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Apologetics and the Cross
David Serle

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In this talk I really want to focus on what our approach should be to Apologetics. Now, we are not 'apologising'! Apologetics means to give an answer. It is a biblical word. In Steve Maltz' new book, 'Into the Lion's Den' chapter 12, you have got our mission statement; Steve's already referred to this, Titus 2, how the grace of God that brings salvation and teaches us, and teaches us to live godly lives while we wait for the blessed hope. And we have a biblical mandate to go out and defend our faith. We should be able to defend our faith but do we defend it using Apologetics, (sorry about the technical term, but the Bible talks about this), or do we go out into the lion's den, beard the lion in his den ... I think about what Paul Luckraft said about "questioning questions". We need to question things that are thrown at us. So many things are taken for granted in our society and Christians are referred to as "bears of little brain" because we dare to believe in Creation. We are despised for these 'non-scientific' beliefs, and basing our views on this 2000 year-old book. How dare we use this 2000 year-old book to tell people how to live in the modern world?! Well, you will see why in a minute, and how we can answer that one.

The Mandate

- ▶ 1 Peter 3:15 Always ready to give an reason (apologia) for the hope that you have
- ▶ Jude 3 you should earnestly contend for the faith
- ▶ How do we engage with the culture around us?
 - ▶ Convert the culture?
 - ▶ Condemn the culture?
 - ▶ Consume the culture?
 - ▶ Confront and challenge the culture!

But we have a mandate. And our mandate is to be "always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). And there is our word – *Apologia* – to give a reason. It's the Greek word, *Apologia*, for the hope that you have. And Jose mentioned this last night – Jude verse 3 – we should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, to the whole body. But if you are to contend for the faith you have to know what you are contending for and in what way you are contending. And again we've heard this several times this conference, *we need to set the agenda*. We don't want to be beaten and driven into the world's agenda; we need to set our own agenda. The church is facing internal and external threats and the internal threats are perhaps more dangerous than the external threats, but in this morning's session we are really thinking about the external threats that come to us.

So, what do we do with the culture around us? How do we respond to the culture around us? In the book “Take Heart” by Matt Chandler, he gives a very good summary of the ways that we can respond to the culture around us:

- We can try to **convert** the culture and this is what you’ll see going on in the New Apostolic Reformation – Peter Wagner, Bethel Church, all of that sort of movement. They are trying to convert the culture. They want to make the culture Christian again. There’s an American “Evangelical Right”, trying to convert the culture and make it Christian, so we have a more comfortable environment in which to share our faith.
- Or we can **condemn** the culture. We can stand back and wag our fingers and say, ‘Well, we can’t have anything to do with that’ and get in our holy huddles and disengage from the culture.
- Or we can **consume** the culture, and we see that going on in the church. We consume the culture, the church absorbs the culture and we get the movements of the ‘The House of Bishops’ and things like that in the Church of England where they’re just absorbing the culture, and the church is becoming entirely ‘culturally relevant’.

There’s nothing new about this of course. This is what happened when the Greeks came in and tried to Hellenize (as it’s known) the Jews at the time of the Maccabees between the two Testaments. We have three movements that developed out of that. We had the Sadducees and we had the Pharisees and we had the Maccabees – well not the Maccabees in this case, no, they challenged it, didn’t they? We had the Hellenistic Jews. And those three movements exactly what we’ve described there.

No, our mandate is to **confront** and to **challenge** the culture. The best way to challenge it, back to Paul here, we need to be asking questions but we need to know the questions to ask. But what I want to say in this session this morning is ... I have used one word, *Apologetics*. I want to use another long word, *Polemics*. They are two sides to the same coin. Now, unfortunately, they are both Greek terms and it is a Greek way of thinking. But it is a Greek way of thinking in order to get us into a Hebraic mode. With *Apologetics* should defend what you believe. With *Polemics*, you undermine what the other person believes. And I want to say this morning that the greatest *Apologetic* we have for our faith is the Preaching of the Cross. The greatest *Polemic* we have for our faith, to undermine other people’s position is the cross-shaped life. Our greatest *Apologetic* is the Preaching of the Cross, but that has to be backed up with the cross-shaped life.

