***Faith - CA-015***

We have been looking at the subject of Christian apologetics for a good while now. So, by way of review, there are basically two world views. There is naturalism and supernaturalism. Naturalism says that everything has an explanation in terms of natural phenomena. Supernaturalism invokes deity.

**Naturalism**

We've seen that naturalism fails because it cannot explain, first of all, ultimate origins. It cannot explain the very existence of the universe. Even though it may attempt to explain origins of how things became what they are, it ultimately fails in providing anything near an explanation for ultimate origins. Secondly, it fails because it fails to take into account, and it cannot explain, design in creation.

Einstein came up with his theories, many of which have been proved to have been accurate. But he would come up with these by saying, "If I were the Creator, how would I have designed this?" Sir Isaac Newton, the discoverer of the principle of gravity among other things, the great astrophysicist, said that he was merely thinking God's thoughts after Him. Naturalism doesn't take this into account.

**Reductionism**

Also, naturalism commits the fallacy of reductionism. You commit the fallacy of reductionism when you say that, "Something is nothing but" something. For example, "A man is nothing but a big boy." Well, yes, a man is a big boy, but hopefully he has matured and learned a few things since boyhood. So reductionism reduces something to only one dimension, and naturalism reduces all of creation to one dimension. Naturalism cannot come up with morals and values on its own.

So naturalism has been called the philosophical smuggler, because it has to smuggle morals and values and standards from deism, or from theism, or from supernaturalism. So we saw the bankruptcy of naturalism.

**Supernaturalism**

We saw that supernaturalism is the necessary world view, because we must invoke the transcendent when explaining why things are. We looked at some very valid reasons to believe in the existence of a Creator, and we have seen that it is not only reasonable to believe in a Creator, but it's very unreasonable to not believe in God.

**The Bible**

Just establishing the fact that God is a necessary being doesn't prove the God of the Bible. So we looked at the Bible. We saw the uniqueness of the Bible. There's no other religious book in the world anywhere near what the Bible is. For one thing, it's unique for its indestructibility. The more tyrants have tried to stamp out the Bible, the more the Bible seems to grow. It is truly an indestructible book. We've seen its life-changing properties. The Bible does what no other book can do. It changes lives. We've seen the accuracy of the Bible. It's almost impossible to find a Bible without maps because the Bible speaks of people that you can look up in history books – real people who existed, and real places, some of which you can find to this day on the map. It also speaks of places (civilizations) that are no longer in existence. There is archaeological evidence of them. So the Bible speaks in accurate terms. No other religious book claims to do this.

**Prophecies**

The Bible even makes prophecies. No other book, that anyone takes seriously, has dared to predict the future with any degree of accuracy. You can buy a copy of Nostradamus' prophecies today, but Nostradamus spoke in such vague generalities that you can explain, or explain away, any of his prophecies. But the Bible spoke some very pointed words of prophecy that we can look back and see how they have been fulfilled. Some were very major, such as Tyre and Sidon and other civilizations. Some were in the short range, such as Jesus saying, "Well, you go into the city, and you see a man carrying a pot of water, and you follow him, and then ask him for the donkey. And when he says, 'What do you want with it?' Say, 'The master has use for it.'" That was prophecy. We see long-term and short-term prophecy all through the Bible – always fulfilled accurately.

And then we see the specific prophecies involving the Lord Jesus Christ, hundreds of years before He was born. These included the city where He was going to be born, and it predicted His ancestors. It was even predicted when He would be born. So we looked at some very accurate prophecies, made hundreds of years in advance, about the person of Lord Jesus Christ.

**Miracles**

We considered the miracles of Christ, and how no other religion has ever dared to publish as many miracles (anywhere near the miracles) as Christianity. During the time of Jesus's life, it seems like Palestine was just inundated with miracles. Wherever Jesus went, true, verifiable, physical miracles occurred all over the place. No other religious leader (no other founder of any of the world's religions) has been able to come up with anything near this. Concerning other founders of religions, there have been claims of a few miracles here and there, but with Jesus, there were miracles after miracles.

**The Claims of Christ**

So we looked also at the claims of Christ. Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh. We looked at the character of Christ, and we saw that this was no mad man. This was no lunatic. This was no deceiver. He was a very honest, intelligent man. He was the only man in history who would stand up in front of a crowd of his enemies and say, "Have any of you ever seen me do a sin? Can anybody here convict me of sin?" And no one said a word. So we looked at the miracles, the prophecies, the claims, and the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of Christ. If there is any fact in history that has been firmly established by eyewitnesses, it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Suffering**

Then we looked at the problem of evil. We always hear, "Well, if you'll just explain why the innocent suffer; why there's so much trouble in the world; and, if you can just explain the presence of physical evil (natural evil) in the creation of an all-good God, then I will believe." We looked at that, we saw that we don't have all the answers. We don't claim to have all the answers, but we believe that natural evil is something that will someday be done away with. It was never intended by God to be a part of creation. The Bible tells us that we are living in a fallen world, but that in spite of this, God uses evil for His own glory, and for our own good.

**Sin**

Then we saw the problem of sin. We said, "Yes, the Bible teaches that sin is real. Moral evil is real. It exists. But it has been judged." The judgment hasn't been carried out yet, but it was judged at the cross.

Now we're at a point where you either get it, or you don't get it. We're at a point where it's like a joke. You either get it or you don't. It's a lot like humor. You know, if somebody doesn't get a joke, and they don't show humor, and you try to explain it to them, sometimes you can try all day, and they still don't get it. You either get it or you don't.

I heard about a man who was in a very fine museum once, and he walked in for a while, and would stand in front of a painting or a work of art, and kind of sneer, and then go to another. Finally, after staying in the museum for a few minutes, he walked toward the door, and he told the attendant as he walked out, "I didn't see a thing in here worth seeing." He walked out, and as he was leaving, the museum attendant said, "Don't you wish you could, sir?" It wasn't a matter of the art not being there, but the fact that the man did not know how to see the art.

So we have to come to a point in Christianity where we say, "If you believe, then you can understand. If you don't believe, it will appear to be nonsense to you."

This appears in some people's eyes as subjectivism or mysticism. The Bible says, in Psalm 34:8: "O, taste and see that the Lord is good. How blessed is the man who takes refuge in him?" Taste and see. Believe in the Lord. Trust in Him, and you will see. You will experience that He is good.

Jesus makes an interesting statement in Matthew 16. He had asked the disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Then He said, "Who do you say that I am?" And in verse 16, Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then here's the interesting statement. Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you Simon BarJonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father, who is in heaven." So there's the supernatural element. Some people would say that there is a subjective element, or a mystical element.

In Ephesians 1:18, the apostle Paul prays for believers. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." So he's praying for believers. He says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened so that you can understand."

In Colossians 2:2, again, he says, "I pray that their hearts may be encouraged, having knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery that is in Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul says, "For this reason, I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have trusted to Him until that day."

So the Bible apparently teaches that you can have certain knowledge; you can have full assurance; you can know God; and, you can know His Son. In fact, Galatians 4:6 talks about having an intimate family relationship with God, as a child relates to his daddy: "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba' (Father)." And the same thought is in Romans 8:15. We can know God intimately, and we can have an intimate relationship with God, but we have to first believe. 1 Corinthians 1, especially verses 9-16, talks about how the Holy Spirit teaches our spirits (our minds) so that we can understand spiritual phenomena. But you have to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That's only for Christians. That is only for people who believe.

So in spite of all of the objective truth that we offer (fulfilled prophecies, valid historical incidents, and so on), people can still say, "But this is all subjective. It's mystical." Well, let's take these two accusations that Christianity is subjective and that is mystical. Let's take them one by one.

