JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY
Published on Behalf of the Religious History Association
rha

Journal of Religious History
Vol. ••, No. ••, 2025
doi: 10.1111/1467-9809.70010

ANDREW ATHERSTONE

Germ Panic and Chalice Hygiene in the Church of England, c.1895–1930

The late-Victorian medical revolution in bacteriology, and growing public awareness of hygienic standards and the danger of disease infection from germs, created alarm about the traditional Christian practice of drinking from a common cup at Holy Communion. Worried congregations looked for alternatives, and some experimented with individual communion cups, an innovation which began in North America but quickly spread globally. This article examines the impact of these public health anxieties upon the eucharistic practice of the Church of England over three decades, between the late 1890s and the late 1920s, under the leadership of two Archbishops of Canterbury, Frederick Temple and Randall Davidson. It offers a close reading of their archiepiscopal correspondence, the debates of the 1908 Lambeth Conference, and the various ways in which Anglican clergy and bishops wrestled with the dilemmas. It argues that Davidson's diplomatic strategy of focusing on medical opinion, rather than church law or doctrine, and of deliberately avoiding public disputation, successfully blunted the campaign to introduce individual cups into the Church of England. The article suggests that these debates were an important, but forgotten, chapter in Anglican eucharistic controversy and in the Church's fractious relationship with modern science.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the British public was captivated by the new science of germs. Pioneering research in microbiology had made international celebrities of Louis Pasteur (1822–1895) in Paris, Joseph Lister (1827–1912) in London, and Robert Koch (1843–1910) in Berlin. During the closing decades of the Victorian period, one major disease after another was shown to be caused not be miasmas or heredity but by living micro-organisms, invisible to the naked eye. The era of bacteriology was born. Many of the most dangerous illnesses which terrified generations of sufferers were now understood to be contagious — cholera, tuberculosis, diphtheria, typhoid, pneumonia, meningitis, leprosy, rabies, gangrene, scarlet fever, syphilis, gonorrhoea, anthrax.[1] By the mid-1890s this medical revolution began to impact ordinary life as public health professionals energetically disseminated what Nancy Tomes calls "the gospel of germs."[2] They warned that microbes could be passed from person to person through close contact, not only by coughing, sneezing and spitting, but by everyday greetings like kissing and shaking hands. Invisible killers were lurking everywhere, in public spaces like theatres and restaurants, and in private homes on clothing, cutlery, combs, and children's toys. Armed with this

University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

1. M. Worboys, *Spreading Germs: Disease Theories and Medical Practice in Britain, 1865–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); J. Waller, *The Discovery of the Germ* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2002).
2. N. Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

new knowledge, concerned citizens fought against the spread of disease with a range of commercial household products such as germicides, disinfectants, antiseptics, and carbolic soap, while regular handwashing became an essential duty. The sick were isolated in sanatoria which boomed in number and fears of contagion became a staple of English literature, explored by novelists like Henry James (1843–1916) and Thomas Hardy (1840–1928). By the dawn of the new century, as Kari Nixon quips, germ theory had "gone viral."[3]

Germ consciousness soon began to impact the Christian churches, especially the ancient practice of drinking from a common cup at Holy Communion. Roman Catholics restricted the cup to the clergy only, but among Protestants of all stripes the cup was shared by the whole congregation. The human throat and mouth were now recognised to be teeming with microbial life, so to share a drinking vessel with strangers was risky. Respected periodicals like *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* discussed its dangers and the controversy became another skirmish in the uneasy relationship between modern science and religious tradition. Alarmed congregations looked for alternatives and some experimented with individual communion cups, an innovation which began in North America in the 1890s but quickly spread to Britain.[4]

This article examines the impact of these public health anxieties upon the eucharistic practice of the Church of England over three decades, between the late 1890s and the late 1920s, under the leadership of two Archbishops of Canterbury, Frederick Temple (1821–1902) and Randall Davidson (1848–1930). It offers a close reading of their archiepiscopal correspondence, the debates of the 1908 Lambeth Conference, and the various ways in which Anglican clergy and bishops wrestled with the dilemmas. It demonstrates how bishops dispatched from England to far flung dioceses in the Anglican Communion, notably in Japan and Australia, appealed back to Lambeth for advice, which in turn influenced Church of England policy at home. Commentators argued over whether the rubrics of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer mandated drinking from a common cup, while Anglo-Catholics and Anglican evangelicals often proposed contrasting solutions. This controversy arrived too late to be considered by the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, which reported in 1906 and is usually seen as the finale of the Victorian ritualist crisis.[5] Yet Anglican contests over the common cup at the start of the new century can be interpreted as a further, forgotten, chapter in these historic eucharistic struggles. This article argues that Archbishop Davidson's strategy of focusing on medical opinion, rather than church law or doctrine, successfully blunted the campaign to introduce individual cups into the Church of England. The law was deliberately left an open question, with decisions devolved to local dioceses, while the archbishop consistently denied the need for an Anglican antigerm crusade. As a result, by the time of the First World War, individual cups at Holy Communion had become widely identified in the public mind as a Nonconformist practice rather than an Anglican one.

Early Proposals

Public anxieties soon reached Lambeth Palace and its incumbent, Frederick Temple, enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury in January 1897. During the Lambeth Conference

3. K. Nixon, *Kept From All Contagion: Germ Theory, Disease, and the Dilemma of Human Contact in Late-Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2020), 1. For earlier decades, see C.-j. Chen, *Victorian Contagion: Risk and Social Control in the Victorian Literary Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2019).
4. D. Sack, *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 31–59; J. Woodruff Tait, *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape-Juice and Common Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 108–20.
5. N. Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain, 1830–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

held that summer, Temple received an appeal from a doctor in Cornwall, arguing that chalice contagion was a matter of "very grave importance" and ought to be discussed urgently by the bishops who had gathered from across the Anglican Communion. The medic asserted that it was "absolutely certain" that tuberculosis and syphilis could be spread by the chalice, and probably cancer also, so everyone who drank the wine ran "a very grave risk of infection." His proposed solution was that the cup traditionally given to an infant at baptism by its godparents could be dedicated at confirmation and then brought to church each week to receive the wine, thus enabling every communicant to drink in safety.[6]

Separate cups were also advocated by Anglican layman and dental surgeon, T. W. F. Rowney, churchwarden of St Werburgh's, Derby. In a startling letter in 1898 submitted to the *British Medical Journal*, but not published, he observed that most people had little idea "what a lot of filth is carried about in many mouths, forming perfect cesspools of disease germs … decayed teeth, old stumps from which pus is continually oozing, artificial dentures which are seldom or never cleaned." The warm moisture of the mouth was a breeding ground for microbes, he warned. No modern dentist would use any instrument on a second patient until it had been thoroughly sterilised, and merely wiping with a napkin was useless. Driving home his point, Rowney lambasted the "much-used, breath-blown, saliva-tainted, moustache-dipped, and sometimes tobacco-fouled and infected communion cup," shared by hundreds of people, an insanitary practice which would not be tolerated in any other context. He further reported that recent medical research in America, putting the dregs of wine in the communion chalice under the microscope, had revealed "epithelial scales, tubercle bacilli, and the pus staphylococci."[7]

In October 1900, *The Lancet* called for the subject to receive proper attention from the ecclesiastical authorities "without delay."[8] In response, the *Church Times* urged the bishops to launch a commission of inquiry to "investigate the peril."[9] Evangelical correspondents to *The Record* proposed numerous remedies, including individual cups, though some believed as a matter of "simple faith" that anyone obeying Jesus's command to drink from the common cup could never be harmed.[10] In the Church of England's northern province, there were attempts at the York Convocation to have the question officially scrutinised. In February 1901, Charles Norris Grey (1841–1913), vicar of Helmsley, North Yorkshire — son of Robert Grey, the first Bishop of Cape Town — asked for a committee to examine the safest mode of administering the chalice. He argued that it was foolish for Convocation to "shut their eyes" to the widespread concerns of the laity, but the debate was quickly closed down and only two or three voted in support of Grey's motion.[11] The following year there was a further attempt by Henry Bell (1838–1919), vicar of Muncaster in Carlisle diocese, who rehearsed the latest medical advice about disease prevention. According to modern bacteriologists, infection might be spread by women's skirts trailing on the ground, by expectoration in railway carriages, by speaking into a telephone mouthpiece, and by witnesses laying their hands upon the same Bible to swear oaths in courts of justice. What then of the communion cup? Bell believed it should be withdrawn entirely or only used symbolically. Again, the debate was immediately quashed by Convocation. Anglican geologist and naturalist, Henry Baker Tristram (1822–1906) of Durham cathedral, ordained for over half a century, announced that he had "never

6. J. W. Gill to Frederick Temple, 4 July 1897, Lambeth Palace Library [LPL], Lambeth Conference Papers [LC] 58, fols. 107–10.
7. "Contagion in the Common Cup," *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 7 May 1909, 10.
8. "The Question of the Communion Cup," *The Lancet*, 13 October 1900, 1088–89.
9. "Adaptation," *Church Times*, 2 November 1900, 481.
10. "The Danger of the Chalice," *The Record*, 16 and 23 November 1900, 1113, 1138.
11. "The Chalice and Infection," *York Journal of Convocation* (21 February 1901), 27–28.

seen a microbe" and was "not afraid of them." He argued that if they dreaded the communion cup they must also abolish the ancient tradition of communal drinking from the Loving Cup at the Lord Mayor's banquet in the City of London, a *reductio ad absurdum*.[12]

In the southern province, William Finch (1857–1905), a layman from Battle in Chichester diocese, took a different approach. Building on a wave of public anxiety, he wrote directly to Archbishop Temple in April 1902 to express the "considerable apprehension" felt among Anglican communicants at the possibility of catching tuberculosis from the chalice. Finch observed that non-communicating attendance was a Roman Catholic practice, as was withdrawal of the cup from the laity, which contradicted "Christ's command that all should drink of it." Therefore, he asked the archbishop to grant dispensation for communicants to drink from a small individual glass into which consecrated wine was poured at the communion rail.[13] Temple replied promptly, through his domestic chaplain W. J. Conybeare, that there was "nothing illegal in the suggested practice." Finch published this correspondence in his local Hastings newspaper, from where it was quickly picked up by other media outlets.[14] James Nisbet's *Church Directory and Almanack* for 1903, an annual directory of all Anglican clergy in the United Kingdom and the colonies, included Temple's verdict in its list of recent legal opinions affecting the church.[15] In subsequent decades, this archiepiscopal judgement was widely quoted by Anglican advocates of individual cups.

There were other equally innovative, though less promising, proposals. John Schwartz, a licensed lay reader in St Albans diocese, suggested that communicants could carry in their waistcoat pocket a small silver straw to suck wine from the cup. This would be particularly beneficial for those with diseases like tuberculosis or "cancer of the tongue," as well as anyone sporting a long Edwardian moustache that tended to dip into the wine. Schwartz believed his proposal would encourage "diffident and nervous" parishioners to approach the communion table, rather than abstaining for fear of contagion.[16]

An alternative proposal, to avoid drinking, was to dip the bread into the wine ("intinction"). Edward Wilkinson (1837–1914), Bishop of North and Central Europe, a coadjutor of the Bishop of London, had oversight of about 90 Anglican chaplaincies scattered across the continent. These included popular health resorts like Davos Platz in the Swiss Alps where tuberculosis patients congregated in large numbers to benefit from the mountain air. Anxieties about contagion at Holy Communion were therefore acute. Wilkinson argued that for each patient to bring their own cup was "awkward, if not indecorous." Another possibility was for the sick and the healthy to drink from different cups, or attend different services, though this would lead to painful divisions and would not protect the chaplain who was required to drink any wine left over. Therefore Wilkinson asked Temple to give the Davos chaplaincy special permission to intinct, following the pattern of the Greek church.[17] His proposal was backed by the leading lung specialist in Davos who believed it would negate medical risks.[18]

When news of this innovative policy reached England, the *Church Times* saw a theological opportunity. It hoped that intinction, "a Catholic use," would now also be authorised in other places for the increasing number of people who wanted to avoid the common

12. "The Chalice and Infection," *York Journal of Convocation* (5 February 1902), 35–37.
13. William George Finch to Temple, 15 April 1902, LPL, Frederick Temple Papers 52, fols. 11–12.
14. "The Primate and the Sacrament," *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 26 April 1902, 7.
15. *The Church Directory and Almanack* (London: James Nisbet, 1903), 41.
16. John Schwartz to W. J. Conybeare (archbishop's chaplain), 26 April 1902, Frederick Temple Papers 52, fols. 13–14.
17. Edward Wilkinson to Temple, 19 February 1901, Frederick Temple Papers 52, fols. 7–8. See also, letter by W. J. Scudamore Emery (Davos chaplain), *The Guardian*, 19 July 1905, 1216.
18. Wilkinson to Temple, 25 February 1901, Frederick Temple Papers 52, fols. 9–10.

cup.[19] For example, at Salisbury cathedral chapter in 1903, several canons reported a new trend of communicants refusing the chalice. John Wordsworth (1843–1911), Bishop of Salisbury, recommended intinction as an alternative, pointing to the precedent set at Davos Platz.[20] There was push-back, however, from Anglican evangelicals like Walter Walsh (1847–1912), author of *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement* (1897), who complained that the Davos chaplain, with episcopal sanction, was giving his communicants "a *mutilated* Sacrament." Walsh argued that intinction disobeyed the command of Jesus to "drink" and flew in the face of the Prayer Book rubric that the minister must "deliver the cup" to each communicant. He wanted Bishop Winnington-Ingram of London to be held to account in the House of Lords to explain why the law of the Church of England was being broken in his jurisdiction.[21]

By the time of Frederick Temple's death in December 1902, aged 81, after only six years in office, pressure was building in the Church of England for a widespread change of communion policy. Theological fractures had already begun to open up as rival parties in the church favoured different solutions to the chalice dilemma. These trends continued to gather pace under Temple's successor, Randall Davidson, enthroned in February 1903. His quarter of a century at Lambeth Palace was the longest archiepiscopate since William Warham in the sixteenth century. Unlike Temple's nonchalant, instinctive acceptance of individual cups, Davidson resisted the innovation. However, he consistently did so not on the grounds of theology, liturgy or law, but as needless on health grounds. He deliberately avoided public statements on the topic, recommended that the anxieties of parishioners and bacteriologists be dealt with quietly, and devolved responsibility to diocesan bishops. This proved to be a highly effective strategy for dampening reformist fervour. As a result, individual cups were restricted to isolated pockets of the Church of England and never became widespread as in other denominations. Intinction was usually the preferred alternative of the Anglican episcopate if the common cup was deemed unsafe.

