

**Politics, Faith, and Reason:**  
2010 Cambridge Graduate Conference in Political Thought and Intellectual  
History

(March 15-16, Beves Room, King's College, University of Cambridge)

Conference Report

The third Cambridge Graduate Conference in Political Thought and Intellectual History took place in King's College, Cambridge, on March 15 and 16. It was generously funded by the Faculty of History, the Centre for History and Economics and Jesus College, Cambridge.

The conference brought together graduate speakers from six different universities: the University of Cambridge, Yale University, the University of Sussex, the University of Chicago, Harvard University and the University of Oxford. Thirty-two attendants were registered, including graduate students from the University of Cambridge, Oxford University, and Queen Mary, University of London.

The papers covered a wide chronological and geographical scope, from the seventeenth century to the present, and included thinkers from the British, European and American intellectual traditions. The division between panels was roughly chronological, but each panel was also centred upon one specific area or issue.

The Conference commenced with Professor Stedman Jones's keynote speech on Monday evening. Professor Stedman Jones's speech provided a direct and stimulating introduction to the conference's central theme, as it presented the religious origins of nineteenth-century socialism in Europe. The keynote speech was followed by an informal dinner, attended by each of the invited speakers.

The conference itself took place on Monday at King's College, and was divided into three panels of two or three papers. Full-length versions of the papers had been circulated in advance to the organising committee, which allowed for a synthetic commentary by a respondent at the conclusion of each panel. The first panel was centred upon the varieties of Christian political thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Teresa Bejan (Yale University) examined the idea of toleration in Roger Williams' writings, Dmitri Levitin (Selwyn College, University of Cambridge) presented Matthew Tindal's views on the church-state relationship in the early eighteenth century, and Sophie Bisset (University of Sussex) discussed Jean Barbeyrac on Christian morality. Lauri Tähtinen (Magdalene College, Cambridge) gave the response, which was followed by forty-five minutes of questions.

After a lunch break, the second panel focused on the difficult relation between theology and the State in the early-modern and modern eras. Stephanie Frank (University of Chicago) offered a discussion of the the theological-political analogies in the works of Sieyès and Malebranche, while Rachel Bayefsky (University of Oxford) discussed the place of religion in the Hegelian State, and Ward Penfold (Harvard University) presented a nineteenth-century critique of natural law in the legal works of Holmes and Géný. Dr Christopher Brooke (King's College, Cambridge) generously agreed to act as respondent for this panel, and his response was followed by forty-five minutes of questions and a coffee break.

The third and last panel focused on the new modes in which religious discourse appears in modern political thought. Mira Siegelberg (Harvard University) compared J.G.A. Pocock and Hannah Arendt's views of political permanence in the modern age, and Loren Goldman (University of Chicago) presented the idea of political hope in the thoughts of Kant, Bloch and Dewey. Samuel James (Jesus College) provided the comments and conducted the concluding questions. These were followed by concluding remarks given by Jocelyn Betts (Jesus College, Cambridge).

The conference was followed by a formal dinner at King's College for all speakers and respondents. The conference was greeted as a success by all participants, who especially enjoyed the broad conceptual and methodological range of approaches brought to the question of the historical relations between religion and politics.

Conference committee: Jocelyn Betts, Sam James, Anna Plassart, Seb Robins, Sophie Smith, and Lauri Tähtinen