Anyway, we need to challenge the culture. We need to understanding is what is driving the culture around us. It’s what this conference is about and most of Steve’s books as well. If you haven’t got ‘How the Church Lost the Way’ you need to get it. Or ‘How the Church Lost the Truth.’ It’s out of print. That was another masterpiece. And Hebraic Church, Livin’ the Life and now Into the Lion’s Den. These are all helping us understand the mindset of the culture round about us.

Challenging the Culture

- ▶ “And to give these forces names from the two races of men who have supplied the most signal and splendid manifestations of them, we may call them respectively the forces of Hebraism and Hellenism - between these two points of influence moves our world”
Matthew Arnold “Culture and Anarchy” ch. 4 (1867-68)
- ▶ Greek mindset vs Hebraic
- ▶ Intellect vs revelation

And again this is not new. Back in the middle of the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold, who was the son of the famous headmaster of Rugby School (incidentally, he became the first Inspector of Schools as well, in his book, ‘Culture and Anarchy’ (interesting title!), was analysing the influences that affected the society around him and he came up with this amazing statement:

‘And to give these forces names from the two races of men who have supplied the most signal and splendid manifestations of them, we may call them, respectively, the forces of Hebraism and Hellenism. Between these two points of influence moves our world’.

Nearly 200 years ago he could see it then. We have, basically – back to Steve’s books again – the Greek mindset verses the Hebraic mindset. We have intellect versus revelation.

A quote here from Lance Lambert, talking about the collapse of society.

“We are witnesses of a church which for the most part is silent. Hardly a national leader in the Christian church has spoken about these matters – same sex marriage, gay rights, and abortion at a very late stage when the child is fully formed. Unbelievably, although it is not welcome in evangelical churches, only the Catholic Church has spoken up. Pope John XXIII was the first, Pope John Paul was the second and Pope Benedict XVI was the third. They all spoke up against what is happening in so-called Christian nations and their societies. In the preamble to their treatise on the European and Anglo-Saxon civilisation, the European Commission neither mentioned the Gospel, nor the Bible, as THE source or even A source. When Pope John Paul requested they should, they replied”

– now listen to this! –

“ ‘It is not the preaching of the Gospel, nor the Bible, which is the source of European and Anglo-Saxon civilisation, it is Hellenism’, which means Humanism. Then Pope Benedict XVI begged them ‘At least put in the preamble that the Gospel and the Bible were A source of the European and Anglo-Saxon civilisation.’ This time they responded ‘It has nothing whatsoever to do with it. Hellenism is the source of our civilisation.’”

What Matthew Arnold did not realize of course was just how much of what he saw as the Hebraic, i.e. the church, was actually infected with Hellenism, and that's what we've been exploring over these last few years. Let us understand, this is where European civilisation is coming from. And in the terms of 'know your enemy,' we need to know that we are not on the same playing field at that very basic level – where does our civilisation come from. But what I would have to say is, if you want to be Hellenistic then watch out.

Watch out!

- ▶ Where did it all come from?
- ▶ Plato - the Republic
- ▶ "One of the greatest works of philosophy and political theory ever produced ... remaining as relevant today as when it was first produced ... the cornerstone of Western philosophy."
- ▶ "Plato (4th cent. BC) stands with Socrates and Aristotle as one of the shapers of the whole intellectual tradition of the West."
(Intro to the Penguin Classics edition)

We need to understand where it has all come from. Plato wrote a book called the 'Republic' which was written about 2,400 years ago, 400 BC. In it he and his friends – Socrates particularly – and one or two other people with long names that I can't remember, start discussing civilisation. And, interestingly, the very first point they discuss what it means to be *dikaiosune* which means to be righteous, to be just, to be justified. It is one of Paul's favourite words. And so they are trying to discuss what it means to be just, and they start discussing this.