Lobbying Lambeth

Soon after taking office, Davidson's postbag was filled by letters from Anglicans across the world, seeking advice or lobbying for change. Some were wives and mothers, alarmed by what they had read in the public press. For example, Agnes MacEwan (1848–1931) from Melbourne, Australia, felt uncomfortable about attending Holy Communion with her large family after reading an article in *The Lancet*. She appealed to the archbishop in May 1903 that the Church of England should be more sanitary "in these days of Microbes and Germs," and proposed that just as every good Anglican brought their own Prayer Book to church, so they should bring their own communion cup.[22] The following month, Ada Dodgson (1858–1908) from London, another advocate of individual cups, warned the archbishop that in "these days of great sanitary improvements," the Church of England was behind the times.[23] Her anxieties multiplied when she read a letter by a surgeon in the *Morning Post* entitled "How Infectious Diseases Spread." Dodgson felt positively ill when watching the clergyman drain the dregs of the communion cup, as he was obliged to do by the Prayer Book rubrics. She wanted the question raised in the House of Commons and hoped Parliament might legislate against the common cup on sanitary grounds.[24]

19. *Church Times*, 9 April 1903, 478.
20. Salisbury Cathedral Great Chapter Minutes, 4 November 1903, Salisbury Cathedral Archives.
21. Walter Walsh, "Protestant Notes," *English Churchman*, 16 April 1903, 249–50.
22. Agnes MacEwan to Davidson, 4 May 1903, LPL, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 222–23.
23. Ada Dodgson to Davidson, 8 June 1903, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 224–26.
24. Dodgson to Davidson, 25 June 1903, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 228–31.

On the Anglican mission field in Japan, meanwhile, there were concerns that the use of the common cup hindered the church's public witness. Nippon Sei Ko Kai was a small missionary province with six dioceses and 86 churches. Henry Evington (1848–1912), Bishop of Kyushu, consecrated at Lambeth Palace in 1894, wrote to Davidson from his residence in Nagasaki to explain that Japanese converts were being drawn away from Anglicanism to denominations which did not require the common cup. Health anxieties were prevalent and in one nearby Japanese city a fifth of deaths were attributed to tuberculosis. Evington had resisted the introduction of individual cups in his diocese, "but I think it may be difficult to hold out." He asked the archbishop directly, "Is it heresy?" and if it was not heresy why erect this barrier to Japanese membership of the Anglican church?[25] Davidson agreed that individual cups were not "heretical," but there were "serious difficulties" in their implementation, so they ought not to be adopted "unless there seems to be no other mode of meeting the difficulty." He also agreed, however, that intinction was "implicitly if not distinctly forbidden" by the Prayer Book rubrics, so there was no easy solution.[26]

Provoked by these Japanese dilemmas, the archbishop turned for advice not to ecclesiastical lawyers or liturgists, but to leading medical opinion. In November 1903 he met with Sir William Church (1837–1928) of Harley Street, president of the Royal College of Physicians, who declared that the danger of sharing a communion cup was "so trifling as to be negligible" and that people were far more likely to catch an infection by travelling in a hansom cab or a London bus.[27] Church consulted with many of the top physicians in London, including Sir William Broadbent (1835–1907), Sir Dyce Duckworth (1840–1928), Sir Douglas Powell (1842–1925), Sir Lauder Brunton (1844–1916), and Sir Thomas Barlow (1845–1945).[28] These medics were unwilling to put their names to a public statement, but Church submitted a short confidential letter to Davidson repeating his reassurances.[29] It was circulated among the bishops and for several years became Davidson's first line of defence when he was asked for advice on the subject. In private the archbishop admitted that there was "an element of truth in what the alarmists so exaggeratedly say," but in public he always played down health concerns.[30]

As individual cups spread throughout the British churches in the first decade of the century, the subject was widely canvassed in the national press, in clerical societies, and from conference platforms. There was often common cause between Anglicans and Nonconformists, on both sides of the question. Congregationalists were early adopters and the secretary of Sheffield Tabernacle Church asserted in 1904 that they would not like to return to "the old dirty system of drinking from a cup forty or fifty others have used."[31] However, the Congregationalist hymnwriter Thomas George Crippen (1841–1929) asserted that "partaking from a common cup is the very essence of the sacramental act." Another Congregationalist derided individual cups as "an unscriptural innovation" which was "lowering the dignity of the Holy Supper" and converted deacons into waiters carrying trays.[32] *The Guardian*, a high church Anglican newspaper, praised these Congregationalist resisters and rejected separate cups as the latest modern trend towards "individualism."[33] Likewise G. J. Cowley-Brown (1832–1924), rector of St John's, Edinburgh, described separate

25. Henry Evington to Davidson, 9 July 1903, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 235–37.
26. Davidson to Evington, 9 September 1903, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 243.
27. Interview with William Church, 4 November 1903, memorandum, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 244.
28. Church to Davidson, 15 January 1904, Davidson Papers 92, fols. 38–39.
29. Church to Davidson, 15 January 1904, Davidson Papers 92, fols. 40–41.
30. Davidson to Lord Nelson, 11 September 1905, Davidson Papers 101, fol. 147.
31. "Individual Communion Cups," *The Examiner*, 31 March 1904, 294.
32. "Communion or Symposium," *The Examiner*, 31 March 1904, 294–95.
33. "Separate Communion Cups," *The Guardian*, 6 April 1904, 571.

communion cups as the "climax of absurdity," akin to the "latest fad" of people scared to open their letters at the breakfast table because microbes might be "lurking under the postage-stamps." This "excessive concern" for health was "making cowards of us all," asserted Cowley-Brown, and was a craze imported from America, "a fertile soil for religious eccentricities."[34]

A less radical method for reducing infection was to wipe the rim of the cup with a napkin (or in some Anglo-Catholic settings with a maniple) after each communicant. This practice also proved controversial because it was absent from the Prayer Book and inevitably left stains of consecrated wine on the napkin. Some defended the ritual as *adiaphora* and "a concession to weak brethren, into whose timorous minds rigorous sanitarians have instilled ungrounded fears."[35] However, Earl Nelson (1823–1913) — who described himself as "an old-fashioned Prayer Book Churchman" — called this wiping of the cup "a very real and growing evil," an unauthorised ceremony which was spreading "insidiously" through the Church of England because of the "microbe scare."[36] As he told the archbishop, it failed to reduce the chances of infection but it increased the chances of "desecration." Nelson urged Davidson to use his archiepiscopal influence to stamp out these new modes of administration which were creeping into Anglican practice.[37]

Clerical Dilemmas

Church of England clergy frequently found themselves under pressure from their parishioners to alter the mode of administration. For example, at Hove in Chichester diocese, Herbert Gosset (1853–1932), an advocate of individual cups, petitioned his vicar in 1905. "If the Germ theory is correct," Gosset urged, "the manner of administering the Holy Sacrament in most churches is not only a perpetual danger to the partakers but in an extreme degree the antithesis of common decency and order." He lamented that many people with chronic lung or throat diseases sipped from the same cup which then, if wiped at all, was "merely smeared over with the same napkin." He had waited at the communion rail while "foreign articles were fished up from the chalice with a spoon," and had often witnessed clergymen with colds and coughs using their pocket handkerchiefs during the service and then handling the communion bread without any washing. "The medical profession absolutely condemns such practices," Gosset protested. "If God's hygienic laws are broken in such a flagrant manner, we cannot expect to be saved from the consequences by miraculous intervention." Furthermore, he argued that germs were part of God's natural law, an infallible divine ordering of the world that could not be resisted by fallible human traditions. As medical science evolved, the church must adjust its primitive customs to the new knowledge. However, Gosset's vicar was unmoved and replied that individual cups were "contrary to an unbroken tradition in the Church" and in defiance of the Prayer Book rubrics. Worried parishioners should simply receive "in one kind" and abstain from the cup if they wished.[38] Unwilling to be fobbed off, Gosset appealed directly to Lambeth, warning that Davidson bore "overwhelming responsibility before God" for putting Anglican communicants in danger.[39] "I can quite appreciate the sacerdotal dilemma in granting reform," Gosset acknowledged, "but why give the enemies of Christ's Church such a glaring opportunity to blaspheme!"[40]

34. "Infection by the Chalice," *The Guardian*, 28 June 1905, 1089.
35. "The Administration of the Chalice," *The Guardian*, 23 August 1905, 1395.
36. "The Administration of the Chalice," *The Guardian*, 16 August 1905, 1360.
37. Lord Nelson to Davidson, 8 September 1905, Davidson Papers 101, fols. 143–46.
38. Copy of Herbert Gosset's correspondence, 1905, Davidson Papers 101, fols. 135–36.
39. Gosset to Davidson, 27 April 1905, Davidson Papers 101, fols. 133–34.
40. Gosset to Davidson, 5 May 1905, Davidson Papers 101, fols. 138–39.

