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Concern and Contempt

Church and Missionary Attitudes Towards Aborigines in North Queensland in the Nineteenth Century

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Prelude to Mission

In North Queensland in the nineteenth century, the European colonists had attempted to assert their authority over the Aborigines as they had in the earlier settled regions to the south; the process aroused Aboriginal resistance, and resulted in bloodshed and the fierce hatred that is a consequence of wars of conquest. After pacification, this authority was maintained by the social gap between the racially defined groups and the use of legal and extralegal intimidation. This assertion of authority disrupted traditional Aboriginal society and, combined with exotic diseases, malnutrition, and the unhygienic living conditions associated with sedentarisation, had a disastrous effect on traditional Aboriginal society. The Aborigines were then accepted as cowed and inferior sojourners in the developing society which was dominated completely by the European colonists. Although generally regarded, with either sympathy or hostility, as parasitic nuisances, they provided a pool of menial and cheap, casual labour. As long as they did not offend the colonists, they were largely ignored. The exception was the casual appropriation or abduction of women and children to meet the sexual and employment needs of pioneer society (Loos 1982).

It was the Christian missionary, however, who aimed to assert the most complete and pervasive authority. The Christian ideology contained within it, in the example and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, a clear acknowledgement of human equality and a concern for the human physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of men, women, and children. However, nineteenth century Christianity claimed to have a unique relationship with the one true God such that it alone offered salvation to all of humanity. All its followers in theory, and some in practice, accepted the imperative of converting non-Christians. This involved an affirmation of the superiority of the Christian religion. As Christianity had its strongest power

base in Europe, it inevitably gained European accretions which its followers saw as essential to Christian belief, although they dropped others that the first Jewish Christians regarded as essential to their veneration of God in the light of Jesus' gospel (Oates 1963:72-81). Christian missionaries therefore were determined to change not only the religion of the Aborigines in its narrow sense but also other aspects of their culture which the missionaries found unacceptable to their cultural value system.

At the height of European imperialism, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, a vast number of missionary societies, groups, and organizations came into being (Neill 1984:15, 325). Inevitably, local and foreign Christian groups concerned themselves with the indigenous populations whose physical and spiritual needs were otherwise almost entirely neglected. This certainly occurred in that part of New South Wales which , after 1859, became Queensland. In 1838, Lutheran missionaries had been sent to the Moreton Bay Settlement at the request of Dr. Lang, the leader of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales. After six years, they had been unable to gain any influence with the Aborigines (Thiele 1938:2-5). In 1843, the Roman Catholic Passionist priests unsuccessfully attempted to establish a mission at Stradbroke Island (Rayner 1951:117; Moran 1894:419). After Queensland's separation from New South Wales, there were isolated missionary ventures which failed and some proposals that never eventuated (J.B. Gribble 1884:80).

Indeed, statements of intentions from the Church of England and Roman Catholic authorities suggested possible major initiatives. Bishop Tufnell, the first Anglican Bishop of Brisbane, on his arrival expressed his belief that the Aborigines were capable of conversion and that the Church had an obligation to help them (Rayner 1951:118). In 1879, at a public meeting in Sydney in connection with Anglican missions to the Aborigines and Chinese of Australia, at which the Bishop of Brisbane and the first Bishop of North Queensland, Dr. Stanton, were present, a pledge was made to co-operate with Stanton in missionary work (*PDT*, 19 April 1879). In a letter to the *Australian Churchman*, Dr. Stanton perhaps revealed the reason for subsequent lack of action by the Anglican diocese of North Queensland:

> A "rush" takes place, and thousands of people congregate, and a town is formed with incredible speed. Unless a clergyman is in the field the Romanists gain the first hold and never relinquish it. The cattle stations are far apart; and no clergyman can spare time to visit them... When I have set our own churches in order I must do something for the 15,000 South Sea Islanders and the 10,000 Chinese and for the uncounted number of poor degraded Aborigines. (*PDT*, 27 March 1880)

The Bishop was personally concerned about the plight of the Aborigines, contributed handsomely to an appeal for destitute Aborigines on the Hodgkinson Goldfield (Amelioration of Aboriginals Committee, Thornborough, to Col. Sec., 24 November 1882, QSA COL/A351/6882), and was the chairman of the Townsville Aboriginal Protection Society (Aboriginal Protection Society, Townsville, to Col. Sec., 10 October 1889, QSA COL/A595/8169). However, the pioneer church's administrative, economic, and spiritual resources were first directed towards the white settlers.

To some extent this taxonomy of spiritual objectives was justified by the Bishop's concern for the 'white heathenism' among the settlers. A little English girl had not recognized the term 'God' and Sunday in the bush signified 'perhaps more sleep and a little less work'. Plumbing, perhaps, a greater depth, the Bishop remarked: 'White savages are far worse than blacks' (*PDT*, 27 March 1880). Yet in a tour of England to attract clergy and financial support to North Queensland, he took with him Robert Christison, a North Queensland pastoralist, and a nine year old Aboriginal girl on whose behalf Christison 'pleaded that something should be done for the native blacks' (*PDT*, 4 December 1880). White souls, however, had precedence.

Such an order of priorities was not, at first, apparent with the Roman Catholic church. Indeed the vicariate of North Queensland 'was elected with a special view for the Conversion of the Aboriginals' (Moran 1894:423). In 1876, the Italian priests of Saint Peter and Paul in Rome took charge of the missionary diocese of North Queensland which was centred on Cooktown. The local Catholics apparently regarded any attempts to 'civilize' or convert the Aborigines as hopeless. The priests appointed found it difficult to communicate with colonists because of language barriers and with Blacks because, at that time, they could only be met with in remote districts. After eighteen months these 'zealous priests [were] transferred to a more genial mission field' and replaced by Irish Augustinians who 'soon found themselves wholly engaged in attending to the spiritual wants of the White populations' (Moran 1894:423-4, 650).

The Catholic priest, Duncan McNab tried to counter the popular pessimism of Queensland Catholics with his individual efforts in the late 1870s both as member and as critic of the Aboriginal Commission. Indeed the Reserve scheme of the 1870s typically saw the churches trying to co-operate with the government to ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines while the government was directly concerned with using the Aboriginal Commission and its church members to divert attention from its main policy of aggressively dispossessing the Aborigines with the aid of the Native Police (Loos 1982).

The failure of the Aboriginal Commission was underlined by the resignation of McNab, and the Anglican Drew, and by the belated criticism of Queensland's frontier policy by the Anglican Bishop, Hale. This seemed to indicate the incompatibility of the churches' working with the Queensland government to ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines. Such, however, was not the case. In addition to attempting to control, or at least legitimize, the use of the Native Police on the frontier, Griffith felt the government ought to make some attempt to meet the needs of its black citizens. Predictably he saw this in terms of charity rather than as a social problem demanding as a right an unavoidable call on the colony's public revenue. Just as predictably the nineteenth century churches approached the Aborigines' problems as they did charitable institutions. They saw a response to the needs of the Aborigines as a moral duty rather than as an inescapable responsibility upon which a Christian's likelihood of salvation depended (Evans 1969:301).

