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# BLUEPRINT FOR A NATIONAL CHURCH

by

The Rt. Rev. Ian Shevill

Bishop of N. Queensland

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## PREFACE

This booklet was written at Miami, Florida, where the invitation of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in America had brought me to share in the National Convention of that church which is held every three years.

An estimated crowd of 9,000 people had gathered in Miami for this event and it was my privilege to address both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies on the work of the Church in Australia.

On this occasion I was also invited to witness the election of the new Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. A. C. Lichtenberger, and to be the bringer to him of Australian congratulations on his appointment.

Having spent the last two months in England giving some study to the organisational structures of the English Church, and now finding myself in the midst of such activity, enthusiasm, and organisation, I have retired to my room and am passing on to you some of the hopes and thoughts about our own beloved Church in Australia which bids fair to burst into national being in 1960.

+ IAN N. QUEENSLAND.

Miami, Florida.

October 13th, 1958

## A BLUE-PRINT FOR A NATIONAL CHURCH

**The Church of England is the largest church in Australia, and yet there are times when it does not appear to wield the influence expected of a majority church in any nation.**

This booklet is written in the belief that the cause of weakness is to be found in the present structure of organisation.

Forty million people belong to the Anglican Communion to-day. Three of these millions live in Australia, two in the United States of America, many more in England and some others in almost every nation on the globe. In other nations the Anglicans are organised in regional or national churches such as "The Church of the Province of South Africa," the "Holy Catholic Church of Japan," "The Protestant Episcopal Church of America" or the "Episcopal Church of Scotland," to mention but a few. This has not yet happened in Australia, but in 1960 it is hoped that the twenty-five Dioceses of the Australian Church will be welded together for the first time into a National Church, and this small booklet sets out to suggest ways in which this development may take place.

The primary unit in church organisation is—

**THE PARISH**, and this is of major concern to every Christian, for the Parish is the family of God's people in your town.

In England there are tiny parishes of forty people and very vast ones of over twenty thousand; America claims that five hundred people is the maximum and that an increase indicates that a new parish should be formed. In Australia insufficient research has yet been done to enable us to fix any such figure, but in most parts the parishes range from two thousand to twenty thousand or more souls.

**The prime duty** of the parish is worship, and for this purpose on Sundays and at other times of the week the people of God gather together in His Church to offer to Him the highest thing of which mankind is capable and that is worship.

So that the children may be rightly trained to carry out this vital function of their spiritual lives, there are Sunday Schools, lessons in Day Schools, and youth movements; and so that adults may more intelligently enter into this central scheme of man's existence, there are other groups such as the Mothers' Union and the Men's Society.

The real test of effectiveness of these things being—not “Do they keep people together?” or “Do they raise money,”—but simply “Do they help people to grow in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man?”

So that the setting for this essential work of the parish may be right, no effort will be spared to make the church a beautiful place as becomes the home of the Almighty and no effort will be spared also to see that worship is freed from the distractions of dis-order and ill taste which might deflect the parishioner from his prime purpose.

All this calls for the training of all who help with the worship—choirs, servers, and attendants, and of those who serve in the nave—the sidesmen and wardens, and of course it calls for a constant attention to cleanliness and order.

In order that things may be done fittingly, it will naturally cost something, and it cannot be denied that membership in God's Church is a costly business, for did not Our Lord give his own life that his children might live? A Churchman, apart from praying, will also wish to pay, and not casually, but in a planned manner, for God Almighty is not a person to be tipped like a waiter.

A Christian will seriously and prayerfully decide upon what percentage of his income he owes to God, for by his baptism a Christian is commissioned to do many things for which his daily work gives him little time . . . things such as healing the sick, caring for the orphans, or taking the gospel to the heathen. He deals with this problem, however, by offering to God each Sunday some of his life (which in crystallised form is money) and by putting this into the pierced hands of his Saviour, he knows that he is fulfilling his duty through the agencies of his church.

**A second duty** of a parish is to serve the community in which it is set, and therefore every time a parishioner does something to help his fellows in the town or district—God's family is doing its job.

At times a parish may undertake some community service such as running a kindergarten, providing baby-sitters from its youth group, or the women's guild may carry out catering functions, and all this is a significant part of “loving our neighbour as ourselves.” Very often too the clubs and guilds may serve a community need for fellowship—but if that is

their only aim, it is debatable whether the Church can afford the time and energy used to provide them.

