Scars on the Australasian heart: Anzac Day as a contextual atonement image

ABSTRACT

Contextualisation has come of age. However while much research is evident with regard to contextualisation in non-Western contexts, contextualisation within Western culture has attracted less theological reflection. If Robert Schreiter's ethnographic approach to contextualisation is applied to Pakeha culture in the New Zealand context, the significance of Anzac Day emerges. A symbol of corporate identity arising from a national experience of shared grief, it has contributed toward the formation of a Pakeha spirituality. The symbolism inherent in Anzac Day can be correlated with dimensions of the atonement in regard to voluntary sacrifice, shared solidarity and resurrection motifs. In both the Anzac Day experience and the atonement, historical reflection on an experience of shared suffering has resulted in a renewal of hope and a reconfiguring of corporate identity. This dialogue between the Anzac Day experience and the atonement, while open to a feminist and pacifist critique, encourages a more indigenous expression of Pakeha spirituality.

1. Introduction

'Contextual' theology has come a long way since the term was first used in 1972.[1] A theology from the margins, and of the margins, is now on the centre stage of theological study. As Bruce Nicholls notes, contextual theology 'is not a passing fad or a debatable option. It is essential to our understanding of

1 In S. Coe. 'Authentic Contextuality leads to contextualization.' *Theological Education 9* (Summer 1973) 24-25.

God's self-revelation.'[2] Newbigin isolates it as a leading contemporary missiological issue.[3] The call for the contextualisation of theology is repeated and repetitive.

The call to contextualise the gospel in a Western context has also been sounded.[4] Roxburgh argues that contextualisation is essential to the survival of the church in the West, writing that '[c]ontextualization ... is a way of life which must permeate into a congregation to form the air it breathes .... Congregations willing to risk such a life will be at the forefront of mission in the midst of our culture.'[5] Within the New Zealand setting, this call seems to have gone relatively unheeded. An exception is provided in the work of Neil Darragh, Maurice Andrews and John Bluck.[6]

2 B.J. Nicholls. 'Contextualization.' *New Dictionary of Theology.* Edited by S.B. Ferguson, D.F. Wright and J.I. Packer. Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1988, 164.

3 'No proof is needed for the statement that this is a live issue.' L. Newbigin. 'Mission in the 1980s.' *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 4, 4 (October 1980) 154.

4 See G.R. Hunsberger. 'The Newbigin Gauntlet: Developing a Domestic Missiology for North America.' *Missiology* 29, 4 (October 1991) 392,406. L.Newbigin. 'Can the West be converted?' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, 1 (January 1987) 2. W.R. Shenk. 'Missionary Encounter with Culture.' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 15, 3 (July 1991) 108.

5 A. Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation.* Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993, 73.

6 N. Darragh. 'A Pakeha Christian Spirituality.' In *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities.* 303-332. Edited by Philip Culbertson. Auckland: Accent Pub., 1997. See also N. Darragh. 'Response' In *Christ and Context.* 224-234. Edited by H. Regan and A.J. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993. M.E. Andrews. 'Contextual Theology as the Interpretation of God for the Peoples of a Region.' Asia Journal of Theology 2, 2 (1988) 435-439. J. Bluck. *Long, White and Cloudy. In Search of a Kiwi Spirituality.* Hazard Press, 1998. I note that while the Deep Sight Trust is a New Zealand based organisation interested in gospel and culture issues, it is primarily involved in applying the work of Lesslie Newbigin to the New Zealand context, rather than an explicit New Zealand contextualisation of theology.

This lack of contextualisation in a Western cultural context is a travesty if Western culture is viewed from a missiological perspective. It is now argued that Western culture is a mission field in which a previously churched culture has largely rejected Christianity.[7] The Western church could be likened to a patient in a terminal condition.[8] It is largely ignored by society's specialists; the media, business and politicians. Funding for life support systems has effectively been cut off as society starves the patient of attention. Meanwhile the gathered family, marginalised and isolated, argues over the pathway to health for this dying patient. This relationship between the church and Western culture necessitates a contextualisation that can allow the gospel to engage authentically with the angsts of this culture. Contextualisation in a Western cultural context needs to heed this missiological call.

Robert Schreiter defines contextualisation as 'the [dialectical] dynamic interaction among gospel, church and culture .. moving back and forth among the various aspects.[9] Schreiter regards this prioritising of a concrete and lively expression of the gospel as a significant shift in theological perspective.[10] He classifies local theologies into models of

7 See for example L. Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989, 235.

8 A similar image, that of the church as a terminal patient, is found in Riddell, M. *Threshold of the Future: Reforming the Church in the Post-Christian West.* London: SPCK, 1998.

9 R. J. Schreiter. *Constructing Local Theologies.* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985,22.

10 This shift in theological perspective can include the work of McFague who writes that the purpose of theology is 'to make it possible for the gospel to be heard in our time', *Speaking in Parables. A Study of Metaphor and Theology.* London: SCM, 1975, 1. Similarly, Douglas Hall argues for the need for 'entering at depth into the historical experiences of one's own people', rather than imbibe other's theological results, *Thinking the Faith*, 19. See also D.J. Hall. 'Who Tells the World's Story? Theology's Quest for a Partner in Dialogue.' *Interpretation* 36 (1982) 47-53. David Tracy argues for the need for a dialogue between context and

translation, adaptation and contextual, advocating the latter, 'as embodying the ideals of what local theology is to be about, even though the working out of these ideals often proves difficult in practice.'[11] This article will embrace Schreiter's contextual model in beginning theological reflection with the cultural context.

