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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

*Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, FRHistS, Editor-in-Chief*

The John F. Woolverton Editor of Anglican and Episcopal History

*AEHeditor@gmail.com*

*Benjamin Guyer, Contributing Editor*

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# Anglicanism, the Lambeth Conferences, and International Relations in the Twentieth Century

ANDREW CHANDLER

The desire for peace is a part of the ordinary piety of every Christian Church. We modulate naturally from praying for ourselves and those we love to prayers for harmony between neighbors and peace between peoples. In the liturgies of Anglican churches, the vision of peace is on the lips of every congregation. If such patterns are not peculiar to Anglicanism, Anglicans have often made the claim that their church represents a *via media*. Has such an idea also given Anglicanism something distinctive to offer a world of national rivalries, interests, and conflicts? Might Anglican bishops understand themselves to be symbols of a middle way, even integrating figures, in a divided world? It is not difficult to speculate in such a fashion but at least one thing might be said with confidence about the bishops of the Anglican Church. Anglican episcopacy has been rooted in a political and social order and in territorial authority. In the eyes of critics, this compromised bishops, for they were too much a part of the *status quo* to judge it with a disinterested justice. Kinder, more hopeful, observers have found in this *locus* a relevance to the daily affairs of society, and with this, opportunities of a prophetic kind.

Roman Catholic scholars have collected and collated the teaching of their church, showing its distinctive qualities and developments. Historians can clearly observe that across the last hundred and fifty years, the papacy has given not only the Roman Catholic

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Andrew Chandler is professor of modern history at the University of Chichester. His latest book, *British Christians and the Third Reich: Church, State and the Judgement of Nations*, is published by Cambridge University Press.

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Church but the world a succession of important documents readily recognized by scholars of secular politics as a part of the history of the age. Was this unique? If a claim that a comparable body of Anglican "teaching" did in some sense exist, it would be natural for a historian to turn to the Lambeth Conferences. The purpose of this article is to offer a *tour d'horizon* of the various statements on international relations which these successive conferences published and to suggest critical questions and perspectives that arise from them.

"LAMBETH SPEAKS"<sup>1</sup>

The first Lambeth Conference took place under the presidency of Archbishop Charles Longley in 1867.<sup>2</sup> The idea of such a gathering of bishops did not then seem innocuous. There were critics in the church, and they were found at the very top of it. Not even the Archbishop of York, William Thomson, attended. Much of this opposition was essentially territorial. Bishops cared to be wholly in charge of their dioceses. They were as suspicious of central authority as parochial clergy might be suspicious of the authority of diocesan bishops – or, it is tempting to add, as a nation state might in a later day be suspicious of an international organization. Longley sought to reassure, insisting that such a conference existed "for brotherly counsel and encouragement." Resolutions there should be, but they could not bind. All of this made the Lambeth Conference something of a study in Anglican ambiguity. Caught up in the middle of it was the question of the authority of its teaching.

This does not make matters straightforward for a historian of Anglicanism. Papal encyclicals and commissions may well seem quite a different matter from a bundle of resolutions drafted and approved by a collection of bishops gathered under the careful presidency of an archbishop of Canterbury. Who noticed them

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<sup>1</sup> The title adopted by Dewi Morgan in his little study commending the reports and resolutions of the Lambeth Conference of 1958 (London: Mowbrays, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> See Alan M.G. Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference, 1867* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1967).

at all? Certainly, they were reported at length in the columns of the Anglican press, but the attentions of the secular press were seldom close. It was perfectly possible to live and worship in an Anglican church anywhere in the world without ever having heard of a Lambeth Conference, let alone reading its papers. Even so, a long succession of decennial meetings grew from this modest root, and the nature of the growth can be seen in the number of matters which the increasingly lengthy agendas of the conferences came to present.<sup>3</sup> The Lambeth Conference of 1867 was content to pass thirteen resolutions; the conference of 1908 passed seventy-eight; the conference of 1948 passed 118.

Nor is the place of the Lambeth Conferences in historiography altogether easy to settle. A scholar may be left with the feeling that the conferences existed in a world of their own outside the national categories which historians of Anglican churches have favored. Only now and then do they turn up, often incidentally.<sup>4</sup> A more recent trend towards histories of “global Anglicanism” has certainly given them a more reliable place.<sup>5</sup> The Lambeth Conferences turn up, usually as necessities, in biographies of archbishops of Canterbury. The trail goes cold in the biographies of bishops. In 1920, St. Clair Donaldson, the bishop of Brisbane, was the chair of the conference’s committee on Christianity and International Relations. The fact is not mentioned in the biography published after his death.<sup>6</sup> A still more serious contribution to the two conferences of 1920 and 1930 was made by Theodore Woods, bishop of Winchester. His biographers provide far more attention, but, even so, find themselves having to explain to their readers just what a

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<sup>3</sup> See Alan M.G. Stephenson, and *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Owen Chadwick, *Hensley Henson: A Study in the friction between Church and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Jeremy Morris (ed.), *Global Western Anglicanism, c. 1910 – Present*, Volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Anglicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Where the conferences have become a subject in their own right there have been valuable historical essays. See Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer, *The Lambeth Conference: Theology, History, Polity and Purpose* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> C.T. Dimont and F. de Witt Batty, *St Clair Donaldson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

Lambeth Conference is.<sup>7</sup> Yet in Lambeth Palace Library the archives invite far more attention, for the reports and proceedings of the conferences present a formidable collection of volumes and a great deal of additional material is in other collections. A purpose of this article is to indicate their value.

Historians of the Lambeth Conferences have seldom emphasized, or even noticed, their discussions of international relations. Their concerns have lain elsewhere and so the historical significance of the conferences has come to lie elsewhere too. But to study the reports and resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences is to acknowledge that when they met together the bishops insistently located their church in a picture of their own time, aligning it with the causes of racial justice and human rights and with the development of international organizations. As Owen Chadwick remarked, 'The Conference knew that its vocation was ethical, not political; yet that often meant an ethical judgement had political results.'<sup>8</sup> The bishops saw this as a part of the moral relevance of their church and its gospel.

#### ANGLICAN TEACHING AND THE IDEAL OF JUSTICE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Anglicans who wished to discuss war and peace need not have feared a poverty in materials. But much of what existed had not developed in recent years or originated in familiar soil. The argument that the relations of nations should answer to an acknowledged framework of international law had a founding father in the figure of Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), whose 1625 book, *On the Law of War and Peace*, remained conspicuous in European thought.<sup>9</sup> But it is significant that English Christians had once

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<sup>7</sup> Edward S. Woods and Frederick B. MacNutt, *Theodore, Bishop of Winchester: Pastor, Prophet, Pilgrim* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1933), Chapters XI and XXVI.

<sup>8</sup> Owen Chadwick, Introduction to Roger Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867–1988* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), p. xxvi.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen C. Neff (ed.), *Hugo Grotius on the Law of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); for an earlier treatment of Grotius in the round see Edward Dumbauld, *The Life and Legal Writings of Hugo Grotius* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. 23–82; for a later discussion within a broader survey see Richard Tuck, *The Rights of Peace and War: Political*

known Grotius not for his study of law, but of theology, in particular for *The Truth of the Christian Religion* (London, 1632), a work admired by those who were interested in debates between Calvinists and Arminians. The tradition of natural law in the work of Anglican divines presented important foundations for such thought but yielded little development in terms of international affairs. Richard Hooker (1554–1600) committed a few brief pages to the “spiritual commerce” and “mutual communion” of Christian nations, observing the importance of showing hospitality to travellers from foreign countries and urging the importance of “general councils” to order the Christian world, something that he found established in the practice of the apostles.<sup>10</sup> In the context of the English Civil War, Joseph Hall, bishop of Norwich, wrote: “To make a war just there must be a lawful authority to raise it, a just ground whereon to raise it; due forms and conditions in the raising, managing and cessation of it.”<sup>11</sup> Evidently, nobody saw fit to develop this statement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, perhaps because the territorial realities of an island nation with a growing empire were not the same as those of a restless continent where wars occurred not abroad but at home. In truth, Anglicans who later sought to speak of the laws of the nations, found that their own tradition had provided no certain ground on which to tread, and no framework, or body of thought, to which to refer. They could only look directly back to the gospels and convert what sayings of Jesus they found there into the premises for international conduct, much as they applied them to questions of other kinds. Anglican writings on war and peace rested on biblical interpretation, not always erudite or profound in character. This pursuit of what was truly Christ-like left them with a great deal to build for themselves.

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*Thought and the International from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 3.

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, First Book* (London: J.M. Dent, 1907), pp. 200–1.

<sup>11</sup> In ‘Resolutions and Decisions of Diverse Practical cases of Conscience’ (1649), later quoted in *The Church and the Atom* (London: Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1948).

Even so, the view that the craft of diplomacy might involve universal principles was by the time of the early Lambeth Conferences well established within the widening vision of politicians and in the growth of new, reforming movements. In the speeches of statesmen John Bright (1811–1889) and Richard Cobden (1804–1865) lay the acknowledgment that wars were costly and a tragic distraction from the profitable things in which a nation might invest for the sake of all its citizens. Free trade was an economic ideal, but integral to that ideal was an insistence that when the nations traded freely their relations must become entangled, mutually beneficial, and peaceful. In Britain a campaigning culture had seen the creation of a peace society and, after 1870, a peace movement.<sup>12</sup> When Prime Minister Gladstone (1809–1898) set out the “Right Principles of Foreign Policy” in 1879 he spoke not merely of the interests of a nation and its empire but of “the most fundamental interests of Christian society,” that it “ought to be to preserve to the nations of the world – and especially, were it but for shame when we recollect the sacred name we bear as Christians, especially to the Christian nations of the world – the blessings of peace.”<sup>13</sup> All of this public Christian morality was contagious. Indeed, a growing number of Anglican bishops proved to be susceptible to it.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF ARBITRATION: THE LAMBETH CONFERENCES IN THE AGE OF THE HAGUE CONVENTIONS

By the time of the first Lambeth Conference the suggestion that international diplomacy should be regulated in some way or other, and that relations between nations should be actively managed, was certainly nothing new. The manoeuvres of conventional alliance diplomacy were, at least since 1815, devised not merely to prevent or facilitate war, but to explore ideas of collective security, albeit within limited models which affirmed the primacy of great powers over others – a principle which the

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<sup>12</sup> See Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> A speech of 27 November 1879 in Edgar R. Jones, *Selected Speeches on Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp. 371–2.

Lambeth Conferences would repeatedly repudiate. The unfolding of the Lambeth Conferences now coincided with the new, parallel history of international institutions which sought to regulate the world's affairs. In 1843, the first of a succession of international peace congresses had taken place in London. These impressive gatherings sought to govern the conduct of war by conventions which would acquire legal authority. Thereafter, a general movement to regulate the conduct of war would gain a powerful momentum. A new Code of 157 articles, drafted by Francis Lieber (1798–1872) and defining the proper conduct of war by Union forces in the American Civil War, was promulgated in April 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln. The first Geneva Convention was signed in 1865. Parts of the Lieber Code subsequently found their way into the Brussels Declaration of 1874. A long succession of Universal Peace Congresses was inaugurated in Paris in 1889.

It was in this context that the 1897 Lambeth Conference set before the churches of the Anglican Communion three successive resolutions on international relations (41, 42, 43). In these lay much of what would follow in later meetings: the belief that arbitration could be claimed not merely as a practice but a principle that expressed the teaching of Christ; that the matter of peace was both a “cause” and “duty” and something that involved “the public conscience” and appealed to an “enlightened public opinion;” that all Christians actually had a “duty” to work for peace, and that this duty could be defined by prayer, “private instruction,” and “public appeal.”<sup>14</sup> This was adopted by the encyclical letter published by the conference:

War is a horrible evil followed usually by consequences worse than itself. Arbitration in place of war saves the honour of the nations concerned and yet determines the questions at issue with completeness. War brutalizes even while it gives opportunity for the finest heroism. Arbitration leaves behind it a generous sense of the passions restrained and justice fought for. The Church of Christ can never

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<sup>14</sup> Resolutions 41, 42 and 43, reprinted in Coleman, *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 22–3.



have any doubt for which of the two modes of determining national quarrels it ought to strive.<sup>15</sup>

In 1899 and 1907, two vital conferences at the Hague brought the conduct of international relations in wartime to a new, still higher, ground. These discussions, the first initiated by the Russian government and the second by President Theodore Roosevelt, now occurred in the Netherlands. The conventions which came of them created a new international court of justice, which became the Permanent Court of Arbitration. This marked an immense advance in international diplomacy, and British and American representatives took a vigorous lead. But adherence to the court remained voluntary; nor yet were its judgements binding. By 1907, there existed fourteen new conventions governing warfare. The British government had sought to introduce a discussion on disarmament, but this was resisted, particularly by the government of Germany, which was racing to build a fleet to match that of Britain itself.

Although the Lambeth Conference of 1908 received a vigorous committee report on "The Moral Witness of the Church" which considered "the democratic ideal" and "social and economic questions," this did not touch on questions of international diplomacy. But the Hague Conventions were noticed. Perhaps as much touched by the seventeenth Universal Peace Congress held in London that year, the bishops welcomed the achievements of the second Hague conference in a single composite resolution which rejoiced "in the growth of higher ethical perceptions which is evidenced by the increasing willingness to settle difficulties among nations by peaceful methods." It recorded its gratitude "for the principles of international responsibility acknowledged by the delegates" and, "urges earnestly upon all Christian peoples the duty of allaying race prejudice, of reducing by peaceful arrangements the conflict of trade interests, and of promoting among all races the spirit of brotherly co-operation for the good of all mankind."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Encyclical letter of the 1897 Lambeth Conference, in Lord Davidson of Lambeth (ed.), *The Six Lambeth Conferences 1867-1920*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), p. 186.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution 52, *Ibid.*, p. 37.

This resolution offered an important development of the three resolutions of 1897 when they might have been stranded in history and forgotten. As it was, such pronouncements began to secure a firm place in the purpose of the Lambeth Conferences and in their early evolution.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION: THE  
LAMBETH CONFERENCE OF 1920

It was in the context of the Great War that a new interest in the work of Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius emerged in Britain. This crystallized in the creation of the Grotius Society, a meeting place for academics, politicians, and public servants, in 1915. There was no reason why an Anglican bishop, too, should not turn up there. At all events, when the bishops came to Lambeth in 1920 their priorities and perspectives had been sharply redefined. Not least had the public role of the archbishop of Canterbury grown. Randall Davidson (1848–1930) had become more than ever a presence in Parliament and in private correspondence with the prime minister, Herbert Asquith, he had in May 1915 protested the use of poison gas, citing international conventions (in so doing upholding the fourth convention of the 1907 Hague conference).<sup>17</sup> The Lambeth Conference of 1920 now caught Davidson at the peak of his powers. It also showed the discreet, organizing presence of the young chaplain that he had recruited on the eve of war in 1914: the energetic George Kennedy Allen Bell (1883–1958).