So what has that got to do with modern civilisation? This is from the introduction to the Penguin Classics version:

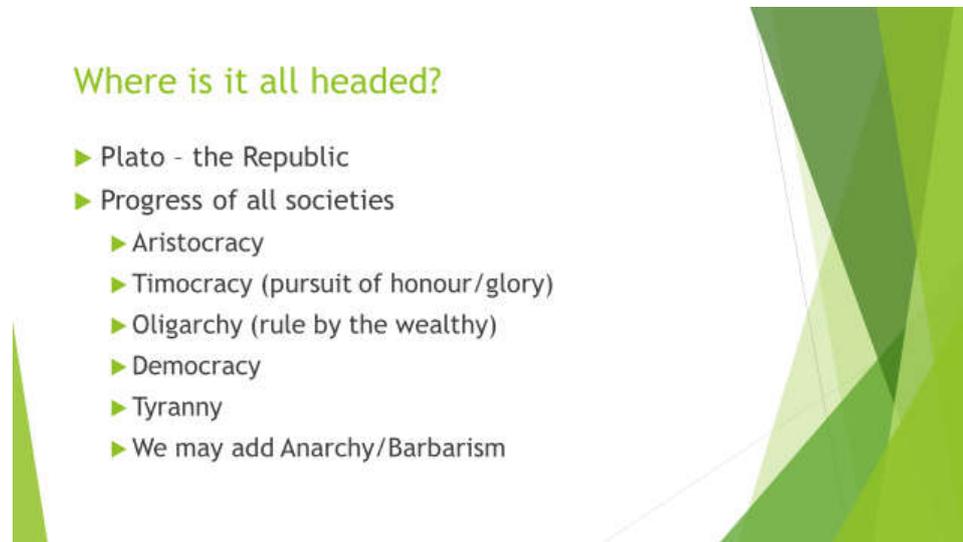
"One of the greatest works of philosophy and political theory every produced, remaining as relevant today as when it was first produced, a corner stone of western philosophy. Plato (fourth century) stands with Socrates and Aristotle as one of the shapers of the whole intellectual tradition of the west."

And these people accuse us of using a 2000 year-old book! So, that's where it came from. I won't bore you with the details. I have downloaded the kindle version and reading it is like watching paint dry. You get pages and pages ...

Now Socrates is very interesting. Someone makes the point and he answers it with a question and at the end of the chapter one of the guys gets really annoyed because "you've not said anything, Socrates! You've only asked questions." But when you get to the end of chapter one you think, 'Oh! There's been a paradigm shift here. They've explored something.' Very interesting – the method they used. As I said I won't bore you with all the detail. One of the things they came up with is

'Parents are not the best people to bring children up. The family should be dismantled. Chosen men and women, picked men and women [a.k.a. eugenics] should be brought together for a one night marriage. The resulting child should be taken away at birth and they should never know who their natural parents are. Children should be brought up as part of a community, not in the family.'

So, that's Plato. Does that ring any bells?



And a number of other things we'll talk about such as dualism in a minute. But they then discuss how civilisations progress and they were looking back at the stories of the Greek, mini-empires that they have had because they are before Alexander. They trace it through. And it is not only the Bible that has predictions. "In the progress of societies," and they are doing this perhaps from an intellectual point of view rather than an historical point of view. We can look back on history and say, 'Hmm, they got it right.' All societies start with aristocracy. There is the rule of people who are recognised as an aristocratic group and that moves into what they called timocracy, which is the pursuit of glory, pursuit of honour. So they are looking at the good things, expanding their influence from the point of view of bringing glory and honour to the society they are in. As a result of that the next generation become wealthy and becomes what is known as an oligarchy, a wealthy ruling class, and they eventually end up suppressing the poor who eventually revolt and push for democracy. 'We want a say in what we are doing'. Democracy, of course, often results in what somebody recalled recently 'the tyranny of 51%', I quote Brexit. But eventually democracy fails. Was it Sir Winston Churchill when he was asked, 'Is democracy an evil system of government?' And he said, 'Yes, it is, but it is less evil than the rest.' But eventually democracy breaks down and you've only got to look at that in the Arab Spring; the democratic movement in the Soviet Union, the former USSR. They went very democratic in about 1992 and by 1999 they had a dictator, and he's still there today. Democracy eventually ends up with tyranny or anarchy. And, funnily, people prefer a dictator to anarchy. So that's how they (Plato and friends) decided civilisations progress ... I've added anarchy on the end.

They weren't the only people to have come up with that. Lord Byron, reviewing history:

Where is it all headed?

