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FROM SAMUEL McFARLANE TO STEPHEN DAVIES: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE TORRES STRAIT ISLAND CHURCHES, 1871-1949

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In 1915 the London Missionary Society in Papua gave up spiritual jurisdiction over its three thousand Torres Strait Island converts in northern Australia and, in a wholesale territorial cession characteristic of the cavalier imperialism of the age, entrusted its churches to the Anglican bishop of Carpentaria. Until then, the Islanders had been Congregationalist converts accustomed to the rule of patriarchal Samoan pastors and the simple chapel services of the LMS. However, in the words of the British anthropologist A. C. Haddon, the Islanders “speedily became interested in the new ritual” of the Church of England and “went over without a murmur.”

This article examines the weakening of LMS strength before 1915. It argues that the transfer was eased by the resentment toward Samoan autocracy as well as the growing authority of Queensland government officials whose sympathies lay with the Anglican church rather than with the LMS. In particular, it analyzes the subsequent process of religious transformation during the long episcopate of Stephen Davies, third bishop of Carpentaria (1922-1949), and discusses the present legacy of Polynesian Congregationalism that lingers in the island churches of the Torres Strait.

On 1 July 1871 a party of eight teachers from Mare and Lifu in the Loyalty Islands, under the leadership of the Reverend Samuel McFarlane of the London Missionary Society, landed at Darnley Island to begin a mission to the Torres Strait Islands. At the time of the landfall at Darnley, there were between four and five thousand people living on the Strait’s twenty inhabited islands. By the seventies; the Strait’s rich resources in pearl and trepang (*bêche-de-mer*) were attracting commercial interest,

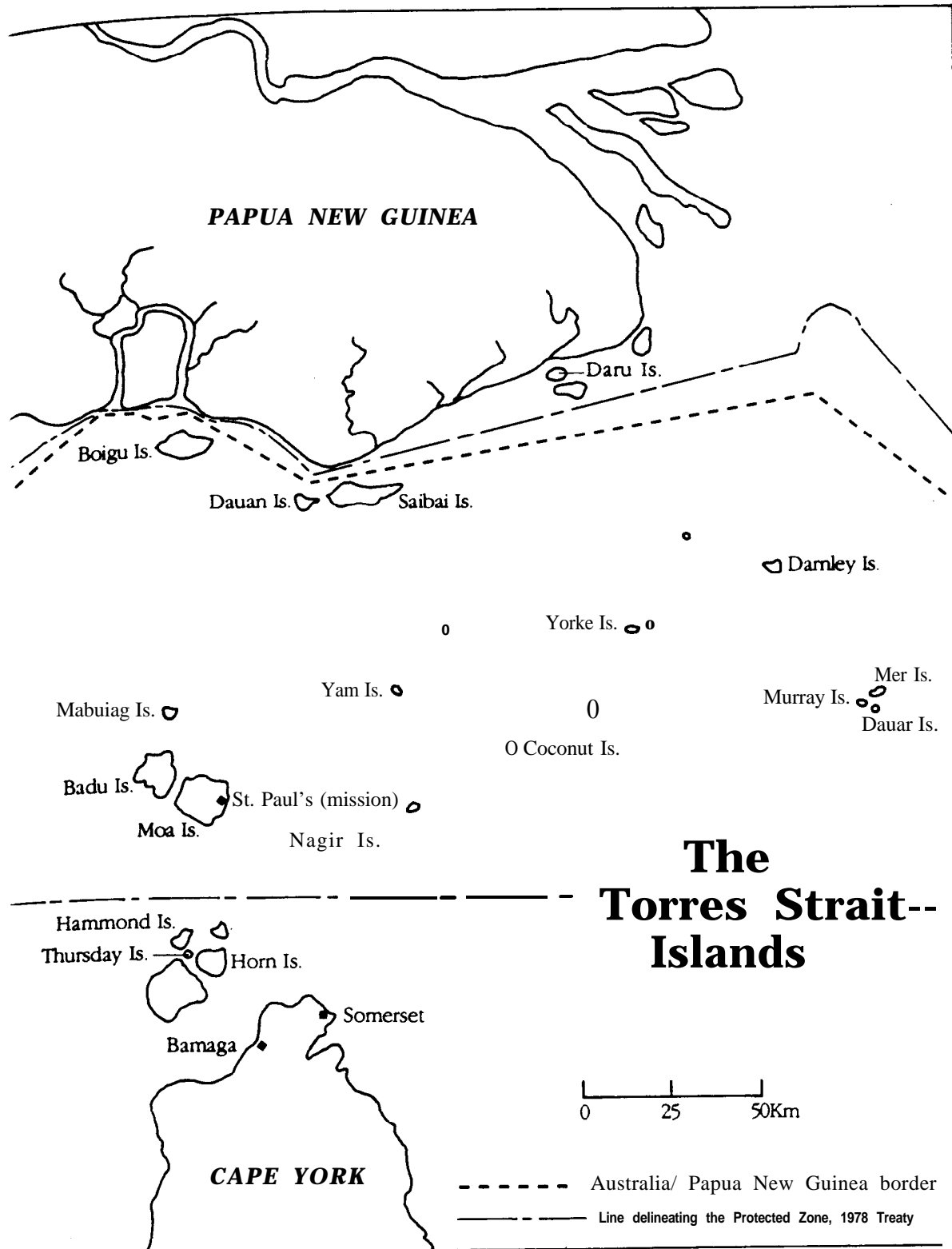
and pearlivers and trepanners were fishing extensively in its waters.' The origins of these pearlivers were diverse: Torres Strait and South Sea islanders were joined during the final quarter of the century by Australian Aboriginal and Japanese divers. Some South Sea Islanders, notably seamen from Rotuma near Fiji, intermarried with Strait women and had some influence on island culture in the Strait.

McFarlane, a Scottish engineer-turned-evangelist, regarded the Strait Islands as "another Iona" that could be used as "stepping stones" for the mission he hoped to establish in New Guinea.² McFarlane believed the mainland of New Guinea to be unfit for permanent European residence. Vexed, too, by the difficulty of living under French restrictions on the Loyalties, McFarlane and his veteran colleague A. W. Murray had decided to move to the Strait. The male teachers, and their wives would be dispersed to various islands, and a "Papuan Institute" for training Torres Strait Islanders would be built on Murray Island, following the example of McFarlane's institute at Chepenehe on Lifu. A second party of Loyalty Islanders came in 1872, accompanied by a pioneer band of Rarotongans, including wives, who settled at Redscar Bay on the Papuan mainland.

From 1877 the original Loyalty Islanders in the Strait began moving seven hundred kilometers eastward to the new LMS mission outposts McFarlane was establishing in the Milne Bay area of eastern New Guinea. Their places were taken by pastors from the Cook Islands and Samoa whose first party arrived in 1883. Samoan pastors managed the LMS congregations in the Strait for over thirty years until the First World War.

Illness and death dogged McFarlane's Loyalty Island teachers from the start. Some succumbed to fever; four were massacred. The death rate among their wives too was appallingly high. Yet footholds were established on Darnley (teacher Guceng), Yorke (Siwene and Waneg), Mabuiag (Waunaea), Dauan and Saibai (Locat, Elia, Tepesa, and Kerisiano), and Murray (Mataika and Josaia).³ Taken to Papua in order to "get the start of [i.e., preempt] foreign settlers," as A. W. Murray put it, Loyalty Island teachers also settled briefly near the Bineturi River not far from Daru. Still believing it was courting death for a white man to live in New Guinea, McFarlane preferred to remain at Somerset, on Cape York, and later chose the "Papuan Institute" on Murray Island as his home.

However, when further acquaintance with coastal New Guinea by the LMS missionaries W. G. Lawes (arrived 1874) and James Chalmers (1877) showed that, although New Guinea had an irksome climate, it



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was quite possible to live there, the idea of using Murray Island as a mission center for the whole of New Guinea was abandoned. Lawes and Chalmers became critical of both McFarlane and his methods. The newcomers' comments on A. W. Murray's "rose colored glasses" and of McFarlane's varnished accounts about his New Guinea exploits provide a glimpse of the divergence between them: "You know that Mac stands at the portals and only occasionally looks in," wrote Chalmers.⁴

With the disappearance by death or resignation of the forty-five Loyalty Islanders,⁵ followed by McFarlane's retirement from the mission in 1886, the focus of LMS work shifted at last from the Torres Strait to New Guinea. Thereafter, the Torres Strait LMS mission lapsed into a state of stagnation tempered by dispute. McFarlane's English successors E. B. Savage and A. E. Hunt failed to work in harmony, the institute at Murray Island collapsed, and the islands became merely the outstations of the "western and Fly River branch" of the mission. The sole representatives of the LMS were Samoan and Ellice Islander pastors.⁶

Nevertheless, chapels had been established, and for Torres Strait men, work on pearling luggers now alternated with a life of fishing, gardening, and church going, Torres Strait Island converts now bore biblical names such as "Isaac," "Samuel," "Ephraim," and "Jacob," conferred by the pastors. They sang hymns written in the vernacular by Loyalty Islanders and Samoans to tunes that came from the English Nonconformist tradition. Samoan and Rotuman hymns were characterized by a two-part harmony with the parts moving independently, the parts sometimes in antiphon and sometimes overlapping.⁷ In addition to other secular tunes, they sang songs taught by Samoan pastors and Rotuman pearlmen. The Islanders had also learned a repertoire of Polynesian dances: the Samoans had been anxious to eliminate what were regarded as objectionable features in Torres Strait choreography and, as substitutes, had introduced Samoan "sitting down dances." By the turn of the century, club dances from Tana (Tanna) in the New Hebrides could also be seen in the islands, as could Rotuman dances, which were known generally as the "Taibobo."⁸

Songs and dances were incidental to the spread of Christianity, and the LMS brethren in New Guinea were reproached by visitors for the partial failure of their pioneer mission. Certainly, the LMS could point to the chapels that had been constructed on a number of islands, the mission vessel built on the slipway of the "Papuan Institute" on Murray Island, and the translation of the four gospels by A. E. Hunt into the language of the eastern islands, which is known as Miriam. But such visitors as the Cambridge anthropologist A. C. Haddon and Sir William

MacGregor, first administrator of British New Guinea, had been shocked at the contrast between the glowing accounts of mission work in McFarlane's book *Among the Cannibals* (1888) and the shabby reality.⁹ Brave words by McFarlane about the Torres Strait being a "firm footing" and the "key to the interior" of New Guinea, where young men were "entering and taking possession in the name of Christ,"¹⁰ were considered by the late eighties to be nothing more than the vaporings of the founder's imagination.