“Christianity and international relations, especially the League of Nations” was the first report to be commissioned and received by the 1920 Lambeth Conference. In setting to work with his committee St. Clair Donaldson remarked, “It is not one of those subjects I imagine upon which we will find ourselves sharply divided. We know what we want, and the work of the Committee . . . will be rather to prepare a campaign than to arrive at a decision.” Civilization could not emerge from chaos if “the Christian element” did not take “an immediate and decided lead.” He emphasized, “Our

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<sup>17</sup> G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 757–61.

faith in the Incarnation engenders in us an instinct of Brotherhood which refuses to be confined within national boundaries." The bishops must "preach the cause of peace;" the public must be roused.<sup>18</sup> In these sentiments Donaldson found a ready ally in Chauncey Brewster, bishop of Connecticut, who criticized the nationalism of United States Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and insisted that as Christians they must maintain "a Christian internationalism." American idealism would yet prevail over isolationism. Strikingly, this speech was punctuated by responses of "Hear, hear" across the hall.<sup>19</sup>

The report which followed began with an exposition of "The Divine Purpose," expressed by the "simplicity, coherence, and fulness" of Christ's example: Jesus had come to serve and so nations had a duty not to exploit or dominate but to serve each other, and the whole world, as "trustees." All nations were equal and should be accorded equal rights. Jesus had warned, "with even fierce emphasis," against the abuse of strength and the despising of "little ones": "This bears with unmistakable clearness upon the relations of the stronger races to those that are weaker and more backward." In them the "instincts of nationhood" should be fostered as they grew, for "the road to internationalism, as it has been well said, 'lies through nationalism.'" But with the achievement of nationhood must come the "acceptance of international obligations." The committee found the roots of international conflict to lie not in territorial disputes but in the very economic order by which nations lived and sought to prosper: "If we really want peace we must set our faces decisively against the vested interests which have so often in the past stood behind governments, and vitiated their action." The "ultimate force" in the relations of nations, and the basis of progress, lay not in physical force, but in morality. The Great War itself had demonstrated this. "We look forward to the day when war between nations will be unthinkable, precisely as duels have become unthinkable in

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<sup>18</sup> Lambeth Conference Papers, 1920, London, Lambeth Palace Library, LC 105 (Minutes 5-7 July 1920), pp. 21-6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-8.

civilized society, because public opinion will not tolerate these absurd and horrible ways of settling disputes.”<sup>20</sup>

The momentous step which the 1920 Lambeth Conference took came in its vigorous adoption of the still-emerging League of Nations: “In the League of Nations we have an instrument in the application of . . . great principles, which all Christians should welcome with both hands.” It was “no fruit of a sudden impulse” but was “strictly in the line of historical development” from the writing of Grotius to the decisions of the Hague Conferences. It was “obvious” that the clauses of the covenant of the League “enunciated” Christian principles.<sup>21</sup> In such a way the committee placed both the work of the League and the mission of the Church openly in the public contexts of liberal democracy. Christians must preach against the hatred that brought war, “with all our power, in season and out of season, in the drawing-room and in the market-place, in the workshop and in the club.” But hatred was ubiquitous, “even among the most Christian of our people . . . it is most dangerous when it seems to those who entertain it to be the expression of righteous indignation.” It was “an utter denial of our Christian calling. We must choose between the spirit of hatred and the spirit of the Lord’s Prayer.”<sup>22</sup>

The report did not rest content with generalities. It was now ‘incumbent on all Christian people to press for the admission of Germany and other nations into the League at the very earliest moment that the conditions render it possible.’ It praised the work of the new International Labour Organization: “We understand on good authority that this body has accomplished more in eight months for the regulation and betterment of industrial conditions than had been accomplished in years by the old methods of dealing with international affairs.” Yet such things still marked a beginning; this was not yet an established world order. Russia was still “an unknown quantity; America hesitates; and Germany is still outside.” Christians must overcome scepticism and doubt: “We

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<sup>20</sup> *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion Holden at Lambeth Palace July 5 to August 7, 1920* (2nd ed., London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1922), p. 53

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51–6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56–8.

believe that a bold venture of faith will rally to the League all the unmeasured forces of goodwill which are latent in the nations of the earth." A footnote acknowledged that the committee was not quite unanimous, for while the American bishops had "cordially agreed in the principle of a League of Nations," they felt "obliged to withhold their support of the existing Covenant without certain reservations."<sup>23</sup> When the report was received by the bishops on July 27, Donaldson was at pains to allude "in particular to the generosity with which the American bishops had taken part in their deliberations."<sup>24</sup>

This report was a clear call to the institutions of the Church at large. "In our Church Assemblies and Councils, whether National, Provincial, Diocesan or Parochial, internationalism must take its place as an integral part of the Kingdom of Christ which we stand to promote." Let them "press for an active propaganda throughout the world," to educate where there was "ignorance and indifference" and to promote through every movement a "genuine internationalism." In every place the Church must support the new League of Nations Union: "From this Union we shall ask for literature of an educational kind, books on international questions for study circles, schemes of intercession, and administrative methods whereby branches shall be systematically formed throughout the world and their leaders kept in close touch with headquarters." They should also turn to the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, which would hold a conference in Geneva that August: "it may well grow into a potent ally of the League of Nations on the spiritual side."<sup>25</sup>

Much of the substance of the report was adopted in eight resolutions, the second of which called on the citizens of all nations to promote and increase "international comity and goodwill, and to secure expression for these by an increased recognition of international law and custom." The conference acknowledged the reality of nationhood: it appeared to be "a natural instinct" and one

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> LC 111 (Minutes, 27 July 1920), pp. 20–4, 29.

<sup>25</sup> *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion Holden at Lambeth Palace July 5 to August 7, 1920*, pp. 57–8.

which the Bible itself seemed to accept and emphasize. But the purpose of God, “as we conceive it,” was that the nations should “form a fellowship, as of a brotherhood, or a family of nations.” The conference endorsed “heartily” the views of the committee “as to the essential Christian basis of the League of Nations,” urging that “steps should immediately be taken, whether by co-operation or concurrent action, whereby the whole Church of Christ may be enabled with one voice to urge the principles of the League of Nations upon the peoples of the world.”<sup>26</sup>

The encyclical letter released from Lambeth in 1920 observed that people had discovered their need for fellowship with a new intensity in the contexts of industrial life and international war. It was now the object of the Christian Church to call people to the contemplation of God and to reconciliation with one another. To do this the whole Church must itself present “a pattern of fellowship.”<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the “Appeal to All Christian People,” which became the most famous achievement of Lambeth Conference 1920, was consistent with the vision of peace which preceded it. The encyclical pronounced: “We commend to all Christian people the principles which underlie the League of Nations, the most promising and the most systematic attempt to advance towards the ideal of the family of nations which has ever been projected.”<sup>28</sup>

#### THE INTERVAL: 1920–1929

In the 1920s, Anglicans at large became not merely observers of a new age of democratic diplomacy but vigorous participants in it. Much of this activity was ecumenical in character. In Birmingham in 1924 there had taken place the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, a boldly ambitious venture in which twelve diverse reports were discussed, one of them devoted to “International Relations” and another to “Christianity and

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<sup>26</sup> Charlotte Methuen, ‘The Making of “An Appeal to All Christian People” at the 1920 Lambeth Conference’, in Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer, *The Lambeth Conference: Theology, History, Polity and Purpose*, pp. 116–117.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion Holden at Lambeth Palace July 5 to August 7, 1920*, pp. 25–6; reprinted in Coleman, *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 44–5

War.”<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the development of the international ecumenical movement could be traced through a succession of conferences which bore a resemblance to the congresses of the new diplomacy. In particular, the World Conference of Life and Work at Stockholm in 1925, initiated a “decisive, continuing narrative, creating new forms and patterns of international association, study and discussion.” The Stockholm Conference issued a statement which was at once considered important: “We believe that war, considered as an institution for the settlement of international disputes, is incompatible with the mind and method of Christ.”<sup>30</sup> Busily at work in all of this was George Bell, who was now dean of Canterbury.

