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Very Wor. Bro. Right Rev. Christopher George Barlow (1858-1915)

Rt. Rev. Christopher George Barlow was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1858 but was sent over to Brecknock College in Wales for his education. After finishing College, he went into partnership with his stepfather in a manufacturing firm in London, but resigned from the business to become Secretary to his life long friend, Rev. George Henry Stanton, on his appointment as the Bishop of North Queensland.

He was later called to the Anglican priesthood and was made a deacon on 18 December 1881 and served as a curate at Mackay. After ordination on 14 September 1882, he was inducted as Rector of St. Paul's, Charters Towers where he stayed for a three year term.

He was Mission Chaplain from 1885 to 1886, Vicar General and Commissary 1887, Hon. Canon of North Queensland 1887 to 1891 and Vicar of St. James, Pro-Cathedral, Townsville from 1886 to 1891. His spiritual qualities, unobtrusive nature and organising abilities were highly thought of by both clergy and laity.

Very Wor. Bro. Right Rev. Barlow's consecration to the See of North Queensland was on St. James' Day, 1891 in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, by the Bishops of Sydney, Grafton and Newcastle. His election had previously been challenged when it was discovered he had no University Degree. The Archbishop of Canterbury soon remedied that by issuing him with a Lambeth Doctorate of Divinity.

After consecration in Sydney, he travelled to England to recruit priests.

He was enthroned in Townsville on 10 April 1892 and journeyed around the diocese for the next ten years re-organising parish and diocesan incomes and widening church activities, despite droughts, cyclones and a depression. Mission work among the Pacific Island sugar workers at Mackay and on the Herbert River, among the Aborigines at Yarrabah and the Chinese at Townsville, Cairns and Charters Towers, were among his numerous activities.

Realising his Diocese was too large for one Bishop, he raised funds for the Diocese of Carpentaria which was created on 28 November 1900. It was once regarded as his greatest achievement, but later his wisdom came to be questioned.

Originally an Evangelical in churchmanship, he gradually changed to a more moderate liberalism with emphasis on spirituality in worship and the personal faith of clergy. In an address to the New South Wales Provincial Synod, he deplored party bigotry within the church and asked for more humanity and tolerance towards differing points of view.

Having served so long in a tropical climate and being subject to frequent bouts of endemic diseases and long visitation tours his health weakened considerably.

He accepted an invitation to journey south to become the Bishop of Goulburn and was enthroned in St. Saviour's Cathedral on 23 April 1902. Here, he found an under-manned Diocese financially crippled by drought and internal dispute. He set about by dividing the Diocese into four archdeaconries. He founded the 'Southern Churchman' and by re-organising the Church Society, increased support from £600 to £3000 a year, which helped the general management of financial affairs.

Many churches and rectories were built during his term of office, but his vision for Bishopthorpe High School for Girls in Goulburn plus a Theological College did not come to fruition due to lack of funds.

Signing himself "your affectionate Bishop," he befriended his clergy and was able to share their personal problems. He was a warm, humane man of simple faith, showing his authority when necessary, but on the whole, was a courteous peacemaker.

Upon his return from England in 1908, he bought, and probably became the first Australian Bishop, to drive a motor car.

To remedy the isolation and intellectual frustration of country clergy, he often lived for months in one centre. He instituted "quiet days" for clergy during Synod meetings. He did not marry, was often lonely, and some of the burdens of his position oppressed him.

Very Wor. Bro. Right Rev. Christopher George Barlow's health deteriorated and he was forced to take many periods of leave.

His home, Bishopthorpe, was burned to the ground in 1914 and he resigned on 31 March 1915.

He died at Cooma Rectory on 30 August 1915 from uraemia. His body was brought to Goulburn and lay in State at St. Saviour's Cathedral where he had given so much of himself. A funeral service was held later at St. Paul's, Cooma, followed by a burial at the Goulburn cemetery.

The High Altar at St. Saviour's Cathedral, Goulburn, is a lasting memorial to our most esteemed Brother.

Very Wor. Bro. Right Rev. Christopher George Barlow was a foundation member of Cleveland Lodge No. 2503, English Constitution, where he affiliated on 28 September 1893.

He served as the Worshipful Master of The Goulburn Lodge of Australia No. 58, New South Wales Constitution.

He held the rank of Past Grand Chaplain, New South Wales Constitution.

He occupied the Chair at the Masonic Banquet held at Goulburn Town Hall on 30 September 1909 to honour the visit of His Excellency Lord Chelmsford, the Governor of New South Wales, who made the declarations for the laying of the corner stone of the tower of St. Saviour's Cathedral, Goulburn, earlier that day.

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