WitnessKit Class 2

Using Dr. Francis Schaeffer's
Search Engine for Truth
to look at
the Ultimate Beginning of
Everything

Job 26:7-10

- **7** He stretches out the north over empty space;
- *He* hangs the earth on nothing.
- **8** He binds up the water in His thick clouds, Yet the clouds are not broken under it.
- **9** He covers the face of *His* throne,
- *And* spreads His cloud over it.
- **10** He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters,
- At the boundary of light and darkness. (NKJV)

The Bible Indicates

- That God wants us to search for Him with our whole hearts,
- And that <u>He</u> searches for <u>us</u>. Just as He searched for Adam in the garden and Adam ran from Him, and hid.
- Those of us who have experienced His search for us know that the Holy Spirit draws us toward God, certainly through our emotions, and also through our reason. God said, "Come let us reason together…" in Isaiah's writing.

How does the Holy Spirit use reason to reach us?

- The ability to reason comes from God and is a hint of His image within us.
- But according to John 14:16-17, the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth because the world does not see Him or know Him.

II Corinthians 3:14-17

- Human minds can be hardened and a veil can lie over human hearts that keeps them from seeing the truth.
- "Whenever a man turns to the LORD, the veil is taken away."
- So we see that the decision <u>to turn to the LORD</u> is a key issue.
- We see that the human will is involved.

Acts 26:17-18

- The Apostle Paul's commission from God was *"to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."*

The arena of spiritual conflict is the mind.

- The weapons God has given us are divinely powerful for destroying fortresses-
- What kind of fortresses?
  - Speculations
  - Every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God
  - Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ

Proverbs 21:22 and 11:30

- A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.

- He who is wise wins souls.

It is Biblical

To witness to others through their reasoning ability.

- Their minds are a gift from God,
- And His Holy Spirit stands ready to help.
- Specifically the Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, according to John 16:8.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer's Search Engine for Truth is a systematic way to apply reason

To matters we often think are restricted to faith.

According to these principles, <u>with the help of God's Holy Spirit</u>,

- Human reason can lead us toward spiritual truth if we think very carefully, step by step.

Francis Schaeffer's Search Engine Step 1

First look at **all** the options. The set of options should cover all the possibilities.

Second, Evaluate the options.

- We should carry the options to their logical conclusions to see if they are workable in the real world.
- We evaluated three options in our first class to see which worldview has potential for finding spiritual truth.
- We concluded:

Assume spiritual truth may exist when you search for it.

- This is a way of "keeping your options open." The first two worldviews—modernism and postmodernism—are closed options, which already have taken a stand on the issue at the preliminary assumption level.
- Assumptions bias conclusions, so we want to start with open assumptions rather than closed ones before we look at data.

This is as far as we went.
Now we want to go through another cycle, to home in toward truth.

Step 3

Refine the search within the best option.

Third, Refine the Search Within the Best Option.

- – that spiritual truth exists –
- By using <u>the same process</u> to think about the ultimate beginning of everything. **Spiritual <u>truth</u> will have a good explanation for origins.**

- **If spiritual truth exists, and is findable, it should explain origins in a reasonable way. Does Enlightenment Theism potentially do that? Or does the origins question point to a different worldview?**

Everyone can find spiritual truth about origins by following these steps:
Look at all the options.

This means setting up our thought experiment to cover **all** the possibilities.

Origins: Look at **all** the options.

- Option #1: Absolute nothingness.

- Option #2: An impersonal beginning.

- Option #3: A Personal Beginning.

Option 1: Absolute nothingness

- What existed before the Big Bang? Nothingness????????
- No one can explain how something <u>as big as a universe</u> could emerge <u>on its own</u> from absolute nothingness. Nothing to cause it to emerge. Nothing there to emerge. Nothing on top of nothing.
- In fact, the first law of thermodynamics says that is impossible. (It would take a miracle...)
- So nobody <u>really</u> espouses the view that the ultimate beginning was absolute nothingness.

Option 2: An impersonal beginning

This is a popular view among scientists and among certain atheist and pantheistic religions.

- An energy field,
- An undefined "singularity" big enough to start the universe
- an **impersonal** spiritual realm,
- "the Force" in the words of *Star Wars*

Option 2: An impersonal beginning

This option does not explain the order and complexity of the universe. It assumes.

It assumes that order arose out of chaos in this manner:

- It assumes that laws which govern nature are merely brute facts without a source
- and that they arose by chance.
- Other contrary laws could just as easily be reality and a different sort of universe would be the effect.
- Assuming is another word for faith.

Problem with the chance universe idea

- According to *The Case for a Creator*, about 40 extremely precise constants control the destiny of the universe, and the slightest change in any of the 40 would have produced a universe incapable of sustaining life.
- So the idea of a chance origin of the universe defies the precise fine tuning of the universe as we know it.