**A third duty** of a parish is to see itself within the wider context of the Diocese, and the Church beyond, for by becoming introverted in their thinking, praying, and giving, many parishes become filled with spiritual spastics who are a very poor advertisement for Christianity. The Lambeth Conference hints and the American National Convention of 1958 states that a parish which does not give away half its income to the work of God over its own fence, contains within itself the seeds of decay.

The leader of all this activity in the parish, and the father of this family of God is the Rector or Vicar who has been chosen by God and set apart by His Church to devote his life to the salvation of his people. Like any other father, his concern is for the growth of his family; for its adequate housing in a worthy building, for its education in the faith, and for its nourishment through the sacraments of the church.

He may have great gifts as a preacher or organiser, or he may not, but he has given the gift of himself to his God and has received the grace of orders to strengthen him in his task. He will naturally expect the loyalty of his family, elder members of which will include the wardens and parish councillors, and they will give him all the advice and help of which they are capable.

The parish then is the basic unit, the family of God . . . and there is no such thing as a Christian living in isolation.

A parish, too, cannot live in isolation, it also must be part of a family.

**THE DIOCESE** is simply a family of parishes centred around the Bishop who is therefore called in the Prayer Book, “Rt. Reverend Father in God.” To the Bishop is given by the whole Church the responsibility of teaching the faith within his Diocese and every priest acts only as his deputy under licence; he also is the celebrant of all sacraments, his clergy acting for him by proxy.

The Bishop acts as the link between the parishes and the wider church representing each to the other and, of course, superintending those things which must be done corporately for the good of all the parishes.



A *Diocesan paper* brings news of parishes to each other, a *Diocesan education programme* brings skilled help to those who teach in Sunday School. *Diocesan Boarding Schools* provide a Christian setting for members of the family living in the country, a *Diocesan Registry* cares for a multitude of accounts and organisation, possibly a *Diocesan Bookroom* provides the parishes with the tools of evangelism, *Diocesan advisers* in matters of Law, Architecture, Music, or Missions are all there to give expert advice to parishes who need it whilst the *Diocesan programme* of Home Missions fosters the spearhead advance in the the evangelism of new districts.

All these are services provided corporately, and naturally they cost money and here the Diocesan Assessment enables every parish to pay its fair share in the corporate life of the Diocesan family. Each Diocese has its own constitution and canons which provide the legislature for every eventuality, and an oath is taken by the Bishop and all his clergy to abide by these canons for the good government of the Diocese.

Every Diocese, however, is only part of an even wider family and therefore expects to pay many thousands of pounds each year for things which are organised nationally for it . . . such as the evangelism of the non-Christians abroad.

Dioceses are generally gathered together into Regional Groupings known as **PROVINCES**, which are ruled over by an Archbishop who is a "*primus inter pares*" amongst the Bishops when they meet in council. In Australia the Provinces are co-terminus with the states\* and therefore the Provincial Synods are an important factor in church life for through them all the Anglicans in one state can express their point of view to the government of that state.

The Provincial Synod is therefore an important element in Church-Government relations especially when dealing with matters over which state governments have control such as education, social services and hospitals.

Provincial Synods are also convenient regional groupings to lay down policy in broad terms for large areas.

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\* Adelaide, Willochra and Tasmania are three Dioceses which are not included in Provinces; it is necessary to have four Dioceses in order to make a Province.

## THE NATIONAL CHURCH

At the top of this pyramid, at the base of which are the parishes, then the Dioceses, and then the Provinces, there comes logically the National Church whose spokesman is the Primate who is chosen from amongst the Archbishops of the Provinces.

In 1960 it is expected that the legislation will have been completed, and that the Constitution of the Church of England in Australia will be in force, thus allowing the Church of England in Australia to become a true entity in the life of the Australian Commonwealth.

For half a century Anglican statesmen have been working towards this end, and when it comes, the Church of England in Australia will no longer be a collection of twenty-five sovereign Dioceses, it will be a united body which has achieved federation half a century after the states themselves were welded into a Commonwealth.