It was the achievement of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 that appeared to many church people as an immense step forward in international morality, for in its multilateral renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy, it vowed that all disputes should be resolved only by pacific means. In this the ambitions of the diplomats now harmonized with the principles of Christian opinion. Bell drafted a resolution on international arbitration to the Stockholm Continuation Committee at Eisenach in September 1929. This welcomed and endorsed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, re-affirmed the Stockholm resolution, looked to revising existing treaties through arbitration, and finally appealed to all churches “to declare in unmistakable terms that they will not countenance any war or encourage their countrymen to serve in any war, with regard to which the government of their country has refused an offer to submit the dispute to arbitration.” This resolution looked beyond the national state to higher loyalties by proposing that Christians might respond to an unjust war with non-co-operation.<sup>31</sup> The Stockholm resolution was adopted, and extended, by

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<sup>29</sup> *International Relations, Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5 -12 1924* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1924) and *Christianity and War, Being the Report presented to the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship at Birmingham, April 5 -12 1924* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1924). No Anglican bishop sat on either of the committees which produced these reports.

<sup>30</sup> See R.C.D. Jasper, *George Bell, Bishop of Chichester* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 94–5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, but see Nils Ehrenström, ‘Movements for International Friendship

the World Alliance. All of this meant that the contexts – diplomatic, political, and ecumenical – in which Anglican bishops deliberated had witnessed a profound change.

WAR AS A METHOD OF SETTLING DISPUTES: THE LAMBETH  
CONFERENCE 1930

Some bishops felt that George Bell could play a still greater role in the Lambeth Conferences if he were a bishop too. In 1929 he became bishop of Chichester. He promptly became the episcopal secretary of the Lambeth Conference of 1930. When Anglican bishops now returned to Lambeth they received a report on “The Life and Witness of the Christian Community,” produced under the chairmanship of Theodore Woods. He was long committed to social and political issues and had led the Anglican deputation to Stockholm in 1925. The sub-committee invited to discuss questions of peace and war was chaired by John Kempthorne, the bishop of Lichfield. George Bell balanced his responsibilities for the conference with membership of this sub-committee. The text on “Peace and War” began with the proposition which came to express the mind not only of this Lambeth Conference but of its successors: “*War, as a method of settling international disputes, is incompatible with the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*”<sup>32</sup>

This statement would be presented to the conference as a draft resolution, Number 25. The report went on:

We believe that as the Christian conscience has condemned infanticide and slavery and torture, it is now called to condemn war as an outrage on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all mankind. We do not deny the right of a nation to defend itself if attacked, or to resort to force in fulfilment of international obligations, but it is the duty of the Christian Church to create a world-wide public

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and Life and Work 1925–1948’, in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1954), pp. 545–53.

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<sup>32</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), pp. 98–103.



opinion which will condemn a nation that resorts to war from a motive of self-interest or a mistaken conception of honour as guilty of a crime against humanity.<sup>33</sup>

The committee reviewed 'The Progress of International Goodwill' across the preceding decade and found that the hopes of the 1920 Lambeth Conference were justified, for the League of Nations was now "an indispensable organ of international co-operation." In the new, hopeful age of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, it continued: "We must enlist patriotism on the side of peace. This we can do more effectively because the renunciation of the right to resort to war has created a new situation." The Christian Church was "the trustee of the peace of the world."<sup>34</sup>

What were the causes of war? First, an "inflamed and aggressive nationalism that ignores the rights of other nations in the determination to assert its own." The question of the rights of minorities within nation states was certainly "a disturbing element" in the new Europe, but it was impossible to create borders without such a problem occurring. The Christian church must encourage nations to take a "more generous attitude" towards one another. The second cause was the distrust which bred fear; yet the risks of trusting other nations were "far less grave than the inevitable consequences of mutual mistrust." The third cause was unrestricted commercial competition for control of "the raw materials of industry," particularly when it came to involve "the exploitation of weaker peoples." Although "economic interdependence" might discourage the will to war, "only a spiritual renaissance can ensure the peace of the world."<sup>35</sup>

When it came to world affairs, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864–1945), abjured vapid platitudes. The fact that he thought well of this report, and found that what it said was "strong and true", is significant praise.<sup>36</sup> The American

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 98. The origin of the term 'crimes against humanity' is found in a joint statement made by British, French and Russian governments on May 24 1915, defying the Armenian genocide.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 105–7.

<sup>36</sup> J.C. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949), p. 353.

bishops assured the committee that they “gladly recognize the principle embodied in a League of Nations as contributing to the peace of the world,” that a “sympathetic interest” in the League was growing in the United States, “and that the absence of official recognition is no evidence of America’s aloofness from or indifference to those problems with which the League has to deal.” The essential task facing international diplomacy was that of disarmament. For while the resolution of disputes was devised, not least through “conciliation, arbitration and direct judicial settlement” at the Permanent Court of International Justice, how could the accumulation of armaments be appropriate? Disarmament by international agreements was a necessity. To those who charged that the Church had never condemned war the reply must be that “we are called to follow the right as we see it, and if God the Great Educator, has revealed more clearly to this generation the fundamental inconsistency between war and the fact of His Fatherhood, the more tremendous is our responsibility for witnessing to this truth.”<sup>37</sup>

Neither Woods nor Kempthorne expected any of this to provoke criticism. But it did. Resolution 25 drew from Herbert Hensley Henson, the bishop of Durham, “a small protest”: “I cannot exactly vote against it, but I could not affirm it.” Henry Hobson, the new bishop of Southern Ohio, dealt with this firmly by responding, “I hope this Conference is not going to lay itself open to the charge of being unwilling to go as far in its condemnation of war as the nations have already gone in the Kellogg Pact.”<sup>38</sup> George Ashton Oldham, the bishop of Albany, proceeded to read to the bishops most of the text of the pact. Amendments were moved, but were all lost. Resolution 25 was passed with five dissentients.<sup>39</sup>

It was a further draft resolution which encountered stiffer resistance. This resolution, Number 27, proposed that the no Christian church could countenance a national policy of war fought for a

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<sup>37</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with the Resolutions and Reports*, p. 47.

