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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

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# “You Share Our Story”:<sup>1</sup> Historiographies of the Lambeth Conference<sup>2</sup>

BENJAMIN GUYER

The Lambeth Conference began in a world where the British Empire was the dominant power. It has survived its original political context and now exists in a world defined by American primacy and values. The historiography of the Lambeth Conference has likewise gone through two main periods. The first began when Randall Thomas Davidson (1848–1930), then dean of Windsor, authored a brief essay, simply entitled “Narrative,” as the introduction to *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888), which was published in preparation for the Lambeth Conference of 1888.<sup>3</sup> That volume was, together with its “Narrative,” revised and expanded in 1889 to include the proceedings of the 1888 Conference;<sup>4</sup> that volume was then reprinted in 1896 to help attendees prepare for the 1897 Conference.<sup>5</sup> Davidson focused on the primary source documentation

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Nwankiti, *The Lambeth Conferences and the Growth of the Anglican Communion*, rev. ed. (Owerri: Springfield Publishers, 2001), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> I thank Romulus Stefanut and Elle Goodrich of the Jessie Ball duPont Library at Sewanee: The University of the South for the research aid that they gave me. I also thank the reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

<sup>3</sup> Randall Thomas Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888).

<sup>4</sup> Randall Thomas Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1889).

<sup>5</sup> Randall Thomas Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1896).

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that surrounded each of the first three conferences by including much material that was not part of official proceedings. Thirty years later, in preparation for the Lambeth Conference of 1920, Davidson, now as archbishop of Canterbury, published *The Five Lambeth Conferences* (London: SPCK, 1920) in collaboration with Honor Thomas. It was prefaced by an expanded “Narrative,” but the volume itself contained only the official documents of each conference.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in 1929, Thomas and Davidson oversaw the publication of *The Six Lambeth Conferences*, which further accounted for the Lambeth Conference of 1920.<sup>7</sup> Davidson passed away in 1930, just months before the Lambeth Conference that year, and because of the Second World War, the next Lambeth Conference occurred in 1948 without an updated volume by Davidson.

The second historiographical era began in 1967 when Alan M.G. Stephenson published *The First Lambeth Conference: 1867* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1967).<sup>8</sup> Containing a foreword by Michael Ramsey (1904–1988), archbishop of Canterbury, the volume appeared the year of the Lambeth Conference centenary and one year before the 1968 Conference. A decade later, Stephenson published *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* as a sequel to his earlier study.<sup>9</sup> These two volumes remain the most exhaustive works yet published on the Lambeth Conference. Their prescriptive ecclesiological content is encapsulated by Ramsey’s foreword, in which he emphasized the “moral authority” of the conference. Stephenson stressed moral authority as well, but also argued, in tandem with many of his contemporaries, that Anglicanism was uniquely placed to overcome confessional and political differences across the world. More recent work on the Lambeth Conference has had to situate itself with respect to Stephenson, especially where it has questioned his

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<sup>6</sup> Randall Thomas Davidson, *The Five Lambeth Conferences* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920).

<sup>7</sup> Randall Thomas Davidson, *The Six Lambeth Conferences* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929).

<sup>8</sup> Alan M.G. Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference: 1867* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> Alan M.G. Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1978), p. xiv.

conclusions, precisely because, although long out of print, his writings remain paramount. In what follows, I argue that Stephenson's historiography has decisively influenced contemporary Anglican concerns with the "moral authority" of the Lambeth Conference.

I begin with an overview of Davidson's work. I leave questions about Davidson's own ecclesiology to the side; as will be seen, his later volumes on the Lambeth Conference focused on "official" proceedings and left very little room for any of his own, more sustained ecclesiological considerations.<sup>10</sup> I analyze Stephenson's books across two sections. I first offer a broad overview of his writings on the Lambeth Conference, attending closely to his ecclesiological positions. In the third section, I compare his work with Davidson's to show that "moral authority" was a conceptual novelty that assumed prominence only beginning in 1967. The essay concludes by noting potential avenues for future research. My focus is comparatively narrow. I restrict my analysis to publications that aim at a descriptive, diachronic overview of the Lambeth Conference as a whole. I am thereby setting to the side writings about the Lambeth Conference and its relation to other, related topics. Excepting Stephenson's study of the 1867 Lambeth Conference, I will not discuss studies of particular conferences.<sup>11</sup> Episcopal

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<sup>10</sup> Several publications have noted that Davidson believed the Archbishop of Canterbury should be the "pivot" for the Anglican Communion. To my knowledge, no one has yet contextualized this proposal, originally made in 1904 during a visit to Canada, in relation to his views on the Lambeth Conference. That would be a valuable study and might also shed some light on the development of Davidson's Lambeth Conference volumes. For a broad survey of Davidson and Anglican identity, see Michael Hughes, *Archbishop Randall Davidson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), ch. 3. Davidson's autobiographical reflections on his archiepiscopal career have been edited by Melanie Barber as "Randall Davidson: A Partial Retrospective," in Stephen Taylor (ed.), *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Miscellany* (Church of England Record Society and the Boydell Press: Woodbridge and Rochester, 1999), pp. 387–438.

<sup>11</sup> Examples of this may be found in, e.g., A.F. London, "The Lambeth Conference 1930," *Theology*, Vol. 21, No. 123, pp. 131–137; James B. Simpson and Edward M. Story, *The Long Shadows of Lambeth X* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969); Guy Fitch Little, "American Bishops and Lambeth 1988," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (1989), pp. 333–352. Paul Avis edited a special issue of *Ecclesiology* on the Lambeth Conference of 1920 and its much-celebrated "Appeal to All Christian People." See *Ecclesiology*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2020); it contains an introduction by Avis and essays by Mark D. Chapman, Charlotte Methuen, Ephraim Radner, and Jeremy Worthen.

memoirs, which sometimes include analyses of conferences attended,<sup>12</sup> also receive no mention; publications concerned with the intersection of the Lambeth Conference and a given Anglican province are mentioned only in passing.<sup>13</sup> Finally, many discussions of the Lambeth Conference have taken a prescriptive, rather than descriptive, approach, either marshalling the Lambeth Conference for a particular position or engaging with the Lambeth Conference because of particular commitments. I also set these aside, although in my conclusion I reflect on how they might be incorporated into future studies.

#### DAVIDSON'S VOLUMES

“Perhaps it is not too much to say that a decennial Conference of the bishops of the Anglican Communion, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, has now become a recognised part of the organisation of our Church.”<sup>14</sup> Because the Lambeth Conference is a defining feature of modern Anglicanism, readers are likely to miss the stark novelty of Randall Davidson’s words, which he first published in 1888. Twenty-one years earlier, Archbishop Charles Thomas Longley had received a request from bishops in Canada for a “General Council” of “the members of our Anglican Communion in all quarters of the world.”<sup>15</sup> Prohibited by English law from calling a synod without royal authority,

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<sup>12</sup> E.g., G.T. Bedell, *The Canterbury Pilgrimage: To and From the Lambeth Conference and the Sheffield Congress* (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company, 1878).

<sup>13</sup> Nwankiti, *The Lambeth Conferences and the Growth of the Anglican Communion*, offers a broad historical survey while noting how Nigerian Anglicans and the Conference influenced one another. Ross N. Hebb, “The Canadians at Lambeth: An Examination of the Canadian Bishops at the Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878 and 1888,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, Vol. XLIX (2007), pp. 5–37, looks at early Canadian contributions; idem., “The Americans at Lambeth,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (2009), pp. 30–66, surveys American Episcopalians at the conference of 1867. Robert W. Prichard, “The Lambeth Conferences,” in Ian S. Markham, J. Barney Hawkins IV, Justyn Terry, and Leslie Nuñez Steffenson (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion* (eds.) (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), pp. 91–104, takes an especial interest in the contributions made by the American Episcopal Church, although the essay is a general overview.

<sup>14</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, p. 6.

Longley instead invited Anglican bishops to gather for “united worship and common counsels.”<sup>16</sup> However, that event, described today as the “first” Lambeth Conference, was not convened in order to become the first of anything. Despite the enthusiasm that it generated among many participants, it concluded without any clear sense that such gatherings would become a recurring reality. To the contrary, it was not uncommon that attendees envisioned the 1867 meeting as the starting point for developing something else – a council that regulated the entirety of the Anglican Communion. Committee Report A, which encouraged the creation of provincial synods, was not alone in noting “the need which is generally felt of united counsel in a sphere more extensive than that of a Provincial Synod.”<sup>17</sup> Many who gathered in 1867 did not want another conference at all, but something else.

Consequently, the Lambeth Conference did not become a subject of recurring historical study until it became an institution. After 1867, it was far from obvious that another conference at Lambeth would occur, but such a request came in 1872, and again from bishops in Canada.<sup>18</sup> It soon received further support from bishops in the West Indies and the United States.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, uncertainty remained. Longley’s successor, Archibald Campbell Tait, wrote in 1875 to the bishop of Pittsburgh that he had brought “the question of a second Lambeth Conference” to Canterbury Convocation.<sup>20</sup> The relative article – “a” rather than “the” – is important here. Even with the good will generated in 1867, there was no necessary reason for believing that support was forthcoming, especially from within England, as several English bishops refused to attend Longley’s 1867 gathering. Tait’s invitation of

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<sup>16</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, pp. 77. Committee Report B, p. 81, noted the same, although both committees also noted the impossibility of creating such a council due to complications raised by civil law.

<sup>18</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, pp. 101–2.

<sup>19</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, pp. 102 (West Indies), 103–6 (United States).

<sup>20</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, pp. 107.

1877 simply denoted the event “a second Lambeth Conference,”<sup>21</sup> and thereby revealed no awareness that this follow-up meeting might develop into a more permanent institution. But, in Davidson’s words, “It was virtually settled at the Conference of 1878 that a third Conference should be held at Lambeth, ten years later.”<sup>22</sup> Lacking a communion-wide synod, the Lambeth Conference was effectively established in 1878. It treated as precedent the determinations of an episcopal conference – now seen as the “first” Lambeth Conference – that had met in 1867. The earliest historiography of the Conference was thus produced after 1878.

Davidson’s first edited collection, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, was basically a document reader. The introductory “Narrative,” which totaled twenty-six pages, was followed by 132 pages of primary sources. The “Narrative” of 1889, expanded to forty pages, was further complemented by even more material, bringing that volume to 414 pages. Some sources from these first two volumes were carried over into Davidson’s compilations of 1920 and 1929, namely his inclusion of the opening addresses at each Lambeth Conference, together with its resolutions, reports, and information on attendance. But the volumes of 1888 and 1889/1896 included a wide range of other texts such as the initial correspondence between the Canadian bishops and Archbishop Longley, the subsequent support for a conference by Canterbury Convocation, and both the proposed and amended programs for 1867; the same volumes contained the requests for a second conference from Canada, the support voiced by bishops in the West Indies and the United States, together with still more relevant correspondence. In 1889, Davidson expanded the material reproduced from the first two conferences by including one sermon from 1867 and two from 1878, and these complemented the sermons that he included from the 1888 Conference. The first three Lambeth Conferences were private, but Davidson helped make them public and disseminated a large amount of highly

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<sup>21</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, pp. 113.