It would be wrong, however, to ascribe the weakness of the Torres Strait mission to McFarlane alone. In Britain, there had been a gradual slide in LMS missionary support from its summit of influence in the 1860s and 1870s. The "Forward Movement," launched in 1895 to mark the society's centenary, had failed to arrest the decline. Hence the "glorious results" couched in the mid-century language of triumph by Murray and McFarlane seemed to a newer generation of missionaries like Chalmers to belong to a vanished age. Still younger candidates for LMS service in the South Seas were placing little emphasis on the Atonement and giving a greater role to the social consequences of the Incarnation of Christ, clearing plantations, building up industrial missions, working amongst orphans, and speaking less certainly of hellfire.¹¹ The modern Evangelical missionary movement that had fueled the South Seas missions from the late eighteenth century was on the wane.

An Anglican Foothold in the Strait

While Evangelical Nonconformity faltered, the Anglican dioceses in Australia were beginning to plant their own outposts in the Torres Strait. At first the Church of England in Australia had reflected the lethargy and weakness of church life in early nineteenth-century Britain. This was certainly the case in the Moreton Bay settlement, which became part of the self-governing colony of Queensland in 1859. But, once a bishopric had been established in Brisbane in 1860 under Bishop E. W. Tufnell and strengthened by his successor, Bishop M. B. Hale, the clergy were found organizing congregations and building wooden churches in North Queensland. This activity increased in the wake of the gold and silver discoveries at Ravenswood (1868), Charters Towers (1872), and the Palmer River (1872-1873).

More than to any other cause, the extension of the Church of England to the Melanesian population of the Torres Strait owed its origin to the mineral boom in North Queensland. So rapid was the influx of white population and wealth to the "El Dorado" of northeastern Australia

that the Anglican church in far North Queensland was expected to become predominantly European and self-supporting. As a commentator on the church in North Queensland wrote laconically, while the gold boom period lasted, the Australian continent, like a ship, "developed a temporary list to the northeast, during which everything and everybody tended to roll in that direction."¹² An ambitious stone Anglican church with side aisles and clerestory windows was begun at Thursday Island in 1890. C. G. Barlow, bishop of North Queensland (1891-1902) began collecting funds for a Church of England diocese that would include the ports of Thursday Island, Cooktown, and Port Douglas.¹³ With nearly £9000 collected by Barlow toward a bishopric endowment, Gilbert White, archdeacon of North Queensland, was consecrated first bishop of the Diocese of Carpentaria in 1900.¹⁴

The new bishopric encompassed some six hundred thousand square miles, or one-seventh of the land area of continental Australia. Carpentaria was more a geographical expression than a diocese. Claiming to be the fourth largest Anglican diocese in the world, Carpentaria consisted of the Cape York peninsula north of Cairns, the Gulf country, and the whole of the Northern Territory. Alice Springs in central Australia was included. The islands of the Torres Strait, staffed by Samoans and still under LMS auspices, lay within its boundaries.¹⁵ When White arrived at Thursday Island, the total population living within the borders defined for his diocese included some 16,500 Europeans; 7,400 Chinese, Japanese, and Melanesians; and an Aboriginal population estimated at about 35,000. There were only four Anglican priests besides the bishop to minister to this scattered population. Their work was to be financed largely by the endowment. It was expected that Carpentaria would depend for further financial support upon settled European parishes in the towns and that the growing port of Cairns would be ceded to Carpentaria by the Diocese of North Queensland and would provide considerable income for the new diocese.¹⁶

Until 1915 only one Anglican settlement existed in the Torres Strait Islands, at Moa Island thirty kilometers northwest of Thursday Island. In 1901 the federal parliament of the new Commonwealth of Australia had decided to deport the Melanesian laborers, or Kanakas, from Queensland in order to maintain a white Australia. Following petitions from Melanesians resident in Queensland and protests by church leaders, a royal commission recommended that those Kanakas who had been in Australia for over twenty years or who had purchased certain areas of land should be permitted to stay.¹⁷ From 1908 Melanesians totaling about seventy-five, including twenty-five children, settled near

the village of Wag on Mea-- the original population having been scattered by pearl shellers--and Gilbert White sent Florence Buchanan to be their teacher. In 1999 the five hundred acres set aside for the Anglican settlement, known as St. Paul's reserve, was increased to two thousand acres.¹⁸ Florence Buchanan, who was called the "Apostle of Moa," endured much suffering until her death in 1913. She used to write on her school blackboards, "One King One Flag One Fleet One Empire."¹⁹

Apart from St. Paul's mission to the Queensland Melanesians on Moa Island, then, all mission work in the Strait was still Congregational. For twenty years the LMS in Papua had agonized over the future of its decaying stations begun by McFarlane and the Loyalty Islanders. In 1903 the New Guinea District Committee had decided to recommend to the society's directors in London the transfer of the Torres Strait churches to the bishop of Carpentaria.²⁰ The LMS held freehold land on seven islands. It was represented at that time by nine pastors--six Samoans and Ellice Islanders and three Torres Strait Islanders. The pastors and Islanders had built eleven churches, some of them fine buildings of lime and coral.²¹ Annual visits were paid by the LMS missionary resident on the Papuan coastal island of Daru near the Fly River. In addition, the Papuan Industries, an offshoot of the LMS in New Guinea, was operating in the Strait, one of its objects being to enable Islanders and Papuans to engage in pearling and planting. The Reverend F. W. Walker, formerly of the LMS, and his brother Charlie had established the headquarters of the Papuan Industries on Badu Island near Moa in 1904.²²

Handing Over

The LMS felt compelled to hand over its mission to the Anglicans in 1915 for three reasons. First, there was continuing friction between the Samoan pastors and the state schoolteachers settled on six of the islands by the Queensland government. The role adopted by the Samoans in the Torres Strait and New Guinea was influenced by the Evangelical traditions of British dissent. Masks, paintings, and carvings of various types were assailed, because they were held in Old Testament teaching to be an offense in the eyes of God. In 1879, before the coming of the first Samoan pastors, some of the Polynesian teachers had joined Samuel McFarlane on Murray Island for a "ceremony of burning the idols."²³ The pastors were acting on lessons learned during their mission training in Polynesia. But the pastors' pattern of behavior was also grounded in their Samoan background, and it is probable that nonmission influences

were at work as well in shaping their responses to Torres Strait Island culture. For, beneath the religious training of the pastors was what Norman Goodall described as a characteristic mode of reaction to certain demands and loyalties, incompatible with any other culture, known as the *fa'aSamoa*, the "Samoan way."²⁴

A serving pastor in Samoa was referred to as the *feagaiga*, a word meaning literally a "contract" or "covenant." The implication was clear: the people undertook to recognize the position of the pastor and respect it; the pastor agreed to recognize the position of the chiefs.²⁵ In short, the village *faifeau* (pastor) was given a position regarded as appropriate for one responsible for the spiritual welfare of the villagers. As in Samoa, so it was in the Torres Strait. The Samoan missionaries expected and received presents during the annual "Mei" (May) mission collections, organized by the Samoans to heighten interisland rivalries and thus produce the maximum show of generosity to the church. In the Ellice group, also a Samoan missionary dependency, the position of the pastors appears to have been the same. The description of the Samoan pastor at Funafuti given by Mrs. Edgeworth David in 1898 seems to typify also the Samoans in the Strait: "He gives himself a few airs, lords it, in fact, over king, magistrate, and natives just like an old-fashioned rector-squire in a country parish in England."²⁶

However, the European schoolmasters appointed by the Queensland government represented a rival source of authority to the Samoans in the islands.²⁷ The government resident, John Douglas, had complained about the tyrannical regime of the Samoans but until the turn of the century had lacked the funds to replace them.²⁸ The appointment of the Queensland teachers helped precipitate a confrontation with the Samoans, dividing the pastors from some of their younger converts. For example, a government teacher on Yorke Island, a Mr. Connolley, quarreled with the Samoan pastor Samuela. It was reported that in March 1914 Connolley entered the LMS church and interrupted the service to tell the people the pastor was a liar. The teacher is said to have called out: "There is no God. All the missionaries are telling you people lies. If there is a God, why does he not heal your sick? I give you medicine and that makes you well, but there is no God to help you."²⁹

Moreover, through the work of the teachers, the young Islanders were gradually becoming better educated than their Samoan mentors, whose faulty English was beginning to be the object of mimicry by some young Islanders. On Murray Island in particular, the position of the Samoan pastor Finau was made more difficult by the administration's appointment of a court of justice on the island. The court consisted of police-

men and chiefs known as *mamooses*, with the schoolmaster J. S. Bruce as guide, At the same time, pastor Finau set up a court in opposition to the Queensland government court. Under the church court, pastor Finau levied fines for disobedience and appointed about twenty of his own magistrates, also called *mamooses*. Then John Douglas set up a Murray Island council representing the districts of the Murray group under the sanction of his own authority as resident.³⁰ Thus, there were other bodies-- teachers, councillors, and *mamooses*--competing with the Samoan pastor for leadership, and it was evident that the Samoans had ceased to command the respect of Torres Strait Islanders to the extent they had earlier. A similar rivalry also soured Queensland-Samoan relations on Saibai Island.

