THE MYTH OF ANZAC

An Inquiry into the use of *religious* language, reference and interest in the

- Representation of various Australian Experiences of the Great War -

1914 - 1918

Definition of Terms\*

*Religious = Holy, Sacred*

*Holy* = *numinous; sublime* (Otto); also the *transcendent* (Otto)

*Sacred = c.f. profane* (Eliade); ‘wholly other’ (Otto)

*Myth =* the sacred story of religious or mythological figures/culture heroes (especially as expressed/celebrated in/through religious rites and rituals – involving sacred time and sacred space) (Eliade)

\*[Please see Methodology section for more detail]

The Question

To what extent did some Australian soldiers and clergy understand their experience of the Great War in religious terms? And to what extent did they conceive of and experience war commemoration during the Great War (especially on Anzac Day) as religious?

The Argument

The thesis argues that for some Australian servicemen (soldiers and clergy) it was their transcendent – numinous and sublime – experiences during the Great War that contributed significantly to transforming ordinary, everyday experience into the extraordinary; the profane into the sacred, the holy, the religious; and the historical into a mythic or sacred history. And that it was such experience and its expression in religious and mythological language (prose, poetry, imagery and symbolism) that helped to create the myth of Anzac during the war itself – celebrated each year (from 1916 on) in Anzac Day rites and rituals.

Situating The Thesis - The Big Picture

Much has been written - and spoken - about what has been variously called Anzac or the Anzac tradition, legend or myth, and from a variety of viewpoints or *Weltanschauung*.

On the 26th April 2016, Dr. Michael Gladwin reminded us of the at times vexed relationship of Australia’s predominant religion, Christianity, with the legend and myth of Anzac in his St. Mark’s National Theological Centre’s Anzac Day Public lecture “Anzac Day: Remembering for all the wrong reasons?” He spoke of the planned solemnity of Anzac Day and its Good Friday type ‘mood’ as designed by Canon David Garland during the Great War itself and how the commemoration and celebration of Anzac has developed and changed during the 20th and 21st centuries; the role of Chaplains on such occasions; the Christian themes (if not messages) associated with Anzac Day rites and rituals; of sacred Anzac places and spaces; the juxtaposition of pagan and classical virtues and Christian values with the ‘spiritual birth’ of Australia through the courage and sacrifice, etc. of the original Anzacs at Galliipoli; the possibility of an Anzac civil religion and the “aura of the sacred”; and the way in which Anzac Day services allow for the ‘spiritual aspirations’ of Australians longing for the transcendent and the numinous.

A decade earlier, Graham Seal, in his *ANZAC: The sacred in the secular* (2007) argued that “the conceptual complex of history, folklore, commemoration and place known as ‘Anzac‘ is talismanic mythology powerfully associated with dominant concepts of nation and cultural identity.” He also suggests that although Anzac is “routinely referred to as ‘sacred’”, it is, despite this sacralisation, “light with signifiers of standard religious rhetoric, observation and dogma” and has been “invested with the sacred through the concept of nation rather than through religion.”

While this might be true up to a point, Seal nonetheless in *Inventing Anzac* (2007) and others such as Professor Ken Inglis in *Sacred Places* (2008) routinely or usually and quite naturally (but not exclusively) equate religion in this context (or compare the cult or civil religion of Anzac) with Christianity; and while this is to be expected in an Australian context (and noting that Inglis in particular also makes comparisons with Aboriginal, classical and archaic language and religion) that what is religious in the Anzac tradition is, arguably that which has always been universally religious: myths of creation or origin, for example, and the archetypal religious language of imagery and symbolism, rites and rituals that *return* those within the tradition to an experiential, a-temporal time or experience at or before creation – in this case, the time of the creation of the myth of Anzac and the Anzac hero, properly understood. It is therefore with this understanding of religious myth, symbolism, imagery, rites and rituals that this study shall be concerned, so that the Anzac experience and tradition can be analysed and placed within a long history of mankind, as *homo religious* (Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*) - experiencing and expressing common, archetypal, religious *truths* and world-views.

At the same time, the thesis will also be concerned with how and why such religious or transcendent language, reference and interest was used to express the numinous and sublime nature of individual and collective wartime experience, thus giving an experiential basis and understanding to and for the creation of the Anzac myth, legend or tradition and the creation of the Anzac hero - during the Great War itself.