**Subjectivity**

Subjective means that it happens all inside you. It's only in your own thoughts, and only in your own minds. Subjective reality is not always the same as objective reality, because you may imagine (you may perceive) things that are not the way they really are in objective reality. So that's the accusation that some people make to us as Christians – that you have to be a Christian before you can understand any of this. So that's pretty subjective. Once you adapt the Christian world view, then you understand it. But it's more than just adapting a world view.

Turn to 1 John 5:6. Speaking of Jesus, the son of God: "This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ, not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit; and the water; and, the blood. And the three are in agreement. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for the testimony of God is this – that He has testified concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. The one who does not believe in God has made Him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son." Let's talk about this for a minute.

First of all, this is the one, the Jesus Christ, who came by water. I understand there are different theories about this. Some people would say that the water means physical birth – the amniotic fluid. But I believe it refers to the baptismal waters of Jesus' baptism. Jesus was a physical man who received water baptism. At the water baptism by John, God the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." The dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, was there also. So I believe that's what the water is referring to – the baptismal waters of the Lord Jesus Christ. And of course, there was also the blood (the literal, physical blood) that He shed on the cross for us. So both of these witnesses are objective, historical facts. There is nothing subjective about these. These are actual incidents, just like Dr. Danish has quoted Francis Schaeffer many times, "The cross that Jesus died on was so real that if he had been there, and you had run your finger along it, you would have gotten a splinter in your hand."

So we have the water and the blood, and the Spirit, because the Spirit is the truth. And the Holy Spirit has testified of Jesus. In John 16:4-7, the last night the Lord Jesus Christ was on this earth, in the upper room, he said, in verse 7, "But I'll tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away."

Let's just pause a minute and make some side comments about that. Would you rather have the Lord Jesus Christ, physically, right here in this room with you, or would you rather have the Holy Spirit? Well, our first instinct is to say, "Oh, wouldn't it be great to have Jesus here with us? Wouldn't it be great to shake His hand; to embrace Him; to eat a meal with Him; and, to talk to Him on a one-to-one basis? Wouldn't that be great? But let me remind you that as a human being, He could only be in one place at once. He could only talk to a few people at one time. He didn't indwell people. So Jesus is telling the apostles, "I'll tell you the truth. Now, I know you don't understand this, but I'm going away, and it's going to be to your advantage," because the Holy Spirit can indwell each one of us and be with us just as Jesus was with one or two or a small group of people at one time.

"It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the helper (the Paraclete, the comforter, the advocate) will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer see Me. And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine, and will disclose it to you."

So the Holy Spirit is not here to bring honor and praise and glory to Himself. He's here to point people to Jesus. He testifies of Jesus. So the Spirit that witnesses, back in 1 John, is the Holy Spirit who witnesses to us of who and what the Lord Jesus Christ was and is.

Verse 10: "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in Himself." Here it may be somewhat subjective because the testimony is a certification – a word of authentication by a witness who speaks with authority. The Holy Spirit witnesses to us of the truth of who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

Our feeling is not the witness. The witness of the Holy Spirit, or the testimony of the Holy Spirit, is His work. The degree that we sense it is not what is focused on here, but the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives us the testimony which is in us – the firm conviction. A conviction is a persuasion that something is the truth. So the fact that the Bible tells us that Jesus was physically here on earth; that He was baptized; that God the Father testified of Him; the Holy Spirit testifies of Him today; and, we have this persuasion in our souls, this is the testimony that we have in ourselves.

**Calling God a Liar**

The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony (the conviction, or the persuasion of the truth) that God has given him concerning His Son. Now, how can you make God a liar? God is absolute truth. So how did you make Him a liar? Well, we make God out to be a liar. Let's just look at a couple of instances where this word is used in that sense.

Jesus was crucified because He made Himself to be equal to God. Remember that wording: "He made himself to be the son of God." These are the accusations that the Jewish leaders made against Him. He made Himself out to be the Son of God. They didn't believe that he was the Son of God, but He claimed to be. So he was making Himself out to be the Son of God.