<sup>22</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, p. 34.

valuable contextual material that gave readers a “behind the scenes” look at how bishops from all over the world had worked together to create and then sustain the largest episcopal gatherings that the Anglican world had yet seen.

The volumes of 1920 and 1929 were quite different. Some changes were small. Davidson added to his “Narrative” the briefest outline, totaling barely five pages, to collectively cover the 1897 and 1908 Conferences. A more detailed fifteen-page addition was made to the “Narrative” in 1929 that covered the 1920 Conference. He also made some corrections and minor alterations. Other changes were of greater import. The 1920 volume removed nearly two hundred pages of sources found in the volume of 1889/1896, much of which had been carried over from the 1888 compilation. It is no criticism to note that, beginning in 1920, the “noise” that defined the earliest conferences was cut to make room for publishing the formal proceedings of all conferences. *The Five Lambeth Conferences* was, furthermore, wholly reorganized. It now presented only the official material from each Lambeth Conference: its attendees, public correspondence (such as an encyclical), resolutions, and reports. The same organization was maintained in *The Six Lambeth Conferences*. Uniform and coherent, each successive volume was also progressively larger. *The Six Lambeth Conferences* totaled more than six hundred pages, rendering it a sizable amount of reading for any bishop. Perhaps it is fortunate that, by modern standards, boat travel to the Lambeth Conference was comparatively slow.

#### STEPHENSON’S VOLUMES

When Davidson told the backstory of the Lambeth Conference, he began in 1865, when the desire for an Anglican council “arose, strange to say, from the interest awakened in North America by the Church affairs of South Africa.”<sup>23</sup> Within three pages, readers were perusing the opening of Longley’s invitation of 1867. Alan M.G. Stephenson told a rather different story in *The First Lambeth Conference*. Surveying the theological debates within the international Anglican world, and the responses to these both within and

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<sup>23</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, p. 5.



beyond the British Empire, Stephenson arrived at Longley's invitation to the Lambeth Conference of 1867 only in chapter ten, which began on page 177. And, instead of beginning with the Canadian request, his study opened with a chapter on the development of "moderate High Churchmen."<sup>24</sup> Stephenson's two volumes, which total just over six hundred pages, were predicated on the simple argument that the Lambeth Conference came from an internationally-developed ecclesiology, and one distinct from the tripartite division of "high," "low," and "broad" church parties that, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, became a familiar shorthand for Anglican existence. As he wrote in the conclusion to his first volume,

The history of the Conference has demonstrated the existence and importance of the moderate High Churchmen, a party within the whole Anglican Communion, who were working together for the extension of their own principles. They stand out as a group separate from Evangelicals, Broad Churchmen, and Tractarians, but they have not been studied as a group and their relation to the other groups has not previously been clarified. The First Lambeth Conference was primarily the work of the moderate High Churchmen.<sup>25</sup>

Davidson had not located the Lambeth Conference in any party, meaning that in 1967, when Stephenson published *The First Lambeth Conference*, he advanced a fundamentally new thesis. What is more, he offered for the first time an academic history that explained what had become, by then, a century-old Anglican tradition.

Stephenson named ten figures as belonging to this (alleged) party: "Longley, [Samuel] Wilberforce, [Francis] Fulford, [John Travers] Lewis, [John Henry] Hopkins, [Henry John] Whitehouse, [Robert] Gray, [George] Selwyn, Christopher Wordsworth, Ernest Hawkins, and others."<sup>26</sup> It is a list that presents both a historiographical problem and an ecclesiological insight. On the one hand, Stephenson offered no evidence that these figures self-identified as a party, much less that they conceived of

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<sup>24</sup> Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, pp. 8–24.

<sup>25</sup> Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, p. 328.

<sup>26</sup> Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, p. 328.

themselves as both “moderate” and “High.” The term “moderate High Churchmen” was not a neologism in Stephenson’s work; it can be found in some other mid-twentieth century historical writing<sup>27</sup> and was in use from at least the early-mid 1860s, when purported moderation served to distinguish this group from those generally classed as “advanced High Churchmen” (that is, Tractarians and, especially as the century moved on, ritualists).<sup>28</sup> However, by classifying various personages with one or another party label, including labels that contemporaries may have not even recognized, Stephenson was following what was, by his time, a very familiar tradition within Anglicanism. Church parties had been a defining feature of Anglican life since W.J. Conybeare published his famous essay “Church Parties” in 1853.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, the descriptive accuracy of Stephenson’s label – “moderate High Churchmen” – still awaits validation.

On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, Stephenson’s list of ten personages is notable because it roots the Lambeth Conference, and by extension the Anglican Communion as a self-conscious ecclesial identity, in an international framework larger than England. Longley was archbishop of Canterbury and Wilberforce bishop of Oxford; Wordsworth was archdeacon of Westminster and Hawkins its canon. But the other six lived elsewhere. Lewis was bishop of Ontario; Fulford was bishop of Montreal and first Anglican metropolitan of Canada. Hopkins was the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, and Whitehouse the bishop of Illinois; Selwyn was metropolitan of New Zealand, and Gray the archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa. From the vantage point of the present, this might appear as merely

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<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Peter T. Marsh, “The Primate and the Prime Minister: Archbishop Tait, Gladstone, and the National Church,” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1965), pp. 113–40, at 115, 134.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Samuel Minton, *A Letter to the Lord Bishop of London [A.C. Tait] in Favour of Liturgical Revision for the Purposes of Relief and Comprehension and Thereby for the Restoration of “Peace and Unity”* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863), p. 16; Francis Cruse, *A Few Facts and Testimonies Touching Ritualism*, second ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), p. 170.

<sup>29</sup> W.J. Conybeare, “Church Parties,” ed. Arthur J. Burns. In Stephen Taylor (ed.), *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Miscellany* (Church of England Record Society and the Boydell Press: Woodbridge and Rochester, 1999), pp. 213–385.

Anglo-centric; Benjamin Nwankiti, for example, wrote that the leadership of the first nine Lambeth Conferences came from “beans [that] were all from the same pod.”<sup>30</sup> But in 1967, against the background of mid-twentieth century decolonization, the geographical distribution of Stephenson’s “moderate High Church” party rendered the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Communion a joint product of both center and periphery, both metropole and (post-)colony. Whereas Davidson found it “strange to say” that the Lambeth Conference began with those outside of England,<sup>31</sup> Stephenson did not. The purported existence of an international “moderate High Church” party rendered such a development all but inevitable.

In his subsequent study eleven years later, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London: SPCK, 1978), Stephenson portrayed Anglicanism as a bridge across theological and national borders, but one that maintained a historically rooted tradition. The book’s opening chapter was defined by two block quotes. The first, by J. Armitage Robinson in 1908, underlined the unity between Anglicans in Britain and the United States, which has been a matter of occasional acrimony in Anglican history. Stephenson then quoted Emani Sambayya, whose 1948 essay “The Genius of the Anglican Communion” argued that Anglicanism united many seemingly disparate realities, such as the Protestant emphasis on the need for individual belief with the Catholic emphasis on the Church as a fundamentally corporate reality. “To a person like me, living in India, the Anglican Communion puts me in the full heritage of Catholicism as well as of the Protestant tradition.”<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that Stephenson quoted only Sambayya’s belief in the ecumenical dynamism of the Anglican tradition. In his original essay, Sambayya had further written that, despite assumptions to

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<sup>30</sup> Nwankiti, *The Lambeth Conferences and the Growth of the Anglican Communion*, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 3; the original comes from Emani Sambayya, “The Genius of the Anglican Communion,” in E.R. Morgan and Roger Lloyd, *The Mission of the Anglican Communion* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and Society for the Promotion of the Gospel, 1948), pp. 18–29 at 21.

the contrary, “Syncretism” might contain a constructive valence, “whereby a living religion appropriates certain beneficial elements of its environment and builds them into its living tissue.” He continued,

Christianity in the past has taken over Platonism and the philosophy of Aristotle in the course of its growth. As Anglicanism takes deep root in the Indian soil, it is hoped that she will judiciously appropriate some of the valuable institutions and ideas in Islam and Hinduism, which constitute her natural environment.<sup>33</sup>

Written in the wake of Indian independence, Sambayya located Christian communion without a political referent, and in the concluding paragraph of his essay, he further asserted that Anglicanism’s long-standing ties to the British crown had often rendered it morally compromised, especially in India.<sup>34</sup> But immediately after quoting Sambayya, Stephenson sounded a note of concern. “Though in 1977 we may be tempted to play down and minimize the Anglo-Saxon or English element in our assessment of Anglicanism, we must resist this temptation,” because the bishops who brought the Anglican Communion to “self-consciousness” also “had every desire to be reminded of their English background and heritage.”<sup>35</sup> Metropole and (post-)colony would remain linked, with the latter rooted in and by the former.

But was such linkage primarily political or ecclesial? *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* suggested the latter, albeit with an ecclesiology that had developed neither a vision nor a vocabulary distinct from that of British imperial – and now, inescapably post-imperial – history. However tempting, if we read Stephenson through the prism of postcolonial “theory,” we will miss important contextual evidence which reveals that, instead of indicating political regret, Stephenson’s sermonizing had a more proximate impetus within the Anglican Communion itself: the creation of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) at the 1968 Lambeth Conference. The place of the ACC in the Anglican Communion has

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<sup>33</sup> Sambayya, “The Genius of the Anglican Communion,” pp. 22–3.

<sup>34</sup> Sambayya, “The Genius of the Anglican Communion,” p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 3.

been a subject of recurring dispute,<sup>36</sup> and whether intentionally or not, Stephenson revealed that disagreement was present from the ACC's inception. In his final chapter, he quoted George Luxton, bishop of Huron, who – as late as 1968 – had desired to see the Lambeth Conference become an international Anglican synod. Luxton believed that “the expense of a Lambeth Conference every five years would be among the best spent money in our Church life,” not least because it “recovers for us a vision of world servanthood.”<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Luxton feared that the ACC, if it failed to maintain a vision of international Anglican unity, would undermine the Anglican Communion as a whole. Stephenson quoted Archbishop Michael Ramsey to a similar effect, noting his view that the ACC could not function as a substitute for the Lambeth Conference.<sup>38</sup> The appeal to “moral authority,” made by Ramsey and Stephenson in 1967, began to look very different following the creation of the ACC. *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* is an early witness to the as-yet unresolved, intertwined issues of ecclesiology and international Anglican administration.