Max Stackhouse defines a 'context' as 'looking at some socio-cultural situation from an angle that involves any number of limitations' and urges a notion of 'provisional' in articulating a context.[12] This author's *angle of looking* is that of a New Zealand from a Pakeha perspective. That this angle exists is argued by New Zealand historians, Jock Phillips and Michael King[13] and it underpins the work of Neil Darragh.[14] Such an angle affirms the plurality that is the reality of Aotearoa New Zealand. It is the angle from which the author views reality and hence the contextual theological *angle of looking* that the author

Christian faith in writing that 'the task of a Christian theology intrinsically involves a commitment to investigate critically both the Christian faith ... and contemporary experience, *Blessed Rage for Order.* New York: Seabury Press, 1975, 45. Roxburgh, writing from an evangelical perspective, argues for a dialogue between the context, the congregation, scripture and tradition as the locus of the missionary encounter with our society, *Reaching a New Generation.* Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993. All of the above are partially congruent with Schreiter in affirming the priority of context for theological method.

11 Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 12. The three models are discussed on 6-16.

12 Max L. Stackhouse. 'Contextualization, Contextuality and Contextualism' in *One Faith, Many Cultures: Inculturation, Indigenization and Contextualization*, 3-13. Edited by Ruy O. Costa. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988.

13 J. Phillips. 'Our History, Our Selves. The Historian and National Identity'. *New Zealand Journal of History* 30, 2 (October 1996) 107-23. M. King (ed.). *Pakeha. The Quest for Identity in New Zealand.* Auckland: Penguin Books, 1991.

14 See Darragh. 'A Pakeha Christian Spirituality.' In *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, 1997 and Darragh. 'Response' In *Christ and Context*, 1993.

is most entitled to explore. Given the importance of Anzac Day in Australia, there is also a likely correlation between Anzac Day in an Australian context and the atonement. Hence the article's title and the discussion of the Australian context at various points. However, such a suggestion requires verification from an Australian *angle of looking*.

Robert Schreiter has further classified his contextual model into ethnographic and liberation approaches. The former is concerned with cultural identity, the latter with the need for social change. New Zealand from a Pakeha perspective is a context that is experiencing both a questioning of identity and a rapid social change. John Bluck seems to prioritise identity over social change. He writes that '[w]e learn more about the spirituality we share through studying these snapshots of our heritage than we do from a hundred desperate attempts to pin down where the Kiwi Spirit is moving now.'[15] In addition, by global standards, New Zealand from a Pakeha perspective is a dominant culture that is far more likely to be part of the oppressor than the oppressed. Hence it seems inappropriate to apply liberation models and the accompanying patterns of being political, economic and social oppressed to a Pakeha context.

Thus this article will attempt to apply a critical ethnographic approach, seeking to embrace the strengths and heed the weaknesses raised by Schreiter, to the context of New Zealand from a Pakeha perspective. In particular it will focus on Anzac Day, as both a historic and contemporary snapshot of a search for identity. It will then explore the correlations that emerge between Anzac Day and the atonement, before finally making some missiological application.

2. Anzac Day in New Zealand

Anzac Day is an essential component of identity in Pakeha New Zealand. It is celebrated as a national holiday and is

15 Bluck, *Long, White and Cloudy*, 1998, 32.

associated with a wealth of communal traditions; the institutional role of the Returned Services Association, red poppies, dawn parades, laying of the wreath and the lone bugler playing the last Post. Annually on Anzac Day the media focus on the commemorations that occur around New Zealand. The ceremonial presence of politicians and civic dignitaries adds weight to the priority New Zealand culture invests in Anzac Day. These traditions have helped ensure the durability of Anzac Day in New Zealand culture.

Indeed, Anzac Day is so deeply ingrained in New Zealand culture that some have argued it is a core element of a Pakeha spirituality.[16] 'Perhaps [New Zealand's] most important indigenous religious ceremonial is the Anzac Day ceremony.'[17] Historically Anzac Day is imbued with a corporate sense of spirituality. Sharpe writes of the deaths at Gallipoli giving a 'spiritual quality' while Phillips writes of Anzac Day's 'sacred quality' and 'spiritual character.'[18] Some Anzac memorials display a scriptural inscription, of which the most significant for our theological reflection on the atonement is from John 15:13,

16 Note that spirituality is used and not civil religion. Within an Australian context, Inglis notes that the Melbourne war memorial 'is based on a speech by Pericles. No word in it signals Christianity or Judaism; it is a text for a secular civil religion.' K. S. Inglis. *Anzac Remembered. Selected Writings of K. S. Inglis.* Edited by John Lack. Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1998, 185. Hill and Zwaga agree, noting that 'in the Australian celebration of Anzac Day that we come closest to the secularised version of civil religion' but concluding that in New Zealand Anzac Day was in competition with prevailing Christian beliefs. Michael Hill and Wiebe Zwaga. 'Civil and Civic: Engineering a national religious consensus.' *New Zealand Sociology* 2, 1 (May 1987), 32, 3. Yet Hill and Zwaga do not seem to give weight to the fact that in New Zealand a state church did not exist and thus if civic rituals were to be a unifying factor, they had to be alert to a religious and denominational pluralism.

17 J. Harre. 'To Be or Not to Be?: An Anthropologist's View.' *Landfall* 20, 1 (March 1966) 41.

18 M. Sharpe. 'Anzac Day in New Zealand 1916-1939.' *New Zealand Journal of History* 15, 2 (October 1981), 98. J. Phillips. *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History.* Auckland: Penguin, 1996, 165.

'Greater love has no man than he gave up his life for his friends.'[19] Anzac Day connects with a spirituality withn the Pakeha New Zealand context.

