Monday, January 12: Creation

Required Reading

- Plantinga, Ch. 2, *Creation*
- From the *DCM Reader:*
  - Chapter 3 Introduction
  - Atkins, *The Limitless Power of Science*
  - Gould, *Non-Overlapping Magisteria*
  - Fang Li Zhi, *Note on the Interface Between Science and Religion*
  - MacKay, *A Scientist in God’s World*

Optional Reading

- Dillard, excerpts from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Other Preparation

- Prepare reading notes; prepare for quiz.
- Administer *A Little Survey* to two subjects and bring them with you next week. I’ll have you record the results in class. Do this by Tuesday.
- Design two versions of a survey question intended to bias the responses in opposite directions. Then try it out on at least 20 subjects. Use a coin toss or some other random means to decide who gets asked which version of the question, but ask the same number of subjects each version so that the results are easy to compare.
  Prepare a brief summary where you
  - Give both versions of your question.
  - Give the distribution of responses to each version of the question.
  - Compare the two distributions and comment on them. Were they more similar or dissimilar than you expected? Did you learn anything else in the process?

This will be collected on Wednesday, but the weekend may be a good time to get your subjects to help you out.
- Take a (sabbath) break. Relax. Enjoy creation.

Class

- 8:30–8:50 Devotions, Quiz
- 9:00–9:50 Plenary Lecture: *An Astronomer’s View of Creation*, Deborah Haarsma
- 10:30–11:50 Discussion
Looking Ahead

- Next week one of the required “readings” will be to watch the movie *The Mission*. There will be on-campus screenings of the movie next Friday, Saturday and the following Monday (times and locations TBA). But you are also free to watch it on your own.

- If you have time to get ahead on reading, you can read the articles by Niebuhr and Clapp in the *DCM Reader*.

- Upcoming plenary talks:
  - Tuesday, January 13: Kurt Schaefer, *The Cultural Mandate and U.S. Poverty Policy*
  - Thursday, January 15: Claudia Beversluis, *Can We Still Speak of Sin in a Therapeutic Culture?*
Getting Ready for Tomorrow’s Readings

1. This discussion item is intended to get you thinking about this issues of culture in the specific context of television.

   (a) Do you think television is inherently bad/evil? Can you imagine someone disagreeing with you? What would they say to you about this if you discussed it with them?

   (b) How would you characterize the influence of television as it actually exists?
      - on balance it is a negative influence
      - on balance it is a neutral influence
      - on balance it is a positive influence

   (c) What sorts of responses could Christians have toward television? How do you those responses relate to the assessment of television’s influence? other aspects of one’s world view?

2. What kind of music / movies / t.v. / books should Christians buy? Which answer comes closest to what you think?

   (a) You should fill your mind with the gospel. It’s OK to listen to any style of music so long as the message is Christian. But you should usually avoid purchasing and listening to music with a non-Christian message. The same goes for movies, t.v., books, etc.

   (b) Christians are often too legalistic. They shouldn’t worry so much about what they can and can’t listen to. Some music is obviously bad, but a mature Christian can listen to most things and filter out what’s bad from what’s good. So listen to what you enjoy so long as it’s not too extreme. The same goes for movies, t.v., books, etc.

   (c) You should listen to the best stuff: classical music and jazz, great novels, classic films, high-quality television. Popular culture has a little bit of good stuff, but most of its drek. Avoid it. As a Christian, you should concentrate on the art and music that you know is good quality.

   (If you don’t like the above answers, how would you answer the question?)

3. North American society is rich compared to much of the rest of the world. There are lots of things we can buy and enjoy. Which of the following comes closest to what you think about that?

   (a) Christians ought to be stewardly with their money. When you buy homes or cars or televisions or clothes, don’t waste money buying the most expensive or stylish. Buy things which are useful and long-lasting. That way, you can save some of your money and give some away to those who have less.

   (b) It’s not enough for Christians to be frugal. North American culture is way too materialistic, almost to the point of idolatry. Christians ought to live simpler. We don’t need so many big houses and gas-guzzling cars or expensive clothes or rich food. If we live more simply, we can live more spiritually, avoid some of the temptations of wealth, consume fewer natural resources, and have more to give to the poor.