As each state has certain independence and certain responsibilities within the Commonwealth, so will each Diocese continue its present programme of responsibilities and work . . . but just as the Commonwealth Government has certain powers and responsibilities, so will the new National Church be responsible for certain things which can be done better corporately than alone.

Let us now turn to a sketch plan for the National Church, noting that this will possibly only be the first of many, and also noting that many of the departments and agencies which will be required are already in existence.

The primary work of the National Church must be that of Evangelism both at home and abroad, therefore one of the first limbs to be grown by the church of the nation would be—

## THE HOME DEPARTMENT

Almost the first unit of such a department should be a unit of *Research and Evaluation*. This would be the unit which would produce the facts upon which the strategies for the future could be based.

We want to know how Church membership is keeping up with population increase; where church membership is increasing or decreasing and, where it is decreasing, why this is happening and how it may be checked.

We want to know what age groups the church is influencing most, least, and why.

We want to know where our ordinands and church leaders are coming from and upon these facts build our strategy of vocation encouragement.

We want to have before us a chart showing increase or decrease in Sunday school scholars, baptised persons, clergy, communicants and congregations arranged on both a national and regional canvass.

Only with this factual survey of statistics and trends before us will it be possible to develop a realistic and effective programme of home evangelism and only a National Home Department is in a position to gather such figures and present such a survey.

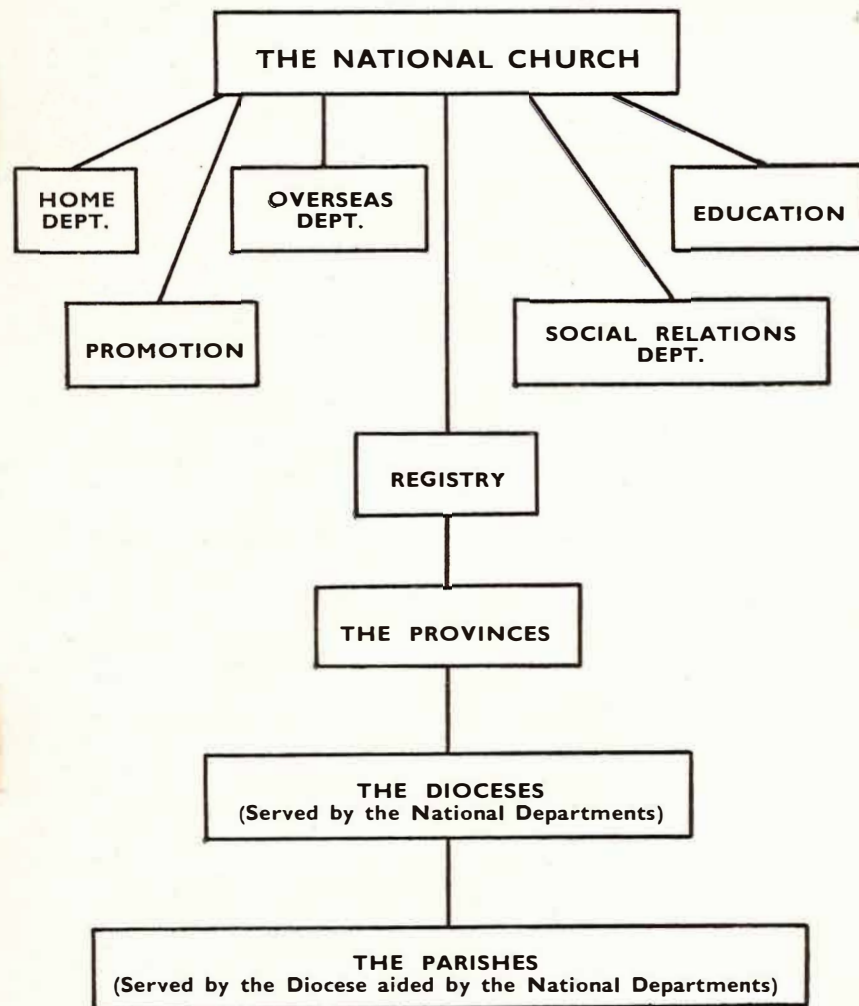
Here and there will be people who fear the revelations of such an objective approach but it is only when we know the facts that defects may be remedied and the stronger parts of the church help the weaker. Without such facts before us, we can but sketch certain sections of the home *Department*\* without evaluating priorities and importance.