In her chapter, *The Anzac Legend* in *Australia’s War, 1914-18* (1995) Joan Beaumont gives a summary and analysis of the legend, its creation, reality, power, transmission, appropriation and perpetuation, noting its various constituent parts, including links with Christian ritual, cautioning nonetheless that such a “natural identification” as between Christianity and Anzac “needs to be qualified.” (*Australia’s War, 1914-18*, 1995, p.164). And it is with such a qualification and comparative analysis of Anzac with universal, mythic themes (known to the history of religions) that this thesis shall be concerned.

That is, while in contemporary life and general academic discourse, religious myth is often understood to be equated with that which is false or at best suspect – the ‘myth’ of Anzac is often portrayed as meaning the ‘artificial and false’ construction of the legend of Anzac - in the field of the history of religions, and more specifically, the discipline of the phenomenology of religion, myth is understood to be an expression of that which is true or real (at least to the person experiencing a ‘transcendent reality’ and believing in the worldview in question).

The study, therefore, will investigate and analyse aspects of the religious nature and significance of the Anzac war-time experience and tradition through a study of Anzac mythology; the associated archetypal Anzac hero; religious symbolism and imagery; religious and transcendent language and numinous and sublime personal experience within a specific period of historical time and the relationship of such elements to other similar religious or mythological elements and themes, past and present. That is, the study will shed some light on how and why contemporary writing about the Great War experience by some was to varying degrees infused with religious language, reference and interest on both an individual and collective level.

Paul Fussell in his *The Great War And Modern Memory* (1975) is concerned with the British experience on the Western Front and some of the literary means by which it was “remembered, conventionalized, and mythologized” (Fussell, 1975, p. ix). Robin Gerster, in *Big-noting The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing* (1987) andnoting the inspiration of Fussell, is concerned with the part played by literature in the creation of the “reverential ethos” of Anzac, where Great War writers wrote like “apostles of a new creed” and where ultimately “myths, like religion, have power and veracity only because people actually believe in them” (Gerster, 1987, p. 20).

Historian Professor Alistair Thomson in his *Anzac Memories Living with the Legend* (1994) focuses on amongst other things how war veterans “composed their memories of the war in relation to the [Anzac] legend, and in relation to their own shifting experiences and identities” (Thomson, 1994, p. 238); while his colleague at Monash University, Professor Bruce Scates, author of *Return to* Gallipoli (2006) in his *The First Casualty of War* (AHS, 130, 2007) – although discussing more recent Anzac commemoration - allows for the validity of the experiences of pilgrims to Gallipoli at the Dawn and National Services on Anzac Day, many pilgrims reporting that they were ‘lost for words’ – and hence provided some evidence of the likelihood or possibility of a transcendent or sublime nature or dimension to such experience in earlier times. Ken Inglis also refers to an ‘awareness of the holy’ associated with the Australian War Memorial and “other repositories of the Anzac tradition” and his own “awe in the presence of the holy” on his first visit to Melbourne’s ‘Shrine’ of Remembrance – once again in reference to more recent, post Great War Anzac experiences. (Inglis, *Sacred Places*, pp. 436, 2) This study will therefore explore the extent to which soldiers and clergy during the Great War experienced something similar (to that reported by Scates and Inglis) and how they expressed or conceived of such experience.

Historian Bill Gammage, in his epic study of the experiences of soldiers during the Great War (*The Broken Years,* 1975), has commented on the religiosity or lack of it in the Australian digger. Michael McKernan has written extensively on the relationship between Australian churches and the Great War and the effect of the war on society and the role of chaplains during the war (*PADRE*, 1986), while Dr. Michael Gladwin has produced a recent comprehensive history of Australian Army chaplains at war – including during the Great War – (*CAPTAINS of the SOUL*, 2013) described by Professor Peter Stanley as a work of “insight and depth” for those who “seek to understand the relationship between religious belief and military experience, regardless of individual adherence.” (CAPTAINS of the SOUL A history of Australian Army chaplains, 2013, p, ix) Gladwin’s colleague at Charles Sturt University, Professorial Fellow, the Rev. Dr. John Moses meanwhile, in his co-authored *Anzac Day Origins* 2013, has reminded us of and argued for the relevance and centrality of the work of historians of religion Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade to an understanding of the sacred nature and significance of the Anzac experience and tradition – something that is taken up in this study. (*Anzac Day Origins Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration*, John A Moses & George F Davis, Barton Books, Canberra, 2013, pp. 14-38)