<sup>38</sup> L.C. 147 (Minutes, 29–30 July 1930), pp. 234–5, 241.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252–4.

cause which had not first submitted to “arbitration.” This resolution revealed the influence of George Bell, for it aligned the Anglican bishops with the mind of the Continuation Committee of the Stockholm Conference and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. Henson again protested: “It is superfluous, it is ambiguous; and in part, at least, it is morally indefensible.” It appeared to him to accept “the old Quaker position that war is, in all cases, for Christian people wrong.”<sup>40</sup> Bell insisted that Henson had not placed the resolution in its “proper context.” He pointed to the Kellogg-Briand agreement and observed that arbitration was itself a term used by the Hague Conferences that now had standing in law and experience.<sup>41</sup> He introduced an amendment to clarify the draft while Woods proposed to add the word “conciliation” to “arbitration.” Henson demurred but did not now oppose.<sup>42</sup> Resolution 27 was accepted without dissent:

When nations have solemnly bound themselves by Treaty, Covenant or Pact for the pacific settlement of international disputes, the Conference holds that the Christian Church in every nation should refuse to countenance any war in regard to which the government of its country has not declared its willingness to submit the matter in dispute to arbitration or conciliation.<sup>43</sup>

The potential implications of this resolution were immense, not least in the international conferences and contexts in which an ecumenical Anglicanism now sought to participate.

Within the Church of England these two Resolutions 25 and 27 prompted significant discussion. They floundered in the Church Assembly, where a motion proposing their adoption dissolved into criticism and retreat, not least after an unyielding speech by E. G. Selwyn, the dean of Winchester. He observed a “vast cauldron of volcanic forces on the eastern confines of Europe, which was maintaining the largest armed forces of any country in Europe, and which at

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266–8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269–72.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 277–85.

<sup>43</sup> Resolutions 25–30, *ibid.*, pp. 46–8; reprinted in Coleman, *The Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 75–7.

any moment might pour upon Christian civilisation as the Turks had poured upon the European Empire in the fifteenth century.”<sup>44</sup> Edward Burroughs, bishop of Ripon, observed this debate sadly and was left to console himself that at least the bishops were “not merely formulating current opinion but giving a lead which some even of our own most prominent clergy and laity are not yet, it seems, prepared to follow.”<sup>45</sup> Burroughs, a vigorous internationalist and an ecumenist who regarded all wars as civil wars was left to look to the ideals and energetic activities of a new generation.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, in the journal *Theology*, which Selwyn edited, the sub-dean of Westminster Abbey, W.H. Carnegie, found that, taken in the “literal sense”, Resolution 25 was “decisive and conclusive.” Yet, he went on, “the writers of the Report do not intend them to be interpreted thus. They make no direct attempt to mitigate the absolute character of their inhibition: they indicate no principle which under certain circumstances may justify a Christian in disregarding it. But they acknowledge that such circumstances have arisen and may again arise.” Carnegie was not at all convinced that the prospect of “civilized” nations building peace by disarmament did not make them vulnerable to “predatory” ones. What was “the mind of Christ”? Carnegie did not think it pacifist and he could not see that the history of Christianity spoke of a pacifist view, either: “Christian civilization at every stage of its development has been one of the most warlike civilizations the world has ever known.” Were they to acknowledge that Christian history altogether showed a fundamental misunderstanding of Christ himself? Christianity had not prohibited war. But it had made war less likely and less cruel. Discussing the “secondary” causes of war, as the bishops had so deliberately done, would help nobody: “Men war with each other because they are at war with themselves. They will not cease to do so until they have established ordered peace in their own souls.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Proceedings of the Church Assembly*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (Spring Session, 1931), p. 196. The whole debate is pp. 188–205.

<sup>45</sup> E.A. Burroughs, *The Christian Church and War* (London: James Nisbet, 1931), p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–13, 42–4.

<sup>47</sup> W.H. Carnegie, ‘Lambeth Conference Reviews: II (e) – Peace and War’, in *Theology*, Vol. XXII (March 1931), pp. 165–71.

## THE INTERVAL: 1930–1948

Conventional diplomacy insisted on a division of domestic and foreign policy. What a government did in its own territory involved the sovereignty of that nation and could barely be touched by authorities abroad. But in the 1930s, Anglicans found this assumption impossible to maintain. Lang repudiated the advice that he solicited in 1933 from the British Foreign Office and protested often against the persecution of Christians and Jews in the Third Reich.<sup>48</sup> These actions were consistent with the resolutions of Lambeth Conferences which sought to identify the causes of war in domestic injustice. As the hopes for peace were eroded by the assertions of dictatorships, Lang sought a vigorous role in the diplomatic controversies of the years leading up to the outbreak of war in September 1939, striving to prevent the conflict by trying to build a common front with the pope and other church leaders.<sup>49</sup>

In 1940, George Bell became a member of the Grotius Society. By this time, he was profoundly involved in German affairs, most significantly the German church struggle and the refugee crisis which the Nazi persecution of the Jews provoked. Bell spoke on behalf of negotiations with Germany in 1940 and found little support. It was his view that war could only maintain Hitler in power, whereas in peace he would be more vulnerable to those who sought to depose him. For Bell, the war of 1939–1945 was not a war between nations but a conflict of ideologies in which many Germans also sought to resist Nazism and end the destruction.<sup>50</sup> But Bell was also adamant that the Allied powers must maintain the standards of international law, and in February 1944 he protested against the obliteration bombing of German cities in the

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<sup>48</sup> See Andrew Chandler, *British Christians and the Third Reich: Church, State and the Judgement of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 60–1.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Chandler, 'The Judgement of an Archbishop: Archbishop Lang and the morality of British Foreign Policy, 1933–1939', in Keith Robbins and John Fisher (eds.) *Religion and National Policy in the twentieth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), pp. 183–224.

<sup>50</sup> See Andrew Chandler, *George Bell, Bishop of Chichester: Church, State and Resistance in the Age of Dictatorship* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2016), Chapter VII.

House of Lords, citing the Hague regulations of 1907, and the rules set down to govern aerial warfare in the 1922 Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments. Archbishop William Temple disagreed with him.<sup>51</sup> To what extent, if at all, did such insights and principles come to affect the debates of a new Lambeth Conference?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE NUCLEAR AGE: THE  
LAMBETH CONFERENCE OF 1948

By 1948, it was apparent that the Second World War had yielded a new confrontation between East and West, and a world divided by ideology. The Third Reich had come and gone; the Soviet Union had come to stay across Eastern Europe. The detonations by the United States of nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked a revolution in the science of modern warfare. The advent of the nuclear age saw a commissioning of reports across the churches, in the United States by the Federal Council of Churches (*Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith*, 1946) and in Britain by the British Council of Churches (*The Era of Atomic Power*, 1946) and by the archbishops of Canterbury and York, at the request of the Church Assembly (*The Church and the Atom*, 1948). This third report, overseen by E.G. Selwyn, represented an attempt to frame a distinctly Anglican view, not only of nuclear weapons but of war and peace at large. It was also notable for drawing explicitly on the thought of Grotius and seeking to establish precepts from biblical texts and natural law.<sup>52</sup> Not everybody was convinced. In the Church Assembly, George Bell found that the report did not make a due reference to Christ; that it lacked “feeling,” even “outrage,” and that it missed “the distinctively Christian note, of compassion for suffering, of forgiveness, and of charity.”<sup>53</sup>

Now, in peacetime, the ecumenists achieved an impressive momentum. In 1948, the first General Assembly of the World

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<sup>51</sup> Andrew Chandler, *British Christians and the Third Reich*, pp. 357–61.

<sup>52</sup> See *The Church and the Atom: A Study of the Moral and Theological Aspects of Peace and War* (London, 1948); for Grotius see pp. 59–65.

