



EVANGELISM IN AN AGE OF WAVERING TRUTH

RC Symposium Presentation Synopses

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Monday [17 July]

Our Modern Crisis: Where is the Life we have Lost in Living? | Dr. Gregory Schulz

In this presentation, Dr. Schulz will share with us his own engagement with the rising chaos and decay that we see in the society around us and most notably in the universities. In light of this, he will attempt to answer the essential question that frames our day-to-day philosophy of life in a time of social upheaval. How are we as Christians supposed to live in this modern crisis?

Why Christianity Needs a Voice at the University | Dr. Richard Howe

When we see modern and popular culture changing as rapidly as in our present time, we should ask ourselves: How did we get here? With the Christian worldview losing popularity, the world around us often feels unrecognizable. How do anti-christian beliefs rapidly disseminate themselves into popular culture - especially among students? Culture is downstream from ideas, and it is at the university that ideas are propagated. In this presentation, Dr. Howe will speak on the importance of a voice for Christianity in the academic institutions that shape our future generations and their leaders.

THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



Tuesday [18 July]

The Truth about Truth | Dr. Richard Howe

This presentation will cover the distinction between theories of truth and tests for truth and then compare various theories of truth. Dr. Howe will defend the correspondence theory of truth and looks at the different ways that a statement can correspond to reality, including literally, allegorically, metaphorically, analogically, symbolically, hyperbolically, phenomenologically, informally, and metonymically. He will also discuss the laws of logic, and respond to common objections brought against logic.

Why Apologetics? | Jonathan de Beer

Some people may argue that apologetics is a discipline only for intellectuals and philosophers. Others argue that arguments don't serve an evangelistic purpose. Apologetics helps us to stand firm in the truth of the Gospel as we learn and explain the reasons why we believe. In this talk, Jonathan will explore apologetics as a tool for strengthening one's own faith and sharing the Gospel with others.

Israelite Conquest at Dan | Dr. Kristen Davis

The Israelite conquest of Canaan is one of the most heavily contested parts of the Bible. This presentation will be an in-depth discussion of the cultural and religious artifacts found at Tel Dan, the site associated with the Israelite tribe Dan. The site provides good evidence that the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan during the period in which the Bible claims the Conquest took place.

Why Think God Exists? | Mike Willenborg

In this talk, Mike will explore various aspects of reality that form the basis for arguments that demonstrate the existence of God.

Miracles: A Philosophy, Theology, and Apologetic | Dr. Richard Howe

In this presentation, Dr. Howe will offer an exploration of what miracles are (philosophy), why miracles occur (theology), whether miracles are believable (apologetic), and how miracles fit into the task of apologetics. The presentation will also offer a response to challenges, including the challenge of atheism (every event has only a natural cause), the challenge of other religions (many religions claim miracles, so no religion can be confirmed by an appeal to the miraculous), the challenge of history (miracle stories were common in the ancient world), and the challenge of epistemology (David Hume marshaled a formidable response against belief in miracles).



Piecing the puzzle: The argument from Undesigned Coincidences | Karnu van Heerden

An underrated and forgotten argument for the reliability of the Bible, the argument from undesigned coincidences uses unintentional confirmation between disconnected passages to demonstrate their value as eyewitness testimony.

Old Testament: History or Hoax? | Dr. Kristen Davis

Christianity is often undermined by the claim that the Old Testament should be viewed as a collection of *moral stories* rather than a *historical narrative* of God's interaction with real people, in real places, at real points in history. However, if Abraham, Moses, David, and others were not real people, a significant portion of our understanding of God's nature and interaction with mankind is lost. This presentation explores the reliability of the Old Testament, responding to specific arguments against the historical accuracy of the Scriptural narrative.

The case for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ | Karnu van Heerden

This presentation will examine the historical evidence for and theological implications of the pivotal event of the Christian faith. By exploring historical data, comparing alternative hypotheses, and considering the significance of the resurrection within the context of the Christian faith, this presentation aims to establish a robust foundation for the credibility and transformative power of Christ's resurrection.

