”

“Because he spoke it through prophets and apostles, as recorded in the Book, and there were great signs and wonders to prove it was him speaking.”

“Like what?”

“Well . . . There was the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and there was Jesus of Nazareth and his mighty works and his resurrection from the dead.”

“Wow. And how do we know about these warrants for the message?”

“They’re written down, in the Book, in the same Book as tells us the message.”

“But how do I know the message is likely to have come from a creator of heaven and earth?”

“Because it’s congruent with what he says about himself in the Book as merciful and good.”

“And I know he can work miracles because . . . ?”

“Because like the message, such works are congruent with the way he speaks about himself in the Book as creator and redeemer of men.”

¹⁴ Percy, *Message in the Bottle*, 146–47.

¹⁵ Percy, *Message in the Bottle*, 140.

"Is there any access to the words and deeds of God apart from the Book?"

"No, not really."

"So we are stuck with the message in the Book, and the signs that validate the message as coming from 'God' are reported only in the Book?"

"Right."

"And there is really no other way of access to him except the Book?"

"No; that's explained in the Book, too. To think we had independent access to God would be to mistake our own capacity to know him, and to forget that, if God is known, he can be known only from himself, given his own decision to speak. God is such that the only way to know him is on his own terms, which is to say, just as he presents himself in the Book."

"Maybe some other day . . ."

The just-imagined dialogue goes on with our rather Barthian evangelist presenting no credentials except the message itself. This, Percy says, will not work. Will things change if the evangelist presents himself as an agent of the Church founded by Christ, himself the keystone of the arch of the historical pattern of salvation? This is to add Tradition to what must otherwise be a very lonely Scripture.

"Perhaps I should emphasize that the Book has never been, as it were, unaccompanied. It has always and uninterruptedly been in the custody of a community of faith, the People of Israel and the New Israel, the Church."

"So you are confident of the continuity of Israel and the Church and the messages they bear from the time they were first fully enunciated?"

"Yes, I am."

"How does this strengthen your epistemic position?"

"Like this: it's not only that we have a record of the over-all message and its miraculous warrants, we have as well a record of the reception of the message and its warrants in a historically continuous community of faith."

"That's very impressive in its own way, of course. But you yourself are in the same position relative to the historically continuous, custodial community of faith as you are to the Book, right?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, in the same way that you trust the Book, so also you trust

the keepers of the Book who themselves trust the Book.”

“Well, yes; but doesn’t the very existence of this continuously existing custodial community provide a sort of perpetual and extraordinary, not to say miraculous, witness to the truth of the message of the Book and the warrants contained therein?”

“But you can’t say that unless you are outside the Book and its keepers, looking on both as just one fact. Before, every access to God was supposed to be inside the Book. But now you want me to recognize something here and now, something present, something beyond the record of the Book.”

Thus, even the ecclesially accredited custodian of the Book will not be enough to make a reasonable case for assent to the message. He has to appeal to something beyond the message and beyond the custodians in their purely custodial capacity. That is, he has to appeal to some access to God beyond the Book and the Church.

The priority of speaker to what he speaks has to be able to be dealt with on its own terms—we cannot have this Speaker merely and exclusively in his speech, where that is the only thing we have of and from him. Thus, “that God has spoken” cannot be recognized unless God can be known to exist and unless it can be known that he might have something to say.

We could put the point as follows. God cannot simply announce himself to us in his self-revelation if it is impossible for us to have any other cognitive access to him. How would we relate such an epistemic meteorite to what we know of reality? If it fits happily into the periodic table we have already constructed, then of course nothing new has been introduced into consciousness. On the other hand, if it is so completely unlike what we know of the real that we cannot relate it to what we already know, then once again, nothing new has been introduced into consciousness, nothing has been said *in such a way we can hear it*. It must rather be that, if the atomic weight and number are hitherto unexperienced by us, we can at least relate them to the periodic table we know. Something new will have been said, and something newly heard will be registered. But this requires being able to imagine something beyond the periodic table we know.

Because God has spoken to us, we must be able to know him independently of his address to us. This is a necessity of manifestation. Even as with a purely human speaker, it is not the speech alone that shows the other speaker exists. Otherwise, we would not be able to distinguish him from ourselves, or from some voice in our heads that, for all we know, is just another form of us. To say that we have a written word that, in the absence

of a living voice, shows us his existence is no good. If all that human beings had from him was a scrap of paper with words said to be God's, that would not tell us God exists. Positive revelation demands a natural revelation, natural theology. And this is precisely why the Scriptures come to us with affirmations of its possibility. While God identifies himself in the words and deeds recorded in the book, He shows us *in the book* how we can also identify him *outside the Book*—that is to say, in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans. He shows us this, just so that we may recognize his identification of himself in the words and deeds recorded in the book.

Question 2: Why Metaphysics Survives Only in Theology:

“*Extra ecclesiam nulla metaphysica*”

(“No metaphysics outside the Church”)

Metaphysics in the high sense survives mostly only in theology; that is, natural theology survives only in supernatural theology. Why is this? There are three considerations.

A Silent God

First, if God does not speak, it becomes more difficult to think he exists. Karl Rahner had us entertain the possibility last century that the silence of God, once he were known by the natural light as first cause and last end, might also be sufficient “speech” to us.¹⁶ Silence is its own enigmatic communication; if the silence of some person is known just as a chosen, intended silence, not a casual oversight or forgetfulness of the other, then it commands a sort of respect, a sort of wondrous regard. Mankind would rightly, Rahner thought and with reason, maintain itself at attention, waiting for any possible word from God, or waiting for no word, which would itself be word of his mysterious and enigmatic reality. This is in itself a noble scenario, but, I think, only for nobles—that is, for men better than the average run of human beings goes.

For think how the calculation would more probably turn out. It would be much the same as that for our calculation of the existence of extra-terrestrial life. The best argument that there is no such thing just is simply the cosmic silence that surrounds us. Notwithstanding the distances and the daunting task of mastering them technologically, once one factors in the enormous time at the disposal of whatever sentience there be out there, a time whose length is equally unimaginable as the distances involved, then, if there were anyone home in the universe besides us, we should already

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994).

have met the welcome wagon. So here, in the absence of a registered and reliable divine speech, the metaphysical silence can be taken to argue that there is no divinity capable of breaking the silence.

A Moral Consideration

This first consideration grows in strength when we add in two factors conditioning the possible hearer of a divine word—two factors conditioning us, in other words: the first is moral, the second metaphysical.

The moral consideration has to do with the moral misery we live in. By that, I mean to advert both to our moral ignorance and to our moral fragility. It is difficult for us to know the moral law much beyond the first and primary precepts.¹⁷ And then when we do, it is difficult for us to keep—that is, to obey—what we know of the moral law. The difficulty each man has in finding out what virtue is and then installing it in himself is matched on the larger scale by the difficulty each culture has in finding a positive law that matches and reflects the natural law, and the related difficulty of prosecuting large and lasting projects of empire and culture, of power economic and political and the associated projects of learning and science.

This consideration of man's moral indigence leads us to Cardinal Newman's argument for original sin in the *Apologia*, an argument very similar to Saint Thomas's argument in the *Summa contra gentiles*.¹⁸ Remember how it goes: since there is a God—and that is one of Newman's certain starting points—and since we are in such misery that no good God would simply establish us from the outset in such estate, therefore there must be some original moral disaster at the beginnings of our history to explain our moral condition in a good world made by a good God. That is just what the word of God claims in the third chapter of Genesis, of course. So here, philosophical contemplation meets the revealed word; the revealed word provokes philosophical contemplation.

But Newman's argument—the nexus of intelligibility that unites the propositions together—depends on an antecedent supposition of the providence of a good God caring for an originally good creation. This antecedent supposition is hard to insulate from the word of revelation itself. The probability that we were not created as we come into the world now, and therefore the probability of an original sin whence we conclude

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 94, a. 6.

¹⁸ John Henry Newman, *Apologia* in *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (London: Longmans and Green, 1908 [originally 1865]), 241–43 (chapter 5: "Position of My Mind since 1845); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, IV, ch. 52.

to the penal and non-natural character of our current condition, “rests,” so T. C. O’Brien says, “upon a knowledge of the ways of a special divine providence toward man.”¹⁹ This providence is revealed to us in its fullness in and by Christ Jesus, and it is no mystery that the doctrine of original sin does not come fully blown simply from Genesis, but from Genesis read together with Romans. Without this antecedent supposition as to the providence and benevolence of God conveyed to us by revelation, the nexus of intelligibility Newman locates can yield another result. Since we have no *secular* record of an original catastrophe, and since there *is* no word of God, then the misery of our condition argues more simply that there is no God. It is not that we are orphans, as in Newman’s reading, for orphans have first to have had mother and father. Would that we were orphans! But no; we are rather and just as Nietzsche thought, the disease of the world—very accurate diagnosis according to his lights: we are the world come to consciousness of itself in pain, consciousness not of an original sin but of an original violence. The old high metaphysics of the Good and the One will have no resonance for us.

A Metaphysical Problem

If God does not speak, then not only morally but also metaphysically will man be interpreted in such a way as no longer to think of himself as an image of God. If we are no longer images, there is no longer any mark of God in the natural world. And the simplest explanation of that is that there is no God for there to be any mark of.

Let us begin with the immediate data on the nature of man, two things that, together, are quite paradoxical.

First, there seems to be something immortal, trans-temporal, eternal about man: he can certainly think beyond his present, his environment, his limitations both temporal and spatial: by his mind, he lives in a world, not in a habitat. If he can think absences, which is quite an epistemological feat, he can think eternity (absence of temporal limits), and in this way his thinking transcends the material. Is that true just of his act or operation, or is it true of him? Should we say that something eternal *belongs* to him by right, that it constitutes him, or should we more modestly say that he is merely touched by something eternal?

What makes the first answer hard—saying that the eternal *belongs* to him—is death. That is the second datum. That we think transcendently

¹⁹ T. C. O’Brien, O.P., “Appendix 1: Attitudes Toward Original Sin,” in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 26 (1a2ae. 81–85): *Original Sin* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book company, 1964), 109.

belongs to us as wholes: and so it seems to be the very intelligibility of the human body just as such, given that the point of departure of all thinking, even the thinking of absences and eternity, is the senses and sense knowledge.

But death seems completely to undo us. Can we say that the intelligibility of man, of his being, since in its operations it extends to the eternal, is itself immortal? But without the body how can it function? Saint Thomas had the comfort of the remnants of the neo-Platonic universe to make it easy for him to suppose a separated, immaterial, and immortal soul could think, helped out by separated substances higher in the hierarchy of minds. But the Aristotelian principle remains, the principle that grew more powerful in his thought the older he got. It is this: the idea that some substantial form exists forever and ever without ever being able to place its proper operation is a complete non-starter.²⁰

So, if we can make no sense of a separated soul thinking, then perhaps we ourselves in our empirical and social and personal reality are not immortal at all, but only touched by some angel, just as the medieval Arabians thought. On the other hand, if we are somehow immortal, it seems to be for no conceivable good.

Of course, our sense of our metaphysical selves would be fixed if we know of the resurrection of the body, the restoration of our whole, natural, complete being. In that way, the anomaly of a detached soul, a remnant of the whole, existing forever and ever without being able to place its proper operation, would disappear. But for that hope, God has to speak to us. And if we think he has not spoken, then once again, all metaphysical bets are off.