   (c) Many Christians are too uptight about money. God has blessed our society with a lot of good things, and we shouldn’t begrudge those good gifts. Instead, we should work hard, enjoy the good things that God gives us, and be thankful for them.

   (If you don’t like A, B or C, how would you answer the question?)
4. In general, should Christians get involved in politics (join political parties, run for political office, get involved in local government, and so forth)? Which answer comes closest to what you think?

(a) Yes. We have a responsibility to get involved. We can accomplish good things and help make society better if we get involved.

(b) Yes, but unfortunately, the current system (including all the major political parties) doesn’t really reflect Christian ideals. It would be best if we could set up an explicitly Christian political party. In the meantime, well just have to make do with the current system.

(c) No. Its a good idea to vote, but if you get much more involved in politics than that, youll probably wind up compromising your Christian ideals. There are more important things for Christians to do. Besides, involvement in politics gives people the misleading idea that societys problems can be solved through government, when the real problems are spiritual problems and need to be solved spiritually.

(If you don’t like A, B or C, how would you answer the question?)
Tuesday, January 13: Cultural Mandate

Required Reading

- From the DCM Reader:
  - Ch 4 Introduction
  - Niebuhr, Christ Against Culture
  - Clapp, Why the Devil Takes VISA

Other Preparation

- Prepare reading notes, as usual. Here are a couple suggestions based on looking at your first couple reading notes:
  - Don’t merely write a sequence of quotations with no additional structure.
  - Try to discern and express the main points of each reading and how they are supported. (And make sure you understand the difference between those two things.)
  - Make use of the fact that the paper is two dimensional: use indentation, draw diagrams, etc. to organize things.
  - Include some response to the reading: agree/disagree, questions, connections to other readings, etc.
  - Make use of white space and/or color to make them more readable and more memorable.

- Remember the survey assignments due Tuesday and Wednesday.

Class

- 8:30–8:50 Devotions, Quiz
- 9:00–9:50 Plenary Lecture: The Cultural Mandate and U.S. Poverty Policy, Kurt Schaefer
- 10:30–11:50 Discussion
Discussion Questions

These discussion questions are to help you prepare for upcoming readings.

1. When the Apartheid system in South Africa was dismantled, the new, Black-majority government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission was empowered to grant amnesty to those individuals who, under the old system, committed human rights violations and crimes against humanity, provided the perpetrators gave a full confession to the Commission. What do you think about this idea?

(a) This was probably a good idea. A lot of crimes were committed, on both sides, during the struggle for power. Investigating and prosecuting all those crimes would take a lot of time and resources, and would just increase what hatred and divisions that still exist. Besides, the ideas behind the commission fit well with the Christian ideals of confession and forgiveness.

(b) Although the Commission sounds good, it doesn’t do justice for the victims. Confessions of perpetrators should be encouraged, and perhaps result in reduced sentences, but there has to be some punishment for evil acts, or the idea of justice is meaningless.

(c) (If you don’t like A or B, how would you answer the question?)

2. Imagine this all-too-common situation: an young, unemployed man is encouraged by his friends to try heroin. He becomes addicted, and then sometimes resorts to petty theft to pay for his habit. In your opinion, which of the following is the biggest part of the problem, and which will provide the biggest part of the solution?

(a) Although the man made some wrong choices, the biggest part of the problem is the addiction. Addiction causes physical changes in the body. It needs to be treated medically. Medical treatment and therapy are the best hope for helping the man out of this situation.

(b) Addiction is a difficult thing, but the real problem was the wrong choices the man made to get into the situation, and the wrong choices he continues to make. Addictions can be overcome by making the right choices, deciding to change your life, and seeking help. You’ve got to start by convincing this man to make the right choices. Until he decides to do that, not much can be done to help him.

(c) Addiction is a difficult thing, and the man made some bad choices, but the biggest part of the problem is the situation the man is in. He needs a job, a stable home, and hope for the future. He needs friends that will help keep him off drugs. Without those things, just getting him to stop using heroin in the short term won’t help in the long term.

