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**"That all may Justice Share: Sydney Catholics in the interwar years
1919-1929**

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“THAT ALL MAY JUSTICE SHARE”:
SYDNEY CATHOLICS IN THE INTERWAR
YEARS 1919-1929.

Monica van Gend (B.A.)



A thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts (Research)

School of Arts and Sciences

Sydney Campus

August 2022

Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Signature:

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ABSTRACT

While the years immediately following Australia's participation in World War I have received much academic attention, the churches in the post-war era have been largely overlooked. Responding to Michael McKernan's claim that Australian churches became less relevant to Australian society after the war, this thesis examines the response of the Catholic Church in Sydney to life after the war. Utilising a dual methodology of religious history and social history, this thesis analyses the role of the Church at this time by examining its works and activities, drawing on primary sources in Archdiocesan archives and the archives of specific Catholic lay groups. It focuses in particular on two rarely studied organisations, the Catholic Returned Soldiers and Sailors Association and the Knights of the Southern Cross. In the final analysis, this thesis finds that the Church in post-World War I Australia played a significant role in the lives of its own members, that Catholic organisations responded to particular social challenges of the period, and that there was a move towards both a more nationalist definition of and an international perspective in Australian Catholicism, culminating in the 29th International Eucharistic Congress of 1928. In studying the Catholic Church in Sydney in the decade following World War I, this thesis contributes towards a more nuanced understanding of the history of Australia in the 1920s and, more specifically, to the history of the Catholic Church in Australia, while challenging the claim that Australian churches became less relevant after the war.

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Introduction

AUSTRALIA AT THE END OF THE WAR

War is sometimes regarded as a regenerative force, rather like the Australian bushfire that consumes energy, burns away the outmoded accretion of habit and allows new, more vigorous growth to occur. The Great War brought no such national revitalisation. It killed, maimed, and incapacitated. It left an incubus of debt that continued to mount as the payments to veterans and war widows continued...¹

After four long years of war, the Australian people greeted the news of the signing of the Armistice with great excitement. “Intense enthusiasm prevailed”² in Sydney as the good news spread across the city, “announced” by constant siren blasts of ferries and trains.³ Such a crush of people entered the city that “impromptu arrangements” of an extra 150 trams had to be organised to accommodate the surge of celebrators.⁴ Four years of pent up nervous energy seemed to pour out in the noise of that day, as brass bands, cheering crowds and tooting vehicles joined the roistering. The religious and political divisions brought about by the war were momentarily forgotten in the enthusiasm of the day; “Armistice — peace — victory at last!” sang the lips and hearts of the merrymakers.⁵

The unity of feeling, the shared cause for joy, did not last long after those first few frenzied days. Within weeks of the signing of the Armistice, the cracks in Australian society, widened during the tense war years, were once more apparent. These divisions, to be discussed in detail in Chapter One, were perhaps most clearly noticeable in the relations of the major Christian denominations. Quick to celebrate the news of peace at last, clergymen gave thanks to God as the source of this peace; their response “true to their understanding of the war they had held consistently for four years”.⁶ Convinced, momentarily at least, that peace was ushering in a religious revival, their optimism stemmed from the outward religiosity of the speeches and mood of the crowds in the armistice celebrations. Clergymen saw in the hymns sung by the crowds,⁷ and the words spoken by politicians urging people to give thanks to God as the first signs of the religious renewal that they had said would come from the war.⁸ This

¹ Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* Fourth Edition (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 173.

² “Summary”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 1918, 1. Found at: trove.nla.gov.au

³ Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1980), 203.

⁴ “Summary”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 1918, 1.

⁵ “Summary”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 1918, 1.

⁶ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 215.

⁷ Spectator, 20 November 1918, quoted in McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 216.

⁸ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 217.

belief that what they were witnessing was the beginning of a new era of religious fervour, however, did not stop clergymen from “playing on the feuds and divisions that had disrupted Australian life” during the war.⁹ Indeed, the ensuing months after the brief display of unity in the Armistice Day celebrations saw more displays of sectarian antagonism than during the war.¹⁰ It was for this reason, the continued and intensifying sectarian hatred, Michael McKernan argues, that the interwar years saw “all the churches [become] increasingly irrelevant”.¹¹ This thesis contests that interpretation.