“There is the moral of all human tales;
Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
First Freedom, and then Glory – when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption, – barbarism at last.
And **History, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but one page.**”

Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818).

Our culture needs saving from itself and its own
chosen path!

Do we try to save society or the people that make up
the society?

Where are we on that fourth line down? Wealth? Vice? Corruption? It's being exposed now by the pseudo Puritans. "Me too," and all that sort of stuff. It is all being exposed now, isn't it? And there's more, there's more to be exposed. Eventually the ruling class comes into disrepute and we end up in barbarism.

Our culture and society needs saving from itself. A culture that is so bedded into its Greek roots – Hellenism, the foundation of our culture – needs to read its own writings and see where it is going. And every culture, every civilisation – you can go back – it follows the same paths whether it be the Greeks or the Romans or the various experiments we had ... all through the Middle Ages. Our culture needs saving from itself, which is where, of course, Christian Apologetics and Polemics come in. We need to be operating from the Hebraic viewpoint though, as a contrast to the Hellenistic culture. The question is, do we try to save society or do we try to save the people that make up the society? And this is where we come back to convert the culture, condemn the culture, consume the culture, or do we confront it?

And we have to confront it with our own weapons. David Andrew said the other day we don't want to use the devil's weapons against him. If you use the devil's weapons you will get hurt. We need to come at this whole thing with a totally different viewpoint, the Hebraic viewpoint. The problem is Christianity has become so infected with Hellenism, with Greek thought, it can no longer speak clearly into the situation. So it ends up trying to confront the social views of the day with its own sort of watered down social views based on the same sort of Hellenistic thought processes. This why this is so important that we get hold of what it means to be Hebraic, to get back to what the Bible says. Or to quote a famous phrase, "Back to Basics."

Back to basics

- ▶ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:
that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,
that He was buried,
that He was raised again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures
1 Cor. 15:3-4
- ▶ Not belief without proof, but trust without reservation

If you have got your bible with you turn to 1 Corinthians 15. Just two verses here, verses 3 and 4. Paul says:

'For I delivered unto you first of all, [or as of first importance] 'that which I also received. How that Christ first died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.'

Paul gives them concrete facts and he goes on to show that those facts can actually be established. It is interesting to see where Paul is coming from, writing to Corinth. When he first came to Corinth, in Acts chapter 18, he came fresh from debating with the Greeks in the Areopagus, Mars Hill. Mars Hill and Areopagus means the same thing, apparently. Ares is the Greek god of war. They were up there on this mount and put the world to rights. There were different groups that trace themselves back to Aristotle and to Plato and he discusses with them. And if you go through, I won't do it now, but if you go through Acts chapter 17 in his discussion with them you'll see he deals with

- Origin vv.24-26
- Meaning vv.27-28
- Morality vv.29-30
- Destiny v.31 when he talks about God's appointed day in which he will judge the world by that man whom He has appointed and he has given testimony to all men in his raising him from the dead.

And he goes into all that and they just laugh. Because the Greek idea is, 'You don't want to come back. You want to die. You want to be released from this level here into the real realm.' This is so much like the truth. The spiritual realm is the real but they saw it as totally disconnected from the earth. So he discusses with them. I'll let you look this up at your leisure.

He comes to Corinth. He is on his own and he comes into Corinth. And he says here in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 1 to 5,

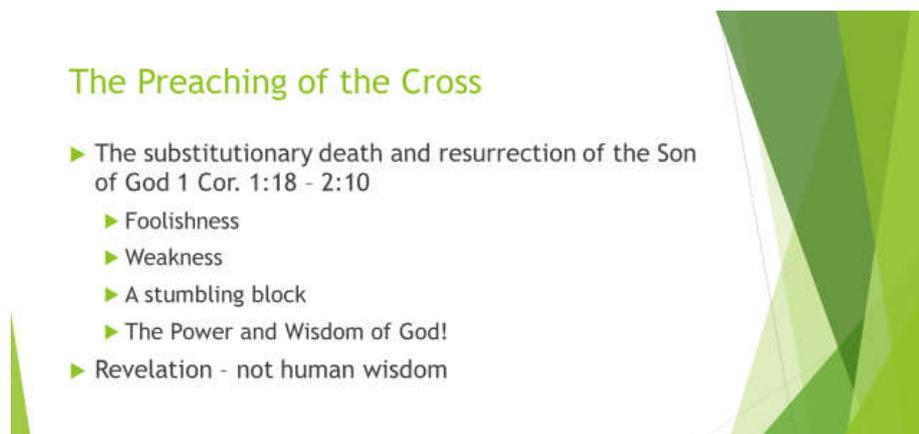
"And I brethren when I came to you, not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in

fear and in much trembling and my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but of God."