In 1 John 5, John says that if you don't believe the witnesses that Scripture gives us of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you're making God out to be a liar. And that's why I keep saying that, "Faith is not calling God a liar." When you don't believe that Jesus Christ is who and what He says He was, then you're calling God a liar, because this is the testimony that God has given of His Son.

In verse 9, John said, "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." You may believe a credible witness who tells the truth under oath and you may say, "Boy, this guy is credible. I believe in what he says. You might even say he's an expert witness. I believe he knows what he's talking about." Then you should certainly believe God, because God is greater. The testimony of God is that Jesus is His Son. He sent Him to die for the sins of the world.

**Assurance**

So we believe that, and we stop calling God a liar. And when we do that, and we trust in His Son, the Holy Spirit comes and lives in us. We receive that testimony (that witness) of the Holy Spirit. Another word for this is assurance. Usually Christians grow in assurance. You can come in your Christian life to such a full assurance that you can have, as the apostle Paul said in Colossians to 2 that we just read, the full assurance of understanding.

Let's look at a couple more in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 6:11: "We desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end." "Hope" in the Bible means a sure thing. You have full assurance of the reality of your relationship with God.

Then in Hebrews 10:22: "Also, let us draw near, with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith." This is in the full assurance of our trust in God (our belief in God). "We have full assurance, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." We believers can have that full assurance.

This is just like in logic, you can make a definite statement that no triangle is a circle. No triangle is a square, because a triangle, by definition, is a three-sided figure. No one can truthfully say anything otherwise: "Well, some triangles may be squares. Every once in a while, a triangle is a circle." How do you know that no triangle is a circle? These things are totally meaningless. We believers can come to the full assurance, through growing in grace, that we have a real relationship with God. But this is only open to Christians.

Paul says, "You can know whom you believe," like he did, but only if you have believed – only if you are a believer. The Christian faith is based on actual historical happenings. So you have a subjective assurance, but it is based on the testimony of actual physical happenings in history. So it isn't subjective. There is a degree of subjectivity in it. You have this full assurance within your own soul, and that's subjective, but it's based on outward objective truth.

It's not like someone who says, "I believe that carrying a rotten tomato in your left shoe will give you a good relationship with God." That's not based on actual objective truth. But the fact that Jesus Christ was born 2,000 years ago of a virgin; that He lived a perfect life without an old sin nature; that He died on the cross; and, He rose again, all of this is corroborated by the words of Scripture; by eyewitness account; by changed lives throughout history; and, by the blood and sealed testimonies of many martyrs. So it's based on objective fact that is open only to Christians. The first step is that you've got to believe.

And there's no neutral ground. You're either saying, "Yes, God, I believe that," or, "No God, I don't believe it." That's why I say that faith is to stop calling God a liar. So it isn't subjective.

**Mysticism**

Is Christianity based on mysticism? Well, mysticism is a philosophy that teaches that truth can be discovered purely subjectively. Do you want to find out what the truth is about ultimate reality? Then look into your soul. Look into yourself. Subjectively, without any help from anyone else, just through your own subjective thinking or intuition, you can discover the truth. So is that what we're saying when we say that there is a subjective element in Christianity? No, that's not what we're saying. Let's look at mysticism for a moment.

First of all, mysticism is a common strand throughout many different religions and philosophies. Most of the strands have a few things in common. One thing is that all truth is really subjective. The outer world, or the objective world, or the material world is an illusion. In other words, as the Hindus say, "It's all Maya." All of the other people, and the cars, and the trees – it's all illusion. It's not real. The only real things are the subjective things.

First of all, remember that they say it's an illusion. Now, what is an "illusion?" An illusion is something that looks like reality. You can be deceived because you think something is reality, but it's only an illusion. Illusions can exist only when there is reality. So it's meaningless when they say, "Everything is an illusion." Well, if there's an illusion, there has to be reality. So that's a meaningless statement to say, "There is no objective reality." Everything objective is an illusion. How would you know it's an illusion unless there's an objective reality to compare it to? So by its very statement, it has the seeds of its own destruction. It is self-contradictory.