In 1885, Griffith included in the estimates 2500 pounds for Aboriginal relief and 1000 pounds for reserves (*QPD*, L, 1886:1132). He explained the first sum as being intended to provide for emergencies like the recent drought, which had necessitated feeding Aborigines on the Hodgkinson Goldfield (*QPD*, XLIV, 1884:1563). The following year he provided 1000 pounds for both purposes, on the grounds that seasonal conditions were improved and that the sum for reserves had not been fully

expended in 1885 (*QPD*, L, 1886:1132). This was the inauspicious beginning of a conscious policy of aiding missionary societies by granting them land and limited sums of money. Griffith claimed personal responsibility for this initiative (*QPD*, L, 1886:1024).

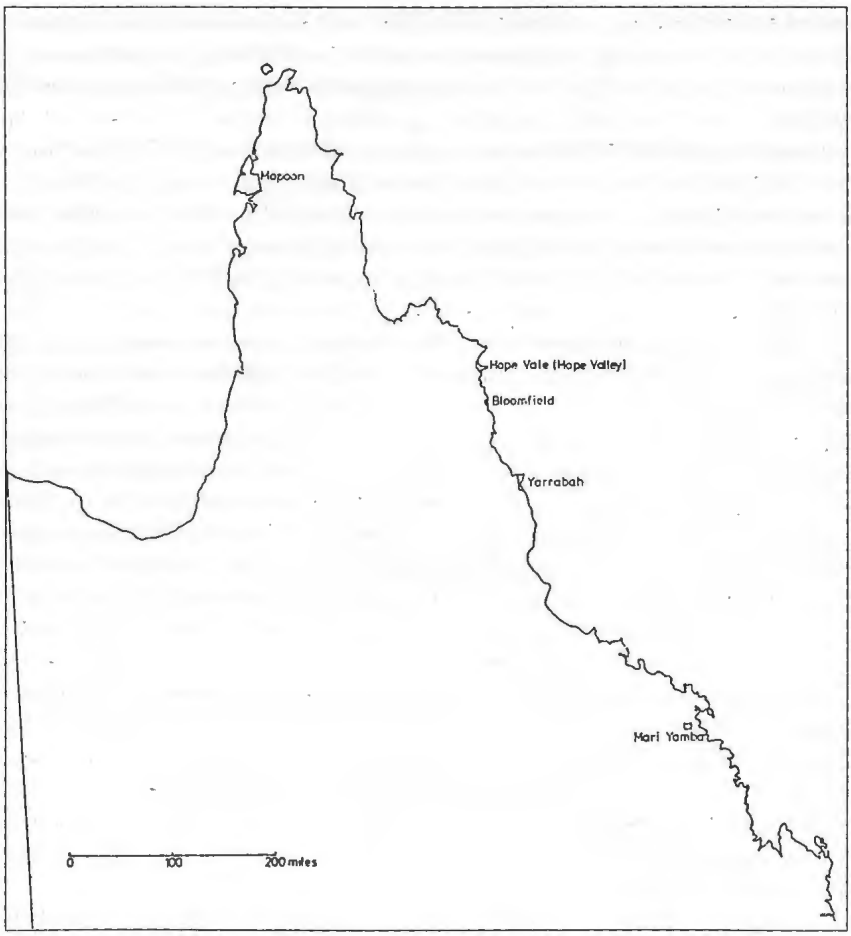
He explained that the 'Moravian Lutheran Church' had established the mission at Cape Bedford (subsequently called Hope Valley and, later, Hopevale) and he expected the Moravians to take charge of the Bloomfield River mission where the government had already erected buildings and distributed food. The Presbyterians had also expressed interest in establishing a mission in North Queensland (*QPD*, L, 1886:1132).

Griffith's confusion concerning the various German missionary societies expressing interest in North Queensland is understandable even today. The early Lutheran congregations of southern Queensland desired to establish a mission station to the Aborigines in Queensland with Lutheran missionaries from Hermannsburg in Germany, but the needs of white congregations for pastors prevented this. In 1885, the Moravian missionary to Aborigines in Victoria, F.A. Hagenauer, came to Queensland at the request of the Moravian Mission Society of Herrnhut in Germany to investigate the possibility of establishing missions. The report of this experienced missionary encouraged Griffith to support missions at a time when he was looking for an acceptable agency to deal with Aborigines (Thiele 1938:102-3; *PA*, 33, n.d.:515-22, 568-9).

The Moravians, however, were not Lutherans but members of a reform church founded by John Huss which predated the Protestant Reformation. The small church successfully established missions in all parts of the world, even among such allegedly difficult and normally neglected people as the Eskimos of Greenland and the Aborigines of Australia. Its reputation for missionary success and its simplicity of doctrine encouraged Protestant churches to support or use its missionaries (Hasse n.d.:2-7; Neill 1984:236-238).

The missions established in North Queensland after 1885 were supported by foreign missionary societies or by recently formed federations or synods of local churches. The United German and Scandinavian Lutheran Synod of Queensland established a mission to the Aborigines at Mari Yamba, north of Mackay. The government provided a subsidy of 10 pounds per month (Thiele 1938:103-4). In 1885, the Lutheran Missionary, Johannes Flierl, set out to establish a mission in New Guinea but was delayed in Cooktown. While there, the plight of the Aborigines was pointed out to him, as was the availability of a Government reserve at Cape Bedford, north of Cooktown (Lohe 1966a:34-6). Flierl guaranteed the assistance of Lutherans in South Australia and Germany. He also envisaged the mission as a staging post for German missionaries going north to New Guinea and symbolically called it Elim (cited Lohe 1966a:36-8). This site was subsequently abandoned and the mission moved to nearby Hope Valley. The Queensland government suggested that Flierl's society take charge of a government reserve established at Bloomfield River. As the Neuendettelsau Missionary Society had decided to accept responsibility for the mission at Hope Valley, Flierl's Immanuel Synod of South Australia accepted responsibility for Bloomfield River (Lohe 1966b:40, 41; K.E. Evans 1972:28).

In 1886, the first Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and New Zealand resolved to establish a mission to Aborigines in North Queensland. In 1890, the Foreign Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church asked the Moravian



1. North Queensland Missions 1885 - 1897

Missions Board in Herrnhut, Germany, to supply missionaries and, with the support of John Douglas, the Government Resident at Thursday Island, chose a site at the mouth of the Batavia River in the Gulf of Carpentaria. In 1891, the Moravian Missionaries, Ward and Hey, established themselves at a site called Mapoon (Hey 1931:8-9).