How do scientists get around the fine tuning issue?

- One method is the idea of many chance universes out "there" somewhere, and a universe spinning machine that spits them out at random. This is called the multiverse idea. But wouldn't the universe spinning machine be a sort of god? Aren't we back to a kind of unknowable mechanical god with this idea?

Option 2: An <u>impersonal</u> beginning

- This option in the scientific realm <u>does</u> have good tools for examining the laws of nature, but it does <u>not</u> have a good explanation of why those laws exist rather than other laws. It can tell "what" but not "why." It can look at intermediate causes, or mechanisms, but not at ultimate purposes.
- This option has a profound absence of tools for examining origins beyond the idea of a clockwork universe—with nobody to wind up the clock at the start.

Option 2: An impersonal beginning

All the forms of belief in an impersonal beginning, whether scientific or religious, consider human destiny as a descent into the impersonal after death,

- either by ceasing to exist altogether
- or by merging into an impersonal, unconscious godness.

Personality exists. An <u>impersonal</u> beginning has no adequate explanation for its existence.

- This view insists that personality arises from impersonal matter and energy, guided only by physical law and chance. Somehow impersonal matter – molecules, electrical impulses – produces mind.
- It is the view of both Modernism and Postmodernism.
- If we humans make a collection of inanimate matter, do we see mind emerge from that collection? If chance events collect inanimate matter, is that MORE likely to produce MIND?

Personality exists. An impersonal beginning has no adequate explanation for its existence.

- One of the quirky outgrowths of this idea is the question of whether computers will eventually develop consciousness,
- and another is the question of whether the organization of the universe will somehow produce a transcendent mind.
- Even starting with the impersonal, the question eventually comes back around to God—at least a sort of God.

Conclusion so far: **If the impersonal beginning idea either requires some sort of impersonal god, or leads to some sort of impersonal god,**

Isn't the idea of such a god being <u>impersonal</u> a purely faith position? Isn't a Personal Beginning at least as good an idea?

Where does an impersonal beginning leave us humans?

What implications does this PURELY FAITH view have for us?

Option 2: An impersonal beginning

- We know that the universe itself will someday die.
- An impersonal beginning means that death ultimately wins.

- Sources for this analysis: William Lane Craig's *Reasonable Faith* and Craig's and J. P. Moreland's *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, and Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland's *To Everyone an Answer*, plus their lectures on CD, available through Biola University's Apologetics program, express these ideas well, and in much greater depth, plus *The Case for a Creator* by Lee Strobel.

Deepak Chopra's Description

- From a transcript of <u>Larry King Live</u> aired September 29, 2004
- "If we were wiped out, it wouldn't make a bit of difference to the universe. We're just a speck of dust in the mindless junk yard of infinity." …
- "What is a human being? A speck on the cosmic canvas."

Does the idea of a Personal Beginning

Have different implications for us as human beings?

Option 3: A Personal Beginning

- If (and since) the ultimate beginning was Personality or Mind, our minds have a source for their existence. Our minds are then "in tune" to some degree with ultimate reality.
- This is a glimmer of hope for a destiny beyond the grave—
- a Personal, eternal Being who <u>gave</u> us our personality can <u>make</u> ours eternal, too.

The Bible describes God as eternal from eternity past.

From everlasting to everlasting, You are God!
Psalm 90:2

Option 3: A Personal Beginning

- Starting with the ultimate beginning as Personality or Mind, the order and complexity of the universe can make sense, because a Mind can plan and create and organize. A Mind could set the 40 fine-tuned constants to be just right to produce an inhabitable world.
- A Mind does not have to be seen to be real. Real Minds can accomplish real things.
- Abstractions like love and beauty can be real, as well, and not just illusion.

We know something about ourselves from inside our minds.

- We are more than just our physical persons.
- We cannot see each other's minds, but we know the minds exist.
- We cannot see each others' hopes and dreams, but we know those things exist.
- And we know they matter.

Option 3: A Personal Beginning

- It would be really odd if the most important things in life were just illusion.
- The things that are most important to us, like love and truth and beauty and hope, must have a reason to be so much a part of our lives.
- A Personal Beginning is the only option that supplies that reason, so it seems very likely as a real world possibility.

Origins Step 2

Evaluate the options.

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 1: Absolute nothingness – This option as a source for all that exists violates every intuition we have. If this option were true, we would have no reason to expect <u>anything</u> to behave predictably. It is the ultimate in unexpected capriciousness for a universe to suddenly emerge from total nothingness.

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 2: An Impersonal Beginning
- This option does not help us make sense of the world. It offers no explanation for the existence of abstractions like love and hope and yearnings.
- It has no good explanation for good and evil.