Against this background of newly emergent dispute, Stephenson ably portrayed the Lambeth Conference as an institution that fostered Anglican self-awareness. As he continued his introduction to *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, Stephenson noted the various travel itineraries that often accompanied the Lambeth Conference. There are distinctions here likely lost on those without a background in English history, but in fact, several of Stephenson's examples pre-date 1066, the year of the Norman Conquest, which saw the final transition from Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to what is now England. For example, Stephenson noted that the fourth Lambeth Conference met not in 1898 but one year earlier; at that conference, “to celebrate the arrival of St Augustine in 597, the bishops made a

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<sup>36</sup> See especially Colin Podmore, “The Development of the Instruments of Communion,” in Jeremy Morris (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume IV: Global Western Anglicanism, c. 1910-present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 271–302 at 296.

<sup>37</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 257.

<sup>38</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 289; see also Colin Podmore, “The Development of the Instruments of Communion,” pp. 271–302 at 293–6.

visit to Ebbsfleet.” Stephenson further detailed how travel to places such as York and Durham had brought the Anglican bishops face to face with saints such as Paulinus (+644; York) and Cuthbert (+687; Durham). Of course, Lambeth Conferences also put bishops in touch with post-1066 English history, such as that of “Anselm, Lanfranc, and Becket,” as well as that of later figures, such as John Cosin and Joseph Butler.<sup>39</sup> It’s exactly the sort of historical-qua-ecclesiological interest that a “moderate High Churchman” would value and grouping all of this under the monolithic label “Englishness” ignores significant fault lines within English history. For Stephenson, the Lambeth Conference was inseparable from its repeatedly demonstrated ability to put bishops – and, by extension, their dioceses – in immediate, material proximity to a far deeper Christian past.

#### MORAL AUTHORITY

For slightly more than half a century, international Anglican history has been defined by both the cultural shifts of the “long” 1960s and the constitutionally undefined relationship between the ACC, the Lambeth Conference, and other provincial and international Anglican structures. One outcome has been an assertion of the Lambeth Conference’s “moral authority,” often made alongside the argument that the conference is essential to Anglicanism. In his foreword to *The First Lambeth Conference*, Michael Ramsey disavowed the creation of any Anglican “organ of formal authority” even as he affirmed that “through the series of Lambeth Conferences a growing, undefined, moral authority has been felt, always within the Anglican Churches and sometimes beyond them.”<sup>40</sup> It is vocabulary that now seems familiar, but it was quite unprecedented at the time. Although the phrase “moral weight” had been used in a committee report in 1867,<sup>41</sup> earlier historiography – the many iterations of Davidson’s “Narrative” – had not spoken of the Lambeth Conference in such terms. The stress upon distinctly *moral* authority began in 1967. It has since become a consistent

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<sup>39</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Ramsey, “Foreword,” in Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, pp. xiii-xiv, at xiii.

<sup>41</sup> Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, p. 309.

theme. Writing more than two decades later, Owen Chadwick explained that although “the Lambeth Conference was allowed to be founded only if it had no authority,” this cut against the grain of social existence, because “meetings start to gather authority if they exist and are seen not to be a cloud of hot air and rhetoric.”<sup>42</sup> This authority, however, was non-judicial because “modern church laws took the form of resolutions without legal force in the state.”<sup>43</sup> The end result has been the creation, by the Lambeth Conference, of a noncoercive body of jurisprudence, in which successive conferences appeal to earlier Conferences as precedent, alongside other normative Christian sources, such as the Bible and the example of the early church.<sup>44</sup> Chadwick concluded that the Lambeth Conference thus remains “an indispensable organ of the Anglican Communion.”<sup>45</sup> Later discussions of the Lambeth Conference have been equally inclined to dissociate juridical from other forms of authority, especially the moral suasion that inheres in episcopal and pastoral offices.<sup>46</sup> But none of these studies have argued for the abrogation or suspension of the conference.

It is a curious fact that, alongside an emphasis upon the Lambeth Conference’s “moral authority,” there has been a concurrent historiographical drive to treat Longley’s denial of synodical authority as if he, as Archbishop of Canterbury, possessed the power to single-handedly determine the constitutional bounds for the Lambeth Conference as an enduring institution. Beginning with his first volume of 1888, Davidson included in his “Narrative” the following statement by Archbishop Longley, which was originally made to Canterbury Convocation in 1867. “It has never been

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<sup>42</sup> Owen Chadwick “Introduction,” in Roger Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867–1988* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), pp. i–xxviii, at x.

<sup>43</sup> Chadwick “Introduction,” p. xvi.

<sup>44</sup> Chadwick “Introduction,” pp. xvii, xx–xxii.

<sup>45</sup> Chadwick “Introduction,” p. xxviii.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Avis, “Anglican Conciliarism: The Lambeth Conference as an Instrument of Communion,” in Mark D. Chapman, Sathianathan Clarke, and Martyn Percy (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglican Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 46–59 at 55. Podmore, “The Development of the Instruments of Communion,” p. 273, sees the emphasis on “moral authority” as the preserve of “catholic-minded conciliarists.”

contemplated. . .that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the churches in full communion with the Church of England and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding upon those here represented.”<sup>47</sup> Almost all subsequent historiography has either included this quote or alluded to it,<sup>48</sup> and such repetition would seem to indicate both historiographical and perhaps even ecclesiological consensus. Few publications offer a dissenting view.<sup>49</sup> But in fact, the portrait that emerges from Davidson’s first two compilations reveals confused authority structures, a more contested role for the Archbishop of Canterbury, and diverse estimations of what an Anglican episcopal gathering could and should be. The 1889 volume contains multiple references to the Canadian request for a “General Council” for the Anglican Communion,<sup>50</sup> and still more references to ecumenical councils and the role that they have played in church history.<sup>51</sup> Readers of Davidson’s earliest edited volumes could see that Longley sympathized with the Canadian request,<sup>52</sup> and that other bishops hoped that such a council would emerge, even if only after the conference of 1867.<sup>53</sup> Readers could also see that, due to civil law, Longley could

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<sup>47</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference: 1867*, p. 308; Owen Chadwick, “The Lambeth Conference: An Historical Perspective,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (1989), pp. 259–77, at 262; idem., “Introduction,” p. viii; Nwankiti, *The Lambeth Conferences and the Growth of the Anglican Communion*, p. 2; Hebb, “The Canadians at Lambeth,” p. 8; Avis, “Anglican Conciliarism,” p. 54; Podmore, “The Development of the Instruments of Communion,” p. 273.

<sup>49</sup> Hebb, “The Americans at Lambeth,” pp. 58–9, notes that the bishops were more proactive than Stephenson allows. Flatly rejecting Stephenson’s interpretation is Benjamin M. Guyer, “‘This Unprecedented Step’: The Royal Supremacy and the 1867 Lambeth Conference,” in Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer, *The Lambeth Conference: Theology, History, Polity and Purpose* (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2017), pp. 53–83. Unusually given the general trend, Prichard, “The Lambeth Conferences,” makes no mention of Longley’s oft-quoted words.

<sup>50</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, pp. 10, 21, 52, 53.

<sup>51</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, pp. 15, 57, 97, 128, 165–6, 209, 355 (twice).

<sup>52</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, e.g., pp. 21–2, 98 (Resolution IV).



not assent to the Canadian proposal, a fact recognized by the committees that considered the question.<sup>54</sup>

In Davidson's works, Longley's words to Canterbury Convocation did not dictate constitutional precedent but merely conceded a legal reality. But this did not prevent other Anglicans elsewhere, especially where the church was disestablished, from looking to develop authority structures that would encompass the entire Anglican Communion. The very existence today of four Instruments of Communion testifies to some degree of success on their part. Furthermore, Davidson's inclusion of both the proposed and amended programs for 1867 reveals a side of the story now generally ignored by overfocusing on what has become Longley's *bon mot*. On the second day of the 1867 conference, the bishops rewrote the proposed program. They made unity, the last topic scheduled, the opening subject for discussion, and they drafted resolutions that, against Longley's initial wishes, opened the way to addressing the topics of theological controversy that had spurred the Canadians' initial request for a council.<sup>55</sup> In 1888, Davidson was right to note that the Lambeth Conference had become a central feature of Anglican life and witness – but its precise scope was still far from clear. With the volume of 1920, however, the focus shifted. By not reprinting the Canadian correspondence found in earlier volumes, half the Canadian requests for a "General Council" were removed; by cutting the proposed and amended programs of 1867, the driving early concern for an international Anglican synod was further muted. With their expansive documentary record, Davidson's first two volumes remain goldmines for historical research. By prioritizing conciliar precedent and official proceedings, Davidson's latter tomes are better suited for the study of a theological tradition. As Stephenson, Ramsey, and other, later authors reveal, the persuasive value of an appeal to "moral authority" is most effective when heard from within the bounds of this

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<sup>54</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, pp. 10–11; Committee Reports A and B have already been noted.

<sup>55</sup> Davidson, *Origins and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, comparing pp. 39–41 (proposed program) with pp. 48–53.

tradition. Only here is the appeal to moral authority also an appeal to a shared Anglican story.

#### FURTHER HISTORIOGRAPHY

Several lines of inquiry would enrich our knowledge of the Lambeth Conference and, by extension, Anglicanism as a whole. First, since 1967, writings on the Lambeth Conference have been heavily preoccupied with its institutional parameters. The emotional side of this story has thus been neglected. Whatever its limits, when viewed over the long term, the Lambeth Conference has sometimes fired the imagination and good will of many Anglicans – and not just bishops.<sup>56</sup> The contribution of social history to analyses of the Lambeth Conference would therefore be most welcome. It could take multiple avenues. For example, the 1988 Conference had an accompanying *Bishops Cookbook*.<sup>57</sup> There is no small value in breaking bread with others, and it would be good if future historiography reflected this. Social history might also look at the influence of the Lambeth Conference upon the liturgical life of the Anglican Communion. The conference is an episcopal gathering that, for most Anglicans, happens a world away. How have more tangible manifestations of the Lambeth Conference shaped provinces, dioceses, and parishes? Davidson's 1889 volume contained the prayer for the 1888 Lambeth Conference,<sup>58</sup> and in 1968, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) published a prayer card for the conference that year. Liturgical and devotional resources pertaining to the Lambeth Conference need to be drawn into the story.

Second is the interrelationship of the Lambeth Conference and Anglican theology. In *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, Stephenson noted the towering stature of Michael Ramsey, whose "reputation as a theologian came through at the [1968] Conference," not least because "It was the first time that the Conference had been presided over by a theologian since Frederick Temple or

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<sup>56</sup> Some of this is covered in Guyer, "'This Unprecedented Step'," pp. 78–82.

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous, *The Bishops Cookbook* (Canterbury: The Church Urban Fund and The Christian Aid Crisis Fund, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, p. 222.

Edward White Benson.” It was a sentiment evidently shared by many.<sup>59</sup> There have been other theologian archbishops, such as William Temple (1896–1902), who died before the Lambeth Conference of 1948, but whose influence upon Anglican social thought remains significant. Charting the history of Anglican theology not just upon subsequent theologians, but upon the communion’s longest-lasting international institution, would further reveal the embeddedness of the Lambeth Conference in Anglican life and doctrine. No less importantly, there is a vast amount of research to be done on the Lambeth Conference and its influence on Anglican ecclesiology, whether in the form of Anglican constitutional history or Anglican theologies of the church – including the broader church catholic. The 1888 Conference, borrowing from the American Episcopal Church, published the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the first international Anglican statement of principles for Christian reunion. The 1920 conference’s “Appeal to All Christian People” did much to solidify Anglican involvement in the burgeoning interwar ecumenical movement. More recently, scholarship on conciliarism has benefited from Anglican contributions, notably those of Paul Avis and Paul Valliere.<sup>60</sup> That work has, in turn, shaped estimations – and sometimes criticisms – of whether and how the Lambeth Conference either exemplifies or falls short of conciliar ecclesiologies.<sup>61</sup> But ecclesiology, like history, should be able to account for more than just partisan engagements with the Lambeth Conference, even if ecclesiology tends toward the prescriptive while history remains descriptive.

More recent arguments about the Lambeth Conference have deployed the concept of “moral authority” in a variety of ways. This, too, is an area for further study. Why did this phrase assume

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<sup>59</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 255–6.

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., Paul Avis, *Beyond the Reformation? Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2006); Paul Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Paul Avis, “Lambeth 2020: Conference or council?” *Theology*, Vol. 122, No. 1 (2019), pp. 3–13.

<sup>61</sup> For example, Podmore, “The Development of the Instruments of Communion,” draws upon Valliere’s estimation of the Lambeth Conference as the progressive marginalization of conciliarism within Anglican history.

prominence in 1967, and how was it subsequently used? If the Lambeth Conference has a unique “moral authority” that the other Instruments of Communion lack, then the conference is indispensable in a way that the other Instruments are not. Is this a matter of agreement or disagreement? If so, when and by whom? Normative appeals are part of the history of the conference’s impact upon Anglicanism, and in a sometimes-oblique way, vindicate the claim that the Lambeth Conference does indeed possess “moral authority” (for why else appeal to it?). Debates over women’s ordination,<sup>62</sup> or sexual matters such as polygamy or same-sex marriage,<sup>63</sup> have – with varying degrees of success – used the Lambeth Conference in their pursuit of outcomes with significant local impact. Who does or does not preside at the altar, what is or is not taught in the pulpit, who is or is not married in the local parish – all are intimately personal realities that directly impinge upon churchgoers’ lives. No doubt these histories vary across localities, both within and between provinces. Future studies of the Lambeth Conference would make a welcome contribution if they rendered the conference an institution inseparable from the history of its reception. This would likely underscore that, in terms of lived experience at one or another local level, the Lambeth Conference has had *more* than just “moral” influence. And that is because history is generally far richer, and occasionally more interesting, than arguments for or against authority.

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<sup>62</sup> E.g., Michael M. Marrett, *The Lambeth Conferences and Women Priests: The Historical Background of the Lambeth Conferences and Their Impact on the Episcopal Church in America* (Smithtown, NY: Exposition Press, 1981); Mary S. Donovan, “The Dimension of Unity: Women at Lambeth, 1988,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 353–363; Geoffrey Rowell, “Wreckers of Church Unity,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 379–383.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., Peter Francis (ed.), *Rebuilding Communion: Who Pay the Price? From the Lambeth Conference 1998 to the Lambeth Conference 2008 and Beyond* (Hawarden, Flintshire: Monad Press, 2008). I do not mean to imply here that all discussions of sexuality and the Lambeth Conference have been normative in their aspirations. Most recently, see the special issue of *Theology*, Vol. 123, No. 2 (2020), which focuses on the history of the Lambeth Conference and contains several essays on human sexuality.

# Archbishop Michael Ramsey and the Lambeth Conference<sup>1</sup>

PETER WEBSTER

The Anglican Communion is perhaps unique in world Christianity in that its sources of authority are both centralized and (at the same time) diffused. In recent years, four institutions, known as the Instruments of Communion, have come to be regarded as the means by which the communion is held together. One is as old as the Anglican church itself – the office of the archbishop of Canterbury; one, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), is very new in comparison; the other two – the Primates’ Meeting, and the Lambeth Conference – have appeared and evolved as the Anglican Communion itself has evolved. As a recent collection of essays showed, the relationship between the Instruments, and the extent of their influence in individual provinces, are varied, fluid, and at times uncertain.<sup>2</sup> This article examines the relationship between two of the Instruments at a particular point in time: the Lambeth Conference of 1968, and the tenure of Michael Ramsey as archbishop of Canterbury (1961–1974).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks are due to Andrew Chandler, Alana Harris, and Bill Jacob for their reflections on this paper at various stages. I also gratefully acknowledge the help of Ben Guyer as editor of the special issue, the peer reviewers, and Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook and all at the journal.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer (eds), *The Lambeth Conference: theology, history, polity and purpose* (London, Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2017): see in particular the essay by Stephen Pickard.

<sup>3</sup> On this relationship in general, see Paul Avis, “The archbishop of Canterbury and the Lambeth Conference,” in Avis and Guyer, *Lambeth Conference*, pp. 23–52. In part, this article develops ideas first given in outline in Peter Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey: the shape of the Church* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2015), pp. 21–5.

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Despite its present-day use, the language of the Instruments was not common in 1968. Stephen Pickard has shown that its currency in Anglican thought dates from the 1980s, part of a general cultural trend towards the transactional and away from “more organic and relational forms of ecclesial life.”<sup>4</sup> From the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, through the subsequent gatherings at intervals of a decade (or as near to it as could be achieved), just such a pattern of relationships was set. The bishops that attended did so at the invitation of the archbishop and met under his presidency in the building that was both his place of work and his home. Unsurprisingly, then, some found the conference hard to separate from the office of the archbishop, even though its resolutions were formally its own. I shall show that the 1968 Lambeth Conference represented an important stage in the evolution of the conference into something more independent. I will also show that, in Michael Ramsey (1904–1988), the Anglican Communion had at its head the right person at the right time to plan and oversee the 1968 conference. I explore Ramsey’s role in giving the 1968 conference the shape that it took, tracing his influence on its agenda, its working methods, and (in particular) its openness to the gaze and to the voices of people other than the bishops themselves. His impact was also visible during the event, as preacher, leader of intercession and worship, chairman, and (in private) as host and mediator. I shall show that, at a time of acute unsettlement, Ramsey’s rare combination of theological acumen, ecumenical commitment, and political sensitivity allowed him to shape the conference such that it could face the questions that most needed to be faced.

#### MICHAEL RAMSEY AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Michael Ramsey became archbishop of Canterbury in 1961, after having first been archbishop of York (from 1956) and before

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A summary account of the 1968 Conference is Alan M.G. Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London, SPCK, 1978), pp. 214–57.

<sup>4</sup> “The Lambeth Conference among the Instruments of Communion,” in Avis and Guyer, *Lambeth Conference*, pp. 3–22, at p. 5.

that, bishop of Durham, from 1952. He was not, however, formed by proximity to power, as chaplain to a bishop, or in the administration of a diocese as an archdeacon or suffragan bishop. Rather, apart from two brief periods in parishes (neither of them as incumbent), his whole career to 1952 had been in teaching and research, first in the theological college at Lincoln, then Durham University, and (briefly) as regius professor of divinity in the University of Cambridge. Neither had he spent significant time anywhere in the communion but England. In 1961 Ramsey found himself in a very different relationship with the churches of the Anglican Communion to that in which his predecessor Geoffrey Fisher (1887–1972) had begun his term in 1945. Fisher had driven, almost to completion, the process by which churches were organized into provinces and given their independence from Canterbury. The Lambeth Conference of 1958 was attended by bishops of two new provinces in Africa that were Fisher's creation, and two more were inaugurated before he handed over his position to Ramsey in 1961.<sup>5</sup> In 1968 only a handful were still listed as "overseas bishops in the Canterbury jurisdiction."<sup>6</sup> Stephen Bayne (1908–1974), the bishop of Olympia in the state of Washington, became the first executive officer of the Anglican Communion in 1959. Freed then, both from the routine governance of overseas churches, and of much of the administrative work of the communion itself, Ramsey was able to take on a quite different role. The role now depended even more on the person of the archbishop, and I shall show that it was one that suited Ramsey's particular talents.<sup>7</sup>

John Howe (1920–2001) was a bishop in the Scottish church when, in November 1968 to his great surprise, Ramsey chose him

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Chandler and David Hein, *Archbishop Fisher, 1945: Church, state and world* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2012), pp. 87–90. On the development of the Communion in general under Fisher's direction, see: W.M. Jacob, *The making of the Anglican church worldwide* (London, SPCK, 1997), pp. 263–83; William L. Sachs, *The Transformation of Anglicanism: from State Church to Global Communion* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 303–21.

<sup>6</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and reports* (London, SPCK, 1968), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Chandler and Hein, *Fisher*, pp. 87–91; Stephen F. Bayne, *An Anglican Turning Point: Documents and Interpretations* (Austin, Texas, Church Historical Society, 1964), pp. 3–20, and *passim*.

as the next executive officer of the Anglican Communion.<sup>8</sup> On his travels over the next few years, Howe often found himself in Ramsey's wake and thus in an unrivalled position to judge his impact. The need was for the archbishop to form relationships, to be *pri-mus inter pares* in a community of equal churches: a situation made for Ramsey, Howe thought.<sup>9</sup> Ramsey travelled a great deal, even when an old man might have been forgiven for avoiding such strains. His press officer thought that Ramsey enjoyed it, in fact, and had a prodigious memory for the people and places he saw.<sup>10</sup> Howe met bishops, isolated from the stream of theological development in the United Kingdom and North America, who found Ramsey, both in person and in writing, a fortifying figure. His achievement was not in the dispensing of "routine phrases of encouragement." While not pretending that all was well, he showed "amongst things new and old, what is sand and what is rock."<sup>11</sup> The theologian John Macquarrie (1919–2007), a Presbyterian who had become an Anglican, and with wide knowledge of both British and American scenes, thought it providential that someone of Ramsey's theological competence should have been at the head of the Anglican Communion in the 1960s. It was Ramsey's general stance that had been so important; he had been "open to the new ideas striving to find expression in the sixties, yet at the same time critical, and profoundly attached to and respectful towards the tradition."<sup>12</sup>

Churchmen close to Lambeth were sometimes guilty of failing to grasp the changing nature of the Anglican Communion: of continuing to view its affairs as it were from the center to the periphery. Ramsey's politics, always liberal, had had a wide

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<sup>8</sup> Howe to Ramsey, 18 November 1968, at Lambeth Palace Library (hereafter LPL) Ramsey Papers 136, f. 87.

<sup>9</sup> Howe, "The Future of the Anglican Communion," in Christopher Martin (ed.), *The great Christian centuries to come* (London, Mowbrays, 1974) pp. 113–34, at p. 114.

<sup>10</sup> Michael De-la-Noy, *A Day in the Life of God*, (Derby, Citadel, 1971). p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Howe, "Future of the Anglican Communion."

<sup>12</sup> John Macquarrie, 'Whither theology?' in Martin (ed.), *Great Christian Centuries to Come*, pp. 152–68, at p. 157.



anti-imperialist streak even as a young man in the 1920s.<sup>13</sup> Even before his travels began, Ramsey saw that the balance of world Christianity was already shifting from west to east, and north to south. At the meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Evanston, Illinois in 1954, he noted the “growing leadership of the Churches in Asia already, and perhaps of the Churches in Africa very soon.” Though they still needed western help, “neither the Churches nor the countries will suffer western domination: they are rising to adult stature, they are the teachers and we are the learners.”<sup>14</sup> “Let African and Asian missionaries come to England,” Ramsey told the Anglican Congress at Toronto in 1963, in something more than a rhetorical flourish, “to help to convert the post-Christian heathenism in our country and to convert our English church to a closer following of Christ.”<sup>15</sup> And Ramsey’s travels as archbishop continued to deepen his understanding of the situation; Howe detected a “quickness of his understanding at depths far below the outward appearance.”<sup>16</sup> Writing to the theologian E.L. Mascall (1905–1993) in 1966 concerning the ecumenical situation in Nigeria, Ramsey stressed the importance of studying “the potentialities of the African mind in developing Christian forms and not to judge everything by Western concepts.” Ramsey had learned to look beyond written formularies, and to see unity in “these total sociological terms.”<sup>17</sup>

Lambeth 1968 was Ramsey’s second Lambeth Conference; he attended the 1958 conference as a relatively new archbishop of York.<sup>18</sup> But he already knew something of such global ecclesiastical events, having attended the first meeting of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. Having a keen sense of Anglican

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<sup>13</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 11–12; Owen Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: a life* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 18–21.

<sup>14</sup> Ramsey, ‘Evanston’, in Michael Ramsey, *Durham essays and addresses* (London, SPCK, 1956), pp. 81–4, at p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Ramsey, ‘Anglicans and the future’ in Michael Ramsey *Canterbury Essays and Addresses* (London, SPCK, 1974) pp. 74–79, at p. 78.

<sup>16</sup> Howe, ‘The future of the Anglican Communion’, p. 114. On Ramsey’s travelling, see Chadwick, *Ramsey*, pp. 209–12.

<sup>17</sup> Ramsey to Mascall, 18 March 1966, as reproduced at Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 184–7.

<sup>18</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, pp. 97–100.

history, he contributed a foreword to a history of the first Lambeth Conference in 1867. Some bishops had then come with a “desire for an Anglican Synod or Council which would speak with authority on the doctrinal turmoil of the time.” What had in fact emerged was not an authoritative synodical body or an “Anglican Patriarchate,” but a “family of Churches” that could advise each other: “through the series of Lambeth Conferences a growing, undefined, moral authority has been felt, always within the Anglican Churches and sometimes beyond them.”<sup>19</sup> Though Ramsey’s view of the authority of the conference in relation to national churches did not change, he nonetheless saw that there were areas in which that authority was likely to be felt increasingly. The conferences had, he told the Convocation of Canterbury in May 1968, often expressed the common mind of the communion in matters of ethics (and the family in particular), and in relation to Christian unity. Now, with worldwide ecumenical negotiation under way with both Orthodox and Roman Catholics, “we need organs that serve [all the churches of the Communion] and take certain actions in the name of them all.” Just as the central organs of the Anglican Communion were changing shape and growing, so too was the role of the conference: it was “to make recommendations about our needs for common action as a Communion.”<sup>20</sup> Although Ramsey did not agree with some of the more excitable speculation that 1968 might see the last conference, he was prepared to entertain the possibility that its role might change. As I shall show, not only its role was to change, but its form too.

#### CONTEXTS

The context of unsettlement in which the 1968 Lambeth Conference took place had several facets. Perhaps the most prominent, and certainly the most publicized, was the unsettlement in theology identified with ideas of “religionless Christianity,” “demythologization,” and the “Death of God.” These ideas were

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<sup>19</sup> Alan M.G. Stephenson, *The first Lambeth Conference 1867* (London, SPCK, 1967), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>20</sup> Ramsey’s presidential address to the Convocation is at *The Chronicle of Convocation* [14–16 May 1968], (London, SPCK, 1968), pp. 4–6.

not wholly new, but did attain a new prominence, largely due to the impact of popularizing works: (from England) the volume of essays entitled *Soundings* (ed. A.R Vidler, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) and John A.T. Robinson's *Honest to God* (London: SCM, 1963); from the United States the work of Paul van Buren, in *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), and, later, Harvey Cox, William Hamilton and Thomas Altizer.<sup>21</sup> It fell to Ramsey to deal with the fallout from Robinson's *Honest to God*, and he later felt he had been slow to grasp the need which the book aimed to meet.<sup>22</sup> But he was to return to the questions raised several times, in his Scott Holland Lectures for 1964 (published as *Sacred and Secular*) and in particular in his book *God, Christ and the World*, the preface to which is dated March 1968, weeks before the conference began.<sup>23</sup> This intellectual disturbance went hand in hand with (in the UK, at least) a rapid overturning of the historic Christian basis of the law as it touched matters of morality: abortion, divorce, homosexuality, and capital punishment, among others. This new differentiation of crime from sin Ramsey could hardly avoid, and indeed he and his staff were deeply involved in framing the Church of England's response.<sup>24</sup>

Rather less sensational, but equally far-reaching, were the streams of ecumenical effort which were converging in the years immediately before the Lambeth Conference. The Second Vatican Council transformed Anglican expectations of ecumenical advance with Roman Catholics; Ramsey himself made a highly symbolic visit to Paul VI in March 1966. A joint preparatory commission of Anglicans and Roman Catholics convened as a result, delivering the so-called "Malta Report" in January 1968, which, though

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<sup>21</sup> On the English situation, see Keith W. Clements, *Lovers of discord: Twentieth century theological controversies in England* (London, SPCK, 1988), pp. 143–217.

<sup>22</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 108–12.

<sup>23</sup> Ramsey, *Sacred and secular* (London, Longmans and Green, 1965), in particular pp. 47–58; Ramsey, *God, Christ and the world. A study in contemporary theology* (London, SCM, 1969), *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> For a general account, see Nigel Yates, *Love now, pay later? Sex and religion in the fifties and sixties* (London, SPCK, 2010). On Ramsey's response, see Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 65–90.

unpublished, was made available to the bishops at Lambeth.<sup>25</sup> At just the same time, the process of rapprochement with the Methodist church in England was on the cusp of fruition. The final details of a proposed scheme of reunion were published in April 1968, a reunion to be achieved by means that (to its opponents) seemed to nullify any prospect of progress with Rome.<sup>26</sup> More than one scheme of reunion elsewhere in the Anglican Communion was at, or approaching, a similar point of decision – in North India and Pakistan, and in Ceylon, and in Nigeria – and as such the decision in England was likely to be determinant of those futures too.<sup>27</sup>

More widely, the mid-1960s saw Ramsey being drawn into wider controversies of politics and society which seemed to demand a Christian response. The war in Vietnam presented numerous opportunities for risky public comment and action, not least a joint statement with other British religious leaders in February 1968, and a World Council of Churches initiative for peace shortly afterwards.<sup>28</sup> At a time when the Church of England was pressing for greater independence from the state, Ramsey was prepared to criticize governments from a greater, more prophetic distance.<sup>29</sup> Ramsey criticized British government policy both before and after the unilateral declaration of independence by the white minority government of Southern Rhodesia. In Parliament, Ramsey advocated the use of military force if necessary on behalf of the black majority; as the colonial power, “nothing could damage us more in the eyes of African countries” than to fail to uphold the cause of justice

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<sup>25</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, pp. 318–23; Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 31–33. On the Malta Report, see Michael Manktelow, *John Moorman: Anglican, Franciscan, independent* (London, SCM, 1999), pp. 116–7.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Webster, “Theology, providence and Anglican-Methodist reunion: the case of Michael Ramsey and E. L. Mascall,” in Jane Platt and Martin Wellings (eds), *Anglican-Methodist Ecumenism: The Search for Church Unity, 1920–2020* (Abington: Routledge, 2022), pp. 101–17.

<sup>27</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1968*, pp. 129–34.

<sup>28</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 122–5.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Webster, “Parliament and the law of the Church of England, 1945–74,” in T. Rodger, P. Williamson and M. Grimley (eds), *The Church of England and British Politics since 1900* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2020), pp. 181–98. On the shifting relationship of the Anglican churches with political power more widely, see Sachs, *Anglicanism*, pp. 314–23.

with the same constancy in every situation.<sup>30</sup> The resulting media storm was the largest of Ramsey's career.<sup>31</sup> At home, Ramsey well knew that the treatment of racial and religious minorities in Britain affected the lives of Christian minorities elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> He was publicly and controversially involved in issues of race relations, both on behalf of immigrants from the Commonwealth who were already resident in the UK and, in March 1968, on behalf of Kenyans of Asian descent forced out by the Kenyatta government.<sup>33</sup> Weeks later came the shock of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. In July Ramsey flew home early from the WCC assembly in Uppsala to speak in Parliament in support of what became the Race Relations Act, just days before the Lambeth Conference opened.<sup>34</sup>

Viewing these currents together, it is possible to characterize the mid-1960s as a moment of turbulence among the worldwide Anglican churches. Talk of crisis is itself not neutral and has the tendency to create or exacerbate that of which it speaks.<sup>35</sup> But there was clearly a distinct change in atmosphere in the councils of the Anglican Communion between the 1958 conference, and 1966, when the agenda for 1968 was being set. In 1958 the worldwide church, when viewed in aggregate, was growing in number; new provinces were being created; in the shape of the executive officer and the new working bodies mandated in 1958, the Anglican Communion seemed to be fitting itself for a greater role. One of the committees of the 1958 Lambeth Conference had spoken of the "truly inspiring structure" of a communion which was "destined for greater and perhaps more dangerous responsibility," to bring

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<sup>30</sup> *House of Lords Debates*, 15 November 1965, vol. 270, cols 265–66.

<sup>31</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 125–7.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Webster, "Race, religion and national identity in Sixties Britain: Michael Ramsey, archbishop of Canterbury and his encounter with other faiths," *Studies in Church History* 51 (2015), pp. 385–98.

<sup>33</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 127–30.

<sup>34</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, p. 174. Ramsey's speech is given in full at Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 197–201.

<sup>35</sup> On this tendency at large, see Sam Brewitt-Taylor, "The Invention of a 'Secular Society'? Christianity and the Sudden Appearance of Secularization Discourses in the British National Media, 1961–4," *Twentieth Century British History*, 24:3 (2013), 327–350, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwt012>

to the world in all its crises “a tempered wisdom and a spiritual stability.”<sup>36</sup> The discussion that came under the heading of Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence (MRI) after the 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto seemed to represent the same new maturity. Not for nothing did Stephen Bayne entitle his 1964 book *An Anglican Turning-Point* (Austin, TX: Church Historical Society).

In October 1965, Ralph Dean (1913–1987), Bayne’s successor as executive officer, was arranging the agenda for the 1966 meeting of the Lambeth Conference Consultative Body, the group of primates to whom it fell to plan the 1968 conference. The major items suggested for consideration in 1968 so far were the general question of education and the work of a bishop; other lesser topics included liturgy, baptism, and “Christian behaviour.”<sup>37</sup> By the following April, when the group met in Jerusalem, Dean’s sense of things had changed completely. His experiences in the previous eighteen months had led him to think “that the world situation is intensely critical and that necessarily the situation of the church within the world is not less so. The very foundations of the Christian Faith are being challenged and it is having a marked effect on the church’s sense of mission amounting almost to a failure of nerve, and certainly of conviction.” The Lambeth Conference would be accused of cowardice, he thought, if it did not address the “‘Death of God’ dialogue” and do something to set the boundaries of belief. The agenda in hand lacked the comprehensiveness the moment demanded. If all this seemed radical, he continued, then “I can only say that we live in radical times.”<sup>38</sup> It is not clear how much of Dean’s change of mood Ramsey knew before the meeting in Jerusalem, though they were in very regular contact being based in the same city. But Ramsey was aware of the feeling of crisis that was abroad, even if not from Dean. He took the chair

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<sup>36</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London/Greenwich CT., SPCK/Seabury, 1958), part 2, p. 69. On the ambiguous optimism of the 1950s, see Sachs, *Anglicanism*, pp. 307–8.

<sup>37</sup> Dean to the members of the Lambeth Conference Consultative Body, 27 October 1965, at LPL Ramsey Papers 99, ff. 291–3.

<sup>38</sup> Typescript memorandum dated 24 April 1966: ‘Some reflections by the Executive Officer on the Agenda for the Lambeth Conference’, at LPL Ramsey Papers 100, ff. 25–6.

at St George's College as the twenty primates discussed the matter, and by the end of the meeting the priorities of the 1968 conference had largely been set.<sup>39</sup>

#### THE PLANNING OF LAMBETH 1968

An event such as the Lambeth Conference, unfolding over a full month, is the work of many hands. To determine just how much of the conference's shape was due to Ramsey, and how much to its steering committee and to Dean, is beyond my scope. Ramsey certainly acted to alter things with which he was not content. But there were innovations which so closely accord with Ramsey's own priorities that, even if they were not first promoted by him, then they would surely have been heartily approved. Lambeth 1968 was by some distance the largest conference up to that point, due to the decision to invite not only diocesans but all bishops in active service; this added some forty-eight suffragans to the total from England alone. The greater availability of air travel was certainly a necessary condition, but there were more positive reasons for the growth in numbers. The change in policy reflected a subtle distinction, more characteristic of the catholic Ramsey than of Fisher, between the administrative and juridical function of the bishop, exercised only by diocesan and metropolitan, and the sacramental and teaching function that all bishops in active service shared. "We feel the important thing is to be a bishop in the Church of God, working," Ramsey told reporters, "and the distinction of bishops and suffragans and assistants isn't a distinction to be recognized."<sup>40</sup> And to invite suffragans and assistants, Ramsey argued, was to enable a greater representation of the African provinces. (Of the nineteen bishops from the province of West Africa, eight were assistant bishops.) This was more than merely fairness; it was an acceptance, indeed an anticipation, of what the African and Asian churches had to offer. "We shall find culture challenged by culture as well as doctrinal emphasis challenged by doctrinal emphasis,"

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<sup>39</sup> The minutes are at LPL Ramsey Papers 100, ff. 29–48.

<sup>40</sup> James B. Simpson and Edward M. Story, *The long shadows of Lambeth X: a critical eye-witness account of the tenth decennial conference of the 462 bishops of the Anglican Communion* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 5.

Ramsey told the Convocation of Canterbury in May: "We may all learn rather painfully that the cultural clothing of our own Christianity may not be of the *esse* of Christianity at all and may in some ways be a hindrance to it."<sup>41</sup> One Australian bishop, veteran of more than one Lambeth Conference, felt that there had been a new and distinctive freedom in fellowship in 1968: "The power of the English bishops to create awe in the spirits of their overseas brethren has gone."<sup>42</sup>

Ramsey had disliked the size of the WCC assembly at Evanston in 1954, and the consequent difficulty of achieving a genuine exchange of thought.<sup>43</sup> The committee Ramsey had chaired in 1958 had been forty-two strong; to bring out the fullest deliberation of a group of such a size would have been beyond even the best of chairmen.<sup>44</sup> With the increased size of the 1968 Lambeth Conference, the problem could have been greater still, but for the adoption of a different working arrangement. The sub-committees of Lambeth 1968 had only ten to twenty members, and fed their reports into one of three sections, for each of which there was a small team of three charged with drawing the threads together. Was this not somewhat cumbersome, a reporter asked Ramsey? It was perhaps a "tricky exercise," he admitted, but the point was to "ensure that every bishop who is present is engaged in real discussions with others, and so you get a real meeting of minds between bishops from totally different places and backgrounds."<sup>45</sup> The bishops were asked to nominate the committee on which they wished to serve, and nearly all their choices were accommodated.<sup>46</sup> Such an arrangement must surely have tended to a better quality of deliberation.

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<sup>41</sup> Ramsey's presidential address to the Convocation is at *The Chronicle of Convocation* [14–16 May 1968], (London, SPCK, 1968), pp. 4–6.

<sup>42</sup> Kenneth Clements, bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, to Dean, 14 October 1968, at LPL LC247, f. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Ramsey, 'Evanston', p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> The members of the committee on 'The Holy Bible: its authority and message' are listed at *Lambeth Conference 1958*, section 2, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Transcript of an interview broadcast on Associated Television in the UK on July 28, 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 126, ff. 39–45, at f. 42.

<sup>46</sup> Draft annual report of the Executive Officer for 1967, at LPL Ramsey Papers 136, f. 11.



Writing to Ramsey after the Lambeth Conference, Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, thought it had had a significant effect on the ecumenical scene.<sup>47</sup> One prominent English insider thought the Anglican Communion had regained “the ecumenical initiative because of Lambeth’s openness to the other Christians; because we envisaged the transformation or disappearance of Anglicanism as a ‘separate encampment’ not merely as a vague possibility, but as a programme for the next ten years.”<sup>48</sup> That openness was both signalled and made manifest by the list of those who, like Blake, were invited to observe. In 1958 the Lambeth Conference had received delegates from several other churches, who had been ceremonially welcomed, and had attended the opening services, but were not admitted to the main business of the conference.<sup>49</sup> It was very much in line with Ramsey’s approach to other churches that the delegates in 1968 were far greater in number, and their involvement much closer. The range had been extended beyond Europe and North America, and beyond the more familiar denominations, to include such bodies as the Mar Thoma Church, the Society of Friends, and the Assemblies of God. The established Free Churches in England were represented not individually, but by their worldwide bodies. The Church of South India, formed in part of churches that had previously been Anglican, had not been invited to the conferences in 1948 and 1958; this time, it sent three delegates. Unlike 1958, the observers were able both to attend and to speak in the plenary sessions of the conference, and (if invited) to attend meetings of the subcommittees.<sup>50</sup> “They have not come just to watch” said Ramsey in a televised interview; “they have come to take part in the discussions in giving and taking, and I think

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<sup>47</sup> Blake to Ramsey, 11 December 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 136, ff. 105–6.

<sup>48</sup> This was David Paton, of the Missionary and Ecumenical Council of the Church Assembly (MECCA), in a letter to Ramsey, 14 October 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 136, ff. 78–9.

<sup>49</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1958*, section 1, pp. 65–66.

<sup>50</sup> A detailed briefing note distributed to the observers is at LPL LC 209, ff. 97–8.

their presence will make us just a bit more of an ecumenical conference.”<sup>51</sup> To the observers themselves he said: “you are here so generously because we need you.”<sup>52</sup>

The Second Vatican Council too had admitted observers; merely one startling aspect of a startling event. Two of the Anglican observers in Rome were also at Lambeth 1968. One of them, the American (but British-based) theologian Howard E. Root had found the experience in Rome life-changing: “[t]he isolation of centuries has been broken down for ever. In its place has come a new sense of responsibility, founded upon the solid ground of personal friendships, theological discussion, and the conviction that we all belong to one Christian family with common problems and aims.”<sup>53</sup> The change of mood was indicated by the presence of several Roman Catholic observers in 1968, which would have been hard to imagine a decade earlier. Among them were men with whom Ramsey was in regular contact, most notably Jan Willebrands (1909–2006), the secretary of the Vatican Secretariat for the Promotion of Unity among Christians, who had been a regular visitor to Lambeth Palace.<sup>54</sup> Willebrands read aloud a message from Pope Paul VI in the opening session.<sup>55</sup>

A further, and unexpected, indication of a new openness was the relationship with the media. Ramsey himself gave two press conferences, one at each end of the Lambeth Conference, as well as a sherry party; Ralph Dean made himself available in a similar way. Additionally, reporters (but not broadcasters) were allowed into the plenary sessions of the conference itself. (It was to this change in policy that the historian owes the detailed account of the 1968 conference by two American clergy journalists, James B. Simpson, and Edward M. Story.)<sup>56</sup> Ramsey’s relationship with the

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<sup>51</sup> Transcript of an interview broadcast on Associated Television in the UK on July 28, 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 126, ff. 39-45, at f. 39.