The establishment of an Anglican mission at Yarrabah, south of Cairns, differed in many ways from the establishment of the reserves at Mari Yamba, Cape Bedford, Bloomfield River, and Mapoon. The latter missions were staffed by people trained in missionary societies; all had missionary experience except Hey and Ward who belonged to the Moravians, probably the most mission oriented sect then in existence. The Anglican church in Australia at that time placed missionary work among Aborigines much lower on its list of priorities.

The General Synod of the Anglican Dioceses of Australia and Tasmania was constituted in 1872 with the power to promote home and foreign missions, but it was to New Guinea that the Australian Board of Missions turned in 1886 for its first extra-diocesan venture (ABM 1886-1904:1). The dioceses of Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane sponsored missions to the local Chinese while the diocese of Melbourne

supported the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Mission and the diocese of Ballarat, the Lake Condah Aboriginal Mission (ABM 1891:4-5). In 1891, when Rev. J.B. Gribble sought support from the Anglican Australian Board of Missions for the foundation of a mission in North Queensland, the financially embarrassed Board could only recommend that it receive 'practical support' (ABM 1886-1904:66). Gribble had to inspect sites at his own expense. Eighty square miles of land on the coast south from Cape Grafton was granted, but six months elapsed before his church recognized it as a missionary enterprise. Even then Gribble was held responsible for raising all the finance (E.R. Gribble 1930:58).

A major blow to Gribble was the refusal of the Colonial Secretary, Tozer, to grant any assistance at all to the mission. In 1891, Gribble saw the Colonial Secretary and discussed government aid in some detail. He was led to expect an initial grant of 500 pounds, a boat, 240 pounds a year, and a pound for pound subsidy. Encouraged by this, Gribble planned a network of three sites and requested funding for teachers, 300 pounds for school buildings, and a mission cutter.[1] The following year the Colonial Secretary refused all help on account of papers forwarded to him relating to Gribble's courageous attempt to expose atrocities against Aborigines in Western Australia.[2] Indeed Gribble's reputation as a 'troublemaker' led to a cold reception from the Bishop of North Queensland. Gribble noted that Bishop Barlow:

> gave me a severe warning against saying anything about the doings of the whites to the blacks going so far as to declare that he would rather the Mission should not be carried on in his Diocese than anything of exposure of wrongs should be made by me. This pained me deeply. Why are the Bishops so afraid of vindicating the cause of this long suffering race? My opinion of my Diocesan is not an exalted one. (Journal of J.B. Gribble, 1891-2, 3 June 1892)

Barlow also warned Gribble he could expect no financial support. The bishop of this impoverished diocese could not afford to alienate his white congregation.

It was estimated that fifty Aborigines permanently occupied the Yarrabah reserve when J.B. Gribble arrived in 1892 (ABM 1886-1904:118-9). The founder did not set eyes on one of them as, after he had been there a few months, he was invalided back to New South Wales where he subsequently died. His place was taken by his son, Ernest Gribble (E.R. Gribble 1930:58, 60). By the end of 1892, the Australian Board of Missions had accepted financial responsibility for Yarrabah (ABM 1886-1904:123, 136). Thus, the five missions established during the period of this investigation were linked to missionary societies which could supply them with finance and personnel.

The missions referred to above were important for a number of reasons. Although two, Mari Yamba and Bloomfield River, were abandoned in 1901, the other three, Yarrabah, Mapoon, and Hope Valley, became firmly established, the first two becoming the forerunners of further Anglican and Presbyterian mission stations in North Queensland. The decision of the Queensland government in 1897 to utilize Christian missionary societies as agents of their 'native' policy depended largely on their perceived effectiveness. Finally, these and the later missions influenced the lives of a very large number of Aborigines in North Queensland and continue to do so. Consequently, the attitudes of the first wave of missionaries to

2. St. Alban's Church, Yarrabah

3. The highly acclaimed Yarrabah Mission Band demonstrated to white supporters the "success" of the mission

meet the first generation of mission Aborigines in North Queensland were of great importance for the effect they would have on the contemporary way of life of Aboriginal people and that of future generations.

The Attitudes of the Missionaries

By 1885, the necessity of establishing a village composed of Christian missionaries and those Aborigines who could be induced to abandon their nomadic life was accepted by all churches interested in converting the Aborigines (Rowley 1970:58). This then necessitated the development of an industrial base suitable to village life which would, the missionaries hoped, make the village at least partly self-supporting, and thus ease the financial drain on the supportive missionary organization whose funds were always meagre. The basic conflict of this aim with the traditions, life patterns, and values of Aboriginal society was complete.

Ernest Gribble looking back on forty years commented: 'to instil the idea of a fixed home is the first task of the missionary' (E.R. Gribble 1932:118; E.R. Gribble 1930). Johannes Flierl, the senior Lutheran Missionary, who established the Hope Valley mission at Cape Bedford, and went on to spearhead the Lutheran missions to New Guinea, spelt out this problem in more detail in a report to the Queensland government in 1898. He had spent the years from 1878 to 1885 at the Bethesda Lutheran Mission in north-east South Australia, paid occasional visits to Hope Valley, and inspected it for the Neuendettelsau Missionary Society (Lohe 1966a:34-38). He informed the government:

> The Aboriginals are nomads. Nothing can be done amongst them without settling them down on reserves,. They are not used to hard work, and very slow in leaving their former manners and customs. The weakest persons are more likely to remain at the station. They are to be clothed, and want their food every day, and can do very little for their own support. It wants much time and patience, much outside work and spiritual labour to nurse the old and sick, and to educate and train the children of the aboriginals, and the success cannot be very quick, great and evident. (Flierl 1898:504)

Pfalzer, the missionary who succeeded Flierl at Hope Valley, felt constrained to explain to Lutheran supporters in Germany that the farm work which occupied such a large proportion of their reports to the *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* was:

> only a means to an end. But the end is totally unattainable without the means. The only thing that could keep these widely roaming hordes together at all is work. But if they are to work they must be fed. And we will not have the necessary food for them unless we cultivate the land. (*KM*, 19, 1887:94)

The Aborigines had long had the reputation of being the most difficult people to convert to Christianity. In 1868, J.K. Tucker, in an authoritative 'Record of Missionary Endeavour' among the Aborigines and Chinese in Australia, had noted that less success had been achieved among the Aborigines than among the Red Indians,

Eskimos, Africans, and South Sea Islanders. He, like most Europeans, doubted the 'religious susceptibility' of the Aborigines (Tucker 1868:12, 22, 23, 30). Flierl informed the Queensland government that mission work was far easier in New Guinea (Flierl 1898:503-4). The lack of results had led the Neuendettelsau Mission Society to consider diverting the resources from Hope Valley to New Guinea where the settled agricultural societies would have enabled it comfortably to support two mission stations for the expenditure on its North Queensland Mission (Flierl 1898:503).