According to the Prayer Book rubric, the minister must communicate first, before the rest of the congregation, but this created alarm if the clergyman himself was believed to be contagious. Elsewhere in Chichester diocese, a country vicar had undergone four or five operations for face cancer, so his parishioners refused to receive communion until he agreed to take the wine with a spoon.[41] There were similar anxieties in the parish of St Trillo's, Rhos-on-Sea, near Colwyn Bay in North Wales. The curate had recently spent time in a sanatorium for tuberculosis, so some communicants refused to share a chalice with him for fear of contracting his disease.[42] A. G. Edwards (1848–1937), Bishop of St Asaph, recognised that such worries were "increasingly and reasonably felt" in many parishes and appealed to Lambeth.[43] Davidson advised that the Welsh curate should receive wine with a spoon, as "greatly preferable" to a separate cup, but admitted that it was a very difficult subject and that spoons were not practical for lay people. As usual, not wishing to raise a public panic, the archbishop urged that "the whole thing should be kept quiet and all publicity and excitement about it avoided."[44] To discuss the Colwyn Bay case, he met with the new president of the Royal College of Physicians, Sir Douglas Powell, who was "a good deal disquieted" about the question. Although Powell did not disagree with the opinion of his predecessor, Sir William Church, he reckoned that authoritative reassurances about the chalice would no longer satisfy medical professionals or an alarmed public for whom safety was paramount.[45]

Likewise, in a parish in Gloucester diocese in 1910, two women refused to drink from the chalice. They simply held it in their hands, "rather ostentatiously," while the words of administration were repeated, and then passed it back without raising it to their lips. Edgar Gibson (1848–1924), Bishop of Gloucester, insisted that communion "in one kind" was illegal in the Church of England, so if the women persisted in their refusal they must be barred from Holy Communion altogether.[46] He believed it was impossible to resist the growing ritualist demands for communion "in one kind" on grounds of Catholic custom, if the practice was already permitted on grounds of hygiene.[47] However, Davidson advised more diplomatic treatment towards those who were "afraid of bacilli." Always anxious to diffuse public controversy, he warned that repelling the women from Holy Communion would turn them into "martyrs" and create "almost insuperable difficulties" if their cause was "backed by a group of rather fussy medical men who are bacteriologists first and doctors afterwards (and there are a good many such)." It was better not to draw attention, but to let communicants decide whether or not to receive "in the right way."[48]

In the Church of Ireland there was similar agitation. J. T. Reade, an Anglican layman in Belfast, published a penny pamphlet, *The Holy Communion: Pleas and Suggestions for Hygienic Administration* (1907). He complained that Anglican usage was still the same as in "the past unscientific and barbaric ages, when there was no knowledge of germs." He thought it was "wanton," even "wicked," to despise the teaching of modern science and to administer the wine as they did in the days of ignorance.[49] Drifting into casual xenophobia, Reade observed that the Orthodox administered wine with a spoon, wiped after each use, and thus "even the Russians are more hygienic than we are."[50] He had heard about a

41. Gosset to Davidson, 27 April 1905.
42. E. James Evans to Douglas Powell, 27 June 1906, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 246–47.
43. A. G. Edwards to Davidson, 8 July 1906, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 262–63.
44. Davidson to Evans, 7 July 1906, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 260–61.
45. Interview with Powell, 7 July 1906, memorandum, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 258.
46. Edgar Gibson to Davidson, 14 November 1910, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 286–87.
47. Gibson to Davidson, 17 November 1910, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 290–91.
48. Davidson to Gibson, 16 November 1910, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 288–89.
49. *The Holy Communion: Pleas and Suggestions for Hygienic Administration, by "A Layman"* (Belfast: Belfast Steam-Printing Company, 1907), 2, 4, copy at Davidson Papers 383, fols. 271–74.

clergyman who died from cancer of the tongue, followed shortly afterwards by two of his communicants with the identical disease, which Reade reckoned was more than a coincidence.[51] The obvious solution, he posited, was individual cups or intinction.

Class undertones ran through many of these debates, as the socially privileged prided themselves on higher standards of hygiene. For example, Rowney claimed that members of the Church of England, "as a class," were "much cleaner and healthier in the mouth than the motley crowd who quench their thirst at the public drinking fountain," and would not dream of using the public cup attached to the fountain.[52] Dodgson and her friends were repelled by "the mere thought" of drinking from the same cup, and she was not surprised that "the higher classes of society" tended to abstain from Holy Communion.[53] When Gosset realised he could not persuade the archbishop on medical grounds, he appealed instead to common decency and good manners. He asked Davidson to imagine serving tea once a week to the whole archiepiscopal household, distributing the food with his fingers, passing around one cup to drink, and allowing the servants to consume before "the ladies of the family" and the guests. Being entertained in this way, "together with a promiscuous company of all classes," was "abhorrent" and "unthinkable."[54] In a further letter, Gosset drove home the point, observing that "one pair of lips makes a cup dirty and to be avoided as a drinking vessel by all decent people … Do we not teach our children from infancy how nasty it is to use other people's dirty cups?"[55] Since these practices would not be tolerated in any household, however poor, Gosset reasoned, why were they still tolerated in God's household of the Church?[56] Debates over the common cup revealed that Anglican attitudes to hygiene and to social hierarchies were closely intertwined.

The 1908 Lambeth Conference

As early as 1904, individual cups began to spread across the Anglican world, adopted first by congregations in Japan and Australia. In Kyushu diocese, Bishop Evington told his diocesan synod that he would not sanction the innovation, but nor would he expressly forbid it, so some pushed ahead.[57] In Melbourne diocese, a formal proposal in September 1904 to introduce individual cups on hygienic grounds was thrown out by the diocesan synod by a large majority.[58] However, in Sydney diocese a handful of parishes began to experiment. St Matthias, Paddington, was the first there to introduce individual cups, though this came to an abrupt end three years later when the rector, John William Gillett (1851–1907), was killed by a motor car. Other early adopters included St Andrew's, Wahroonga, and St Paul's, Chatswood.[59] "The diocese of Sydney has again made itself notorious throughout the whole of Anglican Christendom," chided the *Church Times*. "What has the Archbishop of Sydney to say about this?" The newspaper derided individual cups as irreverent and "utterly in discord with the spirit of our liturgy."[60] After consulting Lambeth Palace, Archbishop William Saumarez Smith (1836–1909) made it clear at Sydney diocesan synod in August 1905 that he disapproved the practice and thought it

50. *The Holy Communion: Pleas and Suggestions*, 7.
51. *The Holy Communion: Pleas and Suggestions*, 5.
52. "Contagion in the Common Cup."
53. Dodgson to Davidson, 8 June 1903.
54. Gosset to Davidson, 5 May 1905.
55. Gosset to Davidson, 19 May 1905, Davidson Papers 101, fols. 140–41.
56. Gosset to Davidson, 5 May 1905.
57. Evington to Davidson, 28 May 1904, Davidson Papers 84, fol. 5.
58. "Church Assembly," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 28 September 1904, 7.
59. "The Church in Australasia," *Church Standard* (Sydney), 25 February 1916, 10.
60. "The Church Abroad: Australasia," *Church Times*, 27 January 1905, 103.

unwarranted on health grounds, but he would not forbid it because it "did not contravene the law."[61]

When Archbishop Davidson called together the bishops of the Anglican Communion in 1908 for the fifth Lambeth Conference, the administration of Holy Communion in the changed circumstances of the early twentieth century was a major topic of discussion. Three pressing, practical questions came to the fore: Was it permissible, on the Anglican mission field, for wheat bread and grape wine to be replaced by local foods, such as rice, tea, banana wine, or milk? Was it permissible for alcoholic wine to be replaced by grape juice, in response to the spread of temperance and teetotalism? Was it permissible for the common cup to be replaced by individual cups, in response to the spread of infectious disease? The debate ranged across all three areas of concern.