The second reason for the capitulation of the LMS in the Torres Strait was administrative. The society was understaffed in Papua and could not provide a European superintendent, while the Anglican church on Thursday Island was anxious to expand into the islands and possessed the means to do so. Finally, the applying of the Commonwealth Navigation Act to Papua from 1914 would administer the coup de grace to the LMS: for tariff purposes Papua would be severed administratively from Australia including the Torres Strait. This legislation would force the LMS ocean-going steamer *John Williams* to enter the Strait at Thursday Island for customs clearance and leave for Papua in the same way, It would also force a local missionary leaving Murray Island for Daru Island, a few hours' sail away in Papua, to clear customs first at Thursday Island, a journey of some four hundred additional miles.³¹ Being "tied hand and foot" by government regulations, the superintendent E. B. Riley advised the LMS from Daru that "owing to the attitude of the Government towards the Anglican Church being so different from that towards our own brethren," the interests of the Torres Strait Islands would be "best served" by the transfer of the district to the bishop.³²

Riley's claim is supported by evidence. Not only did the government residents mediate the influence of the Queensland government, but they had personal reasons to favor the Anglican church. John Douglas, former premier of Queensland (1877-1879), was resident and police magistrate on Thursday Island (1885-1904). Douglas had been North Queensland's diocesan spokesman at the general synod of the Church of England in Australia and Tasmania in 1886 and was a member of the Carpentaria diocesan council. Hugh Milman, his successor (1905-1912), was the nephew of a notable dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London as well as brother of an Anglican bishop; and W. Lee Bryce, the third resident (1912-1916), was an Anglican churchwarden and a mem-

ber of the diocesan council.³³ Moreover, the military garrison set up on Thursday Island in 1895 to operate the artillery battery used the cathedral for military services known as church parades.

The Queensland government officials may have been sympathetic, but most LMS missionaries in Papua were still loath to cede a Nonconformist district to an Anglican bishop. So the LMS vacillated. As late as 1911 the LMS mission staff in Papua had voted £600 for the erection of a large LMS headstation house at Darnley Island. One LMS missionary pointed out to his brethren that the bishop and his clergy were "very high," and another, asserting the Anglicans to be "unsuitable," wanted the Salvation Army to take over the Torres Strait churches. This dislike was felt in the highest quarters. The foreign secretary of the society, R. W. Thompson, wrote to the resident missionary on Darnley Island of his regret that the Queensland government, allegedly under the influence of the Anglicans, was unwilling to hand over its schools to the LMS. "I confess I was not surprised," Thompson went on, "because when it comes to the scratch the Anglican Church and the brewers and opponents of all kinds generally have more voting power than we and our friends."³⁴ Offering for sale the society's aging vessel *Niue* to the Anglican Gilbert White when cession seemed inevitable, E. B. Riley was inclined to thumb his nose in the direction of the purchaser: "I put £10 on the price because he is a bishop."³⁵ To the LMS brethren, the prospect of handing over the fruits of Nonconformist sacrifice to a mitred High Churchman was, to say the least, unpalatable.

It was more acceptable to the Torres Strait Islanders than to their LMS district missionary. In March 1915 Bishop Gilbert White traveled around the Strait on the auxiliary schooner *Goodwill* with F. W. Walker of the Papuan Industries.³⁶ "We will teach the younger people our ways," White wrote, "but we shall have to remember that the elders will naturally cling to the customs to which they have been used, and we shall not press them unless they themselves want to be confirmed to join the church." The Samoan pastors would remain at their posts until the LMS could provide for their removal to Samoa. A. C. Haddon reported a communal swing among the twenty-four hundred Islanders to the new religion: "The people went over without a murmur and at once began to follow the form of the English church service, so different from the simple services they had been used to. . . . The result was that instead of being Congregationalists whose public and domestic piety greatly impressed me, the natives suddenly became Anglicans and speedily were interested in the new ritual and vestments."³⁷

A few details had to be settled. The lime and coral churches would be

enlarged for liturgical purposes, with chapels, side aisles, and ambulatories. Deacons (“decona”) of the Congregationalist order would be metamorphosed into church wardens and required to recite the daily office with the priest, a custom that long persisted in many islands. The Book of Common Prayer began to make its appearance, and before long five hundred candidates were being prepared for confirmation.

There were a few isolated ripples. Saibai Island pearl shellers informed mainland Papuans some years after the transfer that the LMS were “not real missionaries, but simply forerunners . . . preparing the way for the advent of the real minister who would give them the true word”; Papuan pearlshellers collected £80 for the building of a church of the “new religion” at Mabadauan in western Papua. The resident LMS missionary was annoyed.³⁸ On the whole, however, the transfer from Nonconformist to Anglican had been harmonious, a process aptly caught in the name, the *Goodwill*, of the vessel carrying the bishop and Walker around the Strait.

Consolidation

The sudden transition from a Congregationalism emphasizing “the glorious undifferentiated gospel of God” to High Church Anglicanism could not have been accomplished without Islander consent. This consent seems to have been given readily, partly because of growing resentment toward the Samoan pastors. While some Samoans were esteemed, all the pastors were “fond of power,” as John Douglas once remarked, and some were despotic.³⁹ In the instance of Pastor Finau on Murray Island levying fines for disobedience and appointing his own “magistrates,” the presence of a rival European authority possessing greater prestige had then led to conflict. According to Murray Island leaders, the traditional Murray Island priest-headman Passi had become “fed up” with Samoan restrictions, and Gilbert White’s tour had come “just in time” to prevent widespread disaffection from the Christian church on Murray Island.⁴⁰ The Miriam-speaking people of Mer revered family headship, and elders were greatly respected. A hereditary priesthood had held sway over the densely populated Murray island group (eight hundred to one thousand people in the contact period). The island of Waier in the Murray group had been reserved exclusively for the priests of Waier, who visited it for feasting and preserving the dead. The priests, or *zogo-le*, of the cult, known as Malu-Bomai, had been largely suppressed, at least in public, by the Samoan pastors. In Waier, their departure was not regretted.

That the Islanders seemed prepared for the new regime is suggested in a Saibai elder's speech to White in 1915: "We are like children who have lost their father and mother. We do not know what to do or where to look. You will be our father and show us the way to go and how to live."⁴¹ At Saibai, a cargo prophet had appeared, warning the villagers of the "New Messiah" soon to arrive in the islands.⁴² This prophecy was an offshoot of the "German Wislin" movement, whose doctrines had first been announced two years before White's visit and which had become an organized movement in 1914. The cult devotees anticipated the coming of ancestors bringing money, flour, calico, and other goods; their leaders were three men who became known as "German Wislin" and were called "generals" or "captains." It had been predicted that the millennium would begin on Good Friday, 1914; when it did not materialize, the day was postponed, then postponed again. It was reported that a steamer would tie up at a jetty that would rise out of the sea next to Saibai. The cult had been strongly opposed by the LMS Samoan pastor on Saibai.⁴³ It is possible that the bishop's arrival on the *Goodwill*, while the cult was still at its height, may have been viewed as a fulfillment of the cult leader's prophecy. Until more anthropological research has been completed, the historian must rest content with only a partial understanding of the reason for the welcome given to the Anglicans on Saibai Island.

Not long after the changeover, White resigned and Henry Newton, who had been a missionary in British New Guinea from 1899, was elected bishop of Carpentaria.⁴⁴ Once enthroned in October 1915, Newton became concerned about how to minister to the islands. Some of the islands had a population of not more than fifty, and the priests would necessarily require something to do besides their religious duties. Newton decided to create an indigenous Torres Strait ministry, with a priest on every inhabited island, who would support himself with his own gardening and fishing. Presiding over the Islander priests would be the "priest director" of the new mission; and J. J. E. Done, known in the Islands as "Baba" or "Father," arrived in the Strait to occupy that position from 1915 to 1917.⁴⁵ Done was succeeded in 1917 by the Reverend W. H. MacFarlane, welcomed initially by Islanders under the mistaken belief that he was the returning son of the LMS mission founder.⁴⁶ Newton opened a small theological college on Moa in 1916, and the first four Islander men were admitted for training.