However, the economy and work pattern of Europe were so deeply ingrained in the missionaries' concept of civilization and Christianity that the need to induce the semi-nomadic food-gathering and hunting Aborigines to accept regular agricultural employment was seen in itself as essential to conversion. There was no appreciation of the Aboriginal economy. Thus the Lutheran Missionary Poland at Hope Valley described the adult Aborigines as 'wild and vulgar; very workshy and used to absolute, unrestricted freedom. The men have neither strength nor energy. They loaf all day long. Their two or three wives have to feed them' (*KM*, 21, 1889:4). After three years among the Aborigines the Moravian missionaries at Mapoon displayed just as little understanding:

> Thanks to the missionaries they have learned to use such instruments [as hoes] and are beginning to have some idea of earning their own livelihood. The small mission farm is a valuable teacher of thrift, diligence, kindliness and many matters belonging to a settled life. (*IMN*, 15 November, 1895:195)

Gribble probably expressed this nexus most succinctly when he enunciated the aims of Yarrabah as 'The elevation and the evangelisation of the Aboriginals by preaching the Gospel, and by teaching them habits of industry' (ABM 1909).

The missionaries' attitudes towards the Aborigines indicated above reflect both concern and contempt. Their other expressed attitudes reinforce this conclusion and aid in an understanding of the subsequent relationship between the Aborigines and the missionaries. Attitudes expressed by three different Christian sects, the Lutherans, the Moravians, and the Anglicans, illustrate the fact that each sect had a tendency to use its own characteristic language to express its piety, its opposition to paganism, and its zeal for converting the heathen. There could also be a great difference between the writer's personality indicated by their published writings, and that indicated by private correspondence or personal diaries.

All the missionaries thought Aboriginal life was suffused with satanism. They also believed quite literally that the power of Satan confronted them when they observed beliefs, actions, and behaviour patterns that did not accord with their concept of Christian belief and behaviour. Looking back on over twenty years' experience at Mapoon Nicholas Hey, who was by then regarded by some as one of the great modern missionaries (Hutton n.d.:13), said in an address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland:

> We started work with very poor material—some have said hopeless material... Everything seemed to be against us. There was the stifling heathen atmosphere pressing heavily upon us. Besides, we could not help feeling the Satanic power arrayed against us, and we

> realized as never before how completely he was holding sway in the heathen world.[3]

Such an attitude was an important motivation to these and other missionaries and to their supporting societies. Thus a Lutheran missionary at Hope Valley informed his society that, after seven years among the Aborigines, their increasing mastery of the Aboriginal language had revealed 'how firmly Satan has these poor creatures in his grip! Mission work is a battle against the realms of darkness; that is our experience here. Sometimes they really seem to be possessed by the devil and one simply can't get anywhere at all with them' (*KM*, 26, 1894:60).

The missionaries found countless specific manifestations of Satan in the behaviour of the Aborigines. After J.B. Gribble witnessed a corroboree, he noted in his journal that the 'gestures and shrieks were more satanic then human'.[4] When a girl who had disobeyed Schwarz and Poland at Hope Valley was caned, she produced a prolonged temper tantrum which distressed the missionaries: 'We returned to our house quite sad and upset; the Evil One had yet again gained control of the heart of one of our wards' (*KM*, 24, 1892:2). Ward at Mapoon specified, 'The surrounding heathenism manifests itself in thefts, strifes, wailings for the dead, nocturnal dances and other evils. Runaway matches are a constant source of quarrels and fightings in the natives' camp' (*PA*, December 1894:394).

All the missions seem to have objected to the 'quarrels and fightings in the natives' camp' by which the Aborigines settled their disputes, but the Moravians reacted most intensely. At Mapoon, the missionaries would walk between two opposing groups to prevent an outbreak of hostilities (*PA*, September 1892:584).

Such opposition to important characteristics of Aboriginal life was typical. However, the role of women in Aboriginal society, as perceived by the missionaries, was probably what most offended. The middle-class nineteenth century ideal of Christian womanhood was affronted at the very sight of naked Aboriginal women.[5] One of the missionary's fears was that 'the devil [would] yet greatly tempt [the girls domiciled at the mission] to lust after men'.[6] Yet Aboriginal marriage also offended them with its polygamy and reliance on female labour (Journal of E.R. Gribble, 19 January 1894; *KM*, 29, 1897:67).

The economic role of men in hunting and fishing tended to be overlooked as it was no doubt rarely observed near the mission. Poland from Hope Valley probably expressed the view of all the missionaries when he described Aboriginal women as slaves who would have to endure the brutality of bad tempered husbands. He was astonished that they should lament when their husbands died (*KM*, 21, 1889:4). From the first, Gribble would not tolerate Aboriginal men beating their wives and took a stockwhip to one man. He was given authority by the Police Magistrate at Cairns to arrest Aboriginal husbands to check what he termed 'the brutality of the natives to their poor women' (Journal of E.R. Gribble, 20 February, 22 March 1893).

There was very little in Aboriginal life that did not offend the missionaries. Once again the Moravians seemed to express this most intensely. After twenty years at Mapoon, Nicholas Hey still believed that traditional Aboriginal society was decadent, that 'they [were] not in a low stage of human development... as they [were] not in a state of development at all; they [were] not on the upward road but on the downward grade' (Hey 1912:442). Pfalzer of Hope Valley shared this common belief (*KM*, 20, 1883:2). Hey counseled that the attitude of the missionary had to be

sympathetic as, 'According to our western ideas most, if not all, of the social conditions of the Aboriginals are contemptible — hideous and disgusting to a degree'. In 1901, Hey described the unconverted Aborigines as 'moral lepers' while the Lutheran Pfalzer at Hope Valley believed them to be the 'lowest of the low'.[7]

The missionaries objected to Aboriginal child rearing practices, to women fighting, to Aboriginal nakedness, to Aboriginal standards of cleanliness, and to Aboriginal mortuary practices.[8] They believed that unreclaimed Aborigines were dangerous savages bordering on the bestial amongst whom one was not surprised to find cannibalism.[9] J.G. Ward of Mapoon agreed with the contemporary colonial opinion that Aborigines were inherently murderous and related to his Moravian supporters the old chestnut of the Aborigine who begged his white master not to walk in front of him as 'the temptation to kill... might become too strong' (*MM*, 2 April 1892). Two missionary journals likened a picture of Hey with four Mapoon Aborigines to 'a lion-tamer amid four of his half-tamed young lions'.[10] At one extreme the Moravian editor of *Periodical Accounts* thrilled with horror to the idea of savagery, drawing attention to 'an animal expression' on the unreclaimed Aborigines' faces and noting that 'the missionary has to venture into the crowd of blood-thirsty, treacherous lions... and dwell there in faith in the constant protection of his God' (*PA*, December 1894:394). Gribble expressed the same idea less emotionally when he referred to the young Aborigines as 'children of nature' (E.R. Gribble 1930:63) who were, of course, naturally treacherous.[11]