The Lambeth bishops were, of course, mostly specialists in theology and missiology, not medicine. But the Bishop of Zanzibar, John Edward Hine (1857–1934), held the unique distinction of having qualified as a surgeon and served at Oxford's Radcliffe Infirmary before ordination, so spoke with some authority. He complained that "a lot of nonsense" had been written about chalice infection by people who did not know what they were talking about — "Hear, hear," chimed his episcopal brethren. Hine asserted that the transmission of tuberculosis by the common cup was "very doubtful," and the transmission of syphilis was "infinitely improbable," so recourse to separate cups was "perfectly absurd." In extreme circumstances, like ministering to lepers in Zanzibar, he offered communion by intinction.[62] This method was also favoured as a "very perfect solution" by Charles Frederick D'Arcy (1859–1938), Bishop of Ossory in the Church of Ireland, who strongly objected to individual cups because they separated communicants from each other and contradicted their unity in Christ.[63] However, Davidson, as president of the Lambeth Conference, kept the focus on medicine, not doctrine. He read the gathered bishops the 1904 letter from Sir William Church and distributed copies.[64] Likewise the Bishop of Pittsburgh, Cortlandt Whitehead (1842–1922), mocked the inconsistency of those who objected to the common cup but were willing to borrow a book from a public library, or travel in a crowded tramcar, or handle a five-dollar bill which had passed through countless hands. Furthermore, he observed that if the alarmists were correct there ought to be an epidemic among Anglicans every Easter to coincide with the annual boom in Holy Communion attendance, and a high mortality rate among Anglican clergy, which were not the case. Whitehead believed that public distrust of the common cup had been instigated by the devil himself.[65]

In committee, the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Kenneth Mackenzie (1863–1945), urged that they must remember not only "the scruples of nervous people" but also the many "patient and silent people to whom the use of separate cups would be a great offence."[66] However, the Bishop of Gibraltar, William Collins (1867–1911), urged them not to deprecate separate cups. Although he was personally averse to their use, he viewed them as "merely a way of distributing the *one cup*, and therefore not in themselves incapable of justification." He argued that it was unwise for the Lambeth Conference to pronounce against a usage which, "however strongly we dislike it, might conceivably become a recognised practice."[67] The committee report called for "the exercise of common-sense"

61. *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Synod of the Diocese of Sydney* (August 1905), 36–37.
62. Lambeth Conference minutes, 11 July 1908, LC 67, fol. 160.
63. Lambeth Conference minutes, 11 July 1908, LC 67, fols. 146–49.
64. Lambeth Conference minutes, 11 July 1908, LC 67, fols. 161–62.
65. Lambeth Conference minutes, 3 August 1908, LC 70, fols. 11–12.
66. Lambeth Conference committee minutes, 14 July 1908, LC 92, fol. 8.
67. Lambeth Conference committee minutes, 21 July 1908, LC 92, fol. 39.

when faced by "the multitudinous possibilities of disease besetting human life," seeking to chart a middle course between "carelessness" and "panic or a paralysing solicitude."[68]

The formal Lambeth Conference resolution on the subject was deliberately restrained. The bishops made no theological or legal pronouncement but instead, reassured by medical testimony, affirmed their conviction that "it is not desirable to make, on the ground of alarm as to the possible risk of infection, any change in the manner of administering the Holy Communion. Special cases involving exceptional risk should be referred to the Bishop and dealt with according to his direction."[69] Saumarez Smith welcomed this exception clause as allowing sufficient liberty in Sydney diocese. In response, the Bishop of Southern Brazil, Lucien Lee Kinsolving (1862–1929), an American missionary from Virginia, asked explicitly whether this gave bishops the freedom to permit individual cups. As usual, Davidson deflected. Rather than pronouncing for or against individual cups, he answered: "I think we must leave the Bishops to deal with exceptional cases in exceptional ways." In contexts affecting public health, like sanatoria, he suggested that each bishop must be allowed to use his own discretion.[70]

Back in their own dioceses, many bishops followed Davidson's lead by avoiding pronouncements on the theology or legality of individual cups but instead denying their medically necessity. During his visitation of Birmingham diocese in 1908, Charles Gore (1853–1932) drew special attention to the Lambeth resolution and downplayed "the groundless alarm felt among a few people as to a risk of infection through the chalice."[71] Likewise, Archibald Robertson (1853–1931), Bishop of Exeter, told his clergy that the danger of sharing a common cup was "absurdly exaggerated." He welcomed advances in scientific knowledge for protecting public health, but warned his diocese not to be "borne away by a nervous hypersensitiveness sometimes carried to the length of monomania."[72] On the other side of the globe, Moore Neligan (1863–1922), Bishop of Auckland, read the Lambeth resolution to his diocesan synod and published Sir William Church's letter of reassurance.[73]

In keeping with the Lambeth Conference policy of devolving responsibility to diocesan bishops, Davidson consistently rebuffed appeals to intervene or to lay down a universal Anglican rule. For example, among the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), a high church mission agency, there were growing concerns about the spread of individual cups in Japan. Hugh James Foss (1848–1932), a former SPG missionary, was consecrated in 1899 by Archbishop Temple as the second Bishop of Osaka. In 1904 one of Foss's congregations, without episcopal sanction, built a little shelf behind the communion rail to hold individual glasses into which the clergyman poured consecrated wine for each communicant.[74] The bishop was unable to halt these developments and even gave his consent in certain circumstances because of the public panic over the spread of leprosy and tuberculosis. At Christmas 1908, an SPG missionary from Kobe reported that "the practice of separate cups is spreading." When she visited an Anglican preaching station at Hiroshima, under the auspices of the evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS), she was shocked to discover that they received communion with separate spoons. Another SPG missionary encountered "horrible practices" of separate glasses or separate teaspoons at CMS stations

68. *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion, Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 27 to August 5, 1908: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1908), 131.
69. Resolution 31, in *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion*, 53.
70. Lambeth Conference minutes, 3 August 1908, LC 70, fols. 13–14.
71. C. Gore, *The Primary Charge Delivered at His Visitation to the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Diocese of Birmingham* (Birmingham: Midland Education Company, 1908), 10–11.
72. A. Robertson, *The Church of England: Our Heritage and Our Mission* (London: SPCK, 1910), 68–69.
73. *Church Gazette for the Diocese of Auckland*, December 1909, supplement, viii–ix, xvi.
74. Evington to Davidson, 28 May 1904.

but feared that if this "uncatholic" irregularity was banned some Japanese converts would split from Anglicanism.[75] From SPG's London headquarters, Henry Montgomery (1847–1932), former Bishop of Tasmania, lobbied the archbishop to intervene.[76] Davidson was "rather disquieted" by these developments, but felt it was best to let the bishops in Japan make their own decisions in their own unique context.[77] Conversely, at home in England, a woman from Hastings wanted to present Emmanuel Church, her local evangelical congregation, with a set of individual cups but was forbidden by Charles Ridgeway (1841–1927), Bishop of Chichester.[78] The donor appealed to Lambeth Palace, but the archbishop refused to intervene on the grounds that it was a matter for each bishop's discretion, not for provincial regulation.[79]