Unlike the Samoans, the Anglicans tended to be sympathetic to traditional Torres Strait custom, and on islands such as Murray, episcopal rule rekindled family leadership after many years of Samoan suppres-

sion. The hereditary priestly leadership on Murray, the Malu, received an impetus when Poey (Tauki) Passi, the grandson and heir of the last *zogo-le*, began studying on Moa Island for ordination. As Dave Passi, Poey Passi's son, said, the clerical orders of the Anglican church were regarded by many Murray Islanders as the "fulfillment" of the Malu hereditary priesthood.⁴⁷ Kabay Pilot, a later student for the Anglican priesthood, was a descendant of the priest-chiefs of nearby Darnley Island. In 1919 Poey Passi and part-New Hebridean Joseph Lui were made deacons on Thursday Island; in the mid-1920s Passi and Lui were ordained as Anglican priests.⁴⁸

Government control was greater by the time Torres Strait Islanders ceased to belong to the Nonconformist allegiance. The colony of Queensland had asserted its jurisdiction over the Cape York islands with the establishing of the outpost of Somerset in the 1860s, but it had not annexed such islands as Saibai until 1879 and had only nominal control in the Strait until about 1885. After 1904, when Torres Strait Islanders were declared subject to Queensland's Aboriginal Protection Act of 1897, a virtual cordon was thrown around the Islands to limit the movement of their dwindling population. The cordon would also prevent settlement in the Torres Strait Islands by Europeans, South Sea Islanders, and Japanese. Even if the government could not be rid of the Torres Strait Islanders resident on Thursday Island, Islanders were to be kept out of "T.I." as much as possible and segregated within the Torres Strait "reserve." The Anglicans established a South Sea Islanders' home on Thursday Island, where, as Bishop Henry Newton put it in 1915, "boys could have a place to sleep free of charge away from the temptation to drink and gamble, and [have] a bible class every night." While bishop of Carpentaria, Newton had urged the appointment of a protector of Islanders with almost absolute power but also with deep understanding and sympathy. In the Torres Strait Islands, he himself fulfilled the role in no small measure.⁴⁹

Politically regulated from Thursday Island and instructed by Queensland state schoolteachers sympathetic to the church, the Melanesians were quickly absorbed into the Anglican fold. In fact, the Torres Strait mission became something of a diocesan showpiece, a miniature "diocese" in itself. However, Murray Island was proud of its reputation as an independent community, and it is significant that, though some outstanding clergy came from Murray Island, it was the island the government and the Anglican church always found the least tractable. As one government official put it, the Meriam people of Murray were the Irish of Torres Strait, with a long tradition of resistance to colonial authority.

There was in later years a continuing attraction to a corybantic form of Pentecostalism at Murray and Darnley, the islands farthest removed from the offices of the resident as well as those of the bishop.⁵⁰

By the time Newton had resigned to return to New Guinea as bishop in 1921, a clear pattern of religious development had emerged. The Islanders had undergone cultural changes at the hands of the British and Samoan agents of the LMS. There had been considerable musical enrichment through the songs and hymns of the Loyalty Islanders and Samoans, and Islanders had abandoned many precontact dances in favor of a repertoire of Polynesian dances. Many Islanders now bore biblical names. They had received a Congregational church polity grafted by the missionaries. They had endured a fairly strict autocracy under Samoans. There had been some Torres Strait intermarriage with various South Sea visitors: the prominent Mills, Nona, and Hanken families bore witness to part-Samoan origins. The mass of the Torres Strait Islands under the LMS, Gilbert White had written, had "not only become Christian in name, but also to a very large extent in practice."⁵¹ It is noteworthy that the first Torres Strait clergy, Poey Passi and Joseph Lui, had originally been "commended" to the Anglicans by the society. In turn, the fonts, pulpits, and altars raised by Anglicans in memory of the LMS pioneers showed that the Anglicans were adopting McFarlane, Chalmers, and the Loyalty Islanders as their founders. Finally, the anniversary of the LMS landing, 1 July 1871, was celebrated from 1919 as the festival of the "Coming of the Light": "Everything possible linking up with past days is being carefully preserved," wrote the Reverend W. H. MacFarlane to the LMS directors.⁵²

Stephen Davies

This was the mission inherited by the Right Reverend Stephen Harris Davies after Newton's brief six-year episcopate in Carpentaria.⁵³ Under Davies, whose term at Thursday Island spanned a prodigious twenty-eight years, the monarchical tendencies demanded of a bishop of an Anglican missionary diocese increased. Davies was an autocrat. A thin, gaunt man, whose ascetic leanness seemed increasingly to underline the burdens of office, Davies sometimes came close to despair at the trials of the Australian north. Since he occupied the bishopric of Carpentaria far longer than any other bishop before or since, his personal authority deserves closer scrutiny.

In the Torres Strait his first act as bishop was to excommunicate a Murray Islander, and he began at Mitchell River Mission on the Gulf of

Carpentaria by excommunicating four Aborigines. Fifty Anglican converts were excommunicated in the first two months of Davies's episcopate in a severance that, in Anglican churches in New Guinea and the Strait, was carried out with the solemnity of bell, book, and candle.⁵⁴ The mark of Davies's episcopate was authority.

According to his only son, Davies's spiritual model was molded after early Celtic monks who cultivated a self-denying solitude in their rocky British outposts.⁵⁵ The description of the Islands as "another Iona" by LMS founder McFarlane is strikingly appropriate. As a personality, Davies was self-assured and aloof. These traits are scarcely surprising considering Davies's background. His childhood had been spent in a rectory in Shropshire, a county scarcely touched by the industrial revolution and in whose villages squire and rector were often neighbors. The young Davies, moreover, had been not only the rector's son but nephew of the squire as well, having the freedom of the adjoining hall, with its copper beech-shaded gardens and croquet lawn. There were nine children. Apart from two killed during the First World War, one of his brothers served during the war as a doctor in an Indian hospital in Mesopotamia. Another, Vice Admiral Sir Arthur Davies, was chief of staff of the British Atlantic Fleet between 1924 and 1927. A tea planter brother in Assam and the bishop completed the Davies family circle.⁵⁶

Davies accomplished short-distance visits to the Strait communities in the twenty-one-ton *Francis Pritt*, the sixteen-ton *Herald* (replaced in 1939 by the *Torres Herald*), or the eight-ton *Banzai*. He was away from Thursday Island in the Islands and the Gulf of Carpentaria much of the year once the wet, or "Nor'west," season of the early months had passed. Like his admiral brother, Davies was a good seaman and, when in residence, a genial host to officers and crews of the Royal Australian Navy visiting Thursday Island.⁵⁷ His assurance of authority was reflected in his first visit to the Mitchell River in 1922, when older members of the staff were interrogated regarding "the aims of their industrial work": Davies concluded that "they did not seem to have thought out their position."⁵⁸ What the older staff members thought of their new diocesan's forthright questions is not recorded. However, in the Torres Strait Islands, a society conditioned by traditional respect for clan heads overlaid by forty years of Polynesian authoritarianism, the people seemed to have adapted easily to Davies's rule. On visits the bishop was welcomed by banners saying "Hosanna to the Son of David" to the accompaniment of Evangelical hymns of the LMS. He walked on woven mats to his receptions, a postcontact tabu of Polynesian origin, for a chief's feet must not touch the sand. Years after his episcopate of

nearly thirty years ended, there were many Torres Strait Islanders for whom a question under dispute was settled by the saying "Lord Bishop, im bin say!"

Yet it would be incorrect to describe such behavior in the Strait as obsequious; displays of deference to authority by Islanders appeared confident and self-possessed, recalling similar displays by Fijians to high chiefs. Of Davies's pontifical visitations as Lord Bishop of Carpentaria, a European priest wrote many years later that Davies adopted this hierarchical grandeur "because it was desperately demanded of him."⁵⁹ To his staff Davies appeared simple and unaffected. An Australian teacher in the diocese who stayed with Davies at Bishop's House said that the bishop had "no pomp about him."⁶⁰ The initiative for the display of episcopal rule was taken by the Islanders, whose society of chiefly deference was easily accepted by one accustomed to rectory and hall in county England.

The Island converts, then, came beneath the authority of the bishop and the immediate ecclesiastical control of his delegate, W. H. MacFarlane. However, while the bishop remained a spiritual monarch, the Islanders were also involved to an extent in the decision-making processes of the church, a leaven that may have owed something to their Congregationalist nurturing. From 1923 a series of conferences of Torres Strait LMS "decona," or deacons, known as churchwardens in the Anglican system, met under Davies's direction at St. Paul's mission on Moa. Undoubtedly the Congregational precedent of local church order contributed to the effectiveness of such conferences. The chairmanship of the Reverend Joseph Lui was also significant, for it was said that, in addition to Lui's evident "sense of vocation," he "could also show firmness and direction when required." At the first conference the churchwardens discussed the question of higher education for their children and the matter of "church dues," the mission contribution that had its origins in earlier LMS "Mei" mission collections. The churchwardens' conferences became a familiar institution in the Torres Strait.

By this time, the churches in the Torres Strait were becoming symbols of local pride. In a society where church buildings surpassed all others in grandeur, the imposing size of an ecclesiastical structure reflected the municipal spirit of a community. Plain LMS chapels, originally given biblical names from 1871 such as "Bethel" (Badu), "Etena" or Eden (Mabuiag), "Salom" (Yam), and "Panetta" (Saibai), were rededicated in honor of saints. The huge Evangelical pulpits that had dominated their interiors were dismantled, and the timber was used for altars.⁶¹ Walls were rebuilt to take in Anglican additions of sanctuary, chancel,

baptistry, vestry, and side chapels. Arches leading to side aisles were common for overflowing numbers; in this way Panetta chapel at Saibai was expanded to seat five hundred at the renamed Church of the Holy Trinity. A lime-making technique copied from LMS South Sea teachers was to hew coral blocks from reefs at low tide and pile the coral into fire pits for a fortnight. Church interiors had to be richly ornamented, so polished shells --spotted cowrie and pearly nautilus--were set into upper walls and altar rails.