The Truth and the Problem of Evil | Dr. Gregory Schulz

This presentation will seek to address one of the most serious objections to the Christian faith: The problem of evil. Working within the framework of the reality of suffering and its place within the Christian worldview, Dr. Schulz will demonstrate why Christianity provides a meaningful answer to the problem of evil.

Suffering in the Life of a Christian | Rebekah Howe

What role does suffering play in the life of the Christian? How do we walk through suffering with a Biblical mindset? In this talk, Rebekah will share part of her testimony and explain how she, personally, lives as a believer with a chronic disability.

WORLDVIEWS AND WORLD RELIGIONS



Wednesday [19 July]

On Building a Worldview | Dr. Richard Howe

One often hears the term ‘worldview’ used in apologetics. What is a worldview? In this talk, Dr. Howe will examine how Christians ought to steward their minds. Such stewardship requires us to be deliberate about building a worldview that is founded on the truths of reality. A worldview should not merely be chosen, but should be built by means of sound reasoning and should be based upon the nature of reality itself. To that end, Dr. Howe will discuss the nature of truth, the nature of religion, the relationship between faith and reason, and the role of classical empiricism.

Are all Religions Equally True? | Jonathan de Beer

Are religious commitments chosen like a flavor of ice cream or a sport to play? Most religions seem to answer questions about life, the world around us, God, and ourselves. In this presentation, Jonathan will explore whether all religions essentially proclaim the same ideas or whether they make different claims about reality.

Methods Matter: A Response to a Modern Evolutionary Theory of Religion | Dr. Kristen Davis

The Evolutionary Theory of Religion assumes that the nature of religious expression is directly related to the intellectual and material culture of the community. Following Darwinian Evolution, it claims that as a culture becomes more materially, intellectually, and organizationally complex, the nature of its religion becomes more sophisticated. E. B. Tylor originally introduced this theory in 1871, but was quickly discredited by Andrew Lang. In 2011, a modified version of this view was reintroduced by Robert Bellah in his book *Religion in Human Evolution*. Bellah’s view has the potential to be more convincing due to his heavy intermixing of biological and psychological evolutionary theory. In an attempt to mitigate such a response, a new refutation of the Evolutionary Theory of Religion will be presented. Granting Tylor and Bellah’s hypothesis, that religion evolves as people groups evolve, this presentation will explore the requirements for proving such a hypothesis to show that the historical data contradicts Bellah and Tylor’s theory.

Deism: A Clockwork Universe | Karnu van Heerden

In this presentation, Karnu will examine the worldview of Deism, an ideology that has had historical precedent as a contender against Christianity. Karnu will argue that our current social environment provides opportunity for a reintroduction of the Deist worldview, though not as we might expect.

Why the God of Islam is a Nobody | Rudolf Boshoff

In this presentation, Pastor Rudolph will focus on the concept of God in Islam and Christianity. He will explore the idea that the God of Islam, Allah, is portrayed as transcendent and unknowable in contrast to the God of Christianity, who is relational and knowable through Jesus Christ. He will also explore the differences between Islamic monotheism and Christian worship. This presentation will delve into theological aspects and contrast the two doctrines of God.



Paganism Rising | Dr. Kristen Davis

Paganism is a polytheistic worldview. Its adherents employ manipulative power, in an attempt to change or control the circumstances of their lives or the lives of others. While typically associated with the ancient world (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greco-Roman mystery religions), the current culture of relativism has allowed this worldview to thrive once again, resulting in a renewed need for understanding. Through an analysis of ancient paganism, as seen through archaeology, the framework of the pagan worldview will be outlined, after which correlations between ancient and modern paganism will be drawn. This will be followed by a discussion of the differences between the pagan and Christian worldviews, including how the Christian savior story differs from that of pagan accounts. Kristen's final remarks will cover the manner in which the early church handled paganism, with application points on how modern Christians can do the same.

A Christian Critique of Marxism | Dr. Gregory Schulz

This presentation will critically examine the compatibility of Christianity and Marxism, investigating the ideological and theological tensions between them. By evaluating key tenets of Marxism from a Christian perspective, Dr. Schulz will highlight the fundamental disparities in their underlying principles. Through a thoughtful exploration of these contrasting viewpoints, this presentation seeks to deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between Christianity and Marxism.

Christianity and African Religion: The Redefinition of African Spirituality | Fiso Mazibuko

African spirituality is defined as the adoption of the lifestyle and worship that traces its roots to African customs prior to colonialism. This phenomenon seeks to eradicate Christianity, and redefine religion for "Africans". In some circles, African spirituality goes as far as rejecting Christianity as a monotheistic religion and redefining Christianity as the religion of the slave master. In this presentation, Fisokuhle will reconcile our faith with our identity and define African spirituality while exposing falsehoods contained in the system that reduces Christianity to a mere polytheistic religion. Fisokuhle will also explore some of the forces behind the agenda and its teachings. This discussion will be presented within a South African context.

Satanism | Dr. Richard Howe

After a brief exploration of what constitutes an occult worldview, Dr. Howe will present the specifics of Satanism, primarily as a religious (as opposed to criminal) phenomenon in America, including both Anton LaVey's Church of Satan and Michael Aquino's Temple of Set.

What about Those Who have never Heard the Gospel? | Dr. Richard Howe

In this presentation, Dr. Howe will examine the problem of the unreached. Various options will be surveyed including universalism, pluralism, and inclusivism. The conclusion, exclusivism, will maintain that no one goes to heaven without knowingly trusting Jesus as Savior, but will try to show how this works out for those who have never heard the specifics of the Gospel by considering the roles of General Revelation and Special Revelation.

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

Thursday [20 July]

Biblical Justice | Dr. Daniël Maritz

In the present era, the notion of social justice assumes a prominent position in our cultural tapestry. Yet, is this notion truly novel? Why has the need for contemporary social justice arisen when there already exists an age-old framework for such equity? Dr. Maritz will explore the paradigm of Biblical justice, an enduring construct residing within the sacred pages for millennia. Within it lies a profound and efficacious alternative to the prevailing conception of social justice, beckoning us towards a more purposeful path.

Pilgrim Politics: Recovering our Cross-Shaped Creed for Dual-Citizen Living | Simon Jooste

In this presentation, Rev. Simon Jooste will discuss his book, *Pilgrim Politics: Recovering our Cross-Shaped Creed for Dual-Citizen Living*. Rev. Jooste seeks to strengthen the Church's understanding of her spiritual mission and Christian vocation within a two kingdoms framework through a recovery of our cross-shaped creed. He proposes a paradoxical alternative to prevailing Protestant ways of relating Christ and culture that tend to transform the spiritual into political activism. The challenge is to recover and refine the best of the church's creedal heritage for a more faithful witness in the future. Martin Luther's theology of the cross embedded in God's two kingdoms motivates this recovery and prompts recognition of important developments in contemporary Reformed discourse. A cruciform vision for church mission and Christian vocation is surely not limited to Luther and the Lutherans. Its best articulation is arguably found elsewhere, clothed in covenants.

Natural Law Theory | Dr. Richard Howe

During this presentation, Dr. Howe will explore the model of morality known as Natural Law Theory and how it arises from an understanding of some basic elements in metaphysics and theology, including human nature and the good.

Hillsong and Bethel Music - Gateway Drugs? | Rebekah Howe

This presentation takes a look at how some contemporary music is intentionally leading the church away from sound Biblical theology. The discussion will largely be based on the book *Counterfeit Kingdom* by Doug Geivett and Holly Pivec.

Defending Life: Why Abortion is Immoral, and Should Be Aborted | Mike Willenborg

This presentation critically examines the moral implications surrounding the controversial topic of abortion. Through rigorous ethical analysis, Mike will explore the reasons why abortion is considered immoral within certain philosophical frameworks. By challenging the prevailing arguments in favor of abortion, he highlights the inherent value of life and advocates for its protection. Ultimately, this discussion proposes a reevaluation of society's stance on abortion, emphasizing the imperative to reject it as a morally acceptable practice.