The other established church in the British Isles — the Church of Scotland — initiated a major public debate about individual cups at its General Assembly, in response to a request in 1907 from the Glasgow presbytery. A 56-member committee of Scottish theologians, clergy, medics and lawyers investigated the question and in 1909 the General Assembly agreed that henceforth the mode of distributing the wine was at the local minister's discretion. In support of this new policy, the Presbyterians quoted the Lambeth Conference resolution which likewise emphasised local discretion.[80] In private correspondence with a Scottish peer, Davidson expressed his unhappiness at "the use of these little egg-cups or wine-glasses in complete disregard of the symbolism of the 'one cup'."[81] However, the archbishop's consistent strategy was to downplay the need for any formal, and inevitably divisive, debate in the Church of England. In 1912, the bishops considered raising the subject at the Convocations, but declined for fear of creating a public panic and provoking speeches by "bacteriological faddists."[82] At Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, Dr Henry Stoker (1858–1926) found himself kneeling at Holy Communion alongside one of his own infectious syphilitic patients. This perturbing experience led him to bring a successful motion to Goulburn diocesan synod in 1914, urging the Convocations of the Church of England to consider alternative methods for administering the wine during their wider debates on Prayer Book revision.[83] Davidson, however, successfully kept such discussions off the table.

Marketeers

"The Church of England is still undisturbed by the advocates of the individual cup, but there are signs of their presence in our midst," concluded one Yorkshire clergyman somewhat ominously in 1911.[84] Over 2,000 Nonconformist chapels in England had adopted individual cups, but Anglican parishes were also on the receiving end of an aggressive marketing campaign. Inventers, manufacturers, and salesmen were quick to spot an opportunity. Individual cups were "a commercial speculation," noted one sceptic, and their promoters knew that by capturing millions of communicants they would amass "a huge

75. Excerpts from SPG letters, 1908–9, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 277–78.
76. Henry Montgomery to Davidson, 2 March 1909, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 275.
77. Davidson to Montgomery, 3 March 1909, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 279.
78. A. E. Grigsby to Davidson, 12 and 24 March 1914, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 299–300, 317–18.
79. J. V. Macmillan (archbishop's chaplain) to Grigsby, 2 April and 24 June 1914, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 319–20, 323.
80. "Report by Committee on Overture as to Individual Cups at Communion Service," *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland* (1909), 1203.
81. Davidson to Lord Balfour of Burleigh, 7 May 1909, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 283–85.
82. Bishops' Meeting Minutes, 1–2 February 1912, LPL, BM5, 268–69.
83. "Goulburn Anglican Synod," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 25 April 1914, 15; W. H. Read, *The Hygiene of the Communion Cup* (Sydney, 1923), 62–63.
84. J. T. Levens, *Aspects of the Holy Communion* (London: Macmillan, 1911), 390.

fortune."[85] Davidson likened these merchants to the Ephesian silversmith Demetrius, in the Book of Acts, who knew that the goddess Artemis was good for business.[86]

The leading manufacturer of individual cups for the British church market was Edmund Townshend (1843–1932), proprietor of Townshend's Art Metal Company in Birmingham. He patented several designs and had a network of agents across the country. Townshend's cups came in two varieties — a crystal glass, said to be a replica of the small sacramental cups found in early Christian catacombs, and a silver-plated miniature chalice. Both were 1.6 inches high and could be stacked on a variety of aluminium or silver-plated trays, in three tiers, with mahogany or oak finish, and holes cushioned with crimson felt to silence the movement of the cups. For those who preferred to retain the visible symbolism of one cup, Townshend also offered a large chalice, 10 inches high, inside which was hidden a small tray containing ten individual cups. The company recommended pouring wine into a teacup and then filling each communion cup with a teaspoon, but they also sold a contraption which could be attached to the neck of a wine bottle to fill ten communion cups at once, alongside silver-plated flagons with spouts specially designed for pouring into small cups. Thus every ecclesiastical taste was catered for. Also in the sales catalogue was apparatus for sterilising the individual cups in boiling water over a smokeless petroleum oil stove.[87]

Townshend's frequently bid for Anglican business. In 1907, for example, they advertised their wares in the *Official Year-Book of the Church of England*, alongside established church suppliers like Mowbray's and Wippell's. Archbishop Temple's public sanction of individual cups was printed in bold.[88] Likewise, in 1913, they advertised in *The Commonwealth*, an Anglican magazine edited by Oxford's regius professor of divinity Henry Scott Holland (1847–1918). The promotion was headed "Danger at Holy Communion" and described Townshend's range of separate cups as "specially adapted to the Communion Service of the Church of England."[89] However, the *Church Times* rebutted this marketing campaign as "audaciously absurd" since only the common cup was permitted among Anglicans.[90] Elsewhere the newspaper denounced individual cups as "a sectarian invention, contrary to all Catholic custom, destructive of the symbolism of the Eucharist, and to be resisted firmly by Churchmen."[91]

"No one values the Book of Common Prayer more," stated Edmund Townshend when pitching to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet he observed that the "devout Authors of this wonderful Book" were ignorant of the sanitary laws revealed by "modern science." Townshend admitted that his company had a "business interest" in marketing individual cups, but believed it was a good work of public welfare which enabled communicants to approach "the most precious Sacrament of the Christian Church" not with worry or offence but with "unhindered devotion."[92] Their promotional materials included Anglican testimonies of the dangers of a common cup and the blessings of separate cups. For example, they republished an article on "altar germs" from Burtonwood parish magazine in Liverpool diocese, which asked, "Is not health more than rubrics, is not life better than Prayer-books?" It argued that individual cups were "a return to primitive usage, a holding

85. "Communion or Symposium," 295.
86. Davidson to Lord Balfour of Burleigh, 7 May 1909.
87. *Individual Chalice Outfits for Holy Communion* (Birmingham: Townshend's Art Metal Company, no date); *Illustrated Price List of the Individual Cup Communion Outfits* (Birmingham: Townshend's Art Metal Company, no date); copies at LPL, H5149.C5T6.
88. *The Official Year-Book of the Church of England* (London: SPCK, 1907), xviii.
89. *The Commonwealth: A Christian Social Magazine* 18 (May 1913), 136.
90. *Church Times*, 27 June 1913, 879.
91. *Church Times*, 6 January 1922, 8.
92. Edmund Townshend to Davidson, 20 March 1914, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 302–03.

fast of Catholicity, not a departure from it."[93] Townshend's also circulated an apologia for individual cups by Archdeacon Seydel of St Nicholas's, Berlin, part of the Evangelical State Church of Prussia, one of the first German congregations to adopt this Anglo-American innovation.[94] Seydel's credentials as an "archdeacon" in a national church boosted his status among Anglicans. Eager to demonstrate the continuity of their products with historic Christianity, one of Townshend's catalogues carried on its front cover an engraving of Leonardo da Vinci's famous mural, *The Last Supper*, in which Christ and the apostles are each depicted with their own cup.[95]

"I have never been present at a Service in which the practice of separate cups was adopted," Davidson admitted in 1917, "and I cannot imagine how it is managed without indecorum." He continued to complain that bacteriology was "a hobby which people ride to death," and that some were now even making the absurd suggestion that a baby's rattle dropped on the floor must be "chemically sterilised" before the infant was allowed it back.[96] Similar confidence was apparent in *The Fear of Infection in the Chalice* (1917), a short tract by Anglican publisher SPCK, which aimed to reassure "troubled minds" and relied for its medical authority on Professor Frederick Andrewes (1859–1932), a prominent pathologist and bacteriologist at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. It was more dangerous, the tract suggested, to eat a piece of bread from a restaurant table or a bun from a shop counter than to drink from the communion cup, so "sensible people dismiss all such worries as unnecessary and ridiculous."[97] Marketeers of individual cups relied upon heightened anxieties to increase sales, but were not the only voice in the flurry of eucharistic propaganda appealing to Anglican parishioners.