Evaluate OPTION 2: An Impersonal Beginning

- This option can tell us what, but not why.
- This option also negates the idea of the existence of spiritual truth.
- If the impersonal is the ultimate reality, then spiritual truth is simply subjectivity, and is ultimately meaningless.
- In this view, everything ultimately becomes matter, time, energy and chance. Our sense that the human mind is a higher order of being than an inanimate rock is just a transient illusion.

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 2: An Impersonal Beginning
- It offers no explanation for why anything exists.
- It is an option that negates the very idea of purpose.
- It offers no explanation for our sense of having a human soul.
- It offers no good reason to value the individual life. In fact, the core creed of an impersonal beginning is "survival of the fittest" which does not value individual life at all.

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 2: An Impersonal Beginning
- It cannot explain why our minds are able to think in ways that profitably interact with the physical world.
- It makes all the most important matters of life an aberration against a backdrop of a vast, impersonal universe that will also one day die—
  - to paraphrase Dr. William Lane Craig.

Quote from Darwinist Michael Ruse in THE CASE FOR A CREATOR by Lee Strobel

- "Why should a bunch of atoms have thinking ability? Why should I, even as I write now, be able to reflect on what I am doing and why should you, even as you read now, be able to ponder my points, agreeing or disagreeing, with pleasure or pain….

Quote from Darwinist Michael Ruse in THE CASE FOR A CREATOR by Lee Strobel

⦿ … deciding to refute me or deciding that I am just not worth the effort? No one, certainly not the Darwinist as such, seems to have any answer to this…. **The point is that there is no scientific answer."**

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 3: A Personal Beginning.
- This option begins to resonate with our personality.
- We have a source for the existence of abstractions—in the Mind of the One in the Beginning.
- Something we know is real—our own sense of self—IS real. **It makes sense to be able to think.**

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 3, continued
- The things that seem most important to us – love, truth, beauty, right versus wrong, eternal life – these all have a source in the Mind of the Same One.
- Our sense of having a soul is a match with reality, if indeed, option 3 is correct.

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- Option 3, continued
- We have reason to expect the universe to be predictable – a Source exists for its organizing laws.
- We have reason to expect our minds to interact correctly with external reality.

Origins: Evaluate the options.

- **Option 3**, continued
- We have a Source for making sense of the world around us.
- Our heart's cry of "why?" can potentially be answered.
- The abstractions that give life meaning—love, purpose, soul, kindness—are realities, NOT illusions.

Origins Step 3

Refine the Search Within the Best Option.

Origins: Refine the search within the best option.

- So far our search has pointed to Theism, or belief in <u>a Personal Beginning</u>, as the best option for spiritual truth.

This rules out several things such as

1. Materialistic atheism, and
2. Pantheism and
3. Panentheism which are impersonal, and
4. Forms of Determinism that make personality illusion.

It is helpful to rule out classes of answers in our search...

so that we can focus our attention on data within the most likely options.

Origins: Refine the search within the best option.

- We will spend the rest of this course looking at evidence for Enlightenment Theism, and refining that search. We will focus on historic evidence for a Biblical worldview in this first course.
- Even though the universities are overlooking it, Enlightenment Theism has the most potential for leading us to spiritual truth.
- Our own sense of self tells us that spiritual truth is real, just as our own consciousness is real.

Origins: Refine the search within the best option.

- The universities have ruled out Enlightenment Theism because they assume that Darwinism has made Theism invalid. They have confused the idea of intermediate causes and ultimate causes. This is a flaw in logic. Finding a pattern in nature does <u>not</u> equal finding the ultimate cause of the pattern.
- Because the validity of Darwinism is a complicated issue, we will consider another study course to develop ideas about it.
- In the meantime, back to THINKING CAREFULLY.

Enlightenment Theism can lead us toward spiritual truth.

Modernism and Postmodernism are empty of spiritual truth. They may allow for spiritual feelings, but not for spiritual truth.

Origins: Refine the search within the best option.

- Another way to refine our search is to look at DATA, and to think carefully about it.
- Data allows this course to look at the practical realm as well as the theoretical—
- Data about the historical validity of the Bible found in many different forms.

One of our assumptions:

Ideas that match reality work better than those that do not match   reality.

Data Observation

- If a Biblical worldview works better than atheistic materialism over the long term, it is worth investigating as a likely match for ultimate reality.

Data Observation

We can look around the world at societies with and without a Biblical worldview to see how history plays out.

An example: Compare the American revolution with the French revolution. One was built on a Biblical worldview and the other on an atheistic worldview. Which one worked for the good of the people?

Data Observation

- Another example is the former Soviet Union –
- Built on official atheism, the most ruthless of leaders were able to take power and to kill millions of their own people. The moral values to restrain their violence were not allowed.
- Real Spiritual Truth will encourage life and goodness, even among people in power.

Because this is a search…

- It takes time and effort.
- We will be reading some challenging books.
- We will return to the Bible every lesson to be renewed and refreshed from God's word.