<sup>53</sup> *Proceedings of the Church Assembly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (Autumn Session), pp. 396–7.

Council of Churches (WCC) met in Amsterdam. It was natural for the Anglican bishops of 1948 to look hopefully to this, and to greet the new United Nations, just as their predecessors had welcomed the League of Nations. But their bland endorsement of the UN lacked the vivid conviction with which they embraced the League of Nations in 1920. Nor were they roused to campaign with the same urgent idealism. The Cold War cast too long a shadow. Even so, the emerging Covenant on Human Rights attracted particular attention, above all where it affirmed “the right to freedom of religion, conscience, and belief.”<sup>54</sup>

The 1948 Lambeth Conference was the first of two chaired by Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher (1887–1972). It commissioned a report on “The Church and the Modern World,” the work of a committee convened under Ashton Oldham, bishop of Albany. This was a succinct work, but immense in range. In consideration of “The Church and War,” the committee offered a significant development of Resolution 25 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference: “modern war is incompatible with the welfare, and possibly with the continued existence, of man . . . to-day the atom bomb lifts it into a new dimension, multiplying its destructive power a thousandfold and making civilians its chief victims.” It continued:

Against this death-dealing force there is no known defence . . . Nor is there any hope in secrecy, for in time all nations will know the technique. At most, those who now know it have but a few years’ start. Fear of consequences will not avail but instead might induce a nation which feared attack to launch it first. Thus there is no assurance that the bomb will not be used with devastating effect. In fact, it already has been used, and the reasons which prompted and claimed to justify such use would prevail again.<sup>55</sup>

A “national military strength” was necessary, for the world now existed in a state of chaos. But they must continue to strive for disarmament, and they must insist that war “on a global scale with modern weapons of destruction must be no more. It is both a

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<sup>54</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Reports* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1948) Part II, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

blasphemy and an anachronism.” Christian opinion, the committee maintained, had influenced the making of the United Nations. The Commission on International Affairs of the new WCC was in contact with the United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches. Now the United Nations should, “have the whole-hearted support of Christians and all men of goodwill.” But the new organization could not prevail as “a piece of machinery of man’s devising,” “It needs to be permeated with moral and spiritual power. This the Church alone can supply with its belief that a God of righteousness rules the universe and that all men created in His image are of infinite worth.”<sup>56</sup>

This report found that public opinion appeared increasingly and dangerously fatalistic. But, it maintained, “The causes that lead to war are man-made and can be removed by man.” Moreover, the world had seen periods in which uneasy relations between nations had occurred and even endured. But they did not inevitably cause war. Now, “the Church in every land should endeavour to Christianize the international relations of its own country,” not least against “an unbridled, arrogant nationalism.” In a section devoted to Communism the report continued: “As Christians we ought to strive to prevent the world dividing into mutually hostile camps.” Moreover, it continued, “Communism cannot be overcome by argument alone. It has to be outlived, not merely outfought. Under the providence of God its truths will pass into the experience of humanity; its untruths and half-truths will be self-destructive.”<sup>57</sup>

When Oldham presented the report before the conference he remarked, “Very wisely the Report does not appeal for unilateral disarmament but general disarmament, to which I think nobody could take any exception.’ Indeed, he acknowledged that the vigor that was present in early draft work had been “amended . . . and tempered a bit.”<sup>58</sup> Bell intervened and proposed an amendment, preserving the clarity of Resolution 25 of 1930. This was accepted.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup> L.C. 172 (Minutes, 28 July 1948), p. 25.



He then presented a new resolution entirely, insisting that “total war” was now so plainly indiscriminate that it could not be justified by “Christian standards.” The bishops of 1948 did not agree; this second motion was lost “by a large majority.”<sup>59</sup>

The six new resolutions which the 1948 Lambeth Conference passed on “The Church and War” confirmed the careful qualities which had characterized the work of the committee. They pronounced that governments had a “duty” to reduce and control their armaments with a view to a final disarmament, “except those which may be necessary for international police protection.” But to this the conference added: “until such time as this is achieved, it recognizes that there are occasions when both nations and individuals are obliged to resort to war as the lesser of two evils.” Then: “The Conference urges that the use of atomic energy be brought under such effective international inspection and control as to prevent its use as a weapon of war.” All Christians were urged to work for the “reconciliation of the nations which have been at war. Treaties with Germany and Japan, “based on principles of justice,” should follow, “without delay.” Across Europe it was important that as many displaced people “as possible” be admitted to the countries in which Anglican churches were found. Resolution 14 maintained the argument that economic justice yielded peace. Lastly, Resolution 15 affirmed “that the nations of the world must have an organ of co-operation to which each nation must be ready to yield some of its sovereignty, and trusts the United Nations may be used, strengthened and improved to that end.”<sup>60</sup>

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF RECONCILIATION: THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE OF 1958

George Bell retired in 1957. But he remained a bishop and attending a Lambeth Conference was one of the last things that he did before his death. How did Bell view what he now found? In 1958, the Lambeth Conference commissioned a report on “The Reconciling of Conflicts between and within Nations” chaired by

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 67–70.

<sup>60</sup> Resolutions 10 to 15. Ibid., Part I, pp. 30–1; reprinted in Coleman, *The Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 93–4.

the new bishop of Cape Town, Joost de Blank. The committee responsible comprised no less than fifteen American bishops (Hobson, still bishop of Southern Ohio, was the vice-chair). It was now the Church's significance as a reconciling force, of man with God and of nation with nation, which became "the Church's privilege, as it is its greatest glory."<sup>61</sup>

The making and receiving of this report exposed a profound division among bishops over nuclear weapons. It certainly struck a pessimistic note, for "the nations move uneasily from crisis to crisis, and the future is dark with uncertainty. It is in circumstances such as these that the reconciling word has to be proclaimed, not in any vague or indefinite manner, but addressed specifically to the situation in which twentieth-century man finds himself." People feared a "nuclear war would completely wreck their civilization. Perhaps even more they dread what might happen to them if ever they became subject to a totalitarian system that would mean enslavement." The nations had "no firm philosophy of history to give it confidence in its destiny, or to justify the sufferings it must bear." The vision of "secular progress" was "shattered" by two world wars."<sup>62</sup>

Unlike the earlier Lambeth Conference reports, that of 1958 looked at the international order and found the Church and its faith to be irrelevant to those who governed national affairs. Society, it appeared, now looked to scientific truth but found any other kind of knowledge merely "suspect": "There is a tendency to think of man's ideals and his destiny in terms of biological or psychological necessity or in terms of economic advantage." In such a way a sense of "sympathy and obligation" had waned while callous, even cruel, behavior spread. This brought a deepening insecurity, even a "hypnotic" fear, which might at any moment suddenly break out in conflict. In such a context the reconciling gospel of the Christian Church had urgent meaning. It was the duty of a Christian to be a peacemaker. In this assertion lay an acknowledgement of the place

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<sup>61</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London and Greenwich: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Seabury Press, 1958), Part II, p. 118.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

of pragmatism, for in the preservation of peace “compromise, temporary solutions, relative justice, and partial achievement have their place.” Christians, particularly the Christian laity, must take their place in the secular order and bring their faith to bear there. The Church itself could still foster “a climate of public opinion in which constructive action becomes possible.”<sup>63</sup>

