



# **Socratic Club seeks to understand Christianity beliefs**

## **New group inspired by Oxford University club founded in 1941 to discuss the origin of Christian belief**

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One of Gonzaga's newest organizations, The Socratic Club, aims to imitate its Socratic motto, "Follow the argument wherever it leads," in hopes of reaching intellectual understanding of the beliefs and doctrine of Christianity.

It was created in the same style as the Oxford Socratic Club, founded in 1941, said club coordinator and associate professor of philosophy David Calhoun.

Calhoun said he and other faculty members, along with some students and even people from off-campus, had been discussing the possibility of a club for a while. The desired outcome of each meeting is to have intellectual arguments to achieve a greater understanding of the reasons behind Christian beliefs.

In the Socratic method of reasoning one should not decide beforehand what is true, but allow oneself to pursue truth through debate and find out where the pursuit leads.

Calhoun noticed some parallels between the academic campus life at Gonzaga and that of Oxford in the early 1940s Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis noticed that the academics at Oxford had moved away from Christianity because of their belief that it was an intellectual crutch for people with inferior minds. This led him to pursue the creation of the Oxford Socratic Club.

Lewis hoped to show through the Socratic Club that intellectuals could take Christianity seriously by finding reasons and logic behind Christian beliefs. Although Lewis was an atheist in his teens he later converted to Christianity. During his studies at Oxford he realized that he was primarily interested in talking to Christians, which led to his idea for the Socratic Club.

While Calhoun sees parallels between the two campuses, he admits that Gonzaga has a lively spiritual life. He thinks that the element of rationally explaining Christian beliefs, instead of only

attributing them to emotions, is missing in campus conversations.

Today there is a popular perception that Christian faith is based predominantly on emotions and feelings of faith. While emotions play an important role in faith there is also an element of intellectual truth that should not be discounted, according to Calhoun. The Socratic Club is trying to create faith in students that has reason behind it.

Citing the Bible Calhoun said, "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope."

Socratic Club meetings are the second Friday of each month from 4-5:15 p.m., each one beginning with a lecture and following with an intellectual discussion. Anyone with an interest in or opinion on the reasons behind Christian faith and doctrine is welcome.

The discussion portion is in keeping with Socratic method. Socrates taught that truth should be pursued in a community of others and to encourage conflict to check conclusions.

The first meeting began with a lecture by Calhoun titled "Follow the Argument" and "Two Other Socratic Principles for the Christian Academic." The main points of this lecture were to convince Christians that they should pursue finding reasons behind their beliefs and that not knowing why you believe something is not acceptable. Calhoun also stated that there are elements of Christianity that are believed only on blind faith. However, Calhoun suggests there is evidence that God truly exists and Christians should search for the reasons behind that belief.

The next meeting is Oct. 8, with a lecture by Douglas Kries titled "Romans 2:14-15, Natural Law, and the Naturalist Fallacy."