

“Law and Wisdom”

Fall 2022 Carolinas Regional Convivium at Davenant House

Landrum, SC

10/14-15/22

Call for Papers

“Of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power, both Angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.”

Thus declares Richard Hooker in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, seamlessly blending his account of the eternal law with the image of Lady Wisdom from Proverbs 8. He was hardly the first to identify the rational, law-like order by which God governs the universe with the with the biblical image of the divine wisdom through which the heavens and earth were created. And of course, the connection of law and wisdom hardly stops there. In both Psalm 19 and Psalm 119, it is the law of God that brings wisdom, and the five books of Wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures serve as something of a commentary on the five books of Law, showing what it means to live out God’s law in a perplexing and ever-changing world. Indeed, as David Daube has argued (*Law and Wisdom in the Bible*), the category of “law” itself functions less like our own understanding of positive law and more like wisdom teaching.

Today, legal positivism and conservative textualism have eroded the connection between law and wisdom, but it has not been broken entirely, especially in the Anglo-American common-law tradition. Judges are routinely called upon to exercise wisdom, in its many dimensions, to determine the proper meaning and application of statutes and case laws in often radically-altered social environments. Moreover, it is a crucial task of wisdom to recognize the limitations of law, and the danger of reforming law too quickly, even to address glaring injustices. Law is a fabric of limited elasticity, and if stretched too far too fast, is apt to tear.

At the Fall 2022 Carolinas Regional Convivium, our second on the broad theme of “theology and law” we invite you to join us in investigating the relationship between law and wisdom, ancient and modern.

Location: Davenant House, 419 Glenolden Dr., Landrum, SC 29356

Schedule: 6:00 PM Friday October 14 through 4:30 PM Saturday October 15.

Cost:

- Friday night: \$20 (includes dinner)
- Saturday: \$39 (includes lunch)
- Friday-Saturday (includes dinner, breakfast, lunch, and lodging): \$119
- Friday-Saturday student discount (includes dinner, breakfast, lunch, and lodging): \$69

Keynote speaker: Jordan J. Ballor (Dr. theol., University of Zurich; PhD, Calvin Theological Seminary) is a senior research fellow and director of publishing at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty. He is also a postdoctoral researcher in theology and economics at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as part of the ["What Good Markets Are Good For"](#) project.

Call for Papers

We welcome submissions of proposals for paper presentations or guided discussions on topics related to the theme of the Convivium. Papers may be exegetical, historical, or constructive in character and should fill a one-hour time slot, including Q&A.

Papers should address questions such as the following:

- What is the relationship between law and wisdom in Scripture? In what way can biblical laws be understood as a form of wisdom teaching? In what way can biblical wisdom literature be understood as an exposition of divine or natural law? How do other genres of Scripture manifest this connection of law and wisdom?
- How has the practice of wisdom historically been embodied in the various approaches to laws in the Western tradition? Should we take our stand with Aristotle, who wrote, “it is the mark of a good law to leave as little as may be in the discretion of a judge?” or with the English common-law tradition, which invites judges to use their wisdom to build law from particular cases?
- How has the approach to biblical law modeled by forms of Puritanism or theonomy eroded the relationship of law and wisdom as presented in Scripture and classical Protestant thought? How should we make use of biblical law wisely today?
- What is the relation of law and wisdom in the contemporary philosophy and practice of law in the Western world? Have conservatives been shortsighted in their embrace of originalism and textualism, and should we follow approaches such as Adrian Vermeule’s instead—or not? How do principles like *stare decisis* relate to this question? Feel free to analyze in terms of particular cases and decisions (e.g., the various opinions in *Dobbs*).

(The above are meant to be suggestive of possible avenues to explore, not exhaustive)

If you are interested in presenting a paper or leading a discussion, please submit your 200-300-word abstract to Brad Littlejohn (b.littlejohn@davenantinstitute.org) by September 1st.