Fractured Foundations: Why the Nuclear Family has to Go | Simon Brace

In our modern world, the nuclear family is not just under heavy scrutiny, it is seen as an oppressive, patriarchal, and misogynistic Western construct that needs to be abolished. In this presentation, Simon will discuss the importance of the traditional, Christian, nuclear family and why it is currently under attack by the contemporary social justice movement.

Does Artificial Intelligence Lead to Atheism? | Dr. Kristen Davis

Is your brain a computer and your mind software? Will robots one day have souls? Will we be uploaded to a super computer some day? These questions stem from a very specific view of the nature of the human intellect. Join Dr. Davis for an exploration of what it means to be a rational being, to determine whether there are extra-biblical grounds for believing that humanity is indeed unique and irreplicable, and to consider how we can use discussions about AI to point people to Jesus.

Christianity and the Government | Karnu van Heerden

The question of church and state is one that has been discussed throughout the history of Christianity. Should the Church be involved in politics or have nothing to do with it? If it is to be involved, then to what extent? What are a Christian's civic responsibilities?

Dealing with Disagreement: Should We be Troubled When Experts Disagree With Us? | Mike Willenborg

In this discussion, Mike will consider how we should approach situations where experts disagree with our own beliefs and convictions. By exploring the nature of expertise, the limits of individual knowledge, and the role of critical thinking in intellectual discourse, Mike will present principles to help us navigate divergent viewpoints and to constructively engage with the challenge of intellectual disagreement in the pursuit of truth.

Live not by Lies: Woke Worldview vs Christ the Life | Dr. Gregory Schulz

This presentation will critically examine the clash between the woke worldview and the teachings of Christianity, focusing on the philosophical and ethical implications that arise when these two ideologies clash. By analyzing key principles of the woke ideology and contrasting them with the life and teachings of Christ, this talk aims to illuminate the fundamental divergences in their underlying beliefs about truth, identity, justice, and human flourishing.

WHAT NOW?



Friday [21 July]

Always be Ready | Rebekah Howe

Regardless of the circumstances that Christians find themselves in - good, bad, sick, healthy - they are called to *always* be ready to defend the Gospel and to give a reason for the hope within them. In this talk, Rebekah will explore current examples of such a defense and use her testimony as a point of departure.

How to Argue like Jesus | Karnu van Heerden

There is no doubt that Christians in our modern society are struggling to articulate what they believe and why they believe it. How do you effectively communicate your beliefs? You don't need a Ph.D. In this presentation, Karnu will examine some of Jesus' dialogues in Matthew 22 and explore basic principles for argumentation, communication, and persuasion from the Master of rhetoric himself.

Calling out God's Anointed: Challenging False Prophets and Teachers | Rudolph Boshoff

In this discussion, Pastor Rudolph will examine what defines heresy and how to deal with ministers who are outside of orthodoxy. While exploring the concept of false teachers, he will examine two common extremes: sectarianism and minimalism. He will also discuss discernment ministries and question how they can function with accountability to ensure they benefit the church and not fringe movements outside of the church.

The True Nature of Spiritual Warfare | Simon Brace

Many Christians completely misunderstand the true nature of spiritual warfare. This causes them to be ineffective in their engagement with the culture around them. In this presentation, Simon will provide a reinterpretation of the popular Christian concept of spiritual warfare by delving into what Scripture really teaches regarding its true nature and the practical implications for the church, so that it may be a powerful voice in society.

Answering the Arguments of Popular Atheism | Dr. Richard Howe

In this presentation, Dr. Howe will provide an analysis of the phenomena of “t-shirt” or “bumper sticker” atheism (clever one-liners or popular myths) along three categories: (1) Rhetorical Arguments (e.g., “Atheism is merely a lack of a belief in God”); (2) Scientific Arguments (e.g., “Christianity has always stood against the advances of science.”); and (3) Philosophical Arguments (e.g., “If God created the universe, who created God?”)