*Inland Missions* will, of course, be a very important feature of this Department's work. Whilst other churches are organised nationally to evangelise the "outback" through such organs as the "Australian Inland Mission," the Church of England does this work in a sectional manner.

The Bush Church Aid Society draws a great deal of support from Sydney and Melbourne and carries out a wide programme of bush evangelism in Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales and other parts. One of the Bush Brotherhoods (The Good Shepherd) not only cares for its own bush folk in Bathurst but has also extended operations into the Northern Territory. Both these agencies draw a measure of national support, but in addition there are other agencies such as the Brotherhoods of Saint Paul (Brisbane) and Saint Barnabas (North Queensland) and the home missionary districts of other Dioceses whose work is limited and often frustrated through lack of any national support.

\* Such a unit can also render a vital service to parishes by being called in to advise on programme and development.

## STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH





It would be hoped that the unit of research would carefully survey this field so that the National Church might ultimately evaluate need and resources required.

In addition the Home Department would be concerned with *New Suburbs* and population trends. Great work is here at present being achieved at a Diocesan level by "Home Mission Departments" but there are occasionally extreme situations where a weak Diocese is suddenly faced with enormous expansion with which it cannot deal . . . and here the National Church has its responsibility.

The *Universities* are also a national problem, for their students come from Dioceses all over the nation. Many Dioceses have already managed to provide chaplains and some state governments are not unaware of their responsibilities in this direction but if chaplaincy work is to develop, it will mean the growth of centres and personnel and this may well be a responsibility in which the Diocese will have to turn to the nation.

*The Forces* are also a sphere in which chaplains are provided by Government Departments but again they need tools of trade and often buildings for their work and towards this need the Dioceses have been paying a small assessment for many years . . . once again it is a field which may be regarded as a National responsibility.

Other responsibilities of a Home Department will doubtless emerge as the Church grows but sufficient has been said to indicate the sphere of such an important organ in the body corporate.

## THE OVERSEAS DEPARTMENT

This department has been in existence for over a century for the National Church, speaking through its first General Synod in 1850, brought into being the Australian Board of Missions.

The A.B.M. exists to spread the gospel into those areas which are Australia's peculiar responsibility through her geography—the aborigines, New Guinea, the Islands of the Pacific and S.E. Asia.

At an equally early date, there was established in Australia a branch of England's largest missionary society, the C.M.S.,

which has undertaken evangelistic work in further fields such as Africa, India, the Far East and more recently in South East Asia, not forgetting again the Australian aboriginals.

These two missionary wings of the Australian church meet in the Anglican Missionary Council which was set up as a co-ordinating body by the General Synod and both work in even harmony with each other at the headquarters level.

Thus the Overseas Department already exists and the National Church will here have no new machinery to bring into effect.

## THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Once again, no new department will here have to be created, for the General Board of Religious Education has grown into one of the great organs of the Australian Church.

Like the A.B.M., it was established by the General Synod, but unlike the A.B.M., it does not receive very much financial aid from the Dioceses, depending a great deal upon the profit margin of its publications.

The G.B.R.E. provides graded lessons for Sunday Schools all over the Commonwealth, a training college for women workers, courses of study for Sunday School teachers, adults and ordinands and has recently been carrying out vital experiments in the new educational methods emanating from the U.S.A.

As a National responsibility, the G.B.R.E. will have to receive further help from the National church if it is to serve effectively in the challenging days ahead. The same must be said for the Australian College of Theology which again is a national responsibility.

## CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS

This is no new idea for the "Christian Social Order Movement" was brought into life some years ago by the General Synod unfortunately to die of inanition.

Therefore this work is being largely left undone.

Our Lord, however, commanded his Church to help the hungry, the stranger, the sick and those in prison and a programme of Christian Social relations will reflect the concern of the Church.

A ministry to the aborigines on the perimeters of our towns is necessary and often considered, but little is done; a ministry to the migrant peoples who are flooding into Australia, especially those members of churches in communion with our own, the development of a specialised ministry to the aged, a study of the problems of alcoholism, a study of the penetration of the church into the Industrial order, all require new concepts and methods for successful solution.

These are indeed national problems, and the Church in Australia should be playing its part in trying to solve them.