This thesis then for its part (and based upon a limited sample) investigates the voices of those *within* the Anzac experience and tradition – the myth of Anzac - and the way in which their worldviews or transcendent and sublime wartime experiences are expressed in language that can best be described as *religious* and with classical references and within the hero’s experiential journey (using Joseph Campbell’s hero model and applying it to historical, individual experience); the reasons or motives behind such expressions and where/if possible how and why and to what extent such expressions changed over time – for example in successive diary entries. (Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press, New York, 1968, p. 245)

The study will then compare the religious themes discovered within the myth of Anzac and compare and contrast them with those known to the history of myth and religion (as understood by Mircea Eliade and others.)

For example or by way of illustration, chaplains who served with the Australian volunteer soldiers from 1914 to 1918/19, perhaps not unexpectedly, often used a rich text of religious language in their sermons delivered after and during the war and did so for a variety of reasons, consciously or unconsciously, and it would seem, usually consciously. The first reason, and not necessarily at the top of the list, was to console the family and friends of the dead and to also give comfort to those soldiers and sailors who did return to Australia. The second reason was to help to promote, if not also to create the new, developing Anzac myth or tradition – a mythology which included the deeds of the Anzac heroes (dead and living) and a need or wish to remember them, to extol their bravery and virtues and to challenge others *within* the tradition (gathered together on Anzac Day, for example) to make good the debt left to them by those who had made the supreme sacrifice – in the same way, as it was usually pointed out to the assembled congregation, another *hero* had also sacrificed *His* life, not only for the community, nation, empire or tribe, but, indeed, for mankind as a whole. The third reason, then, being to reinforce the essential elements of sacrifice and service of the Christian message, religion or tradition and to do so in association with, or by way of, the myth of Anzac and its annual celebration or re-enacting. (This aspect will be investigated and analysed as part of Chapter 5 of the thesis concerning Anzac ceremonies, celebrations and occasions.)

That is, the *sacralisation* of the experiences of the Anzacs through the employment – consciously or unconsciously - of religious language was in response to or because of not only a need to make sense of and give expression to horrific, modern warfare, but also to give comfort to the bereaved; to commemorate the dead; to help create a new national myth or tradition and for the advancement or shoring up of particular religious, sectarian or political agendas.

Religious symbolism and imagery by its very nature is designed to *speak to* the unspeakable, to give experiential meaning to or in a world that would otherwise be lost to *chaos*, as historians of religion such as Eliade and others have amply demonstrated. (See: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane,* 1959; & Richard Hutch, *Lone Sailors and Spiritual Insights Cases of Sport and Peril at Sea*, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005, pp. 31 - 43) The various myths of creation, for example, give a meaning to existence for those *within* the community or tribe that upholds the particular myth at a specific point in history; and the myths of creation and re-creation do just that in a way that not only answer the needs of those within the religious tradition in question, but also - arguably - *answer to* the needs of the collective unconscious for expression, and the individual and collective consciousness for (religious) meaning and (psychological) certainty. (See: Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2008).

Hence the theme of creation -- the creation of the new tradition or myth of Anzac by the Anzac heroes themselves and their chaplain associates, for example -- is associated in verse and prose with the historically re-occuring religious themes of birth, death, rebirth and the idea of something *sacred* breaking through into the historical; the deeds of the culture-heroes establishing a standard, a pattern of behavior for all within the tradition or group to follow and to ritually re-create each year – in this case on the 25th. April, the anniversary of the Landing at Gallipoli, the new holy ground or mythological landscape – such that one might experience, once again, that non-temporal transcendent moment, *in illo tempore*, at the time of creation. (Hutch, quoting Eliade, op. cit., p. 39 in a discussion of aquatic symbolism specifically and symbolic knowledge in general.)

Thesis Contribution

The thesis therefore is situated within the field of Australian history – the Great War, 1914 to 1918 - and is informed by methodologies and studies in the discipline of the history of religions, with specific reference to the comparative understanding of mythology and the utilisation of the insights and methodology of studies in the phenomenology of religion and studies in the relationship between history, culture, myth and religion.