The causes of war remained diverse and the number of them had grown: ideology, “human selfishness,” “corporate selfishness,” starvation and over-population, the drive for raw materials, “the fear of insecurity or disintegration,” “the desire to protect a way of life,” “the yearnings of peoples coming to maturity,” also, “the tensions that are inherent in the normal change and development which take place in human societies.”<sup>64</sup> The advent of nuclear weapons brought a “startling development” and “a new challenge.” It was seen that weapons were accumulating and proliferating. Christians must consider “their responsibility for inflicting untold suffering by sanctioning nuclear bombing,” and also the “wasteful expenditure” which the development of such weapons must incur when so much human need existed in the world.<sup>65</sup>

The committee admitted that pacifists must find their convictions confirmed by the nuclear age. Their report acknowledged that the bishops were divided on the issue of the possession, use, and disarmament of nuclear weapons. Some bishops were “convinced” that individual nations were justified in possessing such weapons “as a lesser evil than surrendering them and increasing the possibility of an unscrupulous attack,” until an international agreement had occurred. Others found that any use of them was “morally unjustifiable in any circumstances,” and that unilateral disarmament must surely occur without waiting for such agreements. The committee acknowledged that “Christians are looking for one clear answer,” but they insisted that to offer one would “gloss over the complexity of the situation.” This left them with an appeal to the individual conscience: “Each one of us has to try to understand the issues involved and face the consequences of

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 125–6.

any action that he advocates.” They should “press through their governments for international control of the production and testing of nuclear weapons as a matter of the utmost urgency. . . .” Furthermore, “the Church should find ways in which it might discuss the ethics of nuclear power with scientists and political leaders.”<sup>66</sup>

The committee proposed four “positive means of action” for the reconciliation of conflicts between nations. They may accept the need for “an international organization for the prevention of armed conflicts and the development of mutual help between nations.” They should commend the United Nations for its work in such areas of international life while Christians might “assume a greater sense of personal responsibility in becoming informed about its plans, purposes and needs” and in promoting study and concern in their communities to their own governments.<sup>67</sup>

In his biography of Archbishop Fisher, Edward Carpenter wrote that this report was “generally felt” to be “somewhat ordinary and commonplace,” and that Fisher agreed.<sup>68</sup> Much of it was accepted by the conference without demur, but the controversy over nuclear weapons became, if anything, louder. Ernest Reed, bishop of Ottawa, observed that when it was suggested that the use of such weapons must be “morally indefensible” the bishops at large were almost evenly divided (126 disagreeing and 108 agreeing). Bell viewed all of this unhappily. He maintained that even if nuclear weapons were banned, altogether, they should not appear to imply that any war fought with modern, conventional means could be right: “such a war in itself was wrong.” He also insisted that it was a matter of “intense importance” that the conference express its support for the United Nations, for such support “from an international body of bishops would have considerable influence.” The conference should also speak with words that “find an echo in the hearts of ordinary people.” He proposed a lengthy new motion, looking for a “comprehensive” international disarmament treaty, involving “the total prohibition of the manufacture, possession

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>68</sup> Edward Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher – His Life and Times* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1991), p. 471.

and use of nuclear weapons of every kind, together with the elimination of all instruments adaptable to mass destruction." Such a treaty should institute "an effective system of international control . . . with an International Control Organ having its own staff of inspectors permanently in residence in all states signatories, having unimpeded access at all times to all objects of control."<sup>69</sup>

Much of the discussion on disarmament crystallized in a single substantive resolution on "Modern Warfare and Christian Responsibility." This called for "a comprehensive international disarmament treaty, which shall also provide for the progressive reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments to the minimum necessary for the maintenance of internal security and the fulfilment of the obligations of states to maintain peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter." The Lambeth Conference looked to "the more effective use of, and respect for, the existing processes of international justice, and to the creation of adequate means for enforcing its decisions."<sup>70</sup> In addition, the conference published a "Statement on Peace" addressed not only to "our fellow Christians" but "to all who will listen to us."<sup>71</sup> This statement said little that was distinctive; indeed, a bland first draft was revised so that it should contain "some specific Christian references" and "made clearer that the Conference considered war to be evil."<sup>72</sup>

#### THE RESOLUTIONS OF LATER LAMBETH CONFERENCES.

Resolutions issued by the five Lambeth Conferences of 1907, 1920, 1930, 1948 and 1958 were maintained by their successors, but grew only very slightly. During the 1968 Lambeth Conference Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia and Archbishop Michael Ramsey (1904–1988) led the bishops to Westminster Abbey to pray for the people of that country.<sup>73</sup> There was no resolution; perhaps

<sup>69</sup> L.C. 154 (Minutes, 4 August 1958), pp. 145–54.

<sup>70</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London and Greenwich, 1958), Part I, p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, Part I, pp. 63–4.

<sup>72</sup> L.C. 194 (Minutes 4–5 August 1958), p. 138.

<sup>73</sup> Owen Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 274.

there would have been if there was an Anglican bishop of Prague? In 1968, it was a report on "Renewal in Faith" which offered paragraphs on "international morality today," condemning "emphatically" the use of nuclear or bacteriological weapons, insisting that it was the concern of the Church to "uphold and extend the right of conscientious objection, and resolving "to oppose persistently the claim that total war or the use of weapons however ruthless or indiscriminate can be justified by results."<sup>74</sup> A bold, but brief, resolution pressed the governments of the world to work towards "a form of world government designed to serve the interests of all mankind." It is difficult to discern where this resolution came from, or what could come of it. The same might be said of Resolution 10, which invited the archbishop of Canterbury to act on behalf of the conference itself and "to consult with the Pope and the Oecumenical Patriarch and the Praesidium of the World Council of Churches on the possibility of approaching leaders of the other world religions with a view to convening a conference at which in concert they would speak in the interests of humanity on behalf of world peace."<sup>75</sup> Neither of Ramsey's later biographers, Owen Chadwick and Peter Webster, record any consequence. If there was an innovation in the conference of 1968 it lay in a growing, if unhappy, recognition of the moral mandates of revolutionary violence. The discussion of wars between nations had shifted towards a preoccupation with proxy wars, revolutionary, and civil wars. The conference resolutions of 1978 were more discursive and looked to a still greater audience, for now "we dare to speak also to governments, world leaders and people, without distinction, because all countries, however nationalistic in sentiment, are now interdependent."<sup>76</sup> The Lambeth Conference of 1978 called on all Christian people to "re-examine as a matter of urgency" their own attitudes and to

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<sup>74</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1968* (London, 1968), pp. 78–81.

<sup>75</sup> Resolutions 8 to 10, in *The Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and Reports* (London and New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1968), p. 31.

<sup>76</sup> *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1978), p. 33.

engage in “non-violent action for justice and peace and to support others so engaged.”<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, increasingly the Anglican bishops looked not to principles of international relations but to territorial conflicts. At the Lambeth Conference of 1988 Resolution 27, “War, Violence and Justice,” acknowledged a thaw in the Cold War and hoped for “new opportunities for co-operation with the Soviet Union.”<sup>78</sup> After this the conference turned intently towards specific regional conflicts, in Israel and Lebanon, in Latin America, and in Namibia and Sudan.<sup>79</sup> In the Lambeth Conference of 1998 the vision of a church at large in the world was preserved not by discussions of international relations, but by the adoption of an international campaign to release poorer countries from their debts. Resolution 1.4, “A Faithful Response to Aggression and War,” and Resolution 1.11 dissolved into brief clauses which were so attenuated that they had little effect altogether.