### **PROMOTION**

Once again this is no new thing, for the National Council on Promotion was established by the last General Synod.

Partly through its influence, Directors of Promotion have been appointed in many Dioceses and councils for Promotion have been set up where no director exists.

The need, however, of to-morrow is a strong department to guide the church whenever type meets paper, when press relations are needed and when radio and T.V. are to be used.

Promotion exists to communicate the Gospel and therefore might perhaps be better called "Communication." In the present age, this means the use of Radio, Television, Press and perhaps Drama, and each calls for highly skilled presentation.

As these media are very expensive both to use and maintain, a part of any National Promotion programme must be devoted to education in Stewardship.

The National Promotion Council looks forward to the day when an annual canvass, rightly promoted and well lead, is a regular part of every parish in the nation.

For some years the materials needed for such a programme have already been produced and many hundreds of parishes throughout the Commonwealth have learned the value of such a programme. Professional fund raising organisations such as Wells, have rendered significant service to the church but the Council believes that when the tremendous entail of poor stewardship teaching has been overcome, the professional will be called in only for capital drives, leaving the parish budget the concern of the every-member canvass conducted by the Church itself.

If a National Promotion Department is to be effective, it must provide for the Church an efficient press service, gathering the news, preparing it and thrusting it out through the right channels.

It must provide a library and clearing house for Radio Programmes, scripts and transcriptions to be used through Diocesan Radio channels and provide in the days to come a similar service for television material.

In time to come, production as well as collation and assessment may be one of its functions but the production of such materials is at present phenomenally expensive and at first the considerable riches of the countries overseas will be deployed.

As the efficient working of a National Church will involve a large annual expenditure, it will be the task of this department to aid each Diocese and Parish to raise the sums needed by stewardship education and programmes of training and organisation at various levels.

### **PRIMATIAL REGISTRY**

It will be clear that if the Primate is to oversee the developing work of the National Church and at the same time care for his Diocese, it will be necessary to provide him with an adequate establishment or secretariat.

Such arrangements for the Archbishop of Canterbury were made at Lambeth and have long been in existence for the Presiding Bishop of the American Church.

A Registry for the National Church together with a Finance Department would be an essential office.

In addition a sum for "Inter Church Co-operation" would have to be available to enable the registry to provide fares for Australian Delegates to Anglican Congresses abroad, grants towards world-Anglican efforts such as Saint Augustine's College and to inter-church co-operation in the spheres of world relief through the World Council of Churches.

At present some of this work is being done by the Sydney Registry for the whole church, some is being done by agencies not erected for the purpose and some is being left undone.

Just as every Diocese needs its registry, so the National Church can hardly manage without one.



It is believed that when adequate organisational structure is given to the Church of England that she will be able to take her rightful place in the nation and in the world.

A similar structure has developed in England in the departments of the Church Assembly, but as this is a state church with an endowment of two hundred and fifty million pounds, the unendowed church of America may provide for us a more suitable parallel.

In America a similar national structure has allowed the church to grow and expand into a network of one hundred and twelve self-supporting Dioceses with a total membership of two million people. The national programme of this church for 1958 will cost seven million dollars; for 1959 eight million dollars; for 1960 nine million dollars and for 1961 almost ten million dollars.

This means that next year, the National Church programme will cost every American Anglican two pounds Australian, not excessive figures for people who really care about their Christian duty of effective witness.

It is natural that such developments as have been outlined will meet with much opposition, therefore let us see whether we can find an answer to some of the questions which will be raised.

**(i) It is too bureaucratic and will leave the power in few hands.**

This is rather a hollow argument, sometimes used by people who fear they will be "left out of the party."

The Government of any nation demands a Civil Service and the conduct of any business demands a staff of people to do the work . . . the same applies to the church.

In actual fact, both in England and America experience shows that the change of personnel in the departments is quite rapid and very few men are there long enough to gain all the power which concerns those who feel they ought to have it themselves.

**(ii) It is too expensive.**

As half the national structure already exists, this is only half true. It will cost something but Australian Anglicans will have to choose between shoe-string, Heath-Robinson organi-

sation and the sort of efficiency they would expect in anything else but God's work.

**(iii) Where will the money come from?**

It will come from assessment based upon a division of the National Budget into sums commensurate with the size and population of the Diocese concerned. The chart may help to explain the position.