He delivered unto them of first importance what he had received with revelation, not intellect, how the Christ died for our sins. And we know this is what his message was when he was with them.

God doesn't expect us to believe without proof – but He does expect us to trust without reservation. No-one is argued into the kingdom. But Apologetics, understanding our position, understanding the other position, can open the door. It can enable you to ask the right questions. So, if we've evolved over billions of years out of the slime, what does that mean we are? If this is all the product of random undirected processes what does that say about the minds of the scientists who are analysing it – random thought processes?

Our faith is based on facts or on objective truth. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 the best part of 500 people were still alive who you could have gone and seen and checked with that they had seen Jesus risen from the dead. It is according to the Scriptures. It is a solid, fact-based ... and anyone who has analysed the resurrection, like Frank Morris who started to write a book to disprove the resurrection and ended up believing it. Or a judge fifty years before him who went through it again from a disbelieving point of view and actually came to the view 'It's got to be true.' But we have a faith based on objective facts. But that doesn't mean to say that it is a factual process that says you can't argue people into the kingdom. These facts have to be accepted by faith, but *it is not belief without proof*, but *it is trust without reservation*. Trust in what? The preaching of the cross.

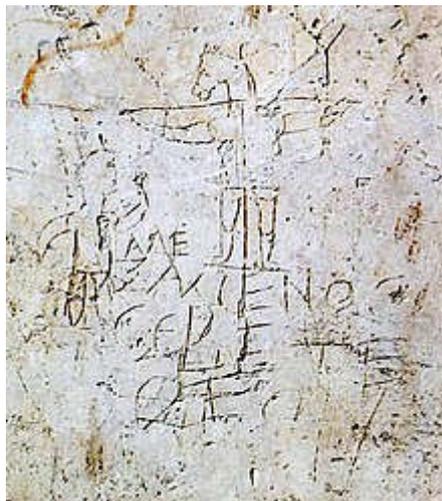


The Preaching of the Cross

- ▶ The substitutionary death and resurrection of the Son of God 1 Cor. 1:18 - 2:10
 - ▶ Foolishness
 - ▶ Weakness
 - ▶ A stumbling block
 - ▶ The Power and Wisdom of God!
- ▶ Revelation - not human wisdom

What is the preaching of the cross? The preaching of the cross is the preaching of the substitutionary death and resurrection of the Son of God. Now, we have got to say 80% of the country doesn't believe this, but THIS IS what we believe. As a preacher's mandate it is wonderful, isn't it? This reminds me of when Isaiah had his vision and God said, 'Go and preach to these people, but they are not going to listen to you. They are going to be blind and they are going to be deaf and they are not going to listen to you at all [Isaiah 6]. So Paul says, preaching of the cross, yes, it is foolishness, it is weakness, it is a stumbling block [1 Corinthians 1:21] to the Hellenistic, the Greek mindset, and to the Jewish

mindset. Why would the Greeks want to worship a condemned criminal? And the Jews weren't looking for a Messiah who was hung on a cross. There's a piece of graffiti from about the fourth century, and it is subtitled 'Alexamenos worships his god'



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexamenos_graffito

And his god is a crucified man with the head of a donkey. Fourth century graffiti.

But what we need to understand is that the preaching of the gospel is the power and the wisdom of God. We cannot substitute anything for the cross otherwise we're back to human wisdom, human power and in our chapter here, verse 19 of 1 Corinthians 1:

"For it is written:

'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise:

the intelligence of the intelligent I was frustrate.'