(If you don’t like A, B or C, how would you answer the question?)
Wednesday, January 14

Required Reading

Note: Our next plenary lecture is Thursday, but I’m going to split up the reading for that lecture and spread it out over two days.

- Plantinga, Chapter 3, The Fall (through page 53)
- From the DCM Reader:
  - Tutu, *Nuremberg or National Amnesia: a Third Way*
  - Ruden, *Harsh Politics, Extravagant Forgiveness*

Other Preparation

- Prepare your reading notes.
- Don’t forget to gather your data from two versions of a survey question.

Class

- 8:30–9:50 Devotions, Quiz, Discussion
- 10:30–11:50 More Statistics
Thursday, January 15

Required Reading

- Plantinga, Chapter 3, The Fall
- from the *DCM Reader*:
  - Chapter 5 Introduction
  - Norris, Good Old Sin
  - Schultze, Civil Sin

Other Preparation

- Reading notes and quiz preparation as usual.

Class

- 8:30–8:50 Devotions, Quiz
- 9:00–9:50 Plenary Lecture: Claudia Beversluis, *Can We Still Speak of Sin in a Therapeutic Culture?*
- 10:30–11:50 Discussion

Looking Ahead

- Viewing times for *The Mission*
  - Friday, 1/16 9:00 AM. Commons Annex Lecture Hall (holds about 200 people)
  - Friday, 1/16 7:30 PM. DCC-015 (DeVos Theatre) (holds about 100 people)
  - Saturday, 1/17 2:30 PM. Commons Annex Lecture Hall (holds about 200 people)
  - Monday, 1/19 2:30 PM. FAC Auditorium

- Things to watch for in *The Mission* (suggested by Roy Anker, the plenary speaker for that day):
  - What does the waterfall symbolize in the movie?
  - There is very little dialog in this film compared to other films. How does this film communicate story with images instead of words?

You might also like read *Redemptive Themes in ‘The Mission’* by Roy Anker (*DCM Reader*) before or after viewing the movie.

- Find an article in a paper, magazine or online that reports on the results of a study. Analyze that article using the “7 critical components”. This will be collected on *Monday* to allow sufficient time to locate an article.

- Upcoming readings:
  - *The Truth, But not the Whole Truth* by Peter Carlson
  - *What Are They Thinking?* by Nelson King
  - Plantinga, Chapter 4
Friday, January 16

Required Reading

- None for today.

Class

- 8:30–9:50: Devotions, Basic Probability
- 10:30–11:50: Sample Proportions
  - Don’t Look in the Bag!

Discussion Questions

Here are some discussion questions to start the day:

1. Driving down the highway.
   
   (a) You are driving on the highway. The speed limit is 65 mph. How fast do you usually drive? (Perhaps imagine you have cruise control, what speed do you set it for?)
   
   (b) Now imagine you are driving down the highway (at the speed indicated above) and you see a police car half hidden to the side of the roadway up ahead. What is your initial reaction? Why?
   
   (c) You continue driving. In the last half hour you have seen several cars pulled over by police officers. Does this effect your driving?

2. Just a minute.
   
   (a) You need to get a couple items from a local store, but you can’t find a legal parking space. It will only take you a few minutes to get in and out. Would you park illegally and take your chances?
   
   (b) In the previous scenario, would it make a difference if the illegal spot is a handicapped spot, a “no parking any time” zone, “reserved for customers of Tony’s Tea House” (not the store you need to go to), or “reserved for Mr. Big Shot”?
   
   (c) What if it will take you 15 minutes to purchase your item? An hour?

3. The Lottery.
   
   (a) Have you ever bought a lottery ticket? Why or why not?
   
   (b) Whether or not you have every bought a lottery ticket, do you think there is anything wrong with buying a lottery ticket?
   
   (c) How about insurance? In what ways are the lottery and insurance similar? dissimilar?