Sydney Diocese

Australian Anglicanism remained officially an outpost of the Church of England until the 1960s, and many of its clergy and bishops were dispatched from England. After Saumarez Smith's death in 1909, Davidson consecrated John Charles Wright (1861–1933), archdeacon of Manchester, as the new Archbishop of Sydney. Wright was part of the "liberal evangelical" movement and is famous within Sydney's evangelical historiography as the archbishop who helped to quash Anglo-Catholicism in the diocese by banning eucharistic vestments.[98] However, he troubled Sydney's evangelicals by refusing to licence anyone who used separate cups at Holy Communion until that custom was explicitly declared to be legal.[99]

Some of Wright's evangelical clergy pushed back, arguing that individual cups were already consistent with the Prayer Book rubrics, so in 1911 he appealed to Lambeth to clarify the law.[100] Again, Davidson deflected the question, observing that there had never been a legal decision on the matter and he was unwilling to formulate one unless the case was brought before him in an official way. Without an authoritative judgement in favour of individual cups, he thought it would be difficult for a parish to justify its departure from

93. "Altar Germs" (1913), copy at Davidson Papers 383, fols. 314–15.
94. *The Individual Communion Cup System: An Address by Archdeacon Seydel of Berlin* (Birmingham: Townshend's Art Metal Company, no date), originally published as "An Archdeacon's Plea for Individual Communion Cups," *The Examiner*, 16 June 1904, 578.
95. *Individual Chalice Outfits*.
96. Davidson to J. C. Wright, 31 May 1917, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 328–30.
97. *The Fear of Infection in the Chalice* (London: SPCK, 1917), copy at Davidson Papers 383, fols. 336–37.
98. S. Judd and K. Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese* (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1987), 159–65.
99. "Diocese of Sydney: Declarations Concerning Certain Unauthorized Interpretations of Rubrics" (1911), Davidson Papers 383, fol. 295.
100. Wright to Davidson, 17 July 1911, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 294.

"the absolutely unbroken custom of the Church of Christ from the beginning," but he held firm to his policy of refusing to make public pronouncements: "I think we shall be rather cautious about saying much lest we do more harm than good." As usual, Davidson shifted the focus from canonical legalities to medical necessities. He reassured Wright that according to the best English medical opinion there was no justification for abandoning the common cup: "Of course there is a conceivable risk, but if you compare it with the risk of travelling by train or going in a four-wheel cab it is negligible. Hardly any act can be performed by anyone in a big city without an element of risk."[101]

This subject was widely discussed among antipodean Anglicans. At the Australian General Synod in 1916, a small episcopal committee concluded that there was insufficient scientific rationale, in normal circumstances, for "so radical an innovation" as individual cups. However, in cases of "known and obvious infection" they would not insist upon the common cup, recommending intinction as the best alternative.[102] Individual cups had already been in use for a dozen years at Wahroonga, near Sydney, under its evangelical rector S. E. Langford-Smith (1869–1950), who therefore asked Sydney diocesan synod to clarify whether they contravened canon law.[103] Again Archbishop Wright appealed to Lambeth for advice.[104]

Davidson's quiet resistance to individual cups was predicated on his belief that they were unwarranted, not that they were uncanonical. Nevertheless, he now approached the Church of England's chief ecclesiastical lawyer, Sir Lewis Dibdin (1852–1938), Dean of the Arches — the only example of the archbishop consulting a lawyer about the chalice, rather than medics. Davidson wanted to be able to advise "Colonials," though he noted that the subject was also growing increasingly urgent in England where bacteriology was "rampant."[105] Dibdin's opinion was very brief. "The law seems clear," he argued, that individual cups contradicted the Prayer Book rubrics, since the consecrated cup should be the same one delivered to the communicants. However, Dibdin focused on practical difficulties — the danger of spilling, the impossibility of manual acts or effective ablutions, and the revival of the medieval abuse of the elements being secretly carried away, hidden by communicants in their individual cups. The best safeguard to infection from the chalice was communion "in one kind," Dibdin wryly noted, "and thus the Presbyterians would really be playing into the hands of the Romans."[106] Armed with a lawyer's letter, Davidson confidently reassured Wright that if the question ever came before an ecclesiastical court, the decision would go against individual cups, but he also emphasised that there had "never been a legal decision on the subject."[107]

The Sydney committee of investigation, which reported in September 1918, was less assertive than Dibdin. They concluded that intinction contradicted church law, but were split over individual cups.[108] The committee chairman, Albert Edward Talbot (1877–1936), Dean of Sydney, who had arrived from England in 1912, argued that individual cups did not contradict the Prayer Book rubrics and were therefore permitted by the Act of Uniformity. A similar verdict was reached by the most senior lawyer on the committee, Cambridge-educated barrister John Taylor Lingen (1848–1933), former Sydney diocesan

101. Davidson to Wright, 21 August 1911, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 296–97.
102. "Report *re* Use of Separate Cups in the Administration of the Holy Communion," *Proceedings of the General Synod of the Dioceses in Australia and Tasmania* (1916), 99–104.
103. *Votes and Proceedings of the Seventeenth Synod of the Diocese of Sydney* (December 1916), 76–77.
104. Wright to Davidson, 17 December 1916, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 324.
105. Davidson to Lewis Dibdin, 4 April 1917, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 325.
106. Dibdin to Davidson, 10 April 1917, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 326–27.
107. Davidson to Wright, 31 May 1917.
108. "Report of the Select Committee on the Law of the Church as to the Administration of the Wine," *Sydney Diocesan Directory* (1918), 171–96.

chancellor. Meanwhile Langford-Smith pointed to the permissive resolution of the 1908 Lambeth Conference and quipped that individual cups may not have been explicitly authorised by the Prayer Book but neither were metrical hymns. Archbishop Wright's counterarguments were republished in England in *The Churchman*, the leading Anglican evangelical journal, a further indication that evangelical opinion remained divided on the subject.[109]

The influenza pandemic which swept the globe in 1918–1920 was particularly severe in New South Wales, spread by troops repatriated from the European warzone.[110] Under pandemic regulations, Sydney communicants had to kneel three feet apart at the communion rail but were still given the same cup to drink. To Langford-Smith this seemed "an absurdity," so he introduced individual cups to his new parish, St Andrew's, Summer Hill, in the Sydney suburbs.[111] In 1922 he successfully persuaded the Sydney diocesan synod that parishioners who harboured "a sense of danger of transmitting or contracting communicable disease" should be offered a "lawful" alternative to the common cup. Langford-Smith's motion stopped short of decreeing that individual cups were lawful, but his intentions were plain.[112] His former parishioners in Wahroonga launched the Church of England Individual Cup Association, seeking to educate Anglicans in their "hygienic advantages" and conformity with "the dictates of modern science."[113] The Association's secretary, William Henry Read (1876–1962), a local physician, promoted the cause in *The Hygiene of the Communion Cup* (1923), which began as an address to the Public Health Association of Australia. On the permissibility of individual cups in the Church of England, Read argued — *contra* Davidson and the Lambeth Conference — that it was outside the scope of local episcopal discretion. "No Bishop has power to authorize their use if they are illegal, and if they are not illegal he has no power to stop his clergy using them."[114]

Conclusion

The Church of England's debates over chalice hygiene in the opening decades of the twentieth century were an important, but forgotten, continuation of the eucharistic controversies which had embroiled Victorian ritualists. When resisting Anglo-Catholic innovations like intinction, evangelicals typically took up a defensive and conservative position, sticking closely to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer. Yet on this occasion, evangelicals themselves innovated with individual cups, while Anglo-Catholics claimed the rubrics were on their side of the argument. The episode reveals that Anglican evangelicals during the crisis over Prayer Book revision were willing to experiment with forms of eucharistic practice unknown to the Protestant Reformation, belying their reputation as staunch liturgical traditionalists.