It tells us that God is bringing that to nothing! He is going to bring to nothing the wisdom of the wise. He is going to render their power useless because the weakness of God is stronger than man's wisdom. He is wiser than man. At the end of the chapter he then goes on and talks about - this happens because it is down to the supremacy of Christ.

I picked this up recently from a blog about Spurgeon.

"He was pre-eminently a theologian and a preacher of the cross. Spurgeon's was a cross-centred and cross-shaped theology, for the cross was 'the hour' of Christ's glorification (John 12: 23-24), the place where Christ was and is exalted, the only message able to overturn the hearts of men and women otherwise enslaved to sin. Along with Isaiah 45:22, one of Spurgeon's favourite bible verses was John 12: 32: 'And I when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself.' "

He believed his preaching of the crucified Christ was the only reason why great crowds were drawn to his church for so many years. And then there is a quote from one of his sermons:

"Who can resist His charms? One look of His [Jesus'] eyes overpowers us. See with your heart those eyes when they are full of tears for perishing sinners and you are a willing subject. One look at His blessed person subjected to scourging and spitting for

our sakes will give us more idea of His crown rights than anything besides. Look into His pierced heart as it pours out its life blood for us, and all disputes about His sovereignty are ended in our hearts. We own Him Lord because we see how He loved.”

The preaching of the cross is what will pierce through to the centre of man’s heart. Yes it is foolishness, it is weakness, but I love this old hymn I used to sing many years ago:

Through weakness, like defeat,
He won the meed and crown,
Trode all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down.
He hell, in hell, laid low.
Made sin, He sin o’erthrew.
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so.
And death, by dying, slew.

That’s the power of the cross, but it is nonsense to the world. So, what did the world do in all its wisdom? They crucified the Lord of glory. If they’d known He was the Lord of glory they wouldn’t have crucified Him. You can probably read that at least in two different ways. Because if they had known they were going to crucify Him then He was going to win the battle, but that’s the world’s wisdom. And, as you get to the end of that section in 1 Corinthians 2: 9 and 10, we discover it is revelation.

“It is written, eye has not seen nor ear heard. Neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.”

Most of us stop there, because that’s the quote from the Old Testament [Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 2:9] but why, why, why, do we not carry on to verse 10?

“But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit.”

You hear people taking a sort of false humility, ‘Oh God hasn’t revealed it to us ... it is beyond our understanding.’ But God HAS revealed it to us through His Spirit. Where is that revelation? It’s in the word of God and it is seen at the cross – AT the cross. Revelation, not human wisdom.

Why the cross? The cross is God’s only solution. The cross is the only solution that God has for the problems of the world. Why is that? Because ultimately we only have one problem: Sin. Now the Greeks were aware of this. I come back to Matthew Arnold again. And the Greeks, bearing in mind via the intellect, were intellectually gear themselves up from here to somewhere up there, where they would be just and happy. Arnold says this:

“It’s all very well to talk about getting rid of one’s ignorance and seeing things in their reality, which was a Greek idea, seeing them in their beauty, but how is this to be done when there is something which thwarts and spoils our efforts? This ‘something’ is sin. And the space which sin fills in Hebraism as compared to Hellenism, is indeed prodigious”.

Basically, he’s saying that ... can I precis this? I can’t really. The Greek way was thinking your way through, thinking yourself into this higher state. He goes on to say

“The discipline of the Old Testament may be summed up as a discipline teaching us to abhor and flee from sin. The discipline of the New Testament has a discipline teaching us to die to it.”

We have to die to sin. The Greek mind wants to think its way through it, but God wants to terminate its ugly career on the cross, to apply the cross to the root of our pride and our self-sufficiency. No wonder the EU won't acknowledge the Judeo-Christian roots as the roots of its civilisation. It cuts right across it.

But not just that. It's the death and resurrection of Christ. Because His resurrection vindicates His work. The death and resurrection of the Christ deals with not just our sin, and that's often where we stop, don't we, on preaching the gospel? Your sins have been forgiven. And most people these days think, 'Well, so what? We don't believe in sin anyway, do we? And what's the big problem with sin? I am just being myself.' And we water the gospel down – just being a question of our sins being forgiven and getting to heaven. I spoke on this here, February last year. But when we look at the cross we see that God doesn't just deal with our sin but He deals with – to use the old Anglican phrase – the world, the flesh and the devil. It all comes to a head, it comes to its *end* at the cross. Everything is terminated at the cross.

