



ANGLICAN & EPISCOPAL HISTORY

Volume 91

• June 2022 •

Number 2

SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

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

The John F. Woolverton Editor of Anglican and Episcopal History

AEHeditor@gmail.com

Benjamin Guyer, Contributing Editor

“You Share Our History”: Historiography of the Lambeth Conference

By Benjamin Guyer 133

Archbishop Michael Ramsey and the Lambeth Conference

By Peter Webster 152

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

By Andrew Chandler 176

Anglican and Episcopal History is a quarterly, peer reviewed journal published by
the **Historical Society of the Episcopal Church**.

Learn more and become a member at hsec.us.

These articles are provided for the public good to provide some historical
background on the Lambeth Conference. Please share this document with others.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-
ShareAlike 4.0 International License.



“You Share Our Story”:¹ Historiographies of the Lambeth Conference²

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 1888.³ That volume was, together with its “Narrative,” revised and expanded in 1889 to include the proceedings of the 1888 Conference;⁴ that volume was then reprinted in 1896 to help attendees prepare for the 1897 Conference.⁵ Davidson focused on the primary source documentation

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

² 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.

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

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

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

Benjamin M. Guyer is a lecturer in the Department of History and Philosophy at the University of Tennessee at Martin and author of *How the English Reformation was Named: The Politics of History, 1400–1700* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

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.⁶ Finally, in 1929, Thomas and Davidson oversaw the publication of *The Six Lambeth Conferences*, which further accounted for the Lambeth Conference of 1920.⁷ 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).⁸ 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.⁹ 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

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

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

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

⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Episcopal

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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,¹² also receive no mention; publications concerned with the intersection of the Lambeth Conference and a given Anglican province are mentioned only in passing.¹³ 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.”¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵ Prohibited by English law from calling a synod without royal authority,

¹² 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).

¹³ 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.

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

¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ 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.”¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ It soon received further support from bishops in the West Indies and the United States.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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

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

¹⁷ 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.

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

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

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

1877 simply denoted the event “a second Lambeth Conference,”²¹ 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.”²² 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

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

²² 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.”²³ 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

²³ 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."²⁴ 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.²⁵

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."²⁶ 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

²⁴ Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, pp. 8–24.

²⁵ Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, p. 328.

²⁶ 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 writing²⁷ 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).²⁸ 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 1853.²⁹ 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

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ 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.”³⁰ 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,³¹ 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.”³² 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

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

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

³² 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.³³

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.³⁴ 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.”³⁵ 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

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

³⁴ Sambayya, “The Genius of the Anglican Communion,” p. 29.

³⁵ Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 3.

been a subject of recurring dispute,³⁶ 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.”³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p. 257.

³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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.”⁴⁰ 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 1867,⁴¹ 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

³⁹ Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 3–4.

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

⁴¹ 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.”⁴² This authority, however, was non-judicial because “modern church laws took the form of resolutions without legal force in the state.”⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ Chadwick concluded that the Lambeth Conference thus remains “an indispensable organ of the Anglican Communion.”⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ 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

⁴² 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.

⁴³ Chadwick “Introduction,” p. xvi.

⁴⁴ Chadwick “Introduction,” pp. xvii, xx–xxii.

⁴⁵ Chadwick “Introduction,” p. xxviii.

⁴⁶ 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.”⁴⁷ Almost all subsequent historiography has either included this quote or alluded to it,⁴⁸ and such repetition would seem to indicate both historiographical and perhaps even ecclesiological consensus. Few publications offer a dissenting view.⁴⁹ 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,⁵⁰ and still more references to ecumenical councils and the role that they have played in church history.⁵¹ Readers of Davidson’s earliest edited volumes could see that Longley sympathized with the Canadian request,⁵² and that other bishops hoped that such a council would emerge, even if only after the conference of 1867.⁵³ Readers could also see that, due to civil law, Longley could

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

⁴⁸ 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.

⁴⁹ 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.

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

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

⁵² Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, p. 10.

⁵³ 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.⁵⁴

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.⁵⁵ 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

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

⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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*.⁵⁷ 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,⁵⁸ 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

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

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

⁵⁸ Davidson, *The Lambeth Conferences of 1867, 1878, and 1888*, p. 222.

Edward White Benson.” It was a sentiment evidently shared by many.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ 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

⁵⁹ Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, pp. 255–6.

⁶⁰ 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.

⁶¹ 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,⁶² or sexual matters such as polygamy or same-sex marriage,⁶³ 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.

⁶² 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.

⁶³ 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.