In 1914 New Zealand was still a shallow rooted immigrant nation looking offshore for its identity. Immigrant roots were not yet deeply embedded in the soil of this non-British land. New Zealand's literature of this period reflects a nation gazing homeward, struggling to establish roots in the soil of this newly colonised nation.[20] The First World War presented itself as an opportunity for a newly colonised nation to affirm its loyalty and desire for partnership with their colonial homeland. New Zealand's participation in this War was a sign that the umbilical cord was not yet cut.[21]

Contrast New Zealand identity pre- and post-Gallipoli. Pugsley writes of the provincialism of pre-Gallipoli New Zealand, where 'men went as the Taihape, Clive or Ashburton Boys', yet would return from Gallipoli and Chunuk Bair as New Zealanders.[22] In the years following Gallipoli, Anzac Day

19 Inclusive language is not a feature of Anzac memorials. According to Maclean and Phillips 'lest we forget' is present on 12.7% of memorials, Ecclesiasticus 44:14 on 11.7% and John 15:13 on 10.5%. Maclean, C. and J. Phillips. *The Sorrow and the Pride*. Wellington: GP Books, 1990. 'For a secular country which resisted, as we have seen, the widespread use of the cross as the main form of war memorials, it is remarkable how frequently God is mentioned in inscriptions.' 106. Sharpe argues that Anzac Day lacked an association with Christianity. Certainly the cross was not as widely used a symbol as might have been expected. Yet Sharpe seems to overlook the denominationalism of the period, which made the use of the cross potentially divisive and thus struck at the heart of the drive for a national unity and identity in Anzac Day. Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand.'

20 A good example is the poetry of Mary Ursulla Bethel, particularly *Time*, *Pause* and *By the River Ashley*. V. O'Sullivan (ed). *Collected Poems: Mary Ursulla Bethel.* Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1950.

21 'For King and for country, for God and the Empire. They'd all come home to be heroes.' Photo caption. Pugsley, C. *Anzac. The New Zealanders at Gallipoli.* Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1995, 15.

increasingly began to function as a national symbol of corporate identity, evident in descriptions of 'the day when the nation came together in unity to recall its birth out of war' and as 'a New Zealand Day, a National Day.'[23] Of Australia, Inglis notes that '[o]n April 25, 1915, the blood of Australians began to spill in the cause of nation and Empire.'[24] Anderson notes that a nation's war memorials often serve as a reinforcer and sustainer of national identity, a thesis certainly evident in New Zealand, where Anzac memorials are part of the nation's landscape.[25] The battle of Gallipoli had fired New Zealand's imagination and Anzac Day was increasingly to become a national symbol of corporate identity.

Beyond its sense of spirituality and a forming of nationhood, Anzac Day resonates with other strands woven into the tapestry of a Pakeha identity. Gallipoli and the two World Wars served as a vehicle for the definition of masculinity in New Zealand. It needs to be noted that war was not solely a male affair. 2,700 Australian women served as nurses in WW1, with 23 dying. However, while some women are included on some war memorials 'the local memorials became sites for ceremonies enhancing that separateness of men.'[26] War tended to eulogise physical prowess, toughness, insensitivity to pain and repression of emotions, while lauding fearless courage, solidarity and loyalty. 'The effect of the war[s] was to re-emphasize a sense of New Zealand as a man's country.'[27] 'The overwhelming image of the New Zealand soldier in the literature of World War II is of a 'hard man' - physically hard as a man of wiry strength, emotionally hard as a man who will never admit to pain or fear or weakness, and a man who plays hard in his leisure time.'[28] Virtues of mateship, solidarity,

23 Pugsley, *Anzac*, 18. He also cites Ormond Burton 'When the August fighting [at Chunuk Bair] died down there was no longer any question but that New Zealanders had commenced to realise themselves a nation.', 79
23 Phillips, *A Man's Country?* 165. Sharpe. 'Anzac Day in New Zealand', 103. Citing *Quick March*, RSA Journal, (April 1919), 37.

'The overwhelming image of the New Zealand soldier in the literature of World War II is of a 'hard man' - physically hard as a man of wiry strength, emotionally hard as a man who will never admit to pain or fear or weakness, and a man who plays hard in his leisure time.'[28] Virtues of mateship, solidarity, loyalty, suppression of emotion and fearless courage were characteristics essential for survival in war and to the emerging construct of a colonial Pakeha identity. Pugsley notes that volunteering to fight was an expected part of mateship.[29] The courage and sacrifice that became part of the Gallipoli story resonated with the perceived qualities essential for the Pakeha myth of maleness. Thus Phillips writes that Gallipoli 'proved the manhood of their [New Zealand] people'.[30] Similarly, Anzac Day 'represented, in men's minds, the entry of New Zealand into national manhood.'[31] Anzac Day served as a cultural symbol that touched deep chords in the construct of Pakeha identity.

Anzac Day as a symbol of nationhood was closely linked with a corporate and individual need to grieve.[32] 35,991 Australians died at Gallipoli. 18,000 New Zealand men died (60,000 Australians) and 50,000 were wounded in the First World War. This represented one in seventeen of the New Zealand population. Very few New Zealanders remained untouched by the War. Sharpe writes that 'Anzac Day provided the occasion when the whole community united to mourn and to reaffirm that they had not died in vain. Thus it became a ritual of community solidarity' and that '[o]ut of the death, the misery, the failure of the Gallipoli campaign, arose a day of a national pride and sorrow in New Zealand.'[33] The massive impact of

29 Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, 192.

30 Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, 212.

31 See Pugsley, *Anzac*, 16.

32 Inglis writes that '*grief* is an understudied phenomenon' of Anzac Day. Inglis, *Anzac Remembered*, 246, 7.

33 According to Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand,' 113, 98.

pride and sorrow in New Zealand.'[33] The massive impact of Gallipoli and World War 1 on New Zealand culture was expressed in the development of Anzac Day. It became a day which blended identity and sorrow, building a corporate solidarity through the experience of shared grief.