It will contribute to a growing scholarship on the religious/sacred dimensions of Australian war experience and commemoration, and in turn challenge received views that Australian soldiers were instinctively irreligious or that war commemoration was not conceived of in religious terms.

Methodology

The thesis employs an historical approach to various Great War documents, while also being informed by the phenomenological methodology of historians of myth and religion such as Mircea Eliade and Rudolf Otto in particular, and historians such as Joy Damousi.

As James L. Cox points out, in his *A Guide To The Phenomenology of Religion* (2006), “the two most important categories for understanding religion for Eliade are myth and ritual, including ways each category is linked to the other” – Eliade, he notes, defining myth as that which defines a *sacred* as opposed to a *profane* history; and ontologies as defining “what it means for a human to *be* in a world [here, Australian society and culture and the Anzac myth or tradition] that has resulted from the sacred interventions [of, e.g., Anzac heroes] described in myths.” (Cox, 2006, p. 180; referring to Eliade, 1986, p. 63-4)

One of the aims of historical-typologist phenomenologists such as Eliade, and in contrast to the essential phenomenologists such as Otto - according to Twiss and Conser in their *Experience of the Sacred* (1992) - is an “historically contextualised understanding of a particular tradition’s ethos and worldview”, thus uncovering a “dynamic picture of how an ethos and worldview developed over time”, and in this case during the years 1914- 1918. (Twiss & Conser, 1992, p. 25) Such an historical approach will be combined with that of the essentialist methodology of Rudolf Otto, informed by his *Das Heilige* (*The Idea of the Holy, The Sacred,* 1917) and his understanding of the experiential or non-rational nature of the transcendent, the holy, categorized as the *numinous* and the *sublime*. It will be a study of the *holy*, the *sacred* within a specific historical context. The reason for such an approach to the historical sources is to elicit from them the numinous and sublime moments – the holy or the sacred - experienced by the chosen soldiers and chaplains and to place such experience within both its historical context and the broader context of the understanding of such experience within the discipline of the history of myth and religion – something that a combination of the essential and historical-typological phenomenology of Otto and Eliade can achieve.

In such analysis of personal experiences and expressions and by using the necessary empathy, the historian can disclose the structure of the religious consciousness or awareness of the individual soldier or chaplain, and “through its primary expressions in myth and ritual”, for example, avoid the hermeneutical predicament of conveying the correct interpretation, by the historian recognising that s/he is dealing with religions as *spiritual universes* (Cox, 2006, p. 182) and peak experiences as numinous or sublime moments in time, as Otto would have it. Or, to put it another way, it is the role or method of the phenomenologist and historian to adopt the “phenomenological attitude” or *epoche* – despite any difficulties associated with such a method - in order to gain insight or intuition into “what makes religious consciousness what it is”, following the Husserlian program, by “temporarily re-enacting or re-experiencing” the intentions, experiences, beliefs or expressions of the person or ethos being studied. (Twiss & Conser, 1992, p. 9).

The above notwithstanding, Ralph W. Hood points out in his chapter “Mysticism” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (1985) that: “While the profundity of mysticism as a human experience is usually accepted by both theologians and scientists, mystical interpretations of such experiences are seldom given much credence.” Or, as he notes, quoting Sharfstein’s (1973: 45) “quaint phrasing”, the mystics’ claim to knowledge based upon their experiences are often seen as nothing but “ontological fairy-tales.” [Ralph W. Hood, Jr. “Mysticism” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age*. ed., Phillip E. Hammond, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, p. 284] That is, amongst classical sociological or psychological theorists—and one might add historians as well— mystical or transcendent experiences have often been analysed as experiences of “union *misinterpreted* by those who would think they have been united with an ultimate transcendent reality (whether interpreted as God or not).” (Hammond, p. 286)

As Hood also notes, nonetheless, mysticism or transcendent experience “is simply a profound, primary religious awareness of transcendent reality that serves as a human experiential basis for religious institutions and dogmas.” (Hammond, p. 287) Such experience stands alone as an experience in and of itself – as *a priori* elements,“non-rational elements of the complex category of ‘holiness’” (Otto, p. 136) - quite apart from the necessity of any religious (or historical) interpretation, and as Otto himself further maintains, in no need of philosophical or empirical proof as to its reality or existence:

“Religion is not in vassalage either to morality or teleology, *ethos* or *telos*, and does not draw its life from postulates; and its non-rational content has, no less than its rational, its own independent roots in the hidden depths of the spirit itself.” (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 136)

This study is also mindful of the approach and advice of historians such as Joy Damousi (*The Labour of Loss*, 1999, p. 4) when she suggests that it is important to read the “silences and gaps” in the expressions of personal experiences as reported in letters and diaries so as to help understand the relationship between history, culture and psychology -- here between history, culture and religion or numinous and sublime experience and its expression -- and the “evocative force” that drives the personal narrative.

