

Anglicanism in the Public Square
Oct. 28-29, 2022
Christ Church Episcopal, Georgetown
3116 O St. NW, Washington, DC 20007

The John Wesley Institute is proud to host “Anglicanism in the Public Square,” a two-day conference open to the public that brings together an international group of scholars and public intellectuals to explore the public and social implications of Anglican history, theology, and ethics for the public square. The Anglican tradition, from Britain to the Americas, Africa and beyond, has inspired social movements and political figures for centuries.

From English and British monarchs driven by an Anglican vision, evangelical Anglican abolitionists, many of the founding fathers of the American republic, the social witness of Bishop Tutu, and bishops in the House of Lords today, Anglicanism has engaged the public square across the globe.

This conference will explore the question of what Anglicanism, historically and in the contemporary setting, brings to the public square, to the formation of just societies, and to the search for a common good. In an age of fragmentation and partisanship, the Church has a different narrative, a different approach to questions of common life and work. Join us as we explore what Anglicanism has to offer for dialogue, discourse, and disagreement in the public square.

Conference Schedule

All events at Christ Church, Georgetown either in the Parish Hall or the Church

Friday, Oct. 28

12:00 – Registration Open

1:00 – Greeting and Opening Prayer

1:15 - Session One

- Oliver O’Donovan, University of Edinburgh, UK

Title: TBD

- Daniel Inman, Chichester Cathedral, UK

“Anglicans and Empire: Negotiating the Past in the Public Square”

The Anglican Communion is often presented as a church irreparably marked by a postcolonial backlash against its mother church’s collusion

with slavery, racism and oppression – a narrative that has been catalysed by the culture wars of the West and the Communion’s own internal divisions around sexuality and gender. This paper suggests, however, that from its earliest forays beyond Britain, the Church of England was far from being a simple handmaiden of empire and was, rather, often the location for ethical anguish about the imperial state’s actions and even a catalyst for its collapse.’

- J. Peter Pham, The Atlantic Council, DC
Title: TBD

2:45 – Break

3:00 – Session Two:

- Suzanne Geissler Bowles, William Paterson University, NJ

“Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Quintessential Anglican Layman”

Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, US Navy (1840-1914) wrote a book in 1890 called *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* that had a monumental impact on international naval history. But Mahan had another side to him, one that most naval historians have overlooked. Mahan was a devout Episcopalian who took his faith seriously. He was active in church affairs on the parish and diocesan level, but because of his already high reputation in military and diplomatic circles he had both a national and international forum to express his theological views. This paper will discuss Mahan’s religious writings, including his book *The Harvest Within* (1909), the theological controversies of the day on which he had strong opinions, and the impact he had within the Episcopal Church.

- Paul Marshall, Baylor University, TX

"The Anglican Divide of North America."

Anglican understandings of the state and the public square have often been more of a disposition than an explicit understanding. After the American Revolution it shaped English Canada in ways distinct from the United States. As George Grant has shown, its weakening from the mid-century has been a major factor in the Americanization of Canada.

- Miles Smith, IV, Hillsdale College, MN

"Continuity and Innovation: Anglican Political Theology in the Early Republic"

Disestablishment fundamentally changed Anglican churches' relationship to the civil order in the Early Republic United States, but it did not change Anglican political theology. Bishops and priests remained committed to robust interaction between church and state within the disestablished order. The absence of state churches was not, for Anglicans, a harbinger of societal or even state secularization.

5:00 - Evensong with the Choir of Christ Church (in church)

6:00 - Reception (Keith Hall)

Saturday, Oct. 29

9:00 - Greeting and Opening Prayer

9:15 - Session Three

- David Corey, Baylor University, TX

“Socratic Anglicanism”

The paper will use the character of Socrates in Plato’s dialogues to describe a way of being Christian that is philosophically honest about what we can know and not know about God, Jesus, and the eschaton, spelling out the implications of such honesty for the life of faith and the implications for the practice of politics—thus sketching out a political theology and arguing that Anglicanism is a welcome home for Christians who value this approach, a Socratic knowledge of ignorance.

- Jonathan Askonas, Catholic University of America, DC

“Whose Service is Perfect Freedom’: Towards an Anglican Technopolitics”

Many of the most important figures in the development of modern scientific capitalism and technological civilization (from scientists like Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton and Charles Babbage to political leaders, industrialists, and inventors) were Anglican. And many more were shaped by broader English-speaking Protestantism. What responsibility does Anglicanism bear from the unleashing of technological rationality and does it have the theological and spiritual resources to discipline our development and use of technology? Building on the work of George Parkin Grant and

C.S. Lewis, I argue that Anglicanism has a unique and powerful contribution to make to a Christian critique of technology.

- Ephraim Radner, Wycliffe College, Canada
"Anglican Devotion and the Politics of Mortality"

A discussion of the Church of England's devotional preservation of the otherwise unremarkable religious concerns of human mortality, concerns that, in the face of evolving modern attitudes to the human person, proved politically quite remarkable and now wholly out of step of contemporary Western outlooks.

Break

11:00 – 12:00 – Panel Discussion

- Hannah Matis, Virginia Theological Seminary
- Sathi Clarke, Wesley Theological Seminary
- Gina Campbell, formerly of the Washington National Cathedral

12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch

1:00 – Session Four

- Bradford Littlejohn, Davenant Institute, VA
“‘The Chiefest Stay of the Commonwealth’: Richard Hooker and the Necessity of Public Religion”

Anglican political theology has long stressed the irreducibly religious nature of civil society, and the crucial role that Christianity plays in sustaining public order and nurturing civic virtue. Contrary to common objections, such commitment to public religion need not crudely instrumentalize the church toward political ends, nor does it commit the state to illiberal persecution. I will outline this argument with the aid of the great Anglican political theorist Richard Hooker.

- Jonathan Chaplin, Cambridge University, UK

Adjudicating Pluralism: A Critical Engagement with Rowan Williams' Anglican Political Theology

Rowan Williams' contemporary rendition of an Anglican tradition of social and political pluralism is innovative but incomplete. The paper applauds his robust critique of 'programmatic secularism' and his affirmation of

'interactive pluralism', but argues that these need to be framed within an account of the political community as agent of just adjudication.

- Nigel Biggar, Oxford University, UK

“Anglican Theology and Political Realism”

Description: “Partly because of its status as an established church, and partly because of its English intellectual character, Anglican thought about political life has often been commendably realistic. This paper describes and reflects on this ethical realism.”

2: Conference Concludes