It is possible to argue that these later reports moved from one understanding of international relations to another, which emphasized violent political developments within nations, while economic injustice, which was once regarded as a cause of war, had been detached from that issue and had found a life of its own in an independent category. Anglicans began to interpret their world, and the place of their church within it, on essentially new terms. But that sense of a narrowing vision is, even so, hard to resist. The preference for internationalism, and the institutions which gave it life and meaning, was still discernible. But resolutions which expressed this looked increasingly like an inherited duty.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Lambeth Conferences did not exist primarily to express a thorough, critical view of international relations. Yet, if this was so,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, pp. 38–9.

<sup>78</sup> Resolutions 1–4, *The Truth shall make you Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988: The Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988).

<sup>79</sup> Resolutions 1.4 and 1.11, *The Lambeth Conference 1998* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), pp. 99, 376, 382.

discussions of war and peace still involved much time and discussion at the conferences, and the resolutions which they placed before the world were presented with a high purpose. They sparked no controversy outside the church itself; at no point was a national foreign policy embarrassed by a resolution of a Lambeth Conference. This was not because they lacked distinctive, or even courageous, qualities. In essential principles they showed a broad consistency and coherence. They maintained the model of the nation as something God-given, instinctive to human beings, or unavoidable. Nationhood was not an end, but a means to an international end. All nations, great or small, new or old, had equal rights; limits must be set on sovereignty in view of the welfare of an international community. This difficult correlation between national and international interests was defined by examining the causes of war. They insisted that while the war itself might be honourable, it occurred only in contradiction to the mind and example of Christ and must always be abhorrent in its violence, suffering, destruction, and grief. The bishops invested their authority in supporting successive models of international diplomacy and arbitration and denied to any government the power to judge a question wholly for itself and to go to war without submitting to these things. They voiced a vivid support for the League of Nations, even when there were doubts, and later they approved firmly of the United Nations. They argued that the accumulation of armaments could be a cause for war, not a basis for peace, and viewed the development of military technology with horror. In the nuclear age they were divided upon the question of unilateral disarmament.

After the Second World War, the Anglican bishops moved from the exposition of international principles towards a deeper concern with regional violence and domestic conflicts. It is arguable that this move expressed the territorial nature of episcopacy itself. They commended a vigorous public participation in these causes and debates within the Christian Church and democracy at large. They certainly looked to strike a note that was distinctively Anglican in nature, but there was too little on which to draw in their own tradition to make this likely. Instead, they reasoned and resolved much as all Christians might, but from the distinctive



premise which was the achievement of the Lambeth Conference. It would be wrong to dismiss their discussions and resolutions as a merely supportive echo of the liberal internationalism that proved so influential across the societies in which Anglicanism could be found. The conferences offered a language and a high moral justification at a time when heroic efforts were made to raise the standards of diplomacy beyond the calculations of self-interest, political advantage, and opportunism. The Lambeth Conferences became a part of the "thickening," as theorists would now describe it, of public discourse in places where the Anglican Church mattered.

An Anglican bishop was not an expert in questions of diplomacy but a principled generalist who made a virtue out of holding a broad view. Democracy insisted on the legitimacy, and value, of such perspectives. Furthermore, at the Lambeth Conferences the bishops commended the study of these questions of diplomacy, armaments, war and peace, to all Christians. They assumed that bishops studied such things themselves or knew them in their own experience. Did they acknowledge the limits of this, and their own need to refer to sources of knowledge and reflection that were solid and continuous? Here was a marked contrast with the efforts of the ecumenists. The Life and Work movement was quick to create a research department in Geneva. In 1946, the WCC established a Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. Nothing similar was attempted within Anglicanism. What originated in Geneva was largely left there. The existence of an Anglican office, and a "permanent representative," at the United Nations since 1991, has marked a significant step, but to most church people it has been an obscure one.

A critic may wonder if Anglican bishops exaggerated their own importance and capabilities or even sought only to incorporate the troubles of the world within a defensible, generalized piety. Too often, perhaps, the reports and resolutions of successive Lambeth Conferences came to settle for repetition and generalities when they might have shown that sharper creative development which occurred, for example, in questions of doctrine or church order. Yet without the labour that yields depth and detail their value could only seem marginal to those at work in professional agencies, in universities, or in public office.

If one bishop gave successive Lambeth Conference reports on international relations character, consistency, and coherence, it was certainly George Bell. Bell was conspicuous in his ability to collaborate with secular expertise, as he did in his study of *Nuclear War and Peace* (London: National Peace Council, 1955), which he co-produced with J.E. Roberts.<sup>80</sup> His long correspondence with Willem Visser't Hooft, the first general secretary of the WCC, shows what he learned from abroad.<sup>81</sup> In his speeches in the regular foreign affairs debates of the House of Lords, Bell certainly achieved a good deal of value on his own account.<sup>82</sup> Because his work was so firmly rooted in the insights and experience of others, it rewards the analyst looking for relevance, substance, and movement in ideas.

After 1968, the year in which the Lambeth Conference coincided with the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, the Anglican investment in Geneva waned along with questions of international relations which ecumenical Anglicans and ecumenists of other churches shared. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Anglicanism itself looked more like a global denomination than ever, and one preoccupied with its own difficulties. In this way, Anglicanism collaborated with the growing secular indifference which the bishops often lamented. The danger of such moral isolation is all too obvious and a sudden crisis will expose it. It may be that if one country now invades another in an act of blatant aggression, Anglican bishops will have little more than platitudes to offer – if, indeed, they are expected to express an opinion at all.

The Lambeth Conferences contributed little to the arts of political science, at least as its practitioners have come to know them. But they encourage us to explore the art of diplomacy as a moral

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<sup>80</sup> G.K.A. Bell and J.E. Roberts, *Nuclear War and Peace* (Peace Aims Leaflet, No. 50, London: National Peace Council, 1955).

<sup>81</sup> See Gerhard Besier (ed.), “*Intimately Associated for many Years*”: *George K.A. Bell's and Willem A. Visser't Hooft's Common Life-Work in the Service of the Church Universal – Mirrored in their Correspondence* (2 vols., Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, *Hansard*, The Debates of the House of Lords, Series 5, Vol. 195, cols. 410–15 (21 December 1955). Here Bell offers a personal “statement of guiding principles” for international policy.

science and as a part of the morality of democracy. We may find such discussions an active part of the new diplomatic values of a century which achieved, for the first time, durable models of international arbitration, conciliation, disarmament, and law. It was an achievement of the age of the League of Nations to democratize what was once the preserve of elites, and to achieve a new foundation for these affairs of state in the experience of ordinary people. The reports from the Lambeth Conferences were a part of this distinctive, and fruitful, culture. They incited a wider discussion of international morality, outlining ideas that possessed a recognizable value in a wider public discourse. They still invite the historian to explore the myriad ways in which the churches of the Anglican Communion inhabited the political world in which they worshipped.

In the year in which Lambeth Conference of 1958 took place, George Bell died, and the Grotius Society was dissolved. Much of their work has since fallen into the hands of specialists, and fragmented. Broad interpretive models which integrate Christian ideas with political, legal, and diplomatic themes have not fared well in an age of professionalization, categorization, and academic jargon. Yet to examine the Lambeth Conferences is to begin to see how such models might emerge, and why they still have something important to teach us. We may even begin to acknowledge that a distinctively Anglican approach to the subject of international relations is not, after all, an impossibility.