“…I draw upon those who argue for the need to connect the psychic, the cultural and the historical, and examine how these have intersected to shape aspects of culture.” “My starting point is a psychological and emotional one.” (Damousi, 1999, p. 2) She continues arguing that historians have “universalised” rather than “particularised” such experience. (Damousi, Joy, *The Labour of Loss Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement* *in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p 2.)

This thesis finds the universal *in* the particular and the transcendent within the historical.

During the Great War itself - 1917 - the German theologian and historian of religions, Rudolf Otto, offered a new language to describe and explain the experience of the *holy* or the *sacred*, that irrational or non-rational aspect of the experience of the transcendent or the divine, giving it the term *numinous*, from the Latin *numen*, meaning god. The felt nature of the *numinous* was further categorized by him as containing the elements of creature-feeling or consciousness, the emotion of being “submerged and overwhelmed” by one’s own “nothingness”; of *mysterium tremendum*, the *tremendum* aspect being further comprised of the three sub-elements of *awefulness*, *majestas*, and *energy* or *urgency* (also described as vitality, passion, will, force, movement, excitement, activity and impetus); while the *mysterium* aspect could be explained as being the ‘wholly other’, with an additional element of *fascinans,* fascination, the uniquely attractive or alluring. (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, various pp.)

It is such an understanding of the nature of the holy – the *numinous* and the *sublime* – that the thesis will draw upon. For Otto both the numinous and the sublime are “authentic ‘schema’ of ‘the holy’.” (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 46)

The study will also draw upon the understanding of the sacred of historian of myth and religion Mircea Eliade.

In the introduction to his *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959), historian of myth and religion, Mircea Eliade, pays tribute to Rudolf Otto’s *Das Heilige* (The Sacred) published in the same year as Great War Australian soldier-poet Leon Gellert’s *Songs of a Campaign*, 1917 (analysed in the thesis). He notes that Otto’s *numinous* presents itself as “something ‘wholly other’ (*ganz andere*)”; and that the sacred “always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from ‘natural’ realities”; and that what his, Eliade’s concern, by contrast or by extension is, is to “present the phenomenon of the sacred in all its complexity”. (Eliade, op. cit., pp. 8-10) Eliade then goes on to explain that mankind becomes aware of the sacred “because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane.” (Eliade, p. 11) And so it is, for example, with the experience and expression of the poet and adventurer Leon Gellert, for whom the sacred shows itself principally in the actions of the Anzacs at Anzac Cove, a new, sacred, mythological landscape ripe with the deeds of newly born heroes or ‘culture-bearers’ from the Antipodes.

Anzac - the mythological landscape - becomes a *hierophany* or series of hierophanies (to use Eliade’s term for an *act of manifestation* of the sacred or of the holy), the emerging myth of the Anzacs being their sacred story. For those for whom the acts of the Anzacs were to become exemplary, creative deeds, their re-enactment and celebration each year became an entry or re-entry point into an experiential *sacralized cosmos* or universe. (Eliade, p. 17) Their world was now “charged with religious values” within the otherwise, arguably, increasingly historically *desacralized* society of the early twentieth century – at least when compared to earlier societies, in particular those of traditional, ‘primitive’ or archaic societies. (Ibid.)

On Anzac Day, through its various rites and rituals, those within the Anzac worldview or Weltanschauung return to the time of the creation of the myth of Anzac. It was – and *is* – a sacred time when the Anzac heroes performed their cosmogonic acts or *gesta* that are celebrated and repeated each calendar year as Anzac celebrants and communicants enter or re-enter mythical or sacred time. It will be argued that the myth of Anzac then is a good example of that which Eliade terms the myth of the *eternal return.* (Eliade, pp. 106-107)

Chapter Arguments - Various

Chapter 1 will argue that:

For Victorian G.I. Adcock, wartime experience was indeed an adventure with transcendent or *numinous* elements and moments of aesthetic appreciation or apprehension of the sublime that can be placed on the same experiential continuum that leads from the experience of the everyday to the sublime or the numinous; while for Queenslander Jack Fryer, participation in the war, his wartime adventure, took on the characteristics and justification of a quest, a fight, a personal fight against German militarism, also with transcendent elements and moments of cultural, aesthetic or sublime appreciation. That is, while the worldview of each was different, the essence and structure of the adventure – experientially - was the same and makes for an informed analysis as to the nature of the hero’s journey with its various constituent phases and the use or otherwise of specific religious language, reference and interest. That is, while for Fryer it is seen as a quest or a just war with religious underpinnings, for Adcock it is the classic adventure or journey into the unknown. But for both it is the same journey, variously rendered or expressed – soon to become a sacred memory and history (as already for Private Mallyon) for those within the new Anzac tradition.

Chapter 2 will argue that:

For chaplains Woods and Green, their wartime adventure was overtly spiritual and religious, yet also imperialist and nationalistic. For Fryer and Adcock (chapter 1) the overt religious element or worldview was missing. All men nonetheless experienced similar transcendent moments on the same experience continuum.

This chapter therefore examines the wartime letters, experiences and roles of two Australian chaplains, the Rev. James Green, Primitive Methodist clergyman, writer and journalist and the Rev. William Maitland Woods, M. A., strict Anglo-Catholic clergyman and Oxford graduate. It argues that (1) despite the difference in their educational backgrounds and denominational adherence, their faith and religious experience were strengthened because of wartime service. It further argues that (2) there was a transcendent element or dimension to this experience, as when, for example, conscious of the historical, biblical or timeless landscape within which they trod; and that (3) it was such numinous experience in particular that changed the ordinary into the extraordinary, the sacred, the holy; that (4) consequently Woods and Green understood their experience as religious, as a spiritual adventure by aligning it with their preexisting religious worldview and by recognizing a variety of numinous or transcendent experiences - amidst the death and destruction of war - as meaningful and religious; and that (5) they were witnessing the creation of a new Anzac hero and a new origin or creation myth, the myth of Anzac.

The chapter therefore examines the various and differing ways in which such transcendent or numinous experience was manifested and rendered and the myth of Anzac created or facilitated; and answers the questions: how did the ordinary, the banal, the mundane—the profane—become significant and sacred; how did Green and Woods understand their particular war-time experience as religious and the nascent Anzac myth as sacred?

Chapter 4 examines:

The war-time poetry of Leon Gellert, arguably Australia’s leading soldier-poet of the Great War will be examined (and possibly also that of Edwin Gerard or Trooper Gerardy, or patriotic Anzac verse) in order to identify and analyse any use of religious and mythological language for the express or implied purpose of giving expression and meaning to their war-time experience and adventure.

It argues that: various forms of religious and mythological language were indeed used - either consciously or otherwise - to make sense of and give meaning to death and destruction on a hitherto unprecedented scale; that this was done by recourse to the pre-existing worldviews and sensibilities of the poet/s being examined; and that such language was used because it best answered or gave expression to their historical and transcendent experience such that their war-time experience also saw the creation – especially for Gellert – not only of a new national hero, but also of a new overarching, archetypal creation myth, the myth of Anzac.

Thesis Outline

Introduction: Aims & Methodology - 4,000 words

Chapter 1: The Angels at the War: Soldiers’ Letters / Diaries

Chapter 2: Deep Reverence in Strange Circumstances: Chaplains’ Letters / Diaries (1)

Chapter 3: God with Us: Chaplains’ Letters / Diaries (2)

Chapter 4: These Men Know Life: Soldiers’ Verse

Chapter 5: Their Name Lives: Anzac Ceremonies / Rites & Rituals / Religious Services

Conclusion: Anzac Myth & History - 1,000 words

Total Length – 80,000 words

The Introduction – will be comprised of a literature review, aims of the study and a methodological and chapter outline.

Chapter 1: The Angels at the War

The wartime writing of three/four soldiers, with two of a higher social and/or educational background and the other/s of a lower socio-economic background and of a different rank, are examined, such that any use of religious or transcendent language, reference or interest, implied or explicit, might be identified and analyzed, as per the thesis argument. This chapter therefore examines the wartime letters of Anglican John Denis (Jack) Fryer (Queensland) and the diaries of fellow Anglican and central Queenslander Private Herbert Mallyon and agnostic G.I. Adcock (Victoria), focusing on a comparison between the implicit and explicit use of religious and transcendent language, reference and interest in the expression of wartime experience, with attention also to degrees of trust, or otherwise, in the Almighty and the structure of the hero’s adventure.

Jack Fryer was born in 1895 in Springsure, Queensland and was educated at Rockhampton Grammar School and for one term at the University of Queensland prior to enlistment in 1915. Writing to his father from the troopship *Warilda*, Sydney, on 8 October 1915 concerning his wellbeing and whereabouts, he closes with “the very best of love & God’s blessing on you all”. A few months earlier on the 20 June, he had written to his sister Lizzie from the Australian Military Camp, Enogerra, on Y.M.C.A. letterhead with the news that his brother Will had become a rejected volunteer “on account of his teeth”. Jack Fryer’s religious language and reference was of a more implicit kind, and his faith expressed more in deeds than in words. Writing to Lizzie from St. John’s College, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, on 13 May 1915, in order to enlist her support in convincing his mother to allow him to sign up for military service, he says: “You don’t know how much I am affected by thoughts of this war. One can’t work properly, & so I would like to get away as early as possible. Of course I know what your own personal feelings may be at losing one of us [brothers]. But we should lay everything like that aside, and trust to the King of Kings to bring us safe through.” Fryer’s was one of implied, and at least initially, implicit trust in the almighty, the angels at the war. [John Denis Fryer Papers, UQFL23: Box 1, Folder 1a]

[Ref. for chapter title: “The Angel At The War”, prayer card, Fryer Papers]

Chapter 2: Deep Reverence In Strange Circumstances

The wartime writing of two chaplains, one of a higher social and educational background and one of a lower social and educational, one Evangalical and one Anglo-Catholic will be examined for their use of religious language, concepts, ideas and reference and observations relating to that of other servicemen. This chapter therefore examines the wartime letters, roles and experiences of the Rev. James Green (NSW), Primitive Methodist clergyman, writer and journalist and the Rev. William Maitland Woods (Queensland), M. A., strict Anglo-Catholic clergyman and Oxford graduate. It argues that despite the difference in their educational backgrounds and denominational adherence, their faith and religious experience were deepened because of wartime service.

The chapter also examines the various and differing ways in which this quickening of the spirit was manifested or expressed. For both men, the experience of the Holy Eucharist or sacrament of Communion amidst a battle scene or prior to battle revealed an inner meaning or significance that it had not had, or was not obvious before; while for Woods in particular, the war offered or brought into play a two-way sacralisation process, whereby the various religious items or instruments of faith, namely the chalice, the crucifix, and the prayer book, became historic and re-invigorated; and historic artifacts, such as the first flag flown at Gallipoli, became sacred. For both men, there was a keen interest in, and experience of the biblical history and significance of the places in which they were serving: Egypt, the Holy Land, the Aegean and the world and adventures of St. Paul; and for Woods, a keen interest in history generally.

[Ref. for chapter title: Rev. James Green, Letter, 1915]

Chapter 3: God With Us

The diaries of Harvard educated the Rev. Dr. E.N. Merrington, Presbyterian Chaplain A.I.F. and one / two other chaplains will be examined as per the aims of the thesis. (Anglican and Oxford educated Rev. George Green and / or a Salvation Army or Catholic chaplain will be used.) Merrington’s interest in mystic experience and his meeting with William James (author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; Otto also mentions this work) prior to the war will be featured, along with his membership of the Queensland Anzac Day Commemoration Committee during the war.

Chapter 4: These Men Know Life

Verse written by two soldiers during the war is examined and any use of religiousor transcendent experiential language will be identified and analysed. That is, religious imagery, symbolism, themes, etc., no matter how literary or otherwise, will be identified and analysed and compared with archetypal/Christian language.

In this chapter, therefore, it is argued that the religious concept or themes of creation and of origin, the idea of sacred space, the related ideas of birth and death and the religious idea of the hero were used by the (two) soldier-poet/s to make sense of and give meaning to his/their wartime experience, to the death of mates and the senseless destruction of war. That is, the poets’ wartime verse is analysed for its use of religious motifs in making sense of and giving meaning to specific, historical wartime experience at Gallipoli, for one soldier, and in Palestine for the other. (The use of Otto’s approach may also help to ‘historicise’ the analysis, both his and Gellert’s greatest works being first published in 1917.)

That is, how and why one/two selected Australian/s drew on religious ideas to make sense of and give meaning to their Great War experience will be identified and analysed. One published soldier-poet, Leon Gellert (South Australia), will be of high diction and of medium rank, and the other, Edwin Gerard or Trooper Gerardy (if chosen), of low diction and of lower rank. It is argued, for example, that meaning was given to soldiers’ deaths by comparing their sacrifice for their mates or the nation with that of the crucified Christ figure, thus expressing or representing the birth of a new tradition (out of the death and destruction of war) and a personal transcendent experience within a particular historical situation.

[Ref. for chapter title: “These Men”, Leon Gellert, *“Songs of a Campaign*”, 1917]

Chapter 5: Their Name Lives

Meaning was given to the death of soldiers and the destruction of war by remembering and honouring the sacrifice of soldiers and mates, the new Anzac heroes, a central element in the new Anzac myth or tradition. This was done in Anzac or civic ceremonies and in religious services, in cities, rural communities and overseas. This chapter will examine a selection of such ceremonies and services conducted for, by, or inthe presenceof servicemen. It will argue that they display elements, concepts, themes, worldviews, meanings and purposes that are religious in essence and nature and that were in direct response to or an expression of wartime experience.

Chaplains and clergymen for example who served with or ministered to Australian soldiers from 1914 to 1918 for varying periods of time at home and on active service, often used a rich text of religious language in their sermons and talks and did so for a variety of reasons, consciously or unconsciously, and usually consciously. The firstreason for doing so was to console the grieving family and friends of the dead and to also give comfort to those soldiers who did return to Australia. The secondreason was to prepare soldiers for battle and console those who had lost mates and comrades. The third reason was to help to promote, if not also to create, the new and developing Anzac myth from 1915 onwards. This new tradition included reference to the deeds of the Anzac heroes, dead and living; a need or wish to remember them, to extol their bravery and virtue and to challenge others within the tradition gathered together on Anzac Day, for example, to make good the debt left to them by those who had made the supreme sacrifice. In such ceremonies and services, it was also usually pointed out to the assembled audience or congregation that another hero had also sacrificed His life, not only for the community, nation, empire or tribe, but, indeed, for mankind as a whole. The fourthreason was to reinforce the essential elements of sacrifice and service within the Christian message and to do so in association with or by way of the Anzac experience and tradition – the myth of Anzac – and its annual celebration or re-enactment. The fifth reason was for chaplains or clergy to express and to come to terms with their own often very confronting and disturbing direct or indirect wartime experience.

It will be argued that each of these reasons for the use of archetypal religious and Christian language, imagery and symbolism were in direct response to wartime experience and not arbitrarily imposed after the war and that within them there was also a transcendent, numinous, experiential dimension. [It should also be noted of course, that as most Australians were at the time at least nominally Christian, such symbolism was familiar to mainstream society and culture.]

[Ref. for chapter title: “Their name liveth for evermore”, Ecclesiasticus 44:14]

The Conclusion – will bring together the various themes and findings of the thesis and relate them to the overall nature, significance, meaning and use of religious and mythological language within the Anzac tradition and to the creation of the Anzac hero and the myth of Anzac. Particular reference will be given to elements of the myth that can best be described as sacred, holy, transcendent, sublime or religious and to conclusions that explain how, to what extent and why Australians drew on religious ideas and language to make sense of and give expression to their Great War experience and in the process create a new creation myth, the myth of Anzac.

**Thematic Summary & Development of Thesis**

Chapter 1: Adventure & myth of remembrance

Chapter 2: Adventure, sacralisation & myth of Anzacs

Chapter 3: Anzac & the Mystic element (Merrington)\*

Chapter 4: Myth of Anzac – religious themes (poetic)

Chapter 5: The Myth of Anzac – (religious) rites & rituals\*

\*To be written