The size of such newly built churches as on Moa (1931) and Badu (1933) also reflected interisland rivalry. When Moa's new church was begun, the five hundred Badu villagers, traditional enemies of the nearby Moa people, insisted that the length of their new church must outstrip that of Moa's. Most Island churches, however, were not new buildings but old chapels rebuilt. Darnley Islanders, proud that their island had first seen the "Coming of the Light," created the most intricate facade in the Strait. Over the LMS-built Zion chapel, an enlarged structure was decorated with turrets and renamed All Saints Church. A craftsman from Rotuma fashioned its altar cross and lights from polished red wongai wood and inlaid the work with mother-of-pearl. Portraits of Samuel McFarlane and James Chalmers were placed in the vestry to remind first-generation Anglicans of the mission's founders. Finally, the building was decked in garlands of frangipani and dedicated by Bishop Davies to the booming of wooden drums. Major Raven-Hart, author of a widely circulated book on the Strait, wrote that All Saints put in mind a scaled-down imitation of a Spanish church, "a miniature, doll's size cathedral . . . a perfect gem."⁶² Though Anglican ornamentation of such churches as Darnley's All Saints had sometimes been of baroque weight, the severe outlines originally planned by their Nonconformist builders remained easily recognizable.

The historian of the neighboring Anglican Mission in New Guinea described the period from 1910 as the "golden age" of the Melanesian village. In the Strait the description "golden age" fitted well the theocratic communities molded by Bishop Davies's clergy. No village epitomized these communities better than St. Paul's mission village on Moa in the mid-twenties. The community of St. Paul's, with the nearby villages of Kubin and Pethin, was based on intermarriage between indigenous women and Queensland Melanesians. Moa appeared frequently in the official literature of the diocese. The island was topped by Mount Augustus (Moa Peak), sometimes shrouded in mist; its lower hills sloped down to the white beaches of the southeast, where the red roofs and romanque outlines of a newly built church with theological college

showed through the coconut palms. At the landing the vegetation was cleared in front of the monument to Florence Buchanan. Behind the monument the full apparatus of a theocratic community was revealed: dispensary, boarding school and girls' hostel with "high school class," church building, and clergy house. The master builder, Junius Schomberg, was also the priest, filling the role of manager, bookkeeper, and recorder; as the *Carpentarian* reported with some understatement, "Many of his tasks do not belong to his priestly office."⁶³ The land of St. Paul's was legally under the joint custodianship of the Queensland resident on Thursday Island and the bishop, who was trustee for the Queensland Melanesians. Like a medieval prelate, the bishop was empowered to convene courts for certain civil as well as ecclesiastical offenses, a power he rarely exercised.⁶⁴ This oversight by state and church was mediated by a policeman and three church council representatives, each wearing a red jersey emblazoned with the word "councillor."⁶⁵ At the small theological college, St. Paul's, the first ordinations took place in 1924, when two St. Paul's men, Captain Oth and Sailor Gabey, were made deacons.

Situated near Thursday Island and opposite the progressive community on Badu Island, Moa was better fitted for energetic advance than some other groups in the Torres Strait. Moreover, Moa's commercial prospects were enhanced by the example of F. W. Walker's Papuan Industries company worked by the Badu pearlers. Through a large store on Badu, the Papuan Industries bought marine produce from the Moa Islanders, selling foods and other consumer goods in exchange. A primary objective of Walker's company was to assist groups of Islanders to buy or build their own luggers, though only one or two luggers were ever built on the Badu slipway. Soon many Island communities in the western group had bought their own boats. Inspired by the P.I., the Moa Fishing Company was formed under the eye of the priest director of the Strait in 1925. The companies were financed by worker-shareholders in a venture described approvingly in mission publications as "communistic." The company was a portent of a more explicitly socialistic venture begun on the mainland toward the end of Davies's episcopate, the Lockhart River Co-operative. During the brief life span of the Moa Fishing Company (1925-1932), the diving and fishing expeditions yielded varying profits for shareholders. Rifts between clans contributed to the decline of the company after a promising beginning.⁶⁶

The Torres Strait people were generous to their churches, supporting them with a mixed subsistence-and-money economy. Churchwardens were meeting to discuss common problems, and an Islander priesthood

was emerging. For their first curacies, Strait clergy were normally sent as “missionary” chaplains to mainland Aboriginal settlements, particularly to the Edward River people, whom Davies lightheartedly referred to in the diocesan newsletter as “the wild men of the Diocese.” Torres Strait teachers and clergy were paid from an annual grant by the Australian Board of Missions in Sydney, supplemented by local offerings from pearl shell profits won by divers on the luggers.

In some ways, Carpentaria’s offshore Torres Strait mission was beginning to fulfill the principle embodied in Henry Venn’s mature nineteenth-century vision of a self-supporting and self-propagating church. So, by the late twenties it seemed to Davies that Islanders should take counsel in a self-governing Carpentaria diocesan synod. In 1931 seventeen European and Islander delegates (twelve clerical, five lay) met on Thursday Island under the authority of the bishop. No representatives of Aboriginal settlements were present. The distances involved in traveling from parishes and missions to biennial diocesan synods were staggering and often prevented attendance at subsequent synods from such parishes as Alice Springs and Darwin. But Melanesian clergy from the nearby islands were always prominent.⁶⁷ The synods were examples of joint Melanesian and European decision making in action. Like the Diocese of Carpentaria itself, they were without equal in other Anglican missionary enterprises in Africa and the South Pacific before 1939. The seasoned participation by Melanesians from the Strait in these assemblies must be added to the other legacies bequeathed by the Congregational founders of the Strait churches to their Anglican successors.

Synods on Thursday Island provided occasions for reappraisals of church and sometimes government policy. Concerned to preserve harmony between church and state, Davies rarely criticized publicly the Queensland government’s performance on Aboriginal issues. In correspondence with the Pearl Shellers Association from the twenties, the bishop pointed out that in many cases Moa men were worth more than the minimum wage; in 1924 he interviewed Crown law officers and a federal parliamentarian to complain about “the wages question.” There was a police action at Cowal Creek on Cape York in 1928, after which Davies gave the magistrate a chance to clear himself by arresting the policeman concerned. But Davies used the 1935 synod to make a trenchant attack on the “Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Amendment Act” passed in Brisbane in the previous year. He called it “an infringement of the rights of citizenship possessed by some of the coloured people of Queensland.” This was reflected in a synod motion urging the federal government of Australia to strip Queensland

and other states of power over Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and to assume control of all Aboriginal people within the Commonwealth. Such resolutions mirrored the dominance of the bishop in carrying the Carpentaria synod with him. The motion was later unsuccessfully proposed by Davies to the Queensland provincial synod of the Anglican Church in 1935.⁶⁸ A few months later, during a four-month strike by Torres Strait trochus divers in early 1936, Davies wrote to the governor of Queensland suggesting that the system of payment, which entailed a deduction by the protector, was among the major causes of the strike.⁶⁹

Drought, Cyclone, and Depression

One reason why the bishop remained monarch of the diocese was the declining European population of northern Australia. Carpentaria had been originally created as a diocese whose income was expected to come largely from white settlements; but steadily and inexorably these settlements were beginning to become ghost towns, and Carpentaria was becoming more Melanesian and Aboriginal in character. Between 1910 and 1930, for example, the populations of Cooktown and Croydon-Normanton in the Gulf declined from 900 to 250 and from 2,200 to 450, respectively. Where Gilbert White had confirmed five times the number of Europeans as he had Aborigines and Islanders, Davies's confirmations showed an opposite bias: of 375 persons admitted by Davies to full membership in 1935, for example, only seventeen were of European descent. Such a reverse was to be expected when the settled ministry once existing in Cooktown and the Gulf towns of Georgetown, Burketown, and Normanton had shrunk with the European population. In 1927 Davies had taken away the service registers from Christchurch, Cooktown, after the resignation of the last resident rector, Henry Matthews. He was "convinced that church life was finished there." As for Darwin, whose population did not decline but showed sturdy indifference to the church, Davies made an entry concerning the parish priest in his diary for 12 May 1924: "Heard from I. L. Skelton that he wishes to leave Darwin, is this place fit for any Priest; a Jeremiah alone could endure." Skelton left the diocese in 1925.⁷⁰

Not only did the loss of European population increase Carpentaria's reliance on the bishop, but it also highlighted the Torres Strait Islands as the sole center of measurable progress in the Anglican church. The Depression compounded the financial slump reflected in the continuing decline in the European population. In 1931 the Australian Board of

Missions cut its grant to New Guinea and Carpentaria by 20 percent and the diocese's overdraft limit was reached quickly. By November missionary stipends, including the bishop's, could not be paid. Cables to London brought some emergency funds from the Carpentaria Association in England, but some European staff had to be dismissed to conserve money. The effects of the church's evaporating reserves lasted throughout the thirties and made it impossible to augment staff. At Thursday Island's All Souls' cathedral, William Burvill was obliged to combine a plurality of offices: subdean, vicar, surrogate, and diocesan registrar (1930-1940).