All of the missionaries believed that civilizing the Aborigines was only possible through Christianity. By civilization, they meant Aboriginal conformity with European social and cultural practices which included the Western European concept of morality which they espoused fiercely. Yet none could envisage Aborigines reaching the heights of European civilization. Moral and physical regeneration was aimed at but with limited paternalistic expectations. In 1894, while discussing Mapoon, the editor of the Moravian journal, *Periodical Accounts*, pointed with pride to Hagenauer's success after over thirty years at Ramahyuck in Victoria, but cautioned readers not to expect too much. What was important was the 'vast difference' between them and the present condition of Aborigines in North Queensland (*PA*, December 1894:395). The violent tempered Gribble echoed this profound paternalism as late as 1930 when he praised an Aboriginal convert for seeking spiritual strength to overcome his quick and violent temper. As they were 'only Australian Aboriginals' he mused with wonder at the power of God (Gribble 1930:101).

In practice there was a good deal of tolerance of Aboriginal behaviour. It was based mainly on the inability to enforce sudden changes but, in some instances, on the conviction that mistaken religious beliefs sometimes served socially useful purposes. As Nicholas Hey put it: ' ...many evils in existence among heathen nations... [were] necessary to prevent still greater evils' (Hey 1912:443). This tolerance sometimes increased with familiarity. Thus, when Hey paid a visit to Aurukun in 1905, the Aborigines greeted the visitors with a corroboree. 'Ten years ago,' Hey remarked, 'I would have done my best to prevent them doing so, but I now look differently upon these things. They gave their best and we accepted it in that spirit'. Then he added: 'It is now for us to give them something better'.[12] There was little, if any, increase in respect for and understanding of Aboriginal religion. Hey was convinced that he must allow the Aborigines to maintain their 'native character'

but only 'as far as will stand the light of the Gospel' (Hey 1912:84). Thus, at all times missionaries stood ready to attack the central features of Aboriginal society: its economy, its pattern of social behaviour, and most of all, its religious values.

The missionaries shared with other colonists the 'doomed race' theory. Gribble commented, as late as 1930, that 'in no part are [the Aborigines] doomed to quicker or more rapid extinction than in Northern Australia' (Gribble 1930:84), and Hey, after twenty-eight years at Mapoon, still saw the 'full blood' Aborigine as 'only a passing phase of Australian occupation. The best that the missionary can do is to minister some little Christian consolation in the fast closing day of his earthly existence'.[13] The Lutheran Poland, who had a literary flair, wrote:

> All the mission can really achieve for them is a kind of Christian burial service, a kind of promising sunset glow, which cannot be followed by any bright dawn in this life here on earth. (*KM*, 30, 1898:81)

The missionaries above all felt the need 'to soothe the pillow of a dying race' (Gribble 1930:119).

The 'dying race' appear to have been happy enough to have their pillow soothed if that was all that was involved. But when the missionaries tried to administer moral and spiritual medicine, they faced great difficulties. Claussen of Mari Yamba might urge Christians 'to have compassion on the poor unhappy heathen who lie in the deepest night of sin and shame' (*PDT*, 31 November 1887; *Mac*, 24 December 1887) but the Aborigines refused to be unhappy for their 'sins' or feel any shame in Aboriginal behaviour. Nicholas Hey believed that the two greatest problems were, firstly, the language, and secondly, the absence of this sense of sin. With all his experience Hey was still mystified that they 'could not see that there was any wrong in themselves' (Hey 1931:10, 11). The missionaries, without exception, tried to convince the adults their way of life and beliefs were sinful even when they were tolerated. This inevitably led to a conflict among those Aborigines who seriously tried to accept the Christian concept of God and the perspective of Jesus of Nazareth as the incarnation of that God. Hey remarked, '... their moral renovation lags behind their religious change' (Hey 1912:443). Hey claimed there were many instances where Aborigines accepted Christ as their saviour and experienced a new peace and hope. They had lost their fear of death and accepted Christ as the atonement for their sins but, in traditional Christian terms, kept on sinning. They might attend Aboriginal burial ceremonies or not conform completely to the missionaries' sexual mores. Hey was so convinced of an inherent conflict between Aboriginal life and the nineteenth century Christian concept of sin that, as late as 1912, he made the radical suggestion that theologians should reassess Christian doctrine in the light of modern missions. He went on to imply that, for Aborigines, the doctrine of free will might not be essential for salvation: that they might have to be controlled to prevent 'sinning'. This was, in fact, a restatement of the belief that Aborigines were not capable of becoming fully Christian: that they were not fully human (Hey 1912:444).

All missionaries tried to convert adult Aborigines to Christianity but, without exception, diverted most of their resources to converting the young. Acceptance of Christianity by an adult Aborigine, such as Menmunny of Yarrabah, to the extent

that he gave up two of his three wives, was exceptional. Even in this case it is possibly significant that his traditional authority as a tribal leader was being eroded by Gribble's successful assertion of authority. Gribble subsequently granted him temporal authority within the developing mission community with the title, 'King John' (Gribble 1930:68, 73, 76-78).

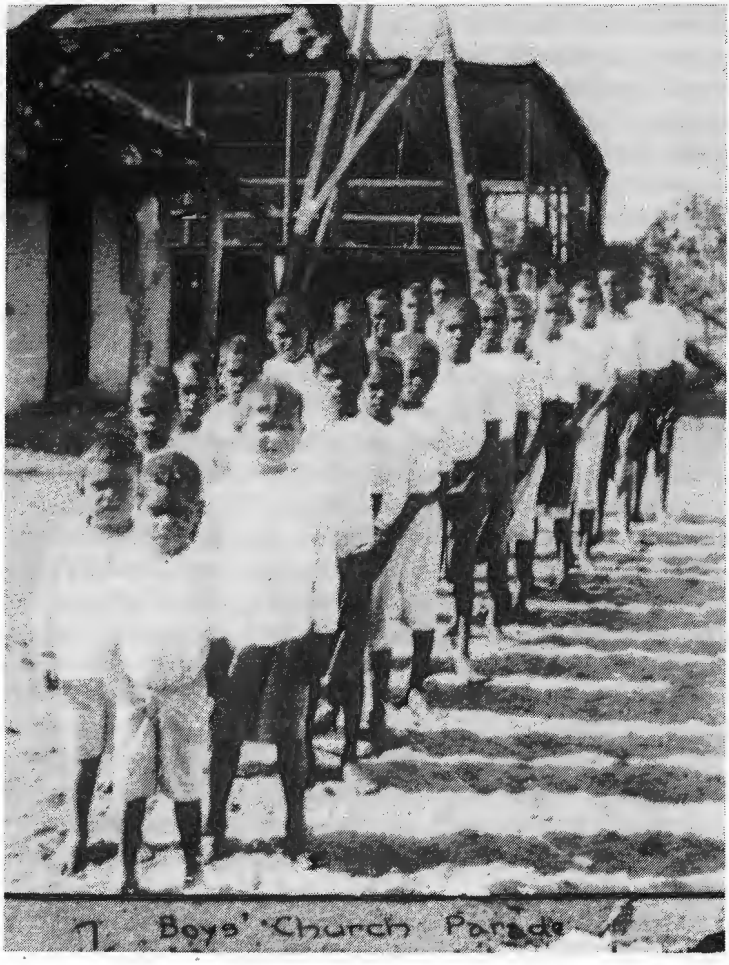
Yet, despite their lack of success with adult Aborigines, all North Queensland missionaries visited the camps when they could, preaching to and praying with the, no doubt often bemused, Aborigines. The Lutherans at Hope Valley and Bloomfield missions seem to have done this least in this period, except at camps adjacent to the mission, as they tried first to establish mission communities (Meyer to the Mission Congregation, South Australia, 3 January 1890, UELCA Archives, B808). Prior to 1896, Gribble seems to have placed most emphasis on this aspect of mission work, going regularly as far afield as Mareeba, Atherton, Thornborough, Herberton, and Port Douglas and walking extensively from Yarrabah to visit local camps (*MN*, 15 April 1895:26; 15 March 1898:19). Gribble was especially motivated by the plight of Aboriginal children in the camps near these settled areas. They were frequently orphaned, starving, or diseased (Journals of E.R. Gribble, 13 February - 19 December 1893). Often mere children were addicted to alcohol or opium, the girls consequently becoming prostitutes (Gribble 1930:81). Gribble's intense passion for rescuing destitute children was largely responsible for the speed with which the permanent mission community grew (*MN*, 15 February, 1900:10). All would have agreed with Hey that a sound Christian foundation was only possible with the second generation.[14]

With the possible exception of Gribble, this conclusion was based on North Queensland experience. Except for Gribble and Meyer, the founding missionaries were new to Aboriginal missions and, although they probably absorbed some preconceptions about adult Aborigines from their missionary societies, they doggedly preached to those they encountered in North Queensland. These missionaries did not have the twentieth century perspective of the similarity of traditional Aboriginal life throughout Australia and were prepared to accept different challenges and different responses. Thus, early in Hoerlein's ministry at Bloomfield he claimed, 'It is our missionary duty to let the older people hear Christ's gospel at every possible opportunity', and to this end, he, like all the German missionaries, including Hey, made great efforts to learn the local Aboriginal language (*KM*, 24, 1892:7). Yet, by 1894, he was writing: 'Our hope is centred on the young people. The older people are too set in their nomadic ways' (*KM*, 26, 1894:61).

As little short of complete submission to the missionary's expectations was demanded, it is not surprising that few adult Aborigines could be converted. Menmunny of Yarrabah had to surrender two of his three wives while, at Mari Yamba, Hansche refused to baptise an Aborigine because he regarded him as 'very arrogant' (*KM*, 27, 1895:87). The Lutherans seem to have been especially cautious in admitting Aborigines lest they accept Christian rites without fully understanding their significance. They were also very conscious of the Christian responsibilities they were placing upon instructed and baptised Aborigines who could easily return to their 'sinful' ways, but without the ignorance of Christian religion and morals as a mitigating factor. This was especially a problem, the missionaries believed, for Aboriginal girls who were unable to marry Christian Aborigines. This caution was prompted, at least in part, by their society's experiences in South Australia (*KM*, 24, 1892:57-9). At Hope Valley, camp Aborigines were not allowed even to attend

Sunday services with the baptised Aborigines and Europeans until 1898, twelve years after the mission was founded (*KM*, 30, 1898:83).

The chief aim of all the missions was to induce the adult Aborigines to leave their children, or the orphaned children of relatives, at the mission. A boarding school system was then established enabling the missionaries to achieve encouraging results at training and indoctrinating the children. Mrs. Ward, the school teacher at Mapoon, pointed out that, by 1892, they had been forced to adopt this system to combat the irregular attendance during their first year and from that date results were 'marvellous'. The adults at Mapoon were encouraged with gifts of flour to give up their children.[15] Missionaries occasionally intimidated children into remaining or, at least, not leaving without permission by such methods as admonishments, corporal punishment, fetching runaways back, obtaining the support of the local police, or simply locking them up.[16] Probably all the missionaries would have agreed with Hoerlein of Bloomfield that 'love alone' was not enough to manage the blacks. 'Law and discipline[were] indispensable' (*KM*, 25, 1893:59).



4. Ready for church at Mapoon

The multitude of rules, the discipline, and the punishment seem similar to that of a strict nineteenth century boarding school except that these expectations were also applied largely to adult Aborigines.[17]

The missionaries aimed at creating an Aboriginal community in which they would have ultimate authority, yet all were aware of the need to develop Aboriginal leaders within this framework. This had not developed at Hope Valley, Bloomfield River, or Mari Yamba before 1900, but at Yarrabah and Mapoon there were signs of an Aboriginal leadership emerging in temporal and spiritual matters whose authority was directly dependent upon the missionaries. Thus, at Yarrabah, on the 19th December 1896, six young Aboriginal men and three young women were confirmed and, on the 30th January, one young man who had become one of Gribble's temporal aides, Alick Bybee, preached to the Aborigines camped near the mission compound (Journal of E.R. Gribble, 19 December 1896; 30 January 1897). Subsequently, Bybee, at his own initiative, preached to the camp Aborigines and his example was soon followed by other young Aboriginal men who witnessed to their new faith in the camps on the Yarrabah reserve (Journal of E.R. Gribble, 8 February - 18 April 1897). Just prior to this Gribble was surprised to discover that Willie Ambryn, the Christian South Sea Islander who had helped the elder Gribble establish the mission, had been holding a prayer meeting with willing young Aborigines (Journal of E.R. Gribble, 14 September 1896).

At Mapoon, by June 1897, Hey had organized an Aboriginal police force. He had early adopted the practice of getting young Aboriginal men to preach and lead in prayer at the Sunday evening services. Hey prepared them for this beforehand and admitted they were able to communicate more effectively with the older Aborigines (*PA*, December 1897:415; March 1897:239; March 1898:472). This was not only because they had a better grasp of the language. They were also able to express such concepts as repentance and salvation in terms Aborigines would find meaningful. Thus, to the Mapoon Aborigines who had run off with many boats belonging to the pearlshell and bêche-de-mer fishermen, and who well understood the punitive power of white society, an Aboriginal evangelist had explained: 'Missionary no policeman but Policeman in Heaven Jesus and if you no sorry — by and by you be put headfirst in hell' (M.H. Ward, "Diary, 1895", 25 October 1896). However, it was probably their example rather than their preaching that was most important. Hey wrote: 'I am... convinced that a testimony... out of the mouth of one of their own people does a great deal more good, and is followed by a greater blessing, than our words' (*PA*, March 1897:239). It is important to note that the emerging Aboriginal leadership on these missions were, with a few exceptions, such as John Menmunny, young Aborigines with little or no experience of traditional Aboriginal values; and that these men were preaching the new religion in the churches and camps and exercising substantial temporal authority over the traditional Aboriginal leaders and their followers in the neighbourhood of the mission.

The importance of taking black Christians to help establish new missions was proven in North Queensland. Hope Valley and Bloomfield had the services of Johannes Pingilina, a Dieri from South Australia, who was invaluable to the Lutherans in learning the languages and controlling the Aborigines (*KM*, 19, 1897:14). Gribble had Willie Ambryn, a Pacific Islander, and Pompo Katchewan, a south Queensland Aborigine.[18] Hey had Harry Price, a Tahitian (*PA*, December 1899:195). Hey's mature opinion was that the South Sea Islanders bridged the gap

between white staff and local Aborigines and this, indeed, seemed the function of all black Christian evangelists.[19]

The aim of the Christian missions in North Queensland was to create a theocracy. The members of the Aboriginal community would led good, useful lives where they would be 'made to live by rule'. Thus, at Yarrabah, the time table included inspecting the cottages of the married couples each day at 11 a.m. — 'the floors having been swept and washed, and the blankets put to air immediately after breakfast' — and cleanliness and sanitation insisted upon. On all missions, to accomplish the aim of creating a new society, a pervasive system of education of children and adults was necessary not only to continue the process of religious education but also to produce the skills necessary for this first missionary generation. There were thus adult education classes, classes for married women, and practical training in child care, homecraft, and simple industrial skills.[20] As Hey pointed out, the Aborigines were given a way of life (Hey 1912:443).

The Aborigines did not simply acquiesce to mission authority; intimidation in a variety of forms was frequent. Gribble and Hey humiliated adult Aborigines, and old Aborigines from Yarrabah in the 1970s described Gribble's use of his fists and corporal punishment on adults who defied him,[21] Gribble's punishments indicate the physical extreme used to assert missionary authority. Although the missionaries may have varied the ratio, all would have agreed with Hey who claimed that 90% of the Aborigines could be dealt with when love was shown them, but 10% had to be controlled through fear.[22]

Yet, until 1897, when Queensland passed its Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, success in establishing a mission community and exerting authority over visiting Aborigines depended ultimately upon both groups accepting mission authority. Adult Aborigines could not be compelled to stay. Yet many did.[23]

Epilogue

It is hard to imagine Christianity being taken in worse circumstances to a people than has been the case with Aborigines throughout much of Australia. Christianity has been an intrinsic part of the colonisation process and, as a consequence, has been companion to frontier violence, dispossession, disease, depopulation, and degradation. Christianity was the religion of the white conquerors who assumed authority and control over Aboriginal people. Missionaries were part of the new law that dominated Aboriginal law. This has certainly been the case in North Queensland (Loos 1982). The missionaries were, of course, as much prisoners of their culture as other colonists. From the hindsight of the twentieth century, many of their attitudes towards Aboriginal people can be seen as offensive. Yet, unlike the other colonists, they came to give Aborigines the greatest gift they had to offer: the salvation they had found in Jesus Christ. They confused their salvation with their culture and both with the 'civilization' they tried to impose on Aborigines.

Their contempt for much of Aboriginal society is manifest in their written words where the concern is often obscured and even distorted. It was more evidenced by the Herculean task they set themselves to establish a Christian village in what was to them a wilderness, and by the years of living, working, and sometimes dying in an alien environment among an alien people. They were the advocates of changes which it would be for Aboriginal people, finally, to accept, reject, or modify (Whiteman 1982). This process is still going on.

Notes

1 A six page letter from J.B. Gribble concerning his preparations for establishing the Bellenden Ker [i.e., Yarrabah] Mission commencing: 'On reaching Townsville a meeting of the Diocesan Council', ABM Archives. The letter was presumably to the Executive Council. The date is obliterated. Minutes of ABM 1886-1900, 15 January 1892. See also Under Col. Sec. To J.B. Gribble, St. Paul's, Temora, New South Wales, 15 August 1890, encl. QSA, Lands Reserve 92-151/20481, where the Under Colonial Secretary stated the Government would gladly consider any application that did not conflict with other missions; and Rev. J.B. Gribble, Brisbane, to Chief Sec., 3 October 1891, encl. QSA, Lands Reserve 92-151/20481, Minute, H.T. [Col. Sec. Tozer], 9 October 1891, where Tozer claimed that he was prepared to assist by funding Gribble to distribute rations to the Aborigines and to consider the matter again later.

2 J.B. Gribble, 1891-92, 16 May 1892. See also Tozer's later justification for not aiding Yarrabah. Minute by Col. Sec. H. Tozer, to Lands Dept., 22 May 1893, QSA, Lands Res. 92-151/8136. Tozer denied he knew land had been made available for a mission in that locality: 'Mr. Gribble applied to me for help but I postponed consideration pending settlement of question of site. Since then I have not had any application and the Mission *is not recognized by this Dept*'. Of course, it is inconceivable that J.B. Gribble, his successor E.R. Gribble, or the Executive of the Australian Board of Missions would have failed to request aid had they not believed it had been clearly refused as J.B. Gribble had reported. J.B. Gribble had been accompanied by another Anglican churchman in his interview with Tozer.

3 Hey 1912. This very important article has been torn out of its volume which is unidentified except for the date although the format suggests strongly that the speech was published in the missionary journal of the Moravian Church of which Hey and the other missionaries at Mapoon, Weipa, and Aurukun were members, i.e., *PA*, December 1912:443, (ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4).

4 A small notebook marked: 'Important re Rev. J.B. Gribble 1891', entry for 23 August 1891, ABM Archives. He had by then spent many years as a missionary to the Aborigines.

5 *PA*, September 1892:585. Mrs. Ward wrote to a former fellow teacher in England: 'I wish you could see the people as I saw them on the day of my arrival. There were about eighty women and girls sitting in a semicircle, most of them quite without clothing, others with a dirty piece of calico tied round their loins. Such a spectacle!'

6 Pastor Hoerlein, Bloomfield Mission, to Pastor Rechner, Light's Pass, South Australia, [n.d., the letter seeming to start at page 2. It is annotated in red and is the forty-first in the file], UELCA Archives, B.833.

