
The God Dialogues: Christianity

'Christianity is for thinking people and is

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The God Dialogues: A moderated panel discussion between Christians, Atheists, and Muslims at 8 p.m. Thursday in Rudder 601.

Representing Ratio Christi and Christianity will be John Ferrer and Dr. Robert Marks; Representing the Atheist and Agnostic Student Group will be Shawn Hanrahan and Abid Mujtaba, and representing the Islamic Study Group will be Emad Mousavi and Shima Mohajeri.

The format will be that of a panel discussion, and the topic will center around two questions:

"What is the basis for Morality from your point of view?" and "What about Evil?"

John Ferrer, an inquisitive man from a southern Christian home, knew he wanted to help people.

"I went into apologetics not even knowing what apologetics was. I knew I wanted to help others come to conclusions on tough questions," Ferrer said.

Now a Christian apologist and doctoral student at Southwestern University, Ferrer will participate in the God Dialogues Thursday representing Ratio Christi, a student apologetics organization on campus. Ferrer said philosophy and the idea of God have intrigued him. However, it was his brother's atheistic worldview that pushed him to explore his own faith.

"He looked at the bad examples in Christianity and thought he could see through Christianity. I looked at the bad examples and look around them and found a better example," Ferrer said. "He dug deep enough to find questions about the faith and I'd like to say I dug deeper and found hard answers underneath those tough questions."

Ferrer teaches church history and philosophy at several schools, including Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I hope to invite the entire audience to engage in the questions that will be addressed," Ferrer said. "I

can build their own worldviews and interrogate their particular answers on these big questions."

Glenn Smith, a friend of Ferrer and Ratio Christi director, approached Ferrer about participating in the dialogue. Smith said he volunteered to bring Ratio Christi to A&M three years ago after receiving an overwhelming response from students hungry for a local chapter.

"We believe that Christianity is for thinking people and a reasonable, logical faith. What we try to do is give answers to people about Christianity and join in intellectual debates on campus about their story," Smith said.

The first God Dialogues in 2009 featured atheist and Christian panels. This is the first year the Islamic faith will be incorporated. Smith said this addition will cater to a broader audience, allowing listeners to consider a variety of religious beliefs.

"This time we are going to have a Muslim group involved which should be interesting. It will be interesting on how they address key existential questions since they do not share a Christian worldview about morality and meaning and why we are here on this Earth," Smith said.

Robert Marks, an engineering professor at Baylor University, is the second Christian panelist. Marks founded the Evolutionary Informatics Lab, which supports intelligent design research. Collegecrunch.com named Marks in its "20 most brilliant Christian professors" list.

Andrew Robbins, senior biomedical engineering major and Ratio Christi treasurer, said he is excited to hear what Marks and Ferrer have to say about a religion he has been exposed to since the sixth grade.

"It was interesting for me because I went to public school and I always have had a love for science and mathematics," Robbins said. "I built up a separation between religion and science and I had this weird dual idea about the way the world worked."

Smith said everyone has his or her own idea of what faith is, and these diverse ideas make open forums — such as the God Dialogues — a great way to bring world views together in one room.

"Frankly, everyone has to have their own answers to what they think people are, what they think about morality and what is the basis for morality," Smith said. "These are questions that have occupied some of the best minds throughout history."

"I would consider it a success if all sides on the panel represent their position intelligently, responsibly and consistently within their worldviews and the audience members are able to take those same questions home and address those questions for themselves."