<sup>52</sup> Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> As quoted in Christopher Brewer (ed.), *Theological radicalism and tradition: “The limits of radicalism” with appendices* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2018), p. 12

<sup>54</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 30, 32.

<sup>55</sup> Reproduced at Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 287–8.

<sup>56</sup> Their assessment of this new openness was given at Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 64–71.

media was complex – and so far is under-explored by historians – and the public relations operation of the Church of England was in a state of some flux. He had not relished the crowd of hangers-on that he encountered at Evanston in 1954, nor the kind of media boosterism that accompanied it.<sup>57</sup> But though Ramsey did not quite delight in the presence of the media, the kind of secrecy of earlier Lambeth Conferences could not be maintained. “This privacy of ecclesiastical gatherings has rather become a thing of the past,” Ramsey told a television interviewer as the conference began. The precedent had been set by the Vatican Council in its invitation to observers; in this way “the privacy goes [and] if it goes, it had better go altogether.”<sup>58</sup>

There was another group at the 1968 Lambeth Conference that was wholly new. The Vatican Council had been supported by a large group of *periti*: consultant theologians who were available to advise the bishops as the conference progressed. A suggestion of something similar had been made to Geoffrey Fisher for the Lambeth Conference of 1948, but he had resisted. The bishops did not need the kind of help that professional theologians had to give, Fisher thought: instead, their task was to “bring a decisive point all their experience through the years in administering their own Dioceses” and to come to a common mind on that basis.<sup>59</sup> Fisher did not change his view in 1958, but a certain cultural change was already under way within the central bodies of the Church, at least in England: a greater recognition of the complexity of the problems to be faced, and of the usefulness of expert advice.<sup>60</sup> Even without this, however, Ramsey’s own background made the idea a natural one to adopt. His role at the 1948 WCC meeting in Amsterdam had been similar, when he (at the time still professor at Durham) was part of a commission with Richard Niebuhr, Karl Barth

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<sup>57</sup> Ramsey, ‘Evanston’, p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Transcript of an interview broadcast on Associated Television in the UK on July 28<sup>th</sup> 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 126, ff. 39-45, at f. 42.

<sup>59</sup> Edward Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher. His life and times* (Norwich, Canterbury Press, 1991), p. 454–5

<sup>60</sup> An indication of this was the formation of the Church of England’s Board of Social Responsibility in 1958: Tom Rodger, ‘Spiritual authority in a “secular age”: the Lords Spiritual, c. 1950-80’ in Rodger, Williamson and Grimley (eds), *The Church of England and British politics*, pp. 222–39, at p. 229.

and others.<sup>61</sup> So it was that a group of twenty-six consultants was assembled for the Lambeth Conference, with a brief to circulate freely around the many sessions, at the service and invitation of whichever group of bishops needed them.<sup>62</sup> Among the names are many from the UK and North America, as was to be expected given the concentration of resources within the Anglican Communion. Several were professional academics based within universities or theological colleges (including Howard Root); there were also several names from the various central bodies within the Church of England that still helped to resource the Anglican Communion and others from comparable bodies in other provinces.<sup>63</sup> As with most such appointments, special care was taken visibly to balance evangelical and Anglo-Catholic opinion from England.<sup>64</sup> There were also voices from elsewhere in the communion: from Japan, the Church of South India, and two from the African churches, including Janani Luwum (1922–1977) – then a theological college principal in Uganda, but soon to become a bishop, and a martyr.<sup>65</sup>

The group of consultants made their presence felt. The conservative evangelical Michael Green (1930–2019) found the experience a fascinating one, moving from committee to committee as required; his interventions helped to shape the report on the

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<sup>61</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, pp. 66–7.

<sup>62</sup> The names are given at *Lambeth Conference 1968*, p. 155; a second list (which does not quite agree) is at Stephenson, *Anglicanism*, p. 236; see also Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, p. 26. The letter of invitation is at LPL LC 208, f. 5, dated 24 April 1967.

<sup>63</sup> Among the academics were Henry Chadwick, David E. Jenkins, Dennis Nineham and Howard E. Root (all based in the UK) and Eugene Fairweather (St John's College Toronto); from the theological colleges, Michael Green, Martin Jarrett-Kerr, Douglas Webster and (from the USA) John Macquarrie. From among Ramsey's diplomats and experts in London, there was John Findlow, representative to the Holy See, and John Satterthwaite of the Council on Foreign Relations, along with David Paton of MECCA, Basil Moss of ACCM (the Anglican Consultative Council on the Ministry) and Mollie Batten of the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility. These were matched by officials in comparable roles in the Episcopal Church, Paul Anderson and Peter Day.

<sup>64</sup> David Paton to Dean, 18 November 1966, at LPL LC 208, ff. 1–3.

<sup>65</sup> From the Church of South India there was H.L.J. Daniel; from Japan, C. Powles; the African church was also represented by John Mbiti, also from Uganda.

ministry. Though he was disappointed with the theological acumen of some of the bishops, he spoke of the “sheer Christian graciousness of all concerned, the friendliness, the give and take.”<sup>66</sup> John Macquarrie too found many of the bishops unimpressive, and was surprised how prone some were to being swept along by theological fashion; he too influenced the drafting.<sup>67</sup> From the chair Ramsey singled out the contribution of the only woman in the group – and indeed at the whole conference – Mollie Batten (1905–1985), recently retired principal of William Temple College and now one of the experts from the Church of England’s Board of Social Responsibility.<sup>68</sup> Noting the absence of female voices, Ramsey had intervened to add Batten to the list, to the great surprise of Dean and of Ramsey’s staff, and wrote later especially to thank her.<sup>69</sup> Dean thought the presence of both observers and consultants a success, with the consultants in particular in great demand.<sup>70</sup> A number of bishops reportedly felt that the observers and consultants had been too prominent and too vocal, causing two of the consultants to seek clarification of their role, perhaps in self-defence.<sup>71</sup> But Ramsey later thought that he had been happiest when there had been such participation from the gallery, in which observers and consultants were seated.<sup>72</sup>

Of the group of consultants, eight also contributed to a substantial volume of preparatory essays, circulated confidentially to the

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<sup>66</sup> Michael Green, *Adventure of faith: Reflections on Fifty Years of Christian Service* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2001, p. 128; Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 159, 168; Green to Ramsey, 20 September 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 246, ff. 24–5.

<sup>67</sup> Macquarrie, ‘Whither theology?’, p. 157; Macquarrie, *On being a theologian: Reflections at eighty* (London, SCM, 1999), p. 39.

<sup>68</sup> Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, p. 159.

<sup>69</sup> Ralph Dean to John Andrew, 30 May 1967, at LPL LC 208, f. 11; Ramsey to Batten, 26 August 1968, at LPL LC 246, f. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Stephenson, *Anglicanism*, p. 237.

<sup>71</sup> Paton to Dean, 13 August 1968, at LPL LC 208, f. 39. The two consultants were Dennis Nineham and Henry Chadwick.

<sup>72</sup> Ramsey to Edward Carpenter, one of the consultants, 26 August 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 246, f. 2.

bishops in advance of the Lambeth Conference.<sup>73</sup> The majority of these were subsequently published in three volumes, under Ramsey's editorship.<sup>74</sup> In both the selection of authors, and in the essays themselves, Ramsey's priorities may be seen reflected. Several of the essays emanated from the English academic world which he knew well; contributions from the American academy came from Charles C. West, of Princeton, and John Macquarrie. But there were lay people too, notably the Oxford economist Denys Munby (1919–1976), and Mollie Batten. Ramsey also drew on expertise outside the Anglican Communion: Daisuke Kitagawa (1910–1970), an Anglican of Japanese American heritage, was on the staff of the World Council of Churches, as was Nikos Nissiotis (1924–1986), the Greek Orthodox theologian. The essay on relations with the Roman Catholic Church came from the Canadian Catholic scholar Gregory Baum (1923–2017), who had been a *peritus* at Vatican II. D.T. Niles (1908–1970) of Ceylon was general secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference, and a Methodist.

Though Ramsey could invite writers to write, he could not be responsible for the result. But he would very likely have appreciated the unflinching way in which many of the writers took to their task. The contributions from Macquarrie and from David Jenkins, later bishop of Durham, stand out for their frank discussion of, respectively, the problem of religious language and the challenge of atheism.<sup>75</sup> An indication of what Ramsey felt the task of the Lambeth Conference to be was reflected in his own essay entitled "Principles of Christian Unity" that opened *Lambeth Essays on Unity* (London: SPCK, 1969). Ramsey had often referred to the ecumenical task as one that went beyond the piecing together of existing structures, as if mending a broken toy.<sup>76</sup> As the churches grew in holiness and truth, so would they grow closer together, but the

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<sup>73</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1968: preparatory essays* (London, SPCK, 1968).

<sup>74</sup> *Lambeth essays on faith*, *Lambeth essays on unity* and *Lambeth essays on ministry* were all published by SPCK in 1969.

<sup>75</sup> Macquarrie, 'The nature of theological language', in *Lambeth Essays on Faith*, pp. 1–10; Jenkins, "The debate about God," *ibid.*, pp. 11–21.

<sup>76</sup> Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, p. 26. On Ramsey's understanding of ecclesiology in general, and its expression in his 1936 book *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, see *ibid.* pp. 14–17.

resulting churches would no longer look as they now did. The Anglican Communion had a role to play in “synthesis and understanding.” But it now faced some difficult decisions: “It need not as a Communion be set upon its own self-preservation so long as it sees the principles it has stood for shared with others in the re-integration of Christendom in its mission to the world. It may exert a greater influence in a process of dying to live than it could ever have in a self-preserving isolationism.”<sup>77</sup> Such a vision of the future could scarcely have occurred to Fisher a decade before.