The Parish Budget being raised each year by adequate Stewardship Teaching and a competent every-member canvass.

**(iv) Where will the headquarters be?**

This will naturally raise age-old controversies about the merits of various centres. At present the Overseas Department Headquarters are in Sydney. Promotion is in Sydney and Education is in Melbourne. Some would like to see a Church House grow in Canberra.

Locality is important but insufficiently important to delay all action.

**(v) How will the National Budget be fixed?**

This will take place in three steps—

(i) The various departments will state their needs and during the General Synod will have an opportunity of presenting their programme.

(ii) The Synod itself will erect a Budgetary Committee who will work carefully through the estimates and present to the General Synod their considered evaluation, having added and subtracted where necessary.

(iii) The Synod will have the opportunity of accepting or adjusting the Budget as proposed by their own nominees.

In conclusion let me say that this is only one man's Blue-Print, my qualifications being the extraordinary opportunities offered in both England and America to study the organisational structure.

It is my sincere hope that others will follow from others who share with me a vital concern for the well-being of the church of our baptism and our nation.

**NATIONAL BUDGET** made up of needs.

National Registry	}	= £X
Overseas Department		
Home Department		
Education Department		
Promotion Department		
Social Relations		

broken down into Diocesan Quotas.

**DIOCESAN BUDGET** made up of such things as

National Assessment	}	= £%X + Y
Diocesan Registry		
Diocesan Home Missions		
Diocesan Paper		
Diocesan Education Dept.		

broken down into Parish Quotas.

**PARISH BUDGET** made up of needs.

Diocesan Assessment	}	= £%X + %Y + Z
Parochial Stipends		
Parochial Car		
Parochial Capital Needs		
Parochial Education		

The Parish Budget being raised each year by adequate Stewardship Teachings and a competent every-member canvass.

## THE ANGLICAN TRUTH SOCIETY

If you have enjoyed reading **BLUEPRINT FOR A NATIONAL CHURCH**, may we suggest the following titles by the same author.

**MODERN HERESIES**, by Ian Shevill. 2/-. This booklet is accepted throughout Australia as one of the best little booklets available in its field. Now in its twelfth re-printing, it deals with Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, British Israelites.

**WHY BAPTISM**, by Ian Shevill. 6d. This handy leaflet-size publication is a convenient answer to all the usual queries that arise about the Sacrament of Baptism. Suitable for parents or godparents.

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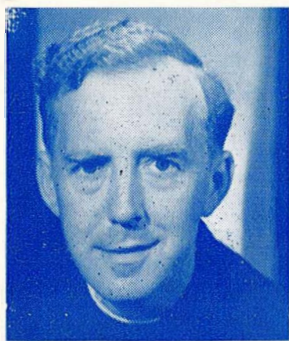
All the above booklets are available from your bookseller or direct from the publishers.

## THE ANGLICAN TRUTH SOCIETY

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Rt. Rev. Ian Shevill was born at Broken Hill, N.S.W., in 1917. Educated at the Scots' College, Sydney, he proceeded to the University of Sydney, where he gained the first Master's degree granted in the Department of Oriental Studies. At Moore Theological College, Sydney, he was the Barker Scholar and gained the Talbot prize.

From 1948-50 he did further post-graduate studies at the University of London, and was also Secretary for Education for the S.P.G.

Returning to Australia in 1951, he became Home Secretary of the A.B.M., where he edited the "A.B.M. Review" and produced perhaps the only missionary film in Australia to have been banned by the Commonwealth Censor, "Children of the Wasteland."

In 1953 he was consecrated Lord Bishop of North Queensland, then being the youngest Diocesan in Australia and the only one in Queensland of Australian birth. The following year he visited America and brought back the American fund-raising techniques which have led to the erection of a number of contemporary church buildings in the north.

He has travelled widely, visiting the Anglican mission fields in Japan, New Guinea, Papua, New Britain and the Torres Islands, and has written a number of works on missionary history, including "Pacific Conquest," "New Dawn in Papua," "God's World of Prayer," "Missionaries in the Treaty Ports," and a number of smaller works of popular theology, the best known of which is "Modern Heresies." He founded the Anglican Truth Society when a student and was elected its chairman when reconstituted in 1955.