I am going to take them slightly out of order:

Only one solution!

- ▶ The World Gal. 6:14
 - ▶ With all its wisdom, power, pride, way of thinking
 - ▶ Its values and fig leaves
 - ▶ John 12:31 Now is the judgement of this world
 - ▶ Now is the Prince of this world cast out
- ▶ The Devil
 - ▶ Heb. 2:14/15 Jesus destroyed him who had the power of death and delivered all his captives
 - ▶ Col. 2:14/15 all his legal grounds of accusation and all his cohorts
 - ▶ 1 John 3:8 For this purpose Christ was revealed!

Let us look at the world. Galatians 6:14. Paul says, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ Jesus, my Lord, *by whom* the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' The world thought they were being clever hanging Jesus on the cross, but actually it was the world that was hanging on the cross. Jesus said in John 12:31, 'Now is the judgment of the world.' The world with all its pride, its power, its systems, its way of thinking that we have just been looking at in 1 Corinthians, all exposed on the cross. The world with all its values, with all its fig leaves trying to cover up for all its injustice, all its self-righteous works, all its independence from God, all nailed to the cross. And I'm dead to it. It should have no appeal to me. But that's the world with all its wisdom, power,

pride, its way of thinking, values and fig leaves. 'Now is the judgment of this world.' But interestingly, that verse goes on to say, 'Now is the prince of this world cast out.' Because the cross is the devil's nemesis as well. Hebrews 2:14. "By dying Jesus destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil. And delivered all those who, through their lifetime, were subject to bondage through fear of death". So, at the cross, Jesus – I won't say terminated, but certainly He bound the strong man in one sense. That marks the fall of Satan who ends up in the lake of fire, but it marks the point where Satan's power is broken. Satan's power over people is broken as Jesus has delivered all his captives.

And then we go into Colossians chapter 2 which, unfortunately, is often misread because the translators didn't understand the Greek word. That's another story. Colossians 2: 14 and 15. It talks about the cross blotting out the handwriting of ordinances. People say that is the law. No it is not. Every time you break the law you are giving God an IOU. Your sin is an IOU to God. But what is it that God owes You? God owes you judgment. And that's what this verse refers to. When you ran into debt in Greek society you gave a 'handwriting of ordinance' (Col.2:14 KJV), a bill, and that bill would be held until you paid it off. Interestingly, when the bill was paid off they would write a Greek word across it *tetelestai*, 'It is finished.' And then, typically, they put it on a stake. 'It's done.' Well, all those IOUs, all the sins, everything that you owed God, which is the devil's legal territory to accuse you – remember he's the Counsel for the Prosecution – this is all his evidence, "Look at this you've done!" – Jesus snatches it out of his hand and nails it to the cross.

More than that, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it". So all the devil's legal grounds of accusation and all his cohorts, all his principalities and powers, meet their nemesis at the cross. 1 John 3:8 tells us for this purpose the Son of God was revealed ... I love the literal understanding of that, it is to 'undo the doings of the devil.' So the devil is running around doing things and Jesus comes along and undoes them. Right that's the world and the devil. Remember our phrase was, 'only one solution, the Cross.'

Only one solution!

- ▶ The Flesh!
 - ▶ Our sins 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 3:13
 - ▶ Our unrighteousness 2 Cor. 5:21; Col.1:20-22
 - ▶ Our flesh Gal. 2:20; Rom.6:1-4
- ▶ Our whole life Luke 9:23
- ▶ The greatest polemic?

The Cross-shaped life

- ▶ To back up the greatest apologetic -

The Preaching of the Cross

Now most of us stop here: 1 Peter 2:24: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.” Galatians 3:13: “He was made a curse for us”. That’s the wonderful, incredible privilege of the gospel ... when does God remember our sins? No more! (Jer.31:34; Heb.8:12; 10:17) And when’s no more in eternity? There’s no future in eternity, there’s no past. So, if God remembers our sins no more, it’s as if they’re gone – past, present and future! He has put all our sins behind His back. Where’s God’s back? The One who is omnipresent! Anyway, hallelujah ... what a wonderful blessing of the Gospel!