This cultural yearning for a sense of corporate identity has a contemporary expression in Pakeha New Zealand. Today the traditional construct of Pakeha identity is being questioned by the claims of Maori sovereignty, by the feminist critique of masculinity and by urban fragmentation. There is a evidence of a search to regenerate a construct that is inclusive of the contemporary plurality that is now the reality of Pakeha New Zealand. A repeated theme of Michael King's book *Pakeha* is the need to justify the use of the term 'Pakeha'.[34] This demonstrates the current stress on the historical construct that is Pakeha New Zealand. It shows the contemporary search to find appropriate cultural vehicles to imagine and re-imagine a Pakeha identity.

One of the offered solutions to this re-imagining of Pakeha identity is the re-exploration of history as an expression of identity. Phillips notes 'evidence that New Zealand society is hungry for a vision of itself through its history.'[35] In a similar vein, contemporary New Zealand fiction is increasingly interacting with its history. C.K. Stead's *The Singing Whakapapa* is a story of a New Zealander trying to make sense of the present by exploring the past.[36] It weaves together two narratives; a family history in New Zealand and the hero's re-exploration of his family tree. The novel shows that healing, identity and integration result from discovering one's roots. Similarly, *Always the Island of Memory*, by Noel Virtue, weaves together two narratives in which acceptance of memories becomes fundamental to reconciliation after family estrangement.[37] Both novels and paint a picture of healing,

33 According to Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand,' 113, 98.

Similarly, *Always the Island of Memory*, by Noel Virtue, weaves together two narratives in which acceptance of memories becomes fundamental to reconciliation after family estrangement.[37] Both novels and paint a picture of healing, reconciliation and integration through the exploration of the past. This parallels the origin of Anzac Day. For both, identity is to be found in a communal reflection on history. Thus both in history and contemporary literature, Pakeha have sought corporate identity through a remembrance of the past.

Historically, Anzac Day has not been without its tensions. It has been opposed by pacifists, who argued that no war is worth fighting. Tensions, both internal and external, have also surrounded church involvement. In Australia '[t]he RSL [Returned Services League] and the churches have disagreed about the character of services.'[38] In New Zealand during World War One '[c]hurches and church leaders on the whole uncritically gave voice to war rhetoric. They were also deeply involved in supporting the war effort.'[39] However in the following years a pacifist strain 'which was strongly represented in some New Zealand denominations' emerged and caused further tension.[40] More recently, feminists have questioned the validity of Anzac Day given its exclusion of women and its links with gender-based violence.

Attendance at Anzac Day services declined through the 1950s.[41] Yet to dismiss Anzac Day as a dying remembrance of the dead ignores a recent rise in popularity. Numbers at Anzac Day Dawn services have been on the increase since the 1980s, especially among the young.[42] It is arguable that this increased attendance at Anzac Day ceremonies is further evidence of the re-imaging of contemporary identity and the search for ways to express Pakeha identity.

Anzac Day is a powerful symbol of much that coheres the identity and culture of New Zealand. It touches a deep chord in

37 N. Virtue. *Always the Island of Memory*. London: Vintage, 1991.
38 Inglis, *Anzac Remembered*, 14.

attendance at Anzac Day ceremonies is further evidence of the re-imaging of contemporary identity and the search for ways to express Pakeha identity.

Anzac Day is a powerful symbol of much that coheres the identity and culture of New Zealand. It touches a deep chord in the New Zealand psyche, connecting with a popular spirituality and being celebrated with religious fervour. Its popularity reflects elements of a historical and contemporary desire for identity, the freight of a Pakeha construct of masculinity and a nationally shared experience of grief and loss. All these factors are knotted together in the celebration of Anzac Day in New Zealand culture. For Anderson 'it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism - poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts - show this love very clearly.'[43]

3. In Correlation: the Atonement and Anzac Day

Having applied an ethnographic approach to Anzac Day, and seen its key function as a symbol of communal identity, we turn to reflect theologically on Anzac Day and to become aware of the many resonances between Anzac Day and the Christian understanding of the atonement.[44]

The atonement is defined as ways of understanding the manner in which the salvation of humanity is possible through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.[45] In the New Testament the atonement is a polyvalent image portrayed in a range of

44 'However during the 1980's the number of young people attending Anzac Day services increased.' Maclean and Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride*, 161. And also Peter Campbell. (RSA Auckland City), who notes a rise in public attendance at the Auckland cenotaph over the last four years, especially among the young and ethnic, 7 February 1997, *pers comm.*

43 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 141.

44 This theological journey started with a song by Steve Grace, 'Unknown Hero', *One Night in a Million.* [sound recording] Caloundra, Queensland: Southern Cross Institute, CD, 1991.

the atonement is a polyvalent image portrayed in a range of vivid word pictures.[46] In exploring these word pictures, one becomes aware of correlations with Anzac Day.

Sacrifice

Within the Christian understanding of atonement, sacrifice is a common concept. This is captured in the Creedal Affirmation; 'For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried' and the assertion that 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). It is informed by such images as Jesus as the lamb of God (John 1:29 and a repeated image in Revelation), Paul who writes of 'Christ our Passover is crucified for us (1 Cor 5:7) and the sustained exploration of the death of Christ in Hebrews.

This motif of voluntary sacrifice is at the heart of both Anzac Day and the atonement. Inglis notes 'I am struck, reading what was said at the dedication of war memorials, how much the clergymen and politicians and soldiers dwell on this [dead did give their lives] in their speeches.'[47] Davidson notes a similar sanctifying of sacrifice in sermons preached in New Zealand during World War One.[48]

The motif of sacrifice thus serves to legitimate the idea that, at Gallipoli, life was given for a belief in the noble cause of the British Empire. Anderson notes that a transcendental cause such as nationhood does evoke the willingness to make such a sacrifice.[49] This same willingness, to suffer voluntarily for a transcendent cause, is at the heart of the atonement. As it says in the gospel of John, 'No one has greater love than this, to lay

Blackwell, 1993, 20.

47 Inglis, *Anzac Remembered*, 125.

48 Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 98.

49 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 144ff.

the gospel of John, 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.'[50] Thus Anzac Day and the atonement share a sense of voluntary sacrifice.

The voluntary sacrifice that is part of both Anzac Day and the atonement has the potential to access deeper cultural chords. Douglas Hall writes of Western culture, 'We too are a broken people, covertly broken. Every news broadcast documents our strange, unheralded night. Our art, literature, and popular music are amanuenses of a pain that would have been inconceivable to the founders of our experiment.'[51] An analysis of best selling novels, science fiction, film and horror movies in Western culture reveals an increasing sense of alienation and pessimism.[52] Commentators characterise the generation gaining adulthood today as restless, angry and alienated, with a sense of 'aloneness' which separates them from any other preceding generation.[53] This is indeed a generation with scars on their heart who 'understand Good Friday better than any other part of their faith.'[54] Thus a further correlation between Anzac Day and the atonement is evident, as the notion of voluntary sacrifice shares a correlation not only with Anzac Day, but with broader themes of alienation and loss that Pakeha New Zealander's share with Western culture.

This dimension fulfills what Douglas Hall urges is one of the key tasks with regard to contextualisation in Western society - to challenge the cultural gloss and glow of success in Western

50 John 15:13, NRSV. Debate occurred in the First World War about the appropriate use of this verse on war memorials. See for example 'An Overworked Text.' *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 18/9/1915. A concern was whether or not the sacrifice of the soldiers could be compared to the sacrifice of Christ.

51 Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 35.

52 Crane, D. *The Production of Culture*. California: Sage Publications, 1993.

53 W. Mahedy. and J. Bernadi. *A Generation Alone*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

54 Mahedy and Bernadi, *A Generation Alone*, 88.

materialism.[55] A sacrificial correlation between Anzac Day and the atonement allows the darkness, futility and pain of both Anzac Day and Good Friday to function as a gospel critique of Western culture.

Historically it is this sacrificial dimension of the life of Christ that has underpinned what is termed the moral or subjective atonement theory, proposed by Abelard in 12th century and expressed by Schleiermacher in the 19th century. The death of Christ shows us the love of God. This love exerts a moral influence on us, inspiring and motivating us to share in the self-giving life of Christ. Similar inspiration is evident with regard to Anzac Day. Inglis writes of Anzac veterans receiving an 'admiration close to awe'.[56] He notes a national yearning for the characteristics of bravery and egalitarianism displayed at Gallipoli to serve as signposts for future national behaviour.

The moral or subjective atonement theory has come under recent feminist critique with the call for 'a re-evaluation of the Western emphasis on sacrificial imagery and language in conceptualizing atonement.'[57] Similarly, Timothy Gorringe writes that '[t]his theology has encouraged the view that there is something valuable or redemptive about suffering *per se*, and this has been used to insist that the poor, and especially women, should bear with and put up with all sorts of things they should not have put up with.'[58]

Yet the sacrificial dimensions are present in the Biblical tradition. Thus for Gorringe, '[i]t is clear that we can not get

55 'There is no greater public task for theology in North America today than to help to provide a people indoctrinated in the modern mythology of light with a frame of reference for the honest exploration of its actual darkness.' Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 36.

56 Inglis, *Anzac Remembered*, 12.

57 S. Alsford. 'Sin and Atonement in Feminist Perspective.' In Goldingay, J. (ed.), *Atonement Today. A Symposium at St. John's College, Nottingham.* London: SPCK, 1995, 162.

58 T. Gorringe. *The Sign of Love. Reflections on the Eucharist.* London: SPCK, 1997, 58.

away from the language of sacrifice, but the question is how we understand it.'[59] Hence Mary Alsford writes that 'if our talk about the atonement omits any use of sacrificial, self-giving imagery, then that may also result in a limitation of the tensive scope of the atonement, and in a limitation of the options available for women.'[60] Hence Gorringe chooses to locate sacrificial language within an Old Testament strand of sacrifice as a life of justice and mercy in obedience to God's commands rather than the Levitical portrayal of animal sacrifice to atone for sin and guilt. The sacrifice of Christ is rooted in self-offering for the sake of God's Kingdom and of life lived to the uttermost for others even to the limits of death.

The sacrificial dimensions of Anzac Day and the atonement, while necessitating careful use, resonate with Biblical and traditional understandings of the atonement as sacrifice. In doing so they provide a contemporary and indigenous expression of voluntary sacrifice as a self-giving expression of love for a transcendent cause, that of the good of others and the dreams of freedom and peace.

New Community

A further Christian word picture used in relation to the atonement is that of the *birth of the new community*. The ministry of Jesus is characterised by table fellowship; from eating and drinking with 'sinners and tax collectors', to the welcome of the Prodigal Son at the feast, through to the gathered community at the Last Supper. Culturally this table fellowship was a sign of acceptance and friendship.

Gorringe writes that '[a] reading of the Last Supper in terms of vicarious sacrifice has stood in the way' of the need to capture the redemptive nature of table fellowship. Indeed the Last Supper as a vital part of the passion narrative is a demonstration

59 Gorringe, *The Sign of Love*, 47.

60 Alsford. 'Sin and Atonement'. In Goldingay (ed.), *Atonement Today*, 164.

of the solidarity of the community in the sharing of a common meal. The death of Jesus is the beginning of a new community called to follow Jesus' lifestyle. Atonement as a redemptive act that births a new community is a theme that continues through the New Testament. This new people of God as redeemed by Christ's death is a prominent theme in Peter. The Exodus language of Revelation links the atonement with the formation of a eschatological community.

Similarly, Anzac Day is a celebration of shared suffering that engendered a corporate identity. Sacrifice birthed a new community. Out of flawed dreams of heroism and imperialism, a new and more durable national identity has emerged. Firstly, the experience of war drew the soldiers together, eliciting a remarkable *esprit de corps*. An Anzac tradition developed around comradeship and loyalty to mates. Then the sacrifice of the soldiers drew the New Zealand nation together. Today, Anzac Day continues to provide a sense of corporate identity through reflection on a historical event.

For both the Christian tradition and Anzac Day, death becomes a cohering point for a group of struggling and straggling group. Sacrifice served as a redemptive agent that gathered and defines a community. Both Anzac Day and the cross evoke a corporate identity for a transplanted group of people who were previously lacking a sense of identity. As it says in 1 Peter, 'Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.'[61]

Deeper exploration of the Petrine writings helps nuance some of the historical tensions - societal, pacifist and feminist - intrinsic to Anzac Day. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter is describing the new community in words drawn from their historical, Jewish reality - chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's own people. Yet because of the outworking of the Christ event in the atonement, Peter's church community are on a journey, 'in order

61 1 Peter 2:10, NRSV.

that you might proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light.'[62] The writer of 1 Peter is evoking a sense of journey, of movement, from a historical reality to a new way of living as a reconfigured community.

Masculinity and the war ethic of Anzac Day are problematic for an understanding of the atonement. Peter's community would have faced a similar type of problem with regard to, for example, Jewish sacrifice. The writer of Peter is able to engage with the historical reality of the past, while pointing toward a new future as 'God's people', reconfigured for equality because of the atonement. For the Petrine community, a historical reality becomes the bridge over which the full implications of the new community can be grasped. May Anzac Day function in a similar way and therefore become a bridge over which a new community can be reconfigured around the peace and equality displayed in life and death of Jesus Christ.

Thus it can be said that atonement in the Petrine writings is a remembering that leads to a re-membering. The remembered act of God establishes, defines and moulds - re-members - the new community. Such an insight can prove informative for a country seeking identity. Values of freedom, equality and self-giving for the other lie in the historic reality of the atonement and Anzac Day. Remembering can lead to re-membering, and a community that is shaped by self-giving and inclusion.

From a New Zealand perspective it is encouraging to note the following comment from Inglis with regard to the potential of Anzac Day to celebrate cultural pluralism. 'A *Maori* performed the ceremony, and led Pakehas through language and gesture they had rehearsed together on board. It's still impossible, I think, to imagine any such bicultural ceremony in Australia.'[63] Maori in World War One were 'treated as second

62 From 1 Peter 2:9,10, NRSV.
63 Inglis, *Anzac Remembered*, 236.

class soldiers, given non-combatant roles, and the rehabilitation given to Pakeha soldiers was not provided.'[64] Yet 'the 28th Maori Battalion in the Second [World War] has shaped race relations in New Zealand and Maori leadership ever since.'[65] Thus John Bluck, writing in the context of Anzac Day, notes that 'Our identity as peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand is emerging, for both Maori and Pakeha.'[66]

It is in this communal area that Anzac Day offers much to a Western Christian understanding of the atonement. This corporate dimension of sacrifice that leads to a new corporate reality needs to be heard, particularly in relation to the atonement. Amid the individualism of Western culture, it has been easy to reduce the atonement to a message for individual sinners who choose to repent. Yet Biblically and historically, the atonement has had much broader and more corporate dimensions. Anzac Day can serve as a critique of Pakeha individualism and offer a more communal model of the atonement.

Victory

In the Christian tradition, Christ's death and resurrection are a great victory. In Christ's death the powers of darkness were defeated, a concept explored in such places as Colossians 2:15 and Romans 8:38ff. In Revelation 1:18, the living one who was dead is now holding the keys of death and Hades.

This New Testament word picture underpins what is termed the classic atonement theory. Early church writers like Clement, Origen, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, and then much more recently Gustav Aulen in *Christus Victor* have developed this New Testament image of Christ as victor.

Thus a further correlation emerges between Anzac Day and the atonement. As detailed above, Anzac Day involves a new

64 Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 99.
65 Bluck, *Long, White and Cloudy*, 36.
66 Bluck, *Long, White and Cloudy*, 36.

corporate identity that emerges from the ashes of pain and darkness. This understanding has resurrection motifs. Out of death emerges new life and hope. Suffering births a new vision, that of communal identity.

The poppy, a symbol of Anzac Day, captures this renewal of hope and sense of resurrection. McGrath writes of a 'symbol ... chosen to express this hope of peace arising from the carnage of war: the poppy.'[67] Death becomes a dream of hope. The Christian parallels are obvious to McGrath: 'the bread and wine of the eucharist symbolize something very similar to those poppies: life through death, hope in the face of apparent despair. The bread and wine are the poppies of the cross, symbolizing the Christian hope of eternal life in the midst of a world of death and decay.'[68]

Moltmann argues that hope is an overriding Christian virtue that is rooted in the resurrection.[69] The atonement is more than a past memorial. A recent Joint British Liturgical Group's Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving is noteworthy for its use of present and future tenses.[70] Atonement ushers in a celebration of a counter-cultural human community living at peace.

Dreams of resurrection, of life and peace emerging from sacrificial death, are shared between the Anzac symbol of the poppy and Christian understanding of the atonement.

The Victim

A familiarity with the cross can easily mask the degradation and absurdity of the proclamation of Christ on the cross. Crucifixion combined the death penalty with excruciating torture and total humiliation. It was a cruel and sadistic form of

67 A. McGrath. *Jesus. Who he is and why he matters.* Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, rev edn., 109.

68 McGrath. *Jesus. Who he is and why he matters*, 109.

69 Jurgen Moltmann. *The Theology of Hope*. London: SCM, 1966.

70 Horton Davies. *Bread of Life and Cup of Joy. Newer Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist.* Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 1993, 44-46.

execution, used primarily to punish slaves. Thus for the early church, the cross was a symbol of total impotence and weakness.

The innocent one who bore our sins in his body on the tree is the subject of 1 Peter 2:24. Hooker argues that 'this is not the language of sacrifice ... it suggests rather the imagery of the scapegoat ... or the account of the treatment of the executed criminal.'[71] The death of the innocent scapegoat is regarded as salvific. This innocent victim is linked with the scandal that is intrinsic to the cross.

Reflection on this dimension of the atonement allows a further correlation with Anzac Day to emerge. A sense of wasted life and futility are part of the Gallipoli experience.[72] Lt. Col. H. Hart wrote, 'So all we have suffered and sacrificed here has been in vain, a most glorious chance in the history of this war, absolutely failed.' This sense of futility and darkness is increased when we think of those who remained in New Zealand, reduced to helpless bystanders, unable to prevent the loss. 'Buried in some foreign field where we can't defend them, even from the weeds.'[73] To reflect on the women around the cross of Christ is to share grief and puzzlement with these Anzac bystanders. There is a similar shared tragedy of innocent life apparently wasted in what can be viewed as a seemingly futile act.

The suffering God as powerless victim has been a recent theological theme.[74] Tom Smail argues that the work of Moltmann has initiated another atonement theory, 'a theodicy of the future, of eschatological hope that shows how Christ makes himself one with the godless and the god-forsaken in order that they may be one with him in the risen life of his Kingdom.'[75]

71 Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel*, 127.

72 Cited in Pugsley, *Anzac*, 87.

73 Head, 'Culture on the Fault Line.' In King (ed.), *Pakeha*, 30.

74 See for example Jurgen Moltmann. *The Crucified God.* London: SCM, 1974.

Thus, as with the sacrifice, this dimension of the atonement accesses broader currents within Western culture. Anzac Day and the atonement have deep significance for the darkness and pain of a generation overshadowed by the clouds of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and faced with the images of Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo and East Timor.

For those who grieve over Anzac loss, this has pastoral implications. It acknowledges the painful reality of death and suffering and avoiding the holiday resort of triumphalism. I lead an Anzac church service in 1999. Participants were asked to bring their war memories and these were laid on the communion table. One of the most poignant moments was hearing a women share of being a child in the bombing of World War Two, coming home to find both her parents dead in the rubble. Correlating Anzac Day and the atonement allowed this pain to be owned and expressed within the community of God.

The war display at the Auckland Museum is titled 'Scars on their heart.' In a similar vein, an Australian war history is titled 'The Broken Years'.[76] The phrase captures dimensions of the atonement which have pastoral relevance in the life and ministry of the church.

Glory

The gospel of John opens a window on a further dimension of the atonement, that of the death of Christ as exaltation. Death and resurrection are brought together as the saving activity of God. But in contrast to the bluntness and pain of the Synoptic gospels, in John death is a disclosure of God's nature and is portrayed as an act of exaltation and glory. Thus Hooker observes that it is better to describe John as a glory narrative

75 Tom Smail. *Once and for all. A Confession of the Cross*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998, 47.

76 Bill Gammage. *The broken years. Australian soldiers in the Great War*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974.

rather than a passion narrative.[77] In John, Jesus is no longer the victim but Zion's King in control of his destiny.

It is at this juncture that a correlation between Anzac Day and the atonement seems to falter. The reality of Anzac Day was certainly not that of control of destiny. It was a catalogue of military errors and of a desperate struggle of survival.

Perhaps more importantly, the most obvious glorification of Anzac Day is war. Anzac Day comes complete with a militaristic packaging. To then discuss the atonement in relation to Anzac Day raises a pacifist objection and the ethical issue of endorsing war.[78] Historically the New Zealand church sanctified war.[79] In fact, McEldowny argues that 'the Christian concept of sacrifice made the carnage [of war] possible, as well as acceptable.'[80] The militaristic overtones of Anzac Day are in juxtaposition to the Christian God of peace.

4. Some Missiological Application

We have explored the symbolic role of Anzac Day in New Zealand culture and the theological themes in relation to the atonement that emerge. This conversation between Anzac Day and the atonement has allowed shared themes of voluntary sacrifice, remembering that leads to a re-membering of the new community, victory and victims to emerge. It is now worth considering the symbolic and missiological potential inherent in the contextualisation of Anzac Day.

77 Hooker. *The Atonement of the Death of Christ*, 109.

78 See Church and Society Commission, *The Observance of Anzac Day,* for a helpful discussion of the ethics of observing Anzac Day.

79 See Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 98. Yet the church response did seem to change during the war. See S.J. Brown. 'A Solemn Purification by Fire. Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches, 1914-19.' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45,1 (January 1994), 82-104.

80 D. McEldowney. Review of Davidson, Allan K. *Christianity in Aotearoa. A History of Church and Society in New Zealand.* In *Theo Lit* 1,4 (June 1991). 15.

Image and symbolism are an increasing priority in our age. Image is everywhere; parading down a cat walk or in the surfing of a multiplicity of television channels. Symbols are commonplace in the visual world of advertising. As cultural commentator Angel McRobbie notes; '[i]mages push their way into the fabric of our lives.'[81] The use of images and symbols have tremendous missiological potential into the next millennium.

Within this image-eyed world, and carried on the wings of missiological intent, aspects of the atonement inherent in Anzac Day have the power to inflame the imagination, to provide another angle on reality and to evoke the emotions of Pakeha culture. Consider what could be evoked in gathering for worship on a floor littered with Anzac Day poppies or surrounding a Eucharistic table to the intonation, 'Lest we forget' while the Last Post is played, or placing a red poppy on a cross inscribed with the words, 'Greater love has no one than they lay down their lives for their friends.'

In a similar vein, the following piece was written by the author for a local community magazine in urban Auckland. It aims to tie together many of the themes of this article in relation to the atonement and Anzac Day, while also demonstrating the missiological symbolism of the dialogue between the atonement and the Pakeha context.

> It is the 24th of April and all around New Zealand sleepy and befuddled Kiwis will drag themselves out of their cosy nest of blankets. Anzac Day used to be old fashioned, a dying memorial for the dead. Today it's increasingly popular and our teenagers will pace at the front of the march. We will gather in our rural towns and urban centres, from Hamilton to Hokitika, from Clevedon to Christchurch. A lonely trumpet will split the dawn. Wreaths will be wrapped around the cold concrete memorials. Speeches will be made. Veterans will return to the RSA to yarn and drink and reminisce.

81 A. McRobbie. *Postmodernism and popular culture.* London: Routledge, 1994, 18.

Anzac Day is essential to Kiwi identity. As some of our Anzac memorials say, 'Greater love has no man than he gave up his life for his friends'. Our young men dying with and for their friends. Dying to save a nation, to purchase freedom for Mother England and her Commonwealth family.

Anzac Day gave New Zealand the twenty-first keys to nationhood. It is a day of pride. It is a day of sacrifice, as our young men died on foreign shores. It is a day of waste, as life bled away for the follies of war and tactics that reduced Gallipoli to a meaningless side show. Today, as our nation comes to middle aged maturity, Anzac Day is a Kiwi symbol of identity through sacrifice.

Identity through sacrifice is shared not only in Anzac Day. It is also the symbol of the Christian cross. A young carpenter dying for his friends. A wasted life bleeding away. An innocent man dying to save a nation, to purchase freedom for his grieving mother and friends. Identity through sacrifice is a shared symbol of nationhood and faith.

Anzac Day is a day of participation. We stand in solidarity and gain identity from the innocence of past sacrifice. For the Christian, our Anzac Day is Communion. A day essential to identity. A day to lay a wreath for a dead carpenter, to blow a lonely trumpet, to remember sacrifice and waste. A day to stand in solidarity. A chance to identify with and gain identity from innocent sacrifice. Anzac Day pulls back a curtain. It spotlights a shared symbol of identity through sacrifice, shared between both Christian and Kiwi.

5. In Conclusion

Any evaluation of the potential correlation between Anzac Day and the atonement must be aware of the limitations of metaphorical language. Hence all atonement images, traditional or contemporary, display strengths and weaknesses. This is consistent with the nature of metaphor, where all images will capture some facets of reality, yet screen others out.[82] Thus we

82 'All metaphors have limitations and it would be absurd to push [an] analogy too far. Metaphors are not descriptions but imaginative constructions.' Messer, D.E. *A Conspiracy of Goodness: Contemporary*

are brought face to face with the struggle of human language to capture the reality of God. Anzac Day, like any atonement theory or Biblical word picture, has both strengths and weaknesses.

The use of Anzac Day in relation to the atonement has the advantage of engaging the Pakeha construct of masculinity, yet the corresponding disadvantage of being potentially exclusive to those who would want to position themselves outside this construct. However at least a wider chorus of voices - women, conscientious objectors, traumatised war veterans - are now being heard.

This article set out to apply a critical ethnographic approach. It started with the needs of people, in this case the underlying reasons for the formation and recent resurgence of interest in Anzac Day. For Schreiter, this is a strength of the ethnographic approach, as it enables a contextual theology to begin with the questions posed by the local context.

Schreiter sees potential weaknesses in the ethnographic approach. These involve identifying the questions, but then failing to initiate dialogue with the Christian gospel. This article has not only explored Anzac Day, but has also engaged with the New Testament word pictures surrounding the death of Christ. In doing so a correlation between the atonement and Anzac Day has emerged and both Anzac Day and the atonement have enriched each other. Schreiter also warns of the potential danger of smoothing conflicting factors for the sake of harmony and of a cultural romanticism. The article has endeavoured to hear the dissenting voices - pacifist, feminist - and how the reality of war was exclusive of Maori and women.

In conclusion, Anzac Day is a symbol that is deeply embedded in the culture of Pakeha New Zealand. We have been alerted to a number of connection points between the atonement and Anzac Day - voluntary sacrifice, the reconfiguring of a new community, the resurrection of hope among the ashes of death

Images of Christian Mission. Nashville: Abingdon, 1992, 69.

and the pastoral relevance of Christ as a victim. Anzac Day offers a historical bridge over which dimensions of the atonement can be grasped by Pakeha culture.

The use of Anzac Day in relation to the atonement offers momentum to a more indigenous expression of a Pakeha spirituality. Identity in Christ through the atonement is offered to a masculine and Pakeha identity under threat of deconstruction. As with the Petrine community, the atonement can become a starting point in the reconfiguration of the corporate reality for the new community. A Christian engagement with Anzac Day could provide a missiological opportunity to re-imagine a more inclusive Pakeha identity built on a focus on the person of Christ. The corporate dimensions evoked by Anzac Day breathe freshness into the individualising tendencies of Western culture with regard to the communication of the atonement. Critically employing Schreiter's ethnographic approach has proved beneficial in one attempt at contextualisation within one context of Western culture.

Steve Taylor