"A Jeremiah alone could endure," Davies had written of Darwin. It could have been a comment on Davies's relations with some of his diocesan staff. As one writer observed in the 1960s, what has been ascribed to autocracy in Davies, the aloof prelate, may have been partly due to exasperation. The impossible shortages of equipment and sometimes vile climate, with its wet and dry seasons, brought out the worst in certain of Davies's staff. The notable Australian photographer Frank Hurley, commissioned by the Australian Board of Missions to make a film of the mission in 1920, had been reduced to a state of peevish inertia within two months of arriving in the Strait.⁷¹ As for the permanent staff, the same writer later wrote with acid verve of Davies's less successful workers: "SO many of the missionaries sent up to him bore some resemblance to their New Testament prototypes described by St. Paul as 'the offscourings of mankind.' All types of misfits and neurotics unconsciously hoping to receive from primitive and unsuspecting natives the adulation denied them by their more sophisticated compatriots were sent to him over the years. The bishop did not suffer these fools gladly."⁷² Such acerbity is unkind, but it bears witness to the blame that powerfully motivated workers heap on one another for collective failure. There were some major personality clashes in the Torres Strait. One result was the increasing emphasis placed by Bishop Davies on local Islanders as church leaders, who were at least acclimatized and, in the words of one commentator, "less likely to throw the jam tins at each other in the monsoon." Pity trod on the heels of exasperation, and whatever their limitations, Davies always supported his European staff when they were in difficulties or under criticism.⁷³

While the European part of the diocese atrophied, life in the Melanesian churches of the Strait prospered on a mixed subsistence-and-trochus economy. Voluntary labor, enhanced by shell earnings accumulated during the twenties, had enabled building programs to continue during the Depression, even though the relative prosperity in pearling

had come to an end in 1930. The Reverend E. J. Taffs, rector of the European town of Mossman, had to wait twenty-five years to rebuild his church demolished in a cyclone in 1911; but in the Strait during the fifteen months after January 1933, Davies found himself in a busy round of church openings: dedicating new theological college buildings on one island; opening a rebuilt church seating five hundred on another; and laying the foundation stone for a new church on a third. For the latter, St. Marks at Badu, he used a trowel with its haft made of dugong tusk and its blade of polished turtle: a thousand Islanders were in attendance. The church was of cathedral-like proportions. Graced by cool arches, it was built in two years by Islanders under A. G. Harris, an overseer whose salary they paid; and in spite of the recession in the trochus industry, the £999 promised by the three villages to complete the structure was paid up. The altar at Badu was built as a memorial to the Reverend F. W. Walker, Congregationalist founder of the Papuan Industries (an irony, since as a Nonconformist, Walker had been explicitly forbidden by Bishop Newton and his successor to take communion at an Anglican altar).⁷⁴ The prosperity of Anglican life in the Strait was not confined to church buildings. "In every island," wrote the diocesan historian, "there was a branch of the Heralds of the King, while the Mothers Union was established on most of the islands." There were also flourishing branches of the Boy Scout movement, with annual camps under priestly leadership,

This activity was accompanied by ritual even more elaborate than previously: the use of incense from 1922; daily cathedral celebration of the Mass under subdean Burvill from 1932; stations of the cross from the mid-thirties, with liturgical processions carrying incense through village lanes in the islands, often led by young trepangers in vestments. It was not for nothing that the Diocese of Carpentaria was reckoned part of the "biretta belt" of Anglo-Catholicism permeating much of northern Queensland. Marked by an increasing use of ritual, there was a general buoyancy in church life in the Strait during the thirties.

What had happened in Carpentaria before the Second World War is without parallel in missionary dioceses of the Anglican Communion. In 1900 Carpentaria had been founded as a diocese whose income was to be drawn mainly from white settlements; but drought, cyclone, and depression had done their work, and the Europeans were withdrawing. By the thirties, the settled parish population in all its towns except Darwin and Thursday Island had virtually ceased to exist. In their place, as the *Carpentarian* remarked, a "coloured" population that could live at a lower standard than the whites was "thriving and

increasing.” In spite of the European facade to Carpentaria’s synods, in the years leading to the Second World War Carpentaria had become more and more a missionary diocese.⁷⁵

Evacuation

In February 1942 Japanese forces raided and bombed the city of Darwin. Troops had been stationed at Darwin and Port Moresby in Papua from 1941, and in early 1942 women and children on Thursday Island were evacuated on the S.S. *Wandana*, with the men following. They were allowed one suitcase for each family.⁷⁶ On Thursday Island, a proclamation was issued by the commander of the Torres Strait Force declaring an area within a hundred-mile radius of Thursday Island an emergency area. Bishop Davies, who had left in 1941 to attend to his ill wife and child, had appointed the Reverend W. J. A. Daniels (1930-1946, 1955-1958) as subdean of the cathedral and was cut off by the evacuation of European civilians from Thursday Island. The European priest at St. Paul’s, Moa, fled, leaving his Torres Strait staff in charge.⁷⁷ The bishop set up the diocesan registry in Townsville, his house on Thursday Island having been taken over as army headquarters. In both Thursday Island and Darwin, houses and churches were looted by hoodlums, many of whom were members of the Australian armed services. Of the 234 houses taken over by the army on Thursday Island, only 103 remained standing at the end of the war. The small cathedral organ, installed in 1941, disappeared without explanation while the troops were in control of the island. Darwin’s stone church, which Davies had threatened to demolish rather than allow the army to use, was also looted. At Moa, St. Paul’s College was closed and the theological students joined the eight hundred men of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.⁷⁸

During the three years of hostilities, the Reverends Poey Passi, Kabay Pilot, and Francis Bowie ministered to the Torres Strait congregations, Joseph Lui having died in 1941. At Kubin village on Moa, on a night before the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, a number of Islanders claimed they saw what they described as a vision of Christ in the sky above Kubin, with his hands outstretched in blessing and protection. News of their “vision” soon spread, and the Islanders took it as a special sign to them that their islands would be safeguarded. The only islands in which direct action took place were Hammond (Aada) and Horn (Laforey). The vision at Kubin was later portrayed on canvas in the reredos in All Souls’ Cathedral, where the Australian artist Cohn Tress

painted Christ crowned and with arms outstretched over the islands of the Strait.

The first three postwar Torres Strait ordinands, Boggo Pilot, Kiwami Dai, and Sagi Ambar, were ordained deacons in 1949, the year Davies ended his long episcopate.⁷⁹ Davies had inherited a diocese devastated by cyclone in the twenties and brought to bankruptcy in the thirties. A good deal of the remainder in the see town was destroyed not by Japanese armies, but by Australian troops. Mrs. Davies and her son Stephen did not return to Thursday Island following the war, and the bishop lived alone. As Stephen Davies recalled, his father's last years were lonely ones. A poignant picture of Davies after the Second World War was provided by an admirer, A. P. B. Bennie: "To see him wracked by cardiac asthma, bent with pain and alone in his ruinous episcopal house was pathetic. For he had forbidden any repairs whatever to be made to it until the dwelling of every single member of his staff, whether white or coloured, was sound and serviceable."⁸⁰

On retiring in 1949 Davies left his successor a report on conditions in the diocese and the clergy. Davies bequeathed several troublesome clergy: two Torres Strait Islanders who had been ordained together in 1936 were "badly prepared" and had deserted their posts; he would not advise that either man be restored. Some of Davies's clergy had benefited from the routine term for Island priests served among Aborigines on the Queensland mainland. Among these priests who received praise was Kabay Pilot, the son of the last pre-Christian priest-chief of Darnley. Another, Francis Bowie, of mixed Malay-Badu Island parentage, was "the best of Native Clergy." Francis Bowie, Davies added, "has great authority and power with both mainlanders and Islanders."⁸¹

"Authority and power" might be Davies's own epitaph, confirmed by the Torres Strait Islanders saying "Lord bishop, im bin say!" W. J. A. Daniels echoes these testimonies to the third bishop's strong episcopal identity: in Daniels's words, Davies was "a bishop in every sense of the word." That is: "He knew his people, he understood them, what he said was law and the people respected him. They always sought his opinion, even after they had seen [Mr. Cornelius O'Leary,] the Director of Native Affairs."⁸² As for the Torres Strait Islanders' response, it was most strikingly revealed during and after the Islands' maritime strike in 1936 in which the wage-earning Melanesians ceased work for four months in protest against low pay and the system of deductions made by the chief protector--a subject on which Davies had corresponded in the twenties. Three years after the strike, the chairman of the Murray Island council approached Davies unsuccessfully with the proposal that he assume

temporal as well as spiritual control of the Islands by becoming protector of Islanders himself.⁸³ It was an echo of Davies's predecessor Henry Newton, the bishop who had urged appointment of such a protector.

Postscript

If Carpentaria is more a geographical expression than a diocese, the evidence accumulated suggests that over the span of eighty years the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were able to use the religion left by departing white settlers as a beam of support in the bewildering sea of culture change then being thrust upon them. The resident Strait population, having risen steadily from the 1920s until the 1960s, declined again by 40 percent, from seven to four thousand in the twenty years before 1988; but the identity of its Christianized communities has remained extremely durable.