However, if you are a bit more of a theological turn of mind you might try to get to the idea of imputed righteousness. He has taken our unrighteousness, and this is 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He was made sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 1 Peter 3:18 says that “He was crucified, the just for the unjust”. And in Colossians 1: 20 to 22, “through His blood shed on the cross He makes peace ...” Not just for us – for the whole of creation – **everything** is reconciled. Things on the earth and things above the earth, not things under the earth. That’s another story as well. But the whole of creation is reconciled back to God, because the stain, the cancer of our sin, had polluted everything. Ultimately, everything is reconciled back through Jesus’ blood shed on the cross. And we become righteous, we are able to be united with God because we have been made righteous.

But it goes further than that. It wasn’t just that our *sins* have been taken away. It wasn’t just that our *sin* has been dealt with, and we are now righteous, but our *flesh is crucified*. Galatians 2:20 Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (KJV) Our flesh, our old Adamic life, is crucified. We cannot glory anything that we have done or we could do, 1 Corinthians 1, we can only glory in the cross. But can I put a comment in here. The NIV translates flesh as ‘sinful nature,’ so we think, ‘before I was saved I had a sinful nature and I had a bit of good nature.’ Your good nature is crucified as well. It is everything that we were in Adam has to go, it has to be nailed to the cross. And it is only Christ which is living in us now. Our righteousness is entirely of Christ. All our gifts, all of our whatever we might think we can do is nailed to the cross. Now, like God gave Isaac back to Abraham He might give you a gift back but it has to be taken to the cross first, because without it going to the cross it’s the flesh. Everything, good and bad, it must all go to the cross and die, so that it is now Christ living in me. Not just the hope of glory but my whole life now before I get to glory.

Romans 6, you can look into that a bit more. The body of sin is done away with. When I preach in Africa I like to use this illustration ... they are much more conversant with death than we are, in Africa. I get one of the Africans to come up to pretend to be my old nature. And say, “The old nature is crucified, dead, buried.” You don’t bury something to kill it, you bury it because it is dead, isn’t that right? So, as I said, the body is dead and we’ve dug the grave, we’ve laid him in the grave and we’ve covered him up. Now, when you go back to living in your old nature, to being controlled by your old nature, its habits, its

desires, its understandings ... it's like you've got a shovel, you've gone out there, you've dug the corpse up, you've got him back, and then I get the guy to stand behind me and I put carry him on my back and say, 'Now you are carrying the old man around with you. You can't have much fellowship when you are carrying the old man around with you. He stinks for one thing. You are trying to have fellowship with believers, you are trying to serve God and you are carrying this old man around with you.

Romans 7, I think David quoted the other day. "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" The Romans used to sometimes strap the body of the murdered victim to the murderer, well we won't go there. We don't want to go and dig up the corpse? Or are we still being driven by our own will, our appetites, our desires, our habits? Romans 6: 11-13, this has consequences, and I will just give you the headlines here. You can read it through. He says,

- Never **expect** to sin. Never go into a situation thinking, 'I'm going to fail.'
- Never **excite** sin, so don't put yourself in a position where you will be tempted to sin.
- And never **excuse** sin. "Well, that's just the way I am."

Is this just for advanced Christians, missionaries, pastors, preachers, or whatever? No, it is for all of us. It is basic discipleship. Luke 9:23, "If any man would follow me, let him **take up his cross daily** and follow Me." It's basic discipleship. This is why our greatest Apologetic is the preaching of the cross. It's the nemesis of the world, the flesh and the devil.

And the greatest Polemic for it is the cross-shaped life. George Mueller, who some of you may have heard of, ran a number of orphanages over many years, thousands of children, millions of pounds, in the Victorian era. He said once,

"There was a day when I died, utterly died, (And as he said this he would get lower and lower and lower and lower) died to George Mueller – his opinions, his preferences, his tastes and his will, died to the world, its approval and censure, died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends, and since then, I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

This is the cross-shaped life. That's the proposition against which there is no argument – Jesus only. Oh to know the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death – Jesus only. Amen.