#### RAMSEY AS PRESIDENT AND HOST

It naturally fell to Ramsey to preach at the opening service of the Lambeth Conference, in Canterbury Cathedral on July 25, 1968. The note of urgency returned, and more starkly. “Today the earth is being shaken,” and the shaking was of society as well as the churches. Ramsey spoke of “the terrible contrast between the world of affluence and the world of hunger, the explosions of racial conflict, the amassing of destructive weapons, the persistence of war and killing. And Man, they say, has come of age.” But while “many things are cracking, melting, disappearing,” it was nonetheless possible “to distinguish the things which are shaken and to receive gratefully a kingdom which is not shaken, the kingdom of our crucified Lord.” The faith would “always be folly and scandal to the world,” never truly popular, and “cannot adapt itself to every passing fashion of human thought. But it will be a faith alert to distinguish what is shaken and is meant to go, and what is not shaken and is meant to remain.” And in the radically changed relations between the churches, “[w]e shall love our own Anglican family not as something ultimate but because in it and through it we and others have our place in the one Church of Christ . . . there will come into existence United Churches not descriptably Anglican but in communion with us and sharing with us what we hold to be the unshaken essence of Catholicity.” But the question, then, of the nature of the Anglican Communion itself could be faced “without fear, without anxiety, because of our

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Principles of Christian unity’, in *Lambeth Essays on Unity*, pp. 1–5, at p. 5.

faith in the things which are not shaken. Perhaps the Anglican role in Christendom may come to be less like a separate encampment and more like a colour in the spectrum of a rainbow, a colour bright and unselfconscious."<sup>78</sup>

Once the conference was under way, its course was only under the president's control to a limited extent. The thirty-three subcommittees deliberated, and their findings were filtered up through the sections into plenary sessions, after which different groups of bishops wrote their reports, which in turn came back to plenary discussion. It is difficult to assess exactly how far Ramsey shaped the resulting set of reports and resolutions from the chair, although in general he intervened relatively little, and less so than Fisher in 1958, which at least one bishop was known to have regretted.<sup>79</sup> Some level of dissent was surely inevitable, whatever he might have said; John Macquarrie recalled some disagreement with Ramsey's intervention in relation to intercommunion.<sup>80</sup> One American bishop felt he had been brusquely dealt with from the chair, but such moments were only as frequent as to be expected in any large and lengthy meeting.<sup>81</sup> The two observers, Simpson and Story, thought Ramsey had retained the respect of all the factions within the conference, and had "entered the Conference and left it as a great leader of Anglicanism and Christendom." A writer in the *Church Illustrated* spoke of "an infinite capacity to grasp the heart of opposites"; seemingly contradictory opinions "reached his Chair and somehow bounded back transmuted."<sup>82</sup>

In the "whirl of oratory, discussions and committees, and typed documents" that Ramsey saw at Evanston in 1954, there had been no room left in which the real work could be done: "[g]reat matters of religion need thought, and thought requires spaces of quiet

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<sup>78</sup> The sermon is reproduced in full at Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 204–8.

<sup>79</sup> The bishop was Robert Stopford, bishop of London: Chadwick, *Ramsey*, p. 276; Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 212, 232.

<sup>80</sup> Michael De-la-Noy, *Michael Ramsey: a portrait* (London, Collins, 1990), pp. 159–60.

<sup>81</sup> This was the Bishop of Erie: Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 56–8.

<sup>82</sup> As quoted at Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, p. 277.



and leisure.”<sup>83</sup> The 1968 Lambeth Conference had its share of large events, but in comparison to 1958, the number of engagements was small, and deliberately so. Ramsey had hoped that the social program would be minimal, and “the bishops will have – if they wish – some quietness for their concentrated task.”<sup>84</sup> More generally, the recollections that survive tend to stress Ramsey’s role in the setting of just such an atmosphere. His first biographer had the impression that what most impressed the bishops was “the religiousness of the man.”<sup>85</sup> Eric Treacy, bishop of Wakefield, was struck by just this during a day of recollection that Ramsey led before the formal business began.<sup>86</sup> Simon Phipps, newly consecrated as suffragan bishop of Horsham, had been impressed by the sight of Ramsey leading the bishops in the *Veni Creator Spiritus* each morning.<sup>87</sup> Russell Chandran, one of the observers from the Church of South India, similarly felt that the tone Ramsey had set in prayer, and his evident humility, had been crucial.<sup>88</sup> And to set and maintain such a tone under the circumstances was a significant achievement. Just as the Lambeth Conference began, the Vatican issued the seismic declaration on contraception, *Humanae Vitae*, prompting a press conference given by Dean to the eager media; the conference had thus begun, in Ramsey’s later words to the press, “in an atmosphere of sky a bit darkened.”<sup>89</sup> In mid-conference, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia; the fighting continued in Vietnam and Biafra. In such circumstances, a kind of feverishness might have ensued. Oliver Tomkins, bishop of Bristol, had detected a febrile atmosphere at the assembly of the World Council of Churches, which took place in Uppsala immediately before the bishops congregated in London. But the Lambeth Conference was different, Tomkins thought: not “so urgent as

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<sup>83</sup> Ramsey, ‘Evanston’, p. 81.

<sup>84</sup> As quoted (but without attribution of a source) by Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, p. 101.

<sup>85</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, p. 275.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> De-la-Noy, *Ramsey*, p. 159.

<sup>88</sup> Russell Chandran was principal of the United Theological College at Serampore: Chandran to Ramsey, 13 November 1968, at LPL LC 246, f. 43.

<sup>89</sup> Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 44, 233.

Uppsala, but neither has it been so frenetic.” This was, he thought, largely due to Ramsey: his “personality . . . his dislike of frenzy, his quiet daily guidance of the meditations and his love of depth rather than width.”<sup>90</sup>

But it seems likely that much of Ramsey’s business at the conference was transacted rather more quietly. The removal of restrictions on the media meant that, as the conference unfolded, Ramsey had to field letters expressing concern as to the drift of the debate; one such came from Eric Kemp, member of the commission on Anglican-Methodist unity in England, concerned about the apparent drift of the debate on intercommunion.<sup>91</sup> It is also likely that much important work was done as Ramsey and his wife entertained small groups of the bishops at Lambeth Palace for evensong followed by a quiet dinner.<sup>92</sup> One such guest was the archbishop of Sydney, Marcus Loane, a leading figure among conservative evangelicals who had been the constituency in the church most wary of the catholic Ramsey. When some weeks later he publicly criticized aspects of the report, Loane wrote to reassure Ramsey that the criticism was not personal, and to thank him warmly for his hospitality.<sup>93</sup> Though the traces of private conversations are naturally few, Ramsey’s mediation is evident in the aftermath of the most turbulent moment of the Lambeth Conference, in relation to Anglican-Methodist reunion. An intervention by the metropolitan of India, Lakdasa de Mel (1902–1976), had caused such ill-feeling among bishops of the catholic part of the church that several excused themselves from the final service at St Paul’s at which de

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<sup>90</sup> Adrian Hastings, *Oliver Tomkins. The ecumenical enterprise* (London, SPCK, 2001), p. 145.

<sup>91</sup> Ramsey reassured Kemp about the resolution that the conference would most likely reach and was correct in his prediction: Kemp to Ramsey, 13 August 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 134, ff. 329–30.

<sup>92</sup> Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, p. 101.

<sup>93</sup> Loane to Ramsey, 16 October 1968, at LPL LC 246, f.36. On Ramsey’s relationship with conservative Anglican evangelicals in general, see Peter Webster, ‘Archbishop Michael Ramsey and evangelicals in the Church of England’ in Andrew Atherstone and John Maiden (eds), *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century. Reform, resistance and renewal* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2014), pp. 172–92

Mel was to preach.<sup>94</sup> One of these was John Moorman, the other of the two Anglican representatives at Vatican II to attend the conference. Writing to Moorman, Ramsey regretted de Mel's speech, but while disagreement was a given, it was "only that breach of fellowship that wounds."<sup>95</sup> But in the case of Graham Leonard, suffragan bishop of Willesden and, if anything, a more conservative figure than Moorman, Ramsey was able to intervene to avert such a breach. A handwritten note was enough to convince Leonard that he both could be, and ought to be present at the service.<sup>96</sup>

### CONCLUSION

All Lambeth Conferences are consequential to some degree, given the range of subjects on which they have pronounced, and the diversity of local situations in which those resolutions land. The Lambeth Conference 1968 had its share of consequences, not least the creation of the Anglican Consultative Council; on other matters it was unable decisively to settle an issue, such as the ordination of women to the priesthood. In any case, to assess its effect at length is beyond my scope. It was, however, consequential in the sense that something of the character of the Lambeth Conference as an intimate private gathering of friends, at the invitation and in the home of the archbishop, was lost and was not to return. Fisher reportedly felt just this, and even that it imperilled the Anglican Communion.<sup>97</sup> Ramsey's relationship with his predecessor, who was also his former teacher and who opposed his appointment, was never straightforward, and by 1968 it had been damaged almost beyond repair by their disagreement over Anglican-Methodist unity.<sup>98</sup> But Robert Stopford, bishop of London, who had been the episcopal secretary to the 1958 Lambeth Conference and served on the steering committee in 1968, felt too a regret at

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<sup>94</sup> Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 227–9; Stephenson, *Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 250–1.

<sup>95</sup> Manktelow, *Moorman*, pp. 125–6.

<sup>96</sup> John Peart-Binns, *Graham Leonard. Bishop of London* (London, Darton Longman and Todd, 1988), pp. 68–9.

<sup>97</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, p. 276.

<sup>98</sup> Chadwick, *Ramsey*, p. 115; Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey*, pp. 42–43.

the change.<sup>99</sup> The increased scale of the conference unavoidably militated against a sense of intimacy; the openness to observers surely added to the effect, as did the decision to admit the media. But did this amount to anything more than the loss of a certain quality of interaction? Although it is hard to demonstrate the effect, the moving of the main sessions from the quasi-domestic surroundings of Lambeth Palace to the more functional setting of Church House may have served as a symbol of a distancing of the Lambeth Conference from the person of the archbishop. And though the conference resolved nothing new as regarded its precise relationship with the archbishop, its resolution to create the Anglican Consultative Council, of which Cantuar would be president but which would be under the chairmanship of another, seemed to be a straw in the same wind.<sup>100</sup> For some, the Anglican Communion had been held together by the relationship to Canterbury, and the Book of Common Prayer; at a time when the latter was being widely revised, there was danger in weakening the former.<sup>101</sup>

The full effect of 1968 on future Lambeth Conferences, I leave aside. But the mid-1960s saw an acute perception of crisis, within the Church and outside it. In Michael Ramsey, the Anglican Communion had at its head one who was both sensitive to the issues at hand and had the intellectual range to begin to address them. His achievement was to have provided the bishops with an agenda, a procedure, a set of resources (in person and in print), and – perhaps most importantly – an atmosphere in which they could at least begin to address the questions they faced. The degree to which they were successful is the subject for another study.

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<sup>99</sup> Robert T. Holtby, *Robert Wright Stopford, 1901–1976* (London, The National Society, 1988), p. 53.

<sup>100</sup> Resolution 69, given at *The Lambeth Conference 1968*, pp. 46–9.

<sup>101</sup> The view of Frank Woods, archbishop of Melbourne, in a letter to Ramsey, 19 April 1968, at LPL Ramsey Papers 136, f. 42. A similar protectiveness of Cantuar's status was voiced from the floor during the Conference: Simpson and Story, *Lambeth X*, pp. 247–8.

# 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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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.