There has been a fragmentation of religious affiliation between Anglicans and Pentecostals in some eastern islands. In the eastern Strait many islanders, especially from Murray and Darnley in the eastern group, have migrated to mainland Queensland in search of work.⁸⁴ A feature of the religious adjustments hastened by migration to North Queensland has been the attachment of a minority of Islanders to various Pentecostal sects. The Pentecostal challenge to the Anglican monopoly (virtually all Islanders have been nominal Anglicans) arose from the conversion before the Second World War of an extended family group on Darnley to the Assemblies of God. There was also a lingering grievance that Darnley, scene of the "Coming of the Light," had not been given primacy as the choice of a site for the cathedral instead of Thursday Island. Within Darnley, relations between descent lines, fanned by religious exclusiveness, were sometimes so strained as to prevent the visiting diocesan bishop from saying Mass until the families promised to settle their differences.⁸⁵

While fragmentation occurred in some eastern islands and on the mainland owing to the encroachments of Pentecostalism, the pattern of monolithic Anglicanism was maintained elsewhere. In the western islands the Congregationalists-become-Anglicans have proved resistant to yet another conversion, to fundamentalist Pentecostalism.⁸⁶ However, the Anglican facade stamped on the western communities has not overwhelmed their sturdy Congregationalist independence. Residents of such islands as Badu, for example, have expressed their desire on occasions for their clergy to be elected by their own congregations rather than appointed by the bishop.

Pentecostalism has weakened the dual Congregational and Anglican heritage of some transplanted Islanders. But continuity rather than change has been the dominant feature of Torres Strait Islander religion. The Anglican churches framed on the chapels built by McFarlane's teachers remain the religious centers of gravity in the Islands. Viewed from the sea, the silhouette of each Torres Strait Island settlement is still topped by a cross.

NOTES

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Research for this article was originally undertaken for an eight-author reflective volume, on the history of the Church of England in Australia, 1788-1988. The volume was one of a number of projects commemorating the bicentennial of European settlement in the antipodes that remained unpublished. The work, an institutional history, was not intended to explore in depth the relations Europeans, Aborigines, and Torres Strait Islanders had with one another. However, further research is envisaged for a study of the manner in which Torres Strait Islanders sought to exploit and accommodate the incoming religious culture of missionaries.

1. Following the Spaniard Torres, who passed through the strait now bearing his name in 1606, visitors to the Strait included James Cook on H.M.S. *Endeavour* in 1770, the *Pandora*, which was wrecked in 1791, and then H.M.S. *Rattlesnake* (1848) and *Basilisk* (1873). These naval survey ships were followed by the investigations of A. C. Haddon's Cambridge Anthropological Expedition (1898), in which the Torres Strait Islands served as the world's first field of study for the emerging science of anthropology.

2. S. McFarlane to J. Mullens, Murray Island, 13 April 1878, LMS Papua Letters, Council for World Mission Archives, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London; microfilm in National Library of Australia [NLA] (hereafter cited as PL). His reference to Iona was to the island base that St. Columba of Ireland had established as a springboard for the evangelization of Britain. The first missionary to visit the Torres Strait Islands was an Anglican, William Kennett, who had accompanied the Reverend Frederick Jagg to found an Aboriginal school near the small military station at Somerset (1867-1868). The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in England made a grant available for work among the Aborigines of the north and the "Indians" in the Torres Strait Islands. Kennett visited the "Indians" of the Torres Strait to try to settle a feud between Mulgrave (Badu) and Prince of Wales (Muralag) islands.

3. A. W. Murray to J. Mullens, Cape York, 25 December 1872, PL. A brief description of some of the teachers together with their islands of origin appears in R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895* (London: Frowde, 1899), vol. 1.

4. J. Chalmers to J. L. Green, 29 March 1884, LMS Papua personal, box 1, PL.
5. The number forty-five includes teachers as well as their wives and children.
6. A. E. Hunt to R. W. Thompson, Murray Island, 26 July 1889, PL; J. Chalmers to R. W. Thompson, Port Moresby, 28 May 1891, PL; see also D. Langmore, *Tamate--A King: James Chalmers in New Guinea* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977).
7. J. Beckett, E. Bani, et al., *Modern Music of Torres Strait* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981), 2.
8. Ibid.
9. A. C. Haddon to J. Chalmers, near Cooktown, 14 April 188[8], PL; A. E. Hunt to R. W. Thompson, Murray Island, November 1888, PL; W. G. Lawes to R. W. Thompson, Port Moresby, 8 January 1890, PL; A. Pearse to R. W. Thompson, Kerepunu, 7 January 1889, PL. For a further description of the "Papuan Institute," see Nonie Sharp, *Torres Strait Islands, 1879-1979: Theme for an Overview*, La Trobe Working Papers in Sociology, no. 52 (Melbourne, [1979]), 70-71.
10. S. McFarlane to R. W. Thompson, Murray Island, 22 January 1884, PL.
11. See, for example, E. Pryce Jones to R. W. Thompson, Iokea, 6 December 1901, PL.
12. W. H. W. Williams, "Bishop Frodsham," in *North Queensland Jubilee Book, 1878-1928*, ed. J. O. Feetham and W. V. Rymer (Townsville: Diocese of North Queensland, 1929), 13.
13. This money was collected by Barlow in England during the Lambeth Conference of 1897. North Queensland Synod Book, 21 June 1894, Diocesan Registry, Townsville; *ibid.*, 9 February 1898, 31 May 1898, 31 January 1900; E. C. Rowland, *The Tropics for Christ* (Townsville: Diocese of North Queensland, 1960), 38-40.
14. White came from an Evangelical clerical family. He himself was a product of the Oxford Movement. The best known of his forebears was his eighteenth-century namesake, the naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne. He had some of the qualities required for a diocese like Carpentaria: The climate suited him, as he had originally left England for a warmer climate because of lung trouble. He had spent sixteen years in North Queensland, knew bush conditions, and would not be prone to disillusionment as might a bishop fresh from England. White was also steeped in the ascetic life and had begun a monastic "brotherhood of St. James" at the cathedral at Townsville. For a fuller portrait of White, see K. Rayner, "The History of the Church of England in Queensland" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland, 1962), 381.
15. *Ibid.*, 268. Subsequent attempts by White's successors to reduce some of this vast territory by ceding central Australia to the care of the Diocese of Willochra in South Australia were rejected by the metropolitan Diocese of Adelaide. *Carpentarian* 21, no. 13 (July 1931).
16. For White's first horseback tour of the continent from Darwin to Adelaide, see G. White, *Diaries*, 28 May-17 August 1901, Oxley Library, Brisbane (hereafter OL). The creation of a mission at Kowanyama on the Mitchell River by the Aboriginal James Noble and Ernest Gribble is recorded in Feetham and Rymer, *Jubilee Book*, 60-62.
17. See K. Saunders, *Workers in Bondage: The Origins and Bases of Unfree Labour in*

Queensland, 1824-1916 (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1982); see also D. Wetherell, "The Bridegroom Cometh: The Lives and Deaths of Queensland Melanese in New Guinea, 1893-1956," *Pacific Studies* 12, no. 3 (July 1989): 53-89.

18. G. Peel, *Isles of the Torres Straits: An Australian Responsibility* (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1947), 78-79.

19. J. King to G. White, 21 February 1908, Metoreia minute book, United Church Archives, University of Papua New Guinea (hereafter UCA). See also Gilbert White, *Thirty Years in Tropical Australia* (London: SPCK [Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge], 1924), 181, 190; and E. Jones, *Florence Buchanan* (London: Central Board of Missions and SPCK, 1921), which contains a photograph of Florence Buchanan with blackboard containing the words referred to above; K. Saunders, "Florence Griffiths Buchanan," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 7: 1891-1939, A-Ch. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979). See also J. Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders: Custom and Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 90.

20. H. M. Dauncey to R. W. Thompson, Port Moresby, 4 April 1914, PL.

21. LMS lands were on Badu, Darnley, Mabuiag, Masik, Murray, Saibai, and Yam islands. H. M. Dauncey to G. White?, Port Moresby, 22 October 1914, UCA.

22. F. W. Walker, *The Papuan Industries Ltd: The Appeal of the Backward Races to the Business Man* (London: Papuan Industries, 1912); J. Singe, *The Torres Strait People and History* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 110-111.

23. S. McFarlane to W. Mullens, Murray Island, 31 January 1879, LMS Papua Reports; Council for World Mission Archives, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London; microfilm in NLA (hereafter cited as PR).

24. N. Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 378-379.

25. For a discussion of the conflict between pastors from Samoa and the Ellice Islands and their English supervisors, see D. Wetherell, "Pioneers and Patriarchs: Samoans in a Non-conformist Mission District in Papua, 1890-1917," *Journal of Pacific History* 15, nos. 3-4 (July 1980): 130-154. The writer acknowledges the permission of the editors of the *Journal of Pacific History* to cite extracts from three paragraphs of this article.

26. Mrs. T. W. E. David, *Funafuti or Three Months on a Coral Island: An Unscientific Account of a Scientific Expedition* (London, 1899), 74.

27. John Stewart Bruce (died 1929), the first Queensland government teacher, had been appointed to Murray Island about 1893. A. C. Haddon, *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits* 6 (Cambridge, 1908), xviii. The inscription on Bruce's grave records that he had lived on Murray from 1881 with his father, brother, and brother's wife.

28. J. Douglas to J. Chalmers, Thursday Island, 27 November 1898, PL.

29. T. O. Harries to R. W. Thompson, *John Williams*, 8 April 1914, PL; see also J. Bayton, *Cross over Carpentaria: Being a History of the Church of England in Northern Australia from 1865-1965* (Brisbane: Diocese of Carpentaria, 1965), 56.