   
   When you eat at the dining hall, how do you decide what time to eat? What line to get in?
List of Readings and Talks So Far

- Plantinga, Chapter 1, *Longing and Hope*
- Plantinga, Chapter 2: *Creation*
- Plantinga, Chapter 3: *The Fall*
- Colson, *What Are We Doing Here?*
- Garber, *To See What You See*
- Fee & Stuart, *The Need to Interpret*
- Salsbury, *The Lady Tasting Tea*, Preface and Chapter 1
- Sire, *What is a Worldview?*
- Atkins, *The Limitless Power of Science*
- Gould, *Non-Overlapping Magisteria*
- Fang Li Zhi, *Note on the Interface Between Science and Religion*
- MacKay, *A Scientist in God’s World*
- Niebuhr, *Christ Against Culture*
- Clapp, *Why the Devil Takes VISA*
- Norris, *Good Old Sin*
- Schultze, *Civil Sin: Evil and the Purgation in the Media*
- Tutu, *Nuremberg or National Amnesia: a Third Way*
- Ruden, *Harsh Politics, Extravagant Forgiveness*
- *Pollster says churches put too much value on numbers*
- Peter Carlson, *The Truth, But not the Whole Truth*
- Nelson King, *What Are They Thinking?*
- Laura Smit, *How to Be Happy in Collge – and For the Rest of Your Life,*
- Deborah Haarsma, *An Astronomer’s View of Creation*
- Kurt Schaefer, *The Cultural Mandate and U.S. Poverty Policy*
- Claudia Beversluis, *Can We Still Speak of Sin in a Therapeutic Culture?*
Monday, January 19

Required Reading

- *The Truth, But not the Whole Truth* by Peter Carlson
- *What Are They Thinking?* by Nelson King

Other Preparation

- Prepare for quiz as usual.
- A few probability problems (from class).
- Type a summary/study sheet for your assigned reading. (These will be copied and distributed to the class.)

Looking Ahead

- Instead of collecting reading notes, I would like you to write a short (maximum one page) response to one of the following items (as assigned to your group).
  - What purpose did Mendoza’s penance serve? Refer to Plantinga’s description of penance in your answer.
  - In terms of community of Guarani at the mission above the falls, trace the themes of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.
  - Why does Mendoza become a Jesuit? How is this act tied to his conversion?
Midterm Information

• The Midterm exam will be on Wednesday, January 21. It will include an in-class portion and a take-home essay.

• The in-class portion may include multiple choice, true/false, fill-in the blank, short answer, or similar sorts of question formats covering the readings, class discussions and plenary lectures through Thursday, January 15.

• The in-class portion will also include some questions on probability and statistics, covering material through Monday, January 19.

• Mid-term Essay (due Wednesday, at time of mid-term).

Write an essay on one of the following topics.

– Does Plantinga offer us any theological insights that might help us to adjudicate between Bishop Tutu and Ms. Ruden? How would you resolve that dilemma and why? In your answer, be sure to give an indication that you understand the relevant ideas from all three writers. You may bring in ideas from other readings and discussions as necessary.

– Plantinga argues that despite the Fall and evil in the world, Creation is ultimately good. (See the beginning of Chapter 3, for example.)
  * What is his evidence for his claim? Is there support for his position in other things we have read or heard?
  * What are the most important consequences (for a Calvinist) to this claim?
  * The ultimate goodness of creation is part of the Calvinist worldview. Do you think a Christian worldview requires you to agree with his argument? Why or why not?

– Give a well-supported response to consumerism, as defined by Rodney Clapp. Your essay should draw not only on Clapp’s article, but on other things we have read and discussed and should demonstrate how your position corresponds to a world view position, but it need not be a Calvinist world view.

Essays should be typed and approximately 3–4 pages long. In organizing your essays, do not forget to consider and address possible objections that might be raised to your position (or the position you are describing).
Class

- 8:30–9:50: Devotions, Quiz, More Probability (coins, births, birthday problem)
- 10:30–11:50: More Statistics (sampling distributions, normal distributions, confidence intervals)

Some Problems

Here are some problems for you to try.