For Saint Thomas, while there are strong philosophical reasons to assert the immortality of the soul, its status as but a principle of being, and not a complete being or substance, makes it difficult to conceive of it as subsisting everlastingly just as such, as a bare principle. Such a state of affairs is deeply unnatural. The natural immortality of soul meets an unnatural condition of its existence. Thus, as Aquinas observes: "If the resurrection of the body be denied, it is not easy, rather, it will be hard to maintain the immortality of the soul."²¹

²⁰ See Aristotle, *De anima* 1.403a10–11. See also Anton Pegis, "The Separated Soul and Its Nature in St. Thomas," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274–1974, Commemorative Studies*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 2:131–58.

²¹ *Super 1 Cor* 15, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 924; translation mine, from the Latin in *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. F. R. Larcher, Woks of St. Thomas Aquinas [Latin–English] 38 [Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012]). For, St. Thomas explains, that the soul be without a body is both *per*

The ground of asserting immortality, however, is the immateriality of the intellectual operations and powers of man. If there is no immortality, we will assert no immateriality in any strong sense. We will look, as the modern world does, for an empirically scientific, positivist, naturalist—materialist—account of mind, intentionality, consciousness.

Resurrection and much less glory are not really thinkable outside of a created universe. Will the necessity of resurrection in order to make sense of the continuing existence of the intelligibility of man make us think God, and judge him to exist who alone could solve the problem of our being? That would be a stretch. And if there is nothing immortal and immaterial about us, we are no longer images of any possible divinity. It turns out then that not only our moral experience, but our very being no longer point to God. If we are mysterious, we are mysterious the way matter is mysterious.

Without the word of revelation we are mysteries; remaining mysteries, without any word, we shall not suppose God even exists—for it would have to be him who is responsible for the almost contradictory character of our being, and the idea of God as making contradictories is not a very successful way into affirming his existence as guarantor of the being, truth, intelligibility, and goodness of the world.

Natural theology is necessary for theology, for its speculative coherence; and then, as for its existential conditions, theology is necessary for natural theology, for its moral or practical coherence!

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It may be helpful to conclude by linking up what has just been said to how Robert Sokolowski thinks we come to know God. On his showing, the distinction between God and the world and the knowledge of God as creator, itself *depends* on revelation for its completion and clarity. Aristotle does not think the First Mover creates the world, and the world is not created by the One in Plotinus. The idea of creation is not really formulated till the second century, and it is first fully formulated by Christians. The idea of creation necessarily involves the idea of a God who is so transcendent to the world that he does not need the world in any way whatsoever. Such a God is not part of the world or our experience of the world, and so the idea of creation has first to be taught to us from outside the world, by God himself. Subsequently, just as the Church teaches, we can then reason

accidens and contrary to nature, and such a thing cannot be thought to perdure infinitely.

to God and to his distinction from the world. But God has first to teach us the distinction for that to happen, and hence Sokolowski's name for it, the "*Christian* distinction."

The Christian distinction is a distinction of such scope and fundamentality that it provides the frame not only for understanding the revealed mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, grace, and the sacraments, as Sokolowski shows in *The God of Faith and Reason*, but also, and paradoxically, for the fact of revelation itself.²² Revelation cannot be made epistemically coherent until, given the Christian distinction by revelation itself, we can subsequently establish the existence of the transcendent and creator God independently of revelation, and just so that revelation may be recognizable as what it is: the word of the God who could be, in unexampled majesty and infinite glory, all that he is whether the world existed or not. By revelation itself, therefore, God undertakes freely to indicate to us how we may naturally recognize him apart from the word of revelation, and as a necessary step in coming to assent to that word. This revelation culminates with the incarnate Son of God, and is expressly articulated in Scripture, in both the Book of Wisdom and in St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. The First Vatican Council and *Fides et Ratio* simply repeat this scriptural teaching. But when we refuse assent to that word, because we think it never spoken, then, as I have tried to show, the natural theology revelation requires and so sustains also becomes unraveled. It *must* exist in order for revelation to be affirmed; it is *enabled* to exist only with the continued assent of faith to that same revelation. Thus an account for John Paul II's twofold observation with which this essay began.

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²² Robert Sololowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).