7 'Report of Mission work done at Mapoon Station, North Queensland, Under the Supervision of the Rev. N. Hey, 1900-1901' (Brisbane 1901), p. 5, (ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4). See also the opinion of the Moravian editor of *PA*, that the Aboriginals were 'the lowest of the low', *PA*, December 1894:395, (ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4); and *KM*, 20, 1888:2.

8 *KM*, 25, 1893:59; 21, 1889:4; 25, 1893:88; 18, 1886:91; *PA*, December 1894:394, and Journal of E.R. Gribble, 23 October 1893.

9 *PA*, December 1894:393, 394; *KM*, 21, 1889:4: 'he lives like an animal, giving thought to nothing but the satisfaction of his physical needs. He is little better than a beast', wrote the Lutheran Missionary, Poland. See Gribble 1930:164, 165 for tales of cannibalism.

10 The *Missionblatt* made this comment first which was repeated with approval by the Moravian journal, *PA*, December 1894:393, (ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4).

11 *MP*, 14 August 1903. Gribble pointed out that white settlers were equally non-Christian and more treacherous. See Hutton, n.d., ch. 3, p. 13, for J.G. Ward's belief that the Aborigines were 'children', 'piccaninnies', and 'spiritual children'.

12 *MW*, [n.d.]:7. Various torn out pages of *MW* can be found in ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4. A date on a letter to *MW*, 18 August 1905, suggests that the date of the journal was late 1905 or early 1906.

13 'Gulf Natives: Pioneer Missionary. Experience of 28 Years', *NCB*, (ML, MSS carton no. 4). The date of the newspaper has not been retained.

14 Hey 1912:448. See also *PA*, June 1896:103; G.H. Frodsham to Board of Missions, June 1896:103; G.H. Frodsham to Board of Missions, Brisbane [copy] encl. QSA, Education Various, 'Mission Schools', 14712/1899, commenting that little was attempted with the adults at Yarrabah. *KM*, 25, 1893:25: 'Our hopes rest on the young people, of course'.

15 *Mes*, December 1911 (ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4). See in same carton, *Moravian Missionary Reporter* II, September, 1892:66 for the early difficulty of retaining the children. See also *KM*, 21, 1889:54, 55.

16 *KM*, 21, 1889:54, 55. Schwarz brought a boy back and verbally intimidated him. On another occasion the Cooktown police inspector ordered some of his runaway girls back. *KM*, 22, 1890:6, Schwarz giving some truants a hiding; *KM*, 27, 1895:86, Hansche at Mari Yamba refusing to allow three of the young boys to leave. Journal of E.R. Gribble, 3 February 1904. At Yarrabah there was a special room where offenders could be locked up.

17 Journal of Rev. E.R. Gribble: 20 February 1893; 14 November 1893; 10 January 1894; 19 January 1894; 24 November 1895; 23 August 1896; 29 October 1896. See also the Yarrabah Journal for 1904, ABM Archives, which has the misleading title on the outside cover, Matron's Log for 1908 Yarrabah Senior Girl's Home. The entries by Rev. E.S. Chase who relieved Gribble for some time are most explicit in revealing the pervasive nature of the missionaries' control. See entries from 16 January 1904 to 28 April 1904. As Chase's return to Yarrabah was 'hailed with great delight' (16 July 1904) and Gribble was remembered at Yarrabah as a very firm disciplinarian who used corporal punishment on children and adults, it is unlikely that Chase's control was firmer than Gribble's. Interviews with Mrs. F. at Palm Island, 19 and 20 December 1972, and Mrs. T. at Yarrabah, 26 November 1972.

18 Journal of E.R. Gribble: 14 September 1896; 19 December 1896; 10 September 1897. Pompo does not seem to have exercised leadership, as did Willie Ambryn, and by 1898 Aborigines like James Noble, George Christian, Alick Bybee, and John Menmunny were the Aboriginal leaders with Pompo as a subordinate. Willie Ambryn was a member of the staff. See Journal of E.R. Gribble 1899: 'Memorandum for 1898' which lists leaders and led of such groups as mission brigade, plantation workers. See entries for 1899 for an indication of how Gribble used Aboriginal authority.

19 'Impressions of Mapoon', October 1916, *NCB*, ML, MSS 1893 carton no. 4.

20 *MN*, 18 June 1900:42. The editor was describing Gribble's method in taking over Frazer Island for the ABM. Minutes of the Executive Council of the ABM 1900-1904:50, 51, ABM Archives. *Brisbane Courier*, 7 September 1901, 'Aboriginal Mission Work: Mapoon Mission Station'. See also Hey 1931:26.

21 Journal of E.R. Gribble: 24 November 1895; 27 December 1895; 19 February 1896; 18 June 1896. Gribble, 1930:70, 71-73, 87-88. Interviews with Mrs. T. at Yarrabah, 26 November 1972, and Mrs. F. at Palm Island, 19 December 1972. Mrs. Fulford had been at Yarrabah.

22 *PA*, March 1897:229, 230. See *MN*, 17 August 1899:80, where it is claimed the 'co-operation' of the Aborigines was obtained by 'a wise blending of love and firmness'. *KM*, 18, 1886:89, 90. Meyer fired shots in the air and sent for the police to break up two groups of Aborigines fighting.

23 E.R. Gribble 1908-9:89. Gribble mentions that by this time there were twelve separate settlements, all except one being run entirely by the Aborigines. As he said, the whole population could walk across the hills to Cairns. See also *AS*, 1 September 1897, for Mapoon.

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Newspapers and Abbreviations Used in Text

AS *Austral Star*

(Mitchell library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

Brisbane Courier

IMN *Illustrated Missionary News*

(Mitchell Library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

KM *Kirchliche Mitteilungen*, i.e., Church News.

(United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia Archives)

Mac *Mackay Mercury*

(James Cook University)

Mes *The Messenger*

(Mitchell Library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

MW *Ministering Women* (various pages)

(Mitchell Library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

MN *Missionary Notes*

(Australian Board of Missions). Copy also held at James Cook University

Mis *Missionblatt*

(Mitchell Library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

MM *The Moravian Messenger*

(Mitchell Library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

MP *Morning Post*

(*Cairns Post* premises).

NCB *Newspaper Cutting Book: Album*

(Mitchell Library, MSS, carton no. 4).

PA *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*

Referred to in the text as *Periodical Accounts*. (Mitchell Library, MSS, 1893, carton no. 4).

PDT *Port Denison Times*

Held at Council Chambers, Bowen. Copy at James Cook University.

Other Abbreviations

ABM	Australian Board of Missions
Col. Sec.	Colonial Secretary
ML	Mitchell Library
QPD	Queensland Parliamentary Debates of Legislative Assembly
QSA	Queensland State Archives
UELCA	United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia

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