1. Suppose you roll 5 fair 6-sided dice, what is the probability that at least two of them match?

2. Two games with dice.
   (a) Here is an interesting game. Alice rolls a single six-sided die four times. If she gets at least one 6, she wins. If she gets no 6’s, Bob wins. What is the probability that Alice wins?
   (b) Would it matter if Alice rolled 4 dice at once rather than one die four times?
   (c) Here is another interesting game. Alice rolls two six-sided dice 24 times. If she gets at least one double-6, she wins. Otherwise Bob wins. What is the probability that Alice wins this game?
   (d) Would it matter if Alice rolled 48 dice at once rather than two dice 24 times?

These games were actually played (for money) by the French nobleman Antoine Gombauld in the 17th century. He figured that since rolling double sixes was six times as hard as rolling a single six, the probabilities of winning each game should be the same. When he started losing money at the second game, however, he wrote a letter to the French mathematician Blaise Pascal. Together with Pierre de Fermat, Pascal went on to develop the mathematics of probability, focussing primarily on “games of chance”.

3. Let’s suppose that the heights of adult male hobbits are normally distributed with a mean of 42 inches and a standard deviation of 2 inches.
   (a) What percentage of adult male hobbits will be 42 inches tall or taller?
   (b) What percentage of adult male hobbits will be between 40 and 44 inches tall?
   (c) What percentage of adult male hobbits will be less than 40 inches tall?
   (d) What percentage of adult male hobbits will be more than 46 inches tall?
   (e) What percentage of adult male hobbits will be between 40 and 46 inches tall?

4. Imagine flipping a coin 10,000 times (like the mathematician in jail). How many heads should you expect if the coin is fair?
   (a) Give intervals within which 68% of such sample percentages (of heads) should fall. Express this also in terms of the number of heads.
   (b) Give intervals within which 95% of such sample percentages should fall.
   (c) Give intervals within which 99.7% of such sample percentages should fall.

5. If 400 voters are surveyed, and 250 say they plan to vote for the democrat in an upcoming election, give a 95% confidence interval for the true percentage of voters that plan to vote for the democrat.
Tuesday, January 20

Required Reading
- View the movie *The Mission*
- Plantinga, Chapter 4: *Redemption*
- Yancy, *The Good, the Bad, and the Redeemed* (Handout)

Optional Reading
- Roy Anker, *Redemptive Themes in ‘The Mission’* by Roy Anker (DCM Reader)

Other Preparation
- Prepare for quiz. It will cover the readings and the movie.
- Prepare short essay response to *The Mission*.
  - Item #2: Groups D and E
  - Item #3: Groups A, B, and C
  - Item #4: Group F
- Do probability and statistics problems that will be sent via email.

Class
- 8:30–8:50 Devotions, Quiz
- 10:30–11:50 Discussion

Looking Ahead
- Midterm on Wednesday.
Wednesday, January 21

Other Preparation

- Midterm essay.
- Prepare for midterm.

Class

- 8:30–9:50: midterm exam
- 10:30–11:50: Discussion

Discussion Questions

These questions are to help prepare us for tomorrow’s reading.

1. Are there some legal occupations that Christians shouldn’t have? (Possible examples: working in a casino, working on films that glorify violence, designing and selling clothes that are obviously designed to arouse lust.) Which answer comes closest to what you believe?

   (a) Yes, there are some legal occupations that Christians should avoid. There is no way that you could do them without compromising your values. (If this is your stance, what can you say about how one determines which occupations are not acceptable?)

   (b) No, it should be possible to redeem any (legal) occupation. There are, of course, some really bad things (mafia hit man, prostitute, drug dealer), but society recognizes those and makes them illegal. Beyond that, any occupation is acceptable. You have to be careful how you do it, of course, but it should be possible. Besides, if Christians all stay away from some occupation, things will only get worse there. If Christians get involved, they can improve how things are done and share the gospel with their co-workers.

   (c) Christians shouldn’t worry so much about their occupation. Your occupation has to do with worldly matters, not eternal matters. Obviously, you shouldn’t compromise your values in your job. But other than that, your worldly job has very little importance compared to the spiritual work you do when you use your time and your money to support the church and world missions.

