

Address by Reverend Dr John A. Moses at St John's Church, Reid ACT 11.15 am Sunday 15th March, 2015.

ANZAC DAY: HOW AND WHY IT BECAME AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING*

+ Sisters and brothers in Christ, the rapidly approaching centenary of the Gallipoli Landing has unleashed a mixed response from the nation's opinion makers. In a democracy such as ours where freedom of expression is everybody's right this is not surprising.

In totalitarian countries, on the other hand, the publications and broadcasts of academics, authors, clergy and journalists are censored to conform to the ideology of the ruling party. In Australia we have most emphatically an "open speech situation", and that is clearly a right to be prized. So it should not be startling to encounter views about such institutions as Anzac Day which conflict radically with those with which many of us grew up.

For example, as someone whose first encounters with the Anzac Day ceremonies go back to the mid-'thirties in Atherton, NQ, I learned to honour the human sacrifices made by our very young country in the life and death struggle between the British Empire and that of the Kaiser's Germany, and I still do. In my student and post-graduate years in Germany during the 1960's where I learned a great deal more about the real meaning of militarism in German

history, if anything, my opinions about the importance and significance of Anzac Day were strengthened.

But these convictions have been challenged in recent years by various schools of historians and journalists who go so far as to urge the *abolition of Anzac Day*. It is important to understand their reasons. The first one is that they dispute Charles Bean's contention that Australia became a nation on the beaches of Gallipoli where, he suggested, a sense of Australian nationhood was born. The idea that out of the human sacrifice made during that futile campaign a nation arose is severely ridiculed.

Secondly, one hears the argument that the Great War was essentially a struggle between rival capitalist empires for control of the earth's resources, a sordid trade war, as the RC Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix asserted at the time. For that reason it was none of Australia's business, so the argument went, and the young Commonwealth was effectively forced by our imperial masters in Whitehall to sacrifice its men and treasure in the cause of foreign capitalist greed.

Thirdly, following from this, it is argued that had Australia become a Republic, having severed ties with Britain, as many vocal Irish Australians had argued, then the nation would never have become involved in such a pointless and costly conflict. And further, the war when it

came was used for imperial propaganda to inflate the German threat, and this led to the crippling of the optimistic Republican trajectory already begun decades before in Australian colonial history.

At this point I need to say something briefly about how scholarly history ought to be written given that there is always a struggle in the mind of the historian about how to relate the past candidly on its own terms and how one would prefer it to have been. This is the struggle between *objectivity* and so-called *presentism*.

The point about objectivity is that it demands a great effort on the part of the historian to divest him or herself of personal prejudices, religious or otherwise, and earnestly try to comprehend the past through the eyes of the people of that time. This, of course, is virtually impossible but there is a great difference between trying to be objective in this sense and being blatantly biased. *Presentism* is the fallacy of judging the past through the eyes of people living now, that is advocating present day agendas, refusing to recognise how attitudes and values have changed over one hundred years.

Those historians hostile to the Anzac commemoration are pursuing present day agendas reflecting their ideologies, wishing to discard the recollection of the sacrifices made in the First World War which affected so many families.

It has long been obvious that if Prussian-German policy prior to and the actual war aims throughout 1914-1918 were better understood people would have to change their stance on the Anzac commemoration, but this they refuse to do thus exhibiting their “cognitive dissonance”. (That is refusing to change your mind in spite of having been apprised of new information that really would cause you to revise your old position. However, the psychological dissonance that this would cause prevents any rational revision and so these individuals all revert to their old comfortable positions.)

Rather, one must remain open to friendly dialogue. If one adopts a dogmatic position, one remains sealed off in an intellectual cage, like fundamentalists, wilfully isolating oneself from the ideas of others. The only option in an open society, thankfully, is to keep publishing so that alternative views are ventilated and sooner or later it may happen that these views spread. --- So now for the remainder of this address, I will try to explain how and why Anzac Day really got started and developed the way it did.

Canon Garland’s Anzac Day Project

One hundred years ago we were a much more Church-oriented community than we are today. But it was marred because of rampant *sectarianism*. This varied from state to state. On one end of the spectrum Victoria was the most

divided by sectarian issues; read Anglo-Irish antagonism fuelled largely by Archbishop Mannix's refusal to engage in dialogue with so-called non-Catholics. At the other end of the scale was Queensland where there was friendly inter-Church dialogue especially between the Anglican and Roman churches attributable to the openness of their respective Archbishops, the Irishman James Duhig and the Englishman St. Clair Donaldson both of whom served on Australia's very first Anzac Day Commemoration Committee established January 1916 in Brisbane. The undoubted driving force behind this had been Canon David John Garland, an immigrant from Dublin, Ireland, without whose zeal as an Empire patriot and his remarkable organisational skills, Anzac Day as we knew it would not have taken off.

It is crucial to comprehend this man's biography. His family originated in county Monaghan on a farm that is still there but when Garland's father was a child it was the location of the Orange Men's meeting house indicating the strong anti-RC commitment of the family. It is well known how deeply hostile Orange people in Ireland were and are towards Popery. When Garland's father moved to work at the Church of Ireland Trinity College Dublin as a non-academic library assistant, he was in the employ of what was flippantly known as the "last outpost of the Protestant

ascendancy”. It was here that David John Garland was born in 1864. Where he was educated is not recorded; certainly not at Trinity College, so he was not a university man. But for some reason unexplained he arrives in Queensland in 1886 where he found work as a non-articled clerk in a Toowoomba law firm.

It was in that country town in the parish of St James that the great biographical transformation occurred. The Rector of St James was a priest named Tommy Jones, an Anglo-Catholic of steel convictions and clarity of mind. He is still remembered in the Diocese. (The chapel of Anglican Church Grammar School, the largest secondary private school in Queensland is the *Tommy Jones Memorial Chapel*) Canon Jones had both the patience and the ability to convert the young fundamentalist Orangeman from Dublin into a crusading Anglican who understood that what one taught about Christianity had to be unequivocally based on the Bible. The Church’s vocation was to make that clear and faithfully to administer the Sacraments. It was to be open “to all sorts and conditions of men” and women and thus reach out to the world as the source of healing and reconciliation, not remain the “little flock” isolated in a fundamentalist fortress refusing to engage with the wider world. The young Garland became, therefore an ardent disciple of Richard Hooker’s famous doctrine namely that

the Church of England had to be firmly based on “Scripture, reason and tradition”.

Tommy Jones encouraged the young Garland to study for Holy Orders which he did. His first ten years as a priest were spent in a lively ministry in Perth where he became the most high profile clergyman in the diocese manifesting extraordinary organisational and pastoral skills. He successfully led a campaign to have Bible instruction in government schools, founded and edited a newspaper, *The West Australian*, became an army chaplain for troops training in Fremantle prior to embarkation to the South African war, and had been all the time a most active and indispensable member of the Diocesan Council.

The downside was his proverbial Irish temper and inability finally to get on his bishop, the dour and prosaic Yorkshire man Bishop Charles Riley. The clash of personalities led to Garland’s resignation and migration to North Queensland and finally to Brisbane where again he successfully led the Queensland campaign of the Bible in State Schools League. In 1912 he was invited to perform the same task in New Zealand. Then the advent of war frustrated the hoped for outcome and in 1915 Garland returned to Brisbane where he was elected secretary of the first *Anzac Day Commemoration Committee*, with the power to co-opt members and to devise a form of service.

The core of the new ADCC was composed of chaplains from all mainstream denominations including Roman. As such it was a most successful example of Ecumenism and inter-church dialogue. The service devised by Garland took account of the theological positions of all. A key feature was there were to be no prayers for the dead, only the two minutes silence, a stroke of genius. –Bear in mind that Romans at that time were forbidden to pray with non-Romans.

All that was Garland's idea. The nation is united in grief, mourning the loss of young lives, and in comforting the bereaved families. Theistic hymns were chosen that would enable all denominations, Jews and even agnostics to join in. There would be a march of ex-service personnel finishing with a service at a public place, later at a war memorial.

Let me say that only a former Orangeman could have come up with this concept. Garland clearly drew on his experience of the annual 12th July Orange march to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. So by virtue of his training under Canon Jones, Garland was able to adapt something divisive into a healing and reconciling event.

Finally, what Garland and his committee aimed at was an act of commemoration that, far from glorifying war, was designed first and foremost to unite the nation in penitence

for the sin of war, and to make the community mindful of the sacrifice of young lives in the cause of freedom. It was meant above all to be a day of serious contemplation, not of what was called jubilation expressed in sports, excessive drinking and two-up. The latter was advocated energetically by some leaders of the RSL who by 1937 eventually got their way, much to Garland's sorrow.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, no doubt the initial commemorative character of Anzac Day has been very much diluted, but nevertheless Canon Garland's basic concept is retained here annually at the AWM and throughout Australia and New Zealand. It is a fixture in our respective national calendars. Long may it remain so. --

Canon Garland died, having collapsed after celebrating the 9.00 parish Mass on 8th October 1939, just after the outbreak of the Second World War, something he had long feared was coming, but he remained unshakably convinced that the scourge of war would not vanish from the earth until the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been preached and heard world wide. He used to introduce his sermons with words of Isaiah 11. verse 9: "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea".

So, the implication was that only then would the nations "beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift sword. +

against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”.
(Isaiah, 2:4; Micha, 4:3; Joel 3:10).

- **For detailed information on this subject, see, John A. Moses and George F. Davis, *Anzac Day Origins: Canon DJ Garland and Trans Tasman Commemoration* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2013) ISBN 9781921577161 (pbk) pp. i-xxxii + 417.**

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