Another thing to think about when they tell you that the outer world (the objective world) is just an illusion, is this. All mystics; even Hindus; and, even Christian scientists say suffering, sin, and sickness are just illusions. They're not real at all. I've noticed that they all get out of the way for a runaway truck. It is something that you might talk yourself into thinking that you believe it, but you can't live it. Ultimately, it breaks down in the face of objective reality – The very thing they deny.

Francis Schaeffer told a story many times about once at a university dormitory in South Africa, he was talking to a group of students. One of the young men there was a Hindu. He made the statement that, "There is no such thing as objective reality. Both good and evil, and pain and pleasure, are all illusions. So the young man whose room they were in immediately went over and got his tea kettle of hot water, and held it over the Hindu student's head. The Hindu student said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm about to pour this scalding water on you. It won't bother you because it's just an illusion." The Hindu indignantly walked out of the room because he couldn't face the absurdity of what he had just said.

So mysticism teaches that physical things and objective reality are illusions anyway. So that's the number one inconsistency in mysticism. With just that, you can forget about mysticism.

Another claim that mystics make is that truth doesn't necessarily follow the guidelines of logic. Maybe logic is good for working out a math problem or a scientific problem. But for spiritual truth, you don't use logic. You use something else. Well, this is very arbitrary. That's another characteristic of mysticism that we'll talk about in a minute – that they can very logically and painstakingly make their case to you that logic doesn't count. Logic is not valid. Well, if it doesn't matter anyway, when you're talking about spiritual things (and this is a spiritual conversation), then why are you using logic. So they defeat their case.

They say that it transcends language. And they go to great pains to use language to show you that language doesn't really matter. The truth transcends language.

I had a conversation once with a young lady who was into mysticism. She was telling me how words are just worthless. She did a pretty good job of explaining with words. She used words beautifully. She did a good job of explaining to me that words are absolutely worthless. Truth transcends words. But she spoiled her case by using words to convince me of this.

Mysticism is arbitrary also. If you're the mystic, then you make the rules. You create your own reality. That's the only rule in mysticism. If I say it's real, it's real to me, so it must be real to you – or, who cares whether it's real to you? This is so ridiculous that it doesn't really deserve a refutation.

I'll just tell a story about two mystics who believed this. They decided to play a game of golf. And one of them said, "Well, since we believe the only reality is in the mind, let's don't go walking around the golf course and doing all this exercise. Let's just play mental golf. So they each got a cold drink, and sat down and enjoyed the mental golf game. One would hit the ball, and he would say, "Oh, wow. Look at that – a hole in one." He just really slaughtered the other guy in their mental game of golf. The other man was sitting there laughing. The first one said, "I don't understand. I've just beaten the socks off of you in mental golf, and you're not even upset. You're just sitting there laughing about it." The other guy said, "Yeah, but you don't know – you've been using my ball."

So you make the rules. Mysticism is something so arbitrary and so illogical that you can't live by it. It may be fun. It may be interesting to talk about it, but it's one of those philosophies that you can't live by. You can't even figure in your bank account by it. I've noticed mystics who say there is no such thing as objective reality. If they find a mistake on their bank account, they can become very indignant.

So the Word of God, with its objective reality, and the persuasion (the conviction, or the witness) of the Holy Spirit in ourselves – this is our defense of Christianity. You have to believe first. You believe; you exercise saving faith; you exercise good faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, you say, "God, I'm not going to call you a liar anymore. I believe what you've been saying to me." Then you can begin to understand and receive that assurance of the absolute truth.

It's not, "I'll believe once I understand." Instead, it's, "I believe *so that* I can understand." It is faith that gives us the position in which we can begin to understand.

Leon Adkins, 2003

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