If you don’t like the answers above, how would you answer the question?

2. Many Christians agree that education is important, but they don’t always agree why it is important. Which of the following comes closest to your own ideas about the most important reason for education?

   (a) Education is a way of improving yourself and, as such, it can help bring you closer to God.

   (b) We can use education to help evangelize non-Christians.

   (c) Less-educated Christians in the church depend on educated Christians to give them guidance in meeting the arguments of well-educated non-Christians.

   (d) Education is important for most good jobs. Christians need education so that they can be positioned to have influence in those good jobs.

   (e) Education allows us to help more people by making better medicine, better technology, better businesses, better governments and better social organizations.

If you don’t like any of those answers, how would you answer the question?
Thursday, January 22

Required Reading

- Plantinga, Chapter 5 and Epilogue
- Kuyper, *Common Grace in Science*

Class

- 8:30–8:50 Devotions, Quiz
- 9:00–9:50 Plenary Lecture: James Bratt *An Education for What? Kuyper and the Project of Christian Higher Education*
- 10:30–11:50 Discussion
Friday, January 23

Required Reading

- Hamming, *The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics*
- Polkinghorn, *Providence*
- Bradley et al, *The Mathematization of Culture*

Class

- 8:30–9:50: Devotions, Quiz, Expected Value and the Lottery
- 10:30–11:50: Are We Scaring Ourselves to Death?
Are We Scaring Ourselves to Death?

Intro and Segment 1 (0:40 - 13:40)

1. John Stossel makes several claims at the start of the program

   - We’ve been told by politicians and the media that there’s danger everywhere and it’s all getting worse.
   - [This] just isn’t true ... crime isn’t exploding, new technology is not shortening our lives.
   - There are real risks to worry about, but we, for the most part, are worrying about the wrong ones.

   Watch for the evidence he presents for each of these claims and see if you agree with him by the time the video is over. Does he make some of these cases more powerfully than others? Are there any holes in his reasoning?

2. Stossel claims that the media “try to scare you” when they report about crime. What methods does he claim they use to do this?

3. What does Stossel (and his guest Mark Warr) mention as negative side effects of being overly frightened about crime (i.e., more frightened than the data warrant)?

4. For whom does Mark Warr say “it is reasonable to be afraid of being murdered”? What evidence does he present to support this claim?
Are We Scaring Ourselves to Death? (cont’d)

Segment 2 (13:40 - 29:40)

5. A little over 19 minutes in, Stossel identifies the main “project” that he (and numerous support staff, no doubt) have undertaken over a three year period. What is it and why did they do it?

6. A couple minutes later, Stossel gives an outline of how they will measure what they are trying to measure. What are they trying to measure, and how do they quantify it? Do you agree that this is a good way to measure? (Can you think of any other ways to measure?)

7. John Graham claims that “there are a lot of risks we ought to go after. The problem is, as a country we’re having our attention diverted to relatively small risks.” Why does he think this happens?

8. What does John Graham mean by “statistical murder”? Give an example.

9. Near the end of this segment a “problem with democracy” is pointed out. What is that “problem”? Do you agree that it is a problem? Is there anything that can be done to offset the problem?

Segment 3 (29:40 - 37:45)

10. What do you think the EPA should do regarding the situation in Aspen, CO? If you think more information is required, what information is required and how could it be gotten?
Are We Scaring Ourselves to Death? (cont’d)

Segment 4 (37:45 - 40:30)

11. The risk statistic for smoking was computed differently than for other risks. What was the difference? Why was it done differently?

12. How does John Stossel claim that regulations can kill people.

13. Which risk “dwarfs all others on the chart”? Do you think this statistic was computed like the one for smoking, or like the earlier ones? Would it be possible to also compute the earlier statistics in the same way the smoking statistic was computed?

Segment 5 (40:30 - 44:10)

14. What is the point of the examples given in this last segment?

15. This video mentions a lot of numbers, are these statistics or parameters?

16. How well does this report stack up against the 7 critical components? (This may vary from segment to segment, but give an overall evaluation for each of the 7 components. Site examples.)