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God has made me
And the breath of the ALMIGHTY
Has given me life.

Homework
Class Two Set 1:

- Read Genesis chapters 2 and 3.
- Did people start out as sinners from the very beginning?

Read HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT chapter 2. This chapter addresses the dilemmas of human identity.

- What are the facts that underlie these dilemmas?
- If one applies the different possibilities for a beginning to these facts, what is the problem with an impersonal beginning?

Homework
Class Two Set 1:

- What benefits go with a personal beginning, both regarding <u>a source for morals</u> and ways of thinking about <u>human personality</u>?
- What are the possible explanations for the existence of evil in human morals, given a personal beginning for existence?
- If people have always been moral failures, what does that imply about their creator?

Homework
Class Two Set 1:

- If people once were morally perfect, innocent creatures, but then changed into moral failures, what does that imply about their Creator?
- How do people who believe humanity or nature has always been both good and evil explain the goodness of God?
- List another problem with this system of thought regarding the potential for improvement.

Homework
Class Two Set 1:

- What does this imply as a benefit of the view that the world in now <u>abnormal</u> because of the presence of evil?
- The Biblical answer in the area of morals matches what we actually observe in this life, so its promises about eternity have credence.

We observe that

- People have real moral issues because real morals exist.
- There is hope for constructive change.
- There is reason and encouragement to fight evil, and one can fight evil <u>without</u> fighting God.
- We can <u>consistently</u> believe that God is totally good.

Homework
Class Two Set 1:

John chapter 1 states that the light of God enlightens every person, so these truths should resonate in our hearts with the light He gave us.

- Read I John 1:5-9. What problem does the Bible describe as a real problem in the area of morals?

Homework
Class Two Set 2:

Read John chapter 1 and Genesis 28:10-22.

⦿ The Bible claims to be true communication from God, and later in the homework we will study a wealth of information that supports its claim. In John chapter 1, the Bible says there was another form of communication from God. What was that form?

⦿ How does the statement in verse 51 match Jacob's dream in Genesis 28:12?

Homework
Class Two Set 2:

- How did Jacob know that his dream really was communication from God?
- Read Chapter 3 in HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT. This chapter summarized the serious problems in the way anyone can know anything – if they do not believe in a personal beginning. The history of philosophy took a long time to reach the level of "anti-philosophy" that this chapter describes. Nevertheless, the universities are filled with the outworking of this anti-philosophy.
- Describe Plato's conclusion about ideals, **and the difficulty of the multiple, finite gods of his culture's beliefs.**

Homework
Class Two Set 2:

- Schaeffer says that we learn and know things only by the existence of universals. What do you think he means?
- Epistemology is the science of how we know. Briefly trace the historic development of the epistemological difficulty.
- How did Hegel make the problem worse?
- How did the problem of epistemology affect science? What is the question of observer-subject correlation?

Homework
Class Two Set 2:

- How does the real world imply that a solution exists to the problem of epistemology?
- If you would like to cover this material in more detail, ESCAPE FROM REASON in THE FRANCIS SCHAEFFER TRILOGY might be helpful for extra reading. It covers the information at a slower pace.

Homework
Class Two Set 3:

- Read John 7:14-24. Here again, healing on the Sabbath is an issue. The wrong conclusion on this issue caused people to come to the wrong conclusion about who Jesus is.
- In verses 16-24, what did Jesus say was necessary to know whether His teaching was from God?
- For background, read Luke 3:1-17 and Luke 7:30. What earlier decision had this group of people made, causing spiritual blindness? (Hint: This is not about the external symbol. What did John teach?)

Homework
Class Two Set 3:

- How does this relate to Proverbs 3:5-6?
- Read chapter 4 of HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT. Schaeffer refers to the Reformation as follows. The Protestant Reformation was first and foremost a **"back to the Bible" movement**. It retained the entire Bible and encouraged personal Bible study. In fact, much of the persecution of that period occurred because the state church wanted to keep the people from having the Bible in their own languages.

Homework
Class Two Set 3:

- The Reformation was built on a Biblical base. It believed in an infinite-personal God who has always been alive. The Reformation accepted the Bible's explanation that evil <u>is</u> in our world, but is <u>abnormal</u> for God's creation because of the Fall of Man.
- Why did this <u>base of knowledge</u> keep the modern problems of epistemology from developing during the Reformation?

Homework
Class Two Set 3:

- What basic assumption makes the Biblical position intellectually possible?
- What theoretical distinction is often made between people and animals?
- If God's mind created the capacity within human minds for language, is it reasonable to believe that God <u>can</u> use human language, written or spoken, to communicate with people?

Homework
Class Two Set 3:

- So the issue becomes, **among the possibilities claiming to be that kind of communication**, how does one decide **which claims are true?** We will study that question at length in our next textbook, THE NEW EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT.