

David John Garland, Priest: 'A Triton among the Minnows'

A preacher both powerful and persuasive

John A Moses

When in 1907 Archbishop St Clair Donaldson of Brisbane was trying to recommend the Revd David Garland for an appointment in Sydney diocese, he wrote to the Ordinary as follows:

He is very wilful and insubordinate, and in Queensland he is, in my opinion, far too deeply immersed in politics even to settle down as a quiet parish priest. What he needs, and what he professes to want, is a town parish, if possible

Professor John A Moses is a professorial associate of St Mark's National Theological Centre and Charles Sturt University, and author, with George F Davis, of Anzac Day Origins: Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration, Barton Books, Canberra, 2013.

among the poor. And further he needs to be in a sphere where there are other men of calibre. In Queensland he is *a triton among the minnows*.

The archbishop added, by way of compensation:

There is a lot of good in him: he is fearless, affectionate, sympathetic, and full of zeal, and withal a man of first-class ability. His ideal has undoubtedly been pastoral work, and he will turn his back on that ideal if he ceases to work as a parish priest.¹

Not surprisingly, with such a recommendation, the archbishop of Sydney did *not* offer a parish to Garland. Eventually, however, a way opened for Donaldson which enabled Garland to stay in Brisbane. Garland had become secretary of the Bible in State Schools League. This was a role that gained him considerable ecumenical popularity because of his fiery eloquence in promoting the league's cause. Indeed Garland's advocacy of the league was so vigorous that he virtually single-handedly ran a campaign to have the Queensland Education Act changed to allow religious education in government schools.² This was achieved in 1911, whereupon Archbishop Donaldson actually conferred a canonry on his turbulent priest.

Of course, when Donaldson described Garland as a 'Triton among the minnows' he was not being entirely complimentary. Indeed, he had put up with the troublesome Dubliner only with great forbearance. But we need to understand the force of the metaphor. Triton was a figure in ancient Greek mythology, son of Poseidon, god of the sea. Archbishop Donaldson's metaphor signifies, on the one hand, recognition of Garland's extraordinary competence, and on the other a certain anxiety that his hyperactive priest could be a source of trouble.

There exists a portrait photograph of David John Garland as a very young priest that reveals a man of an unmistakable spiritual intensity. Garland's earnestness has certainly something to do with the fact that he was born in Dublin into an Orange family which owned (and still does) a farming property in



County Monaghan in the Republic, where, in bygone years, the local chapter of the Orangemen's association used to meet.³

Garland's father, however, eventually left the farm to take up a non-academic job at Trinity College, Dublin, finally as a library assistant. Here Garland was born in 1864 and grew up until migrating to Queensland—first Brisbane and then Toowoomba in 1884. There he apparently first worked as a *gopher* in a law firm.⁴ While doing so he came under the influence of the Reverend Tommy Jones, Rector of St James', the second of the Toowoomba city parishes.

The remarkable thing about Jones is that he could be described as a vigorous Tractarian who founded many parishes throughout colonial Queensland and was a personality powerful enough to convert the young Garland from Orangeism to a fervent champion of the Oxford Movement. And so Garland left the law to become Jones' catechist, reading theology under Jones' guidance, and in 1889 was made deacon in Grafton. After being placed in charge of several bush parishes over three years, Garland then migrated to Perth WA where he was finally ordained priest in 1892.

There in the far West, Garland served for ten remarkably active years, distinguished by his unique administrative and political ability, leading such causes as the Bible in Schools League, and, significantly as well, conducting an active ministry during the Boer war as chaplain to troops in training prior to their departure for South Africa. Garland's sojourn in the West was sadly concluded due to an irreparable rupture with the Archbishop of Perth, Charles OL Riley, which prompted Garland to migrate back to Queensland in 1902. After a series adventures in the diocese of North Queensland, Garland served as archdeacon and rector of the second city of Charters Tower, eventually becoming Rector of Holy Trinity, Wooloongabba in Brisbane, which is where Archbishop Donaldson finally appointed him while he ran the Bible in State Schools League.⁵

Not surprisingly then, New Zealand's Anglican bishops invited Garland to come and lead a similar 'Bible in schools' campaign across the Tasman, which Garland did from 1912 until 1915, when the impact of the Great War persuaded the New Zealand Church leaders to abandon the campaign and concentrate on the war effort. Garland then returned to Brisbane and became Secretary of Recruiting, having revived his chaplain's commission and worked assiduously among troops training in camps around Brisbane. As part of his war effort Canon Garland initiated a so-called Lavender

Appeal to raise money for troop welfare, thereby creating an Anglican rival to the YMCA. In this he was spectacularly successful, raising sufficient funds for a number of hostels for troops around Brisbane. One still exists at Coolangatta.⁶ Through his consummate ability to traverse the corridors of power in both Church and State, in 1917 Garland was able to acquire a brief from the Minister for Defence to become a special chaplain (at the age of 53) to the Middle East to investigate troop morale and the condition of army cemeteries, and set up separate hostels for Australian and New Zealand troops for which he had raised considerable funds in Queensland. While there he even managed to accompany troops in action and to work among the wounded, for which he received a service medal.

It will be obvious that Canon Garland was a gifted communicator. The question is, what drove him? First, through his Orange upbringing in Dublin he became a devoted Bible-believing Christian. Second, he was a doughty imperial patriot, convinced that the success of the British Empire in spreading its civilisation throughout the world was attributable to the fact that the British people were called by Almighty God to do so. The basis of this success was the Holy Bible. In this he had been powerfully influenced by the career and writings of the great British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone (1809–98). Here, of course, Garland echoed the views of Bishops JB Lightfoot and Foss Westcott, and, as historians Rowan Strong and Hilary Carey have shown, this imperial sentiment was ubiquitous at the time.⁷ And third, Garland's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism convinced him of the basic truth of his ordination vow, namely to be a faithful minister of both the *word and the sacraments*. To this ideal he was unswervingly dedicated his entire life. He learned from his mentor Canon Tommy Jones that a good evangelical had also to be a good Catholic and a good Catholic had also to be a good evangelical. Why? Because a true Catholic could only teach what was in the Bible, or was not in conflict with it, and a true evangelical had to be a good Catholic by embracing the sacramental life of the Church.⁸ In this way, the crucial ideological-theological bridge was crossed that enabled the earnest young Garland to remain loyal to the Biblical tradition in which he was raised, albeit in a critical way, and to embrace Anglo-Catholicism so warmly. Garland became convinced by Canon Jones' belief that without the Oxford Movement/Anglo-Catholic revival the Church of England would have completely lost any relevance to the world and remained the moribund 'Tory Party at Prayer.'⁹

The focus here is on Garland the preacher, and there exists a sufficient extant remnant of his sermons to enable us to re-experience his style and his aims. In fact, without these it would be impossible to gain a balanced picture of the career of this priest who became a household name in his day, and is still remembered with great affection among the older congregation of St Barnabas' parish in the suburb of Red Hill in Brisbane.

Garland's sermons, along with the public profile outlined above, reveal the basic assumptions that underpinned his ministry. In the first place, the Bible was the basis of true human civilisation. The Orange heritage in this respect remained central to his entire being.

Second, the justification for the existence and policies of the British Empire lay in the empire's loyalty to the Bible and the Christian faith expressed therein. The empire had a vocation from God to enable the spread of Christianity wherever the Union Jack flew throughout the world.

Third, the empire's naval and military power was sanctified as the means necessary to enable it both to spread and defend the faith. Fourth, soldiers and sailors were essential elements in the life of the nation. In wartime they were like modern day crusaders who were commissioned with the task of fighting on behalf of the Gospel of Christ. This conviction was undoubtedly behind Garland's recruiting fervour; his fundraising activities (the Lavender Appeal) on behalf of troops; and his energetic establishment of chapels and recreational facilities for troops in training camps, which included the distribution of Prayer Books to each soldier and preparing them for confirmation before departure for overseas service. And, of course, his energetic establishment of hostels for Anzac troops in Egypt, Palestine and Syria was eloquent expression of this concern.

Fifth, and finally, as with most British, Australian and New Zealand churchmen of all denominations during the First World War, Garland was convinced that the German invasion of Belgium allowed no other choice but to declare solidarity with the empire, mainly because Germany in her outrageous action was manifestly the agent of the anti-Christ. That was evident from the very first when German troops perpetrated the infamous atrocities at Louvain and Namur, executing civilians and destroying the ancient towns and their monuments and libraries—actions that almost the entire German academic community publicly endorsed at the time.¹⁰ Troops had to be cared for in both their spiritual and material lives, hence Garland's energetic fundraising and welfare efforts. Consequently Garland

assessed the war as a crusade against the evil of Prussian militarism. Whereas Prussia-Germany with her vain-glorious Kaiser was clearly a nation gone mad and apostate, having deserted true Christian values, the British Empire had to remember her long Christian tradition, revive it and fight the good fight until the world was liberated from the threat of Teutonic barbarism.¹¹

The fact is that like most Anglican clergy of his day, Garland was an imperial patriot—indeed a champion of *God's Empire*, as Hilary Carey has so brilliantly formulated it. That being the case, one had to be able to fight for it; there was no place for any sentimental pacifism. And, as Garland always said, 'Nothing is too good for our soldier boys.' They had to be cared for in both their spiritual and material lives, hence Garland's fundraising and welfare efforts.

These, then, are the assumptions that can be discerned in Canon Garland's preaching and public ministry. It is interesting that sometimes when he preached, he began or ended with the following invocation from Isaiah 11: 'May the Earth be filled with the knowledge of God as the Waters cover the Sea.' His great hope was the conversion of the entire world. The empire's responsibility was to fulfil its vocation under God to further that objective.

David Garland was, despite his lack of a university education, extremely well read and eloquent. He exemplified the positive traits of the Irish with their traditional ability to formulate what they want to communicate simply and directly and with heartfelt conviction. It is fair to say that he had the common touch of a man who could frequent the corridors of power negotiating with premiers, cabinet ministers and mayors in advocacy of the many causes he espoused, and at the same time be a most sincere and caring pastor to his many loyal parishioners.

As one would expect, Garland preached highly instructive sermons about the sacraments, about the fellowship of the Church and its role in sanctifying the world, and about great political issues affecting the life of the community and the nation. A priest today reading Garland's sermons will be struck by his ability to relate the great issues affecting the world to the Bible. His point of departure for everything was Holy Scripture. Both the Old and New Testaments were quite literally for Garland the handbook of human culture. Holy Writ contained all the principles by which humanity ought to live; to ignore these principles was to court true social and moral disaster. And it is interesting to note how Garland used the entire Bible to

affirm his Anglo-Catholic worldview. For example, in a sermon broadcast by the ABC Brisbane station 4QG on the second Sunday after the Epiphany in 1928, he explained his understanding of the doctrine of the 'Real Presence' using St John's Gospel 6:52 as his text, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' His object was to explain that from the earliest Biblical times, God had been making His presence felt among human beings. Garland summarised as follows:

There is the visit of the Lord God Almighty in the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden; there is Enoch walking with God; there are various other Theophanies[...] such as at Penuel when Jacob saw God face to face; then later on as we get out of the patriarchal days into the days of the Church, the Jewish Church, there is the presence of God localised first in a cloud, then over the mercy seat, the Shekinah, in the Tabernacle and in the Temple.

Garland continued:

And then we come to the days of the New Testament and to the Catholic Church, and we find again there is a Real Presence, but no longer is it to be looked for in one place only, within the Holy of Holies. It is to be "When ever two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them", and "lo I am with you always event to the end of the world"; and not in any general sense but in a specific sense "This is my body, this is My Blood". And there is, as I understand it, a continuation of that Real Presence of God which He began with our first father in in the Garden of Eden, which He manifested at various times to those whom he specially chose, and which He also exhibited to own chosen people, those whom He elected for His own purpose for the redemption of the world. Now, as I said the Presence of God is not confined to one spot, it is not localised; and here we must guard against what does lead to misunderstanding, we must be perfectly clear that our Lord Jesus knew what He was saying, that He understood its import all through the ages to come, that He in His

omniscience as god foreseeing difficulty could have removed or obviated that difficulty by the choice of other words. Definitely. Positively, He says "This is My Body, this is My Blood"; no word suggesting "this represents" as I have seen it printed in Scripture Books, but not in the Bible; no word suggesting that this is only a symbol as I have seen it explained in print.

And then, Garland asks, who spoke these words? The unequivocal answer: 'God Almighty'. As an old Orangeman now re-incarnated as a catholic sacramentalist, Garland is able to read the entire Bible in a revitalised way that brings out forcefully the continuity between the Old and New Testaments and the essential relevance of both to human life, namely that Jesus came in order that we might have life more abundantly (John 10:10). And so, for the rector of St Barnabas' Ithaca, drawing upon the opening of the fourth Gospel, "in Him was life," It was He who was the Word, the maker, creator, the life of all things who said, "This is my Body". Here is encapsulated the essence of Canon Garland's faith that he stove valiantly to communicate to his parishioners and via the radio to all Queensland.

Among the remnant of Canon Garland's extant addresses located at the Oxley Library in Brisbane there is a remarkable appreciation of Cardinal Newman's great poem, 'The Dream of Gerontius,' that had been set to music by Sir Edward Elgar and of which recordings of extracts had been made in 1927. Given Canon Garland's penchant for using the latest photographic equipment as well as radio broadcasts for communicating the essence of the Gospel, it is not surprising that he acquired recordings of this famous spiritual oratorio. He was clearly very moved by its depiction of the journey of a soul from this world to the next. After having summarised the assessments of previous commentators on Newman's poem, and having listened to the recording, Garland is content to follow Newman's eschatology by affirming that:

The soul is leaving this world and realises that death has gripped it. There is the travail of fear as it enters the valley of the shadow of death. There is the surprise of the soul at its discoveries in the other world. There is the divine peace which comes when the last enemy is destroyed and death is swallowed up in victory.

For Garland, all this was unquestionably real, and in his preaching and ministry generally he was at pains to communicate this reality to his fellow citizens. We are sojourners in this 'vale of tears' with a vocation to witness to the risen Christ, the Saviour of the world. And the Church being the Body of Christ is the agency for healing the world. Consequently Garland perceived himself as a very pro-active priest who linked directly what he did as a celebrant of the Eucharist and preacher of the Word to corrective activity in the world. He cultivated no 'little flock' mentality that prioritised ministry among the converted over outreach to the entire world. On Armistice Day 1934 Garland took the opportunity to render account of the Church's work in ministering to the bereaved, and caring for the incapacitated diggers still in hospitals. Clearly alarmed by the rise of fascism in Europe, Garland wished to alert the Church to its wider obligation to minister not only to local needs but see to it that the Gospel message permeated not only the Church but the entire nation. He wrote:

Our duty is clear. We should fearlessly proclaim the Christian Faith and endeavour so ... that it will bring within its influence first the whole community and then the nations.

He went on:

The strengthening of corporate religion seems to me to be our need. Anything that emphasises division should be regarded as sinful and everything that can be done to promote the application of Christian principles in the affairs of the nations should be done. I am not advocating an attenuated Christianity. The stronger and more definite it is the more likely it will be to attract, hold and inspire. Flabby backboneless Christianity is just as useless as that view of Christian faith which would make us concerned with saving our own souls only.

Garland's main point—from which he never resiled—was that there was only one hope for the world and that was knowledge of, a full trust in, and a complete surrender to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Finally, in this brief sampling of Canon Garland's preaching, his views on the role of the 'clergyman as citizen' are of significance. Clearly this derived from his conviction that the fact of ordination, far from confining

a man to his pulpit and hence to public silence, rather empowered—indeed, obliged him—to take a prophetic lead in highlighting social and political ills in the country. And here Archbishop St Clair Donaldson's description of Garland as 'Triton among the minnows' is more than amply vindicated. In his undated sermon he cited a number of examples of clergy—both in Britain and Australia from all denominations—who used their profile to expose dangers to the community. Among these were the polluted water supply in Charters Towers that was causing typhoid on a large scale, and the struggle for shorter working hours for workers in days gone by. Here the solidarity of clergy was able to accomplish changes for the benefit of the wage earner. So clergy were to work to sensitise the consciences of politicians, just as the energetic Revd Tim Costello does today, to name one prominent example. Canon Garland summed up his attitude as follows:

I think that over and above our sermons, our services in church, the chief power which we exercise both as a clergyman and also as a citizen is by our influence and example. It is not that we should be this or that merely for example, but we can no more cast off the effect of our influence, than we can cast off our shadow. Every day we move we exhibit influences both for good and for evil, and when we consider our obligations as members of the great Christian family, let us remember that one of the chiefest of these obligations is so to act and speak, so to go about our daily work that we may every moment be raising and not lowering the social, moral and spiritual tone of those with whom we associate. The whole tenor of our office is that we should serve our brother man. It is not merely that we should serve the Church of England, and we fail in the services if we forget the probable effect of our influence on such causes as Temperance, Sanitation, Religious education, morality, and the other great social problems of the age. The Church is the one true benefit society, the greatest that has existed in the world. It is a society of brotherhood between man and woman, old and young, wise and foolish, weak and strong, for one purpose under one headship working to one end.

Sufficient has been said to illustrate Garland's self-perception as priest and preacher. It made him arguably the most publicly involved cleric of any denomination in the entire nation during his time. Few clergy have evinced such energy and entrepreneurial skill as the little Dubliner, the Orangeman who turned Anglo-Catholic in Toowoomba Queensland 126 years ago. In this year, the centenary of our involvement in the Great War when Garland did so much for soldier welfare and the commemoration of the fallen, we do well to remember him.

Endnotes

1. John A Moses & George F Davis, *Anzac Day Origins: Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration*, Barton Books, Canberra, 2013, p. 91.
2. Yvonne Perkins, 'Queensland's Bible in State Schools Referendum 1910: A Case Study of Democracy', BA (Hons) thesis, University of Sydney, 2010. Accessible online at <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/10596>.
3. The Orange Lodge originated in Ireland and there exist branches in all Anglo-Saxon countries at the present time. See David A Roberts, 'The Orange Order in Ireland: a religious institution?', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1971, pp. 269–82.
4. A *gopher* or *gofor* in a law firm is a junior person who fetches and carries for the lawyers. In this role Garland acquired an extraordinarily wide and detailed knowledge of the law, but he seems never to have become an articled clerk since there is no one of that name registered in the files of the Queensland Law Association.
5. For biographical information on this section of Garland's career see my *Anzac Day Origins*, pp. 102–17.
6. This holiday guesthouse that Garland founded back in 1916 still exists and is currently undergoing a massive expansion. It is located at 192 Marine Parade, Coolangatta.
7. Geoffrey R Treloar, *Lightfoot the Historian: the nature and role of history in the life and thought of J.B. Lightfoot (1828–1889) as churchman and scholar*, Mohr and Siebeck, Tübingen, 1998; Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire c. 1700–1850*, OUP, Oxford & New York, 2007; Hilary M Carey, *God's Empire: religion and colonialism in the British world, c. 1801–1908*, CUP, Cambridge & New York, 2011.

8. I first encountered this argument in a conversation with Canon JE Dale who was, during the 1950s, administrator of St Paul's Cathedral in Rockhampton, Queensland. It was apparently quite widespread among his generation of Anglo-Catholic priests.
9. Garland was unequivocally an Anglo-Catholic but one who quite rigorously and logically remained firmly loyal to his evangelical upbringing in an Orange family. See *Anzac Day Origins*, pp. 92–101. His way of holding the two positions together must be seen as quite exemplary and could be adopted today by clergy of all shades of churchmanship with positively conciliatory results.
10. See *Anzac Day Origins*, p. 5.
11. John Anthony Moses, *Prussian-German Militarism 1914–18 in Australian Perspective: the Thought of George Arnold Wood*, Peter Lang, Bern/Frankfurt/New York, 1991. Professor Wood and Garland were contemporaries. They shared the very same view of the nature of the Great War as a crusade against what they at the time termed 'Prussianism'.