The debates were also a significant, but forgotten, new chapter in the church's fractious relationship with modern science. Anglican clergyman Arthur Henry Garnsey (1872–1944), warden of St Paul's College, University of Sydney, described it as "a fresh phase of the continual clash between religion and science." He rebuked episcopal resisters of individual cups for "sinning against the light" and, as too often in church history, for

109. J. C. Wright, "The Cup in the Communion Office," *The Churchman* 32 (July 1918), 436–42.
110. I. Shaw, *Pandemic: The Spanish Flu in Australia, 1918–1920* (Sydney: Woodslane Press, 2020).
111. "Holy Communion: Are Individual Cups Legal? Anglican Opinion Differs," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 14 November 1921, 3.
112. "Anglican Synod: The Individual Cup," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1922, 9.
113. *The Use of "Individual Cups" in the Service of Holy Communion in the Parish of Wahroonga* (Sydney, 1921), 25, copy at Moore College, Sydney.
114. Read, 65.

responding to the challenge of new learning "by obscurantist appeals to authority and tradition."[115] By contrast, Anglican evangelical advocates of individual cups were surprisingly quick to accept the revelations of bacteriology as part of the "laws of God" and often embraced the latest medical theories without hesitation. Again, this belies their reputation as doctrinaire obscurantists who were inherently hostile to the results of modern scientific research.

As this article has shown, Archbishop Davidson also appealed to modern medical science — rather than to church law or doctrine — in his quiet resistance of individual cups. Yet the science was fiercely contested. Following the global influenza outbreak, Edward Culverwell (fellow of Trinity College, Dublin) urged in 1920 that the Church of England must prepare for the next pandemic by reviewing its communion policy. He recommended that the chalice should be wiped after each communicant with sterilised cottonwool, rather than with an unsterilised napkin.[116] Davidson reacted, as usual, by consulting a leading medical professional — this time Sir Thomas Barlow, another former president of the Royal College of Physicians.[117] The archbishop reassured Culverwell with his standard line of defence, that according to the leading doctors the risk of drinking from the common cup was negligible compared to "sitting in an omnibus or railway carriage or taxicab."[118] Culverwell retorted that such "ex cathedra" pronouncements were worthless and that the Church of England needed to face up to the "objective truth" of scientific data.[119]

Davidson's strategy of downplaying public anxieties, refusing to make formal pronouncements, and devolving decisions to local dioceses, had the desired effect of dampening reformist fervour. Unlike in 1908, at his second Lambeth Conference in 1920 there were no debates or resolutions about Holy Communion. Although the British Medical Association's public health committee was under pressure to make a judgement on the common cup in 1924, they resolved (after back-channel diplomacy with Lambeth Palace) to leave the question to the churches, lest they "offend the religious susceptibilities of a very large number of individuals."[120] Under Davidson's leadership, the vast majority of Anglican parishes retained the common cup and, as a result, individual cups became synonymous in the public imagination with Nonconformity. There were some notable exceptions, however. On Easter Sunday 1926, a correspondent for the *Morning Post* visited St Paul's, Portman Square, one of London's best-known evangelical congregations, where the vicar, John Stuart Holden (1873–1934), chairman of the Keswick Convention, preached to a packed congregation for half an hour and used individual cups at Holy Communion.[121] The *Church Times* rebuked Holden's cups as "quite obviously incompatible with the idea of sacramental Communion." It suggested that Anglo-Catholics departed from the Prayer Book only "with the backing of Catholic precedent," but Anglican evangelicals seemed to do so "out of sheer personal eccentricity."[122] That autumn, octogenarian Philip Fyson (1846–1928), former Bishop of Hokkaido in Japan, then living in retirement in Kent, appealed to Davidson to issue a public statement about individual cups.[123] But, as always, the archbishop declined to be drawn into the controversy, calculating that the agitation was now a diminishing force.[124]

115. "Communion Cup," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 October 1922, 7.
116. Edward Culverwell to Davidson, 4 February 1920, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 339.
117. Archbishop's secretary to Thomas Barlow, 5 February 1920, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 340.
118. Davidson to Culverwell, 14 February 1920, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 341.
119. Culverwell to Davidson, 16 February 1920, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 342.
120. Public Health Committee minutes, 14 March 1924, British Medical Association Archives, B/294/1/11. See also, correspondence of T. W. Pym, February–April 1924, Davidson Papers 383, fols. 346–50.
121. "The Churches of London," *Morning Post*, 12 April 1926, 5.
122. *Church Times*, 16 April 1926, 455.
123. Philip Fyson to Davidson, 3 September 1926, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 351.

A few prophetic voices reckoned that Anglicans would eventually catch up with the global trend by adopting individual cups or intinction as standard. The modernist theologian Ernest Barnes (1874–1953), Bishop of Birmingham, declared in 1928: "I am sure that a growing sensitiveness to hygienic standards will in the end lead us to give up the use of a common cup."[125] However, the common cup persisted in the Church of England. Intinction was the most popular response to chalice anxieties, especially in Anglo-Catholic circles. A new rubric endorsing the practice, only when strictly necessary "through grave danger of infection," was inserted in the revised Prayer Book, one of Davidson's last acts as archbishop — though the book was twice thrown out by a Protestant-minded House of Commons in 1927–1928.[126] A decade after Davidson's retirement, his successor Archbishop Lang in 1939 commissioned a confidential report on chalice hygiene in preparation for the next Lambeth Conference, which focused entirely on the latest medical wisdom, with no doctrinal, legal, or liturgical commentary. It included a statement from Sir Thomas Barlow, retracting his previous reassurance to Davidson that the common cup was low risk, and urging the church authorities to take action.[127] When the Lambeth Conference did eventually convene in 1948, after the Second World War, it endorsed intinction as an "optional alternative" to the common cup "where conditions require it," marking a significant policy shift in global Anglicanism.[128]

In subsequent decades, anxieties over chalice hygiene burst into life again during major health scares, such as the AIDS panic in the mid-1980s,[129] the Swine Flu outbreak in 2009–2010,[130] and the COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020s. Church of England debates and episcopal decrees over the permissibility of intinction or individual cups remained emotionally charged and theologically freighted. However, as this article has shown, it was the opening decades of the twentieth century which decisively shaped Anglican attitudes to the common cup in the new bacteriological age. Davidson's quiet diplomacy during his long archiepiscopate — focusing on medical necessity and local discretion, while deftly deflecting doctrinal or legal questions, and eschewing public controversy — had an abiding impact on the Church of England's eucharistic identity.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

124. Davidson to Fyson, 24 September 1926, Davidson Papers 383, fol. 354.
125. F. A. Iremonger, *Men and Movements in the Church: A Series of Interviews* (London: Longmans, Green, 1928), 143.
126. "An Alternative Order for the Communion of the Sick," *The Book of Common Prayer … The Book of 1662 with Additions and Deviations Approved in 1927* (unpublished, 1927), 283, copy at LPL, H5147.4.
127. *The Hygiene of the Common Chalice* (Saffron Walden: Talbot Press, 1939), copy at LPL, WA602.C6.
128. Resolution 118, in *The Lambeth Conference 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, Together With Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1948), part I, 53.
129. *Is It Safe? The Chalice and AIDS* (London: Terrence Higgins Trust, 1986); R. Hovda, "AIDS Hysteria and the Common Cup: Take and Drink," *Worship* 60 (1986), 67–73.
130. C. Buchanan, "Individual Cups? Law, Ecclesiology and Eucharist," *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 12 (2010), 219–23.