Festival of Thought 2018 **[1]**

Submitted by Wessel on Tuesday, 24 April 2018 - 21:53

Read time: 4 minutes
Last week the Festival of Thought [2] was hosted in Cape Town and Stellenbosch [3]. The festival is a wonderful initiative by RZIM [4], aimed at students and the business world, to discuss the big questions in life, such as meaning and morality. With more than a dozen local and international speakers, and around 100 events across five metropolitans or campuses, this was a huge effort which was a wonderful opportunity for people to gain some insights into contemporary debates and engage with others in open, honest and civil discussion.

On Thursday evening I attended a discussion between Dr. Greg Fried and Prof. John Lennox at Jubilee Church in Observatory [5]. While it was billed as a discussion (not strictly a debate) about "God and Science", Fried is not a scientist, but a philosopher, so the discussion leaned more toward philosophy (where Lennox met Fried quite successfully). The discussion was a bit heavy at times, but good. The discussion was cordial, friendly and constructive. I was a bit disappointed with the arguments for the existence of God which Fried asked Lennox to comment on, namely Anslem's original version of the ontological argument [6], and Pascal's Wager. Not only do I think people tend to dismiss the ontological argument too quickly, but the argument has also evolved substantially over the centuries since it was first formulated. And Pascal's Wager does prove problematic when faced with pluralism (although it was formulated to address a dualistic choice). If Fried wants to seriously consider arguments for the existence of God [7], there are other, weightier (forms of the) arguments to be investigated. As for Lennox, he proposed an argument that scientific development could only be pioneered in a culture which espouses Christian theism; this is an argument of which I am cautious and likely won't offer up myself. While his arguments for what did happen are solid, we cannot say what could have happened had history developed differently. Still, the evening was enjoyable and the discussion stimulating; I pray that it may be a model for how a Christian and non-Christian can come together and have constructive discussion and remain (or become) friends afterwards!

On Saturday I attended an open Q&A with Ravi Zacharias and Michael Ramsden at Kruiskerk in Stellenbosch [8]. Ravi Zacharias opened with describing the perspective of humanity from the Christian point of view. He was then joined by Michael Ramsden as they tackled questions from the audience, with an earnest plea for people who want genuine and sincere discussion to make use of the resources made available by RZIM to investigate Christianity.

Finally, on Sunday evening I attended the evening service at St. James in Kenilworth [9], where John Lennox was preaching. He offered a fascinating exposition of chapters one and two of the Gospel of John, drawing parallels with the creation story, but also Biblical theology as a whole. He again emphasised that Christian beliefs are evidence based. The evening was again ended with a Q&A session, but sadly these were always far too brief, regardless of how much time was allocated for it.

Many more events were held which I wanted to attend, but were unable to. All the events were recorded, as far as I am aware, so I hope that these will be made available online. I am thankful for the fruitful conversations which were had, and that it could span so many different denominations, businesses and university campuses. It does seem like South Africa is poised to counter the hostile tendencies in the West to silence opposing viewpoints. However, there remains much work to be done, as Christians and the church in South Africa need to continue to grapple with difficult and unique challenges from our past and the present. May whatever challenges we face be conducted with respect, understanding and love for one another!

Categories:

- Conferences [10]

Tags:

- festival of thought [11]
- john lennox [12]
- ravi zacharias [13]
- michael ramsden [14]
- greg fried [15]
- free thinking [16]
- open discussion [17]
- dialogue [18]
- pascal's wager [19]
- ontological argument [20]
- biblical theology [21]
- exposition [22]
- humanity [23]

Source URL: https://siyach.org/node/1188

Links
[1] https://siyach.org/node/1188
[2] http://festivalofthought.buzz
[3] http://festivalofthought.buzz/festivals/south-africa-2018/
[4] http://rzim.org/
[5] https://jubilee.org.za/
[6] https://siyach.org/node/107#ontological-argument
[7] https://siyach.org/node/107
[8] https://www.kruiskerk.com/
[9] http://www.stjames.org.za
[10] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/1
[11] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/830
[12] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/602
[13] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/262
[14] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/831
[15] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/834
[16] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/835
[17] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/836
[18] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/682
[19] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/837
[20] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/172
[21] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/838
[22] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/839
[23] https://siyach.org/taxonomy/term/840