
November 3, and the World Needs the Anglican Way!

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

November 3 was on a Sunday this year; and our grand celebrations of All Saints' Sunday prohibited us from keeping the feast of the person we usually observe on November 3. Of course, I loved our All Saints' Sunday festivities! I was tremendously moved – from Friday, All Saints' Day, when we honored homeless people who had died, to Sunday, All Saints' Day, when we baptized new saints, and remembered family and friends and members of the Cathedral parish who had died. I love most of our traditions, but I especially love the tradition of All Saints' Sunday.

But, we missed remembering a particularly good guy, one of our forebears, whose actual feast day is November 3 itself. He is a person whose philosophy and method our Church continues to need, and one whom our world may need even more so. He is the philosopher and theologian, Richard Hooker, who lived from 1554 to 1600, and who helped described the genius of Anglican Christianity. (I might also add that his primary biography was written by Isaak Walton, who also gave us fishermen the great book titled “The Compleat Angler!”)

Do you think our country lives in desperately divided times today? Do you think our country is so polarized that we cannot speak to each other? Check out England in the middle of the sixteenth century! When Elizabeth I came to the throne, she inherited a country that was being violently swung between extreme Puritanism and extreme Roman Catholicism. And I mean “violently.” Many of the Reformation leaders (like Thomas Cranmer, who developed the First Book of Common Prayer in 1549) had been executed by “Bloody Mary,” who wanted to turn the country back to the Roman Church.

In 1558, Elizabeth I, and her genius, began an amazingly wise and sensitive leadership. She oversaw the outlines of a broad and tolerant country, one that would be neither too extremely Puritan, nor too extremely Catholic. She wanted a people who could pray the same words together, even if the words might mean different things to different people. She said she would not make “windows into mens' souls.”

It was Richard Hooker who rose to provide the theological and philosophical structure of this new breadth. Many of you know that I refuse to call the Anglican Way, “the Middle Way.” Rather, our Anglican Way is “the Comprehensive Way,” because it includes both sides; we honor both Protestantism and Catholicism. It was Richard Hooker, and his theological method, who helped show us how to do that.

Richard Hooker's dense set of writings, “The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,” talked of both natural law and political law, that they were to be guided by reason and tradition, as well as scripture. And he had mercy. His was a balanced synthesis of thought, reminding people of Aristotle and Aquinas. He was criticized once for claiming that Roman Catholics, too, would go to heaven! (to the dismay of the more Protestant critics). His wisdom would influence the political theory of John Locke.

In a time of polarized division, England did well to draw upon the wisdom of reason and tradition. Maybe our country, and others across the world right now, would do well to find those kinds of seasoned thinkers, too – not simply loud voices who amplify the extremes. We need wise voices who recognize truth in all sorts of quarters, and who are thus able to describe a greater truth.

Such wisdom – the wisdom of scripture, reason, and tradition all used together – is a major reason I serve The Episcopal

Church, which is The Anglican Church in our country. Our way is a great gift to Christianity, and I think we can also be a great gift to politics itself! So, on November 3, around election day throughout our country, I am thankful to remember people like Richard Hooker.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip