



THE Simpson PRIZE

A COMPETITION FOR
YEAR 9 AND 10 STUDENTS

2010 Runner-Up
Queensland

Brittni Crofts
Mundubbera State P-10



Where's the Faith? How the Clergy were Excluded from the Anzac Legend

Brittni Crofts

Mundubbera State P-10



Australia came of age in the trenches of Gallipoli. From the heroic stories of this time the Anzac legend was created, promoting the spirit and attitude of those who have served representing our nation. The legend is based on Australians who stood tall in inhumane times and displayed principles of fairness and loyalty to mates. These principles are still identified as part of the army today.

The Anzac legend has become a national icon through highlighting the intrinsic values of mateship and courage which today the everyday Australian can aspire to. The legend is seen as being vital for the role it played in establishing the fledgling nation on an international scene.

Australian and New Zealand troops helped to establish their countries' reputations in the world through qualities of strength and bravery when faced with adversity. In fact, it is much more than that. The legend of these men who endured so much has given something of which Australians can be proud. It put Australia's mark on the world as something other than a nation descended from convicts. (Red Apple Education, 2009).

The standard set by a few changed the perception of so many around the world. Australian's could finally farewell their convict heritage and be proud of their new national identity.

From the qualities of the legend developed the visual image of the 'bronzed Aussie' hero fighting bravely shoulder to shoulder in the trenches. This macho stereotype elevated the Anzacs as heroes of their time. There was a need to promote this image especially during the campaigns of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. In chauvinistic societies, this stereotype gave justification to send young people to foreign lands to benefit all. In recent times this need has changed and this image has proven to be more unyielding. This steadfast nature has been to the detriment of the Australian military and has resulted in a lack of acknowledgment for some of its own members.

While this legend promotes characteristics that have inspired a nation, it fails to acknowledge the vital role some groups played in the battlefields where the legend was created. One such group this applies to is the clergy. The clergy's role in the Australian defence forces has a history as long as the defence force itself. The role they fulfilled required them to display mateship and courage, vital values of the Anzac legend. Our clergy members faced combat fronts and saw terrifying scenes with the soldiers. However,

the clergy faced these conditions unarmed, demonstrating a key value in the Anzac legend, courage. Initially, the clergy had shown courage and strength through participating in war situations which defied core Christian morals toward violence. 'Service personnel will make a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace by being the first to work to overcome the temptation to violence and by working to defend the rights of peace and love.' (The Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force, n.d.). The courage the chaplains displayed promoted the other value in the Anzac legend, mateship.

The core role of the clergy was to be of support to those at war and be a positive influence in times of hardship. One would expect the importance of this role would lead to them being elevated to a position of power. The clergy supported many, shared burdens and gave counselling to those at war. This is expressed in the mission statement of the Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force:

Our mission is to ensure that the pastoral care of all those associated with Australia's defence is provided at the highest possible level. This requires chaplains to be both holy and dedicated clergy and thoroughly trained professional members of the Armed Services. It is a unique and challenging ministry. In simple terms, we are dedicated to serving those who serve. (The Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force, n.d.).

This devotion to serve our mates embodies the values that are associated with the Anzac legend. Although the clergy apply the qualities of courage and mateship, many do not receive the same recognition as other Anzacs.

A prime example of the importance of the clergy was Chaplain J.V.J. Robinson, who fulfilled this role humbly. Along with the troops, Robinson tolerated the same living and environmental conditions to achieve his role in the defence force. 'His high regard for the troops and his efforts to listen and interact with them as people, without regard for position in the rank hierarchy endeared him to the men' (Johnston, n.d.). Robinson's support was not limited to those concerning war. He also supported those at war who had family, marital and separation issues. 'He listened to the men's reminiscences of home and met the men's loved ones through photographs. He was often called on to help the men deal with strains of separation' (Johnston, n.d.). Robinson devoted time and energy into organising recreational activities. In doing this he strived to prevent men falling into complacency and depression and replace it with a sense of optimism, to enlighten the troops through the worst conditions. His most gruesome of responsibilities was to bury the dead, especially when there were only pieces of remains to bury. Robinson was a great asset in the war. Morally and emotionally, he endeavoured to make the war environment the best it could be in the toughest of trials. 'Chaplain Robinson emphasises the value and impact that can flow from simple gestures of compassion' (Johnston, n.d.).

The Anzac legend displays an image of physical danger, leading many to only identify the soldiers of the defence force. This is unjust for the chaplains who serve. Despite the role they fulfil they are ineligible to fit hero status as they are stripped of the 'bronzed Aussie' stereotype. This stereotype is needed to exemplify a key value of the Anzac legend, courage. Many are oblivious to the role of the clergy and the vast amount of courage it involves. Still, for everything the clergy do, Simpson's donkey received more acknowledgment than the clergy. Clergy members hold a vital, unseen part in the preparation of troops for war mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The clergy and their role have been neglected for too long.

The values the clergy uphold and promote, I see as being very worthy and noble. It has always been apparent to me personally that it is healthy to have someone to turn to when things get tough, or when seeking advice. People who can be a support person, a mentor, a positive influence, or who give up their time to help others deserve acknowledgement and appreciation for what they do.

Until recently, I had not discovered the significance of clergy in the defence force. It is quite obvious they are important to those at war through their consistent support and mental strength. I did not know that the clergy were actually present in the trenches with the troops, unarmed, solely to support them. To have done that proves a remarkable form of courage that many do not realise. Discovering this made me feel even more appreciative of what these people do, and have done.

From the lack of appreciation and inclusion in the identity of the Anzac legend, it is apparent that the clergy have been forgotten. Most Anzacs at war had physical strength and weapons, but chaplains were among the strongest of people mentally, morally and spiritually through these war times. Chaplains put others' sorrows before their own to help those who needed someone to turn to. They demonstrate the true Anzac spirit which the everyday Australian should admire. The clergy still play a very significant part in the defence force today, much like they have in the past. The clergy is a missing voice from the Anzac legend that needs to be heard.

REFERENCE LIST

- The Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force. (n.d.). *Mission and Vision Statement*. Retrieved 23rd November 2009 from <http://www.military.catholic.org.au/vision.htm>
- Johnston, V. (n.d.). *Remembering the War in New Guinea*. Retrieved 15th November 2009 from <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/remember.nsf/Web-Printer/4602325DDBC07E3DCA256CCD000CBAE7?OpenDocument>
- Red Apple Education. (2009). *The Anzac Legend*. Retrieved 23rd November 2009 from http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-42_t-46_c-136/the-anzac-legend/nsw/the-anzac-legend/australia-and-world-war-i/gallipoli-and-the-anzacs

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anglican Defence Force Chaplaincy. (2005). *Becoming a Chaplain*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from <http://www.anglicanadf.org.au/becomingachaplain.htm>
- Anglican Defence Force Chaplaincy. (2005). *Defence Force Board*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from <http://www.anglicanadf.org.au/board.htm>
- The Australian Army. (2009). *Army Principal Chaplain: Army Recruiting*. Retrieved 15 November 2009 from <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/PRINCHAP/Recruiting.asp>
- The Catholic Diocese of the Australian Defence Force. (n.d.). *Mission and Vision Statement*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from <http://www.military.catholic.org.au/vision.htm>
- Grunts View. (2008). *The Anzac Legend*. Retrieved 15 November 2009 from <http://www.gruntsview.org/anzac.html>
- Halsey, W., et. Al. (Ed.) (1987). Army. In *Collier's Encyclopedia* (Vol. 2, p. 692). London: P.F. Collier Inc.
- Johnston, V. (n.d.). *Remembering the War in New Guinea*. Retrieved 15 November 2009 from <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/remember.nsf/Web-Printer/4602325DDBC07E3DCA256CCD000CBAE7?OpenDocument>
- Lutheran Church of Australia. (2004). *Defence Force Chaplains*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from <http://www.lca.org.au/action/chaplain/defence.cfm>
- Red Apple Education. (2009). *The Anzac Legend*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from http://www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-42_t-46_c-136/the-anzac-legend/nsw/the-anzac-legend/australia-and-world-war-i/gallipoli-and-the-anzacs
- Stringer, C., (2003). *Fighting McKenzie Anzac Chaplain: Tribute to a hero..* Queensland: Col Stringer Ministries Inc.
- Uniting Church in Australia. (2009). *Who Are We and What We Do*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from <http://www.victas.uca.org.au/outreach-justice/outreach-ministries/who-we-are-and-what-we-do>
- Webb, B. K. (n.d.). *The legend of the Anzac*. Retrieved 23 November 2009 from http://www.ncs.net.au/history/essay_01.html