30. Haddon, *Cambridge Anthropological Expedition*, 6: 178-179.

31. Bayton, *Cross over Carpentaria*, 56.
32. J. Douglas to J. Chalmers, Thursday Island, 27 November 1898, PL; E. B. Riley to R. W. Thompson, Fly River, 9 July 1903, PL; Papua District Committee Minutes, 18-24 March 1914, PR.
33. White, *Thirty Years*, 218-219.
34. T. O. Harries to Royal Commission on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, Mabuiag, 24 June 1913; F. Lenwood to H. M. Dauncey, 18 June 1914; H. M. Dauncey to F. Lenwood, 22 August 1914, all in Metoreia House records, Port Moresby. R. W. Thompson to B. T. Butcher, London, 29 April 1910, Western Outgoing Letters, Council for World Mission Archives, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London: microfilm in NLA.
35. E. B. Riley to R. W. Thompson, Daru, 5 June 1905, PL; H. Milman to E. B. Riley, Saibai, 14 June 1905, Metoreia House records, Port Moresby.
36. F. W. Walker arrived in British New Guinea as an LMS missionary in 1888, resigned in 1896, formed the Papuan Industries in 1904 after further service with the LMS, and died in 1926.
37. The original version of this account, written initially about Murray Island by J. S. Bruce to A. C. Haddon (1915), is in the Haddon Collection of Cambridge University Library, envelope 1004.
38. Fly River District Report 1924, PR.
39. J. Douglas to J. Chalmers, Thursday Island, 27 November 1898, PL; see also Fly River District Report, 1898 PR; Haddon, *Cambridge Anthropological Expedition*, 6:79-81; see also Wetherell, "Pioneers and Patriarchs," 142-149.
40. B. T. Butcher to Queensland Secretary, Darnley Island, 10 August 1908, Metoreia House, Port Moresby; Dave Passi, interview with E. E. Hawkey, transcribed by David Wetherell, Brisbane, December 1983. The Murray Islands consist of Mer, Dauar, and Wajer, but when the group name Murray Islands was gradually abandoned, Mer became known as Murray Island.
41. White, *Thirty Years*, 214.
42. Lee Bryce to A. C. Haddon, Thursday Island, 30 September 1914, Haddon Papers, Cambridge University Library, envelope 24.
43. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 94-95. There seems to be no reason to accept Worsley's claim that the word "Wislin" is a contraction of "Wesleyan."
44. J. J. E. Done, *Wings Across the Sea* (Brisbane, 1987). White was translated to the new Diocese of Willochra in South Australia.
45. *Ibid.*
46. There was a brief interregnum following Done's transfer to other Strait work, with the Reverend G. A. Luscombe of St. Paul's, Moa, acting as priest director before MacFarlane's arrival. *Ibid.*, viii.
47. Father Dave Passi, pers. com., May 1991.

48. H. Newton, Diary, 11 February 1916, OL; H. Newton to H. H. Montgomery, Thursday Island, 19 December 1919, Bishop's House records, Thursday Island (hereafter BH). Passi and Lui descended from a common ancestor, Koit of Giar Pit, and, having the same great-grandparents, Kaisamo and Mogor, were second cousins. Father Dave Passi, pers. com., May 1991.
49. Singe, *The Torres Strait People*, 109; H. Newton to Secretary, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Thursday Island, 3 December 1915, BH; *Carpentarian*, October 1917. In June 1992 the High Court of Australia determined that Murray Island is not Crown Land but is in the possession of the Murray Islanders. The Meriam people, the court ruled, are "entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands." The court put to one side "the Islands of Dauer and Waier and the parcel of land leased to the Trustees of the Australian Board of Missions [Anglican]." With regard to the church, the evidence given to the Australian High Court by Father Dave Passi is similar to that cited in note 47, above. *Eddie Mabo and [others], plaintiffs and The State of Queensland, defendant: Order I High Court of Australia*, Canberra, High Court of Australia, F.C. 92/014.
50. A. P. B. Bennie, review of J. Bayton, *Cross over Carpentaria*, *ABM Review* (Sydney) 56, no. 3 (June 1966): 41-42, 52; Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*, 22.
51. G. White, *Round About the Torres Straits: A Record of Australian Church Missions* (London: Central Board of Missions and SPCK, 1917), 41.
52. W. H. MacFarlane to LMS Directors, Darnley Island, 9 March 1919, UCA.
53. The series of episcopal moves in Queensland that led to Davies's appointment in 1921 were initiated by the action of David Lloyd George, British prime minister (1916-1922). Lloyd George translated the archbishop of Brisbane, St. Clair Donaldson, to the bishopric of Salisbury in England. The Queensland bishops then elected Gerald Sharp, bishop of New Guinea, as Donaldson's successor in Brisbane. In turn, Newton of Carpentaria was elected to succeed Sharp in New Guinea, creating the vacancy in Carpentaria. In November 1921 Davies, who had been head of the Bush Brotherhood of St. Paul at Charleville, Queensland, was offered the bishopric of Carpentaria.
54. S. Davies, Diary, 23 April-28 July 1922, OL.
55. Stephen J. J. F. Davies, interview by David Wetherell, 1983, Melbourne.
56. Sir Arthur Davies, created admiral in 1936, was recalled in the Second World War as commodore of ocean convoys during the Russian campaign. *Sunday Mercury* (Shrewsbury, Shropshire), 23 June 1968; *Who Was Who, 1951-1960*, vol. 5 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964), 280-281.
57. The naval connections of the bishops of Carpentaria continued with the election of a former chaplain in the Royal Australian Navy, Hamish T. U. Jamieson, as seventh bishop (1974-1984).
58. S. Davies, Diary, 12 May 1922, OL.
59. A. P. B. Bennie, pers. com., 1985.
60. Doris Downing to Joyce Downing, Thursday Island, 12 May 1924, cited in J. Downing, *The Bridle Path: Doris Downing, Her Life and Letters* (Maryborough, Vic.: Joyce Downing, 1989), 10.

61. H. Newton, SPG report, 1916, BH. At the time of cession the Anglicans inherited the partly built LMS church at Mabuiag; they were able to persuade the Mabuiag people to finish their church in a style that accorded with Anglican liturgical practice, including the raising of the sanctuary, "as the floor was fortunately not completed' by the LMS. Gerald Peel, *Isles of the Torres Straits: An Australian Responsibility* (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1947), 80.
62. R. Raven-Hart, *The Happy Isles* (Melbourne, 1949), 75.
63. *Carpentarian* 30, no. 120 (October 1930); 27, no. 114 (April 1929); 37, no. 148 (October 1937).
64. For a reference to the church court of St. Paul's, Moa, see S. Davies, Diary, 1-11 May 1929, OL.
65. See White, *Thirty Years*, 182.
66. H. T. U. Jamieson, pers. com., 15 December 1983; *Carpentarian* 28, no. 114 (April 1929); 29, no. 118 (May 1939). A description of the young Bishop Davies as "a socialist" is found in an interview with one of his brothers in *Sunday Mercury* (Shrewsbury), 23 June 1968.
67. *Carpentarian* 43, no. 155 (July 1939).
68. S. Davies, Diary, 16 March 1922, 16 February 1924, 12 October 1928, OL. *Carpentarian* 31, no. 123 (July 1931); 37, no. 148 (October 1937); 25, no. 140 (October 1935); 25, no. 141 (January 1936).
69. S. Davies to Sir Leslie Wilson, n.d., cited in Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*, 52.
70. *Carpentarian* 21, no. 126 (April 1932); 25, no. 141 (January 1936); S. Davies, Diary, 13 August 1927, OL.
71. F. Hurley, Diary, 14 December 1920-15 February 1921, ms. 883, NLA.
72. A. P. B. Bennie, review of J. Bayton, 42.
73. Ibid.
74. H. Newton, Diary, 17 January 1916, OL.
75. *Carpentarian* 35, no. 141 (January 1936). Reports of the chief protector and of the Aboriginals Department indicate that the Islander population was 2,368 in 1913, rising to 3,765 in 1938, and 7,250 in 1960. Subsequent census figures suggest lower figures but record similar rates of growth in Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*.
76. W. J. A. Daniels to H. T. U. Jamieson, Clontarf, Queensland, 25 June 1977, in BH.
77. Ibid.
78. Bayton, *Cross over Carpentaria*, 166; *Carpentarian* 38, no. 155 (July 1939).
79. One of the three, the Right Reverend Kiwami Dai, was consecrated assistant bishop of Carpentaria in 1986.
80. Bennie, review of J. Bayton. Bennie further remarks that Davies's refusal was "magnificent."
81. S. Davies, Notes on Clergy, 1949, BH.

82. Cornelius O'Leary was protector of Islanders, 1936-1941; department head of Native Affairs, 1941-1953; and director of Native Affairs, 1948-1953. W. J. A. Daniels to H. Jamieson, Clontarf, Queensland, 22 April 1977, BH; see also J. Beckett, "Mission, Church, and Sect: Three Types of Religious Commitment on the Torres Straits," in *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania*, ed. J. A. Boutilier (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), 223.

83. Beckett, "Mission, Church, and Sect," 223.

84. Beckett, *Torres Strait Islanders*, 177-180.

85. E. E. Hawkey, pers. com., December 1983.

86. Asked by Bishop H. T. U. Jamieson (1974-1984) how the church should react to the coming of Pentecostalism, a priest on Moa tendered this terse advice: "If the Pentecostals [*sic*] come, My Lord, shoot them!"--an expression of the vehement reaction to the family disruption and fragmentation caused by new sects. H. T. U. Jamieson, pers. com., December 1983.