In 1918 Australians celebrated victory, but as they knew in part and would soon discover in full, victory won at the expense of so many lives and such financial cost could only weaken the Australian nation.¹² The after-effects of four years of conflict overseas, and on the home front in the form of the conscription debates (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter One) were keenly felt by the Australian people. How could life return to how it had been after such a war? A war that had killed “some 60,000 Australians and seriously wounded probably three times that number. A war that had invaded almost every Australian home to bring fear, grief, suffering — and also great pride.”¹³ Australia’s proportional military participation was “almost as high as that in any belligerent nation”, and the toll too was high;¹⁴ with the wounded or dead making up two out of every three soldiers who enlisted from Australia, the emotional, psychological and financial cost to families and the nation was immense.¹⁵

The economic picture of Australia after the war was, like nearly every other nation who had been at war, of a nation in significant debt. The public debt of the Commonwealth rose from six million pounds at the beginning of the war to a staggering 325 million by the end of the war.¹⁶ Nor, obviously, did the end of the war see the end of large-scale government spending, with the years between the wars seeing the government spend at least 238 million pounds on veteran affairs alone; this vast sum represented only a small portion of the war’s cost to Australia.¹⁷ The war debt and repatriation payments were not the sole causes of the economic misfortunes of the interwar years. By “interrupting the inflow of population and

⁹ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 217.

¹⁰ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 217.

¹¹ Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914–18* (Sydney: Canberra: Catholic Theological Faculty, Australian War Memorial, 1980), 172.

¹² E. M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian relations during World War I* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993), 213.

¹³ Michael McKernan, “Independence Day”, in *Making Australian History Perspectives on the Past since 1788*, ed. Deborah Gare & David Ritter (Melbourne: Cengage Learning, 2008), 345.

¹⁴ Ken Inglis, “Men, Women and War Memorials: Anzac Australia,” *Daedalus* 116, no. 4 (1987): 36.

¹⁵ Macintyre, *Concise History of Australia*, 169.

¹⁶ Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia Volume 4 1901-1942 The Succeeding Age* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 154.

¹⁷ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 212.

capital” the war had undermined the foundations of economic growth; it halted the growth of families and thereby “paralysed the house-building and ancillary industries”.¹⁸

The state of family life in Australia was also changed by the war. As previously mentioned, with the number of Australian casualties appallingly high,¹⁹ there were not many homes that escaped being affected by war.²⁰ Even for those who did not lose a husband, father or offspring, many found that their family life could not go back to how it had been before the war. For many couples the strain of life after the war “proved too much” for their marriage.²¹ Two years after the end of the war the divorce rate had nearly doubled what it had been in 1914.²² McKernan argues that as the divorce laws did not change during this time, nor was there a lessening of the social stigma attached to divorcees, it seems safe to assume that the strain of the war and its aftermath was a contributing factor.²³ Many veterans returning from the war were disillusioned with their old life: they had “tasted independence and excitement and wished to find a lifestyle in greater harmony with their recent past.”²⁴ Thus the stability of the family unit in Australia was challenged by the ravages of war — death, disablement and divorce. As McKernan observed, “the flower of a generation had been destroyed”.²⁵

Although only a brief snapshot of life after the war, the little that has been discussed above gives some context to the world and its needs that confronted the Church at the close of the war. It is with this context in mind that this thesis aims to appraise McKernan’s statement — that the churches became “increasingly irrelevant” in the years after World War I — in relation to the Catholic Church’s involvement in Sydney in the interwar years, investigating what can be said of the ‘relevance’ of the Church in this crucial era of Australian history. Having given a brief overview of the historical context, it is now necessary to review the current academic literature on the topic, illustrating how this thesis interacts with and adds to the current body of work that touches on the Church in Australian society and Australian society after the war.

¹⁸ Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia Volume 4*, 155.

¹⁹ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 224.

²⁰ McKernan, “Independence Day”, 345.

²¹ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 222.

²² McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 222.

²³ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 222.

²⁴ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 210.

²⁵ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 224.

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

As Australia has often been seen as a nation largely defined by its participation in World War I, the events before, during and after have captured the minds and pens of many historians of Australian history. There is, thus, an extensive and wide-ranging body of literature on World War I. As this thesis' focus is post-war Australian religious history, particularly Catholic history, that broad body of literature is not addressed in the thesis as it is neither feasible nor necessary to this focus. The role of the Catholic Church, along with other major Christian churches, during the war has been documented in a few key histories of war time Australia, but there is a comparative poverty in the quantity and specificity of accounts of the churches in the post-war era. Consequently, the current literature regarded as significant for this research topic will be broad or general in nature as specific accounts of the Church's roles in post-war Australian society are generally lacking. While the subject of this thesis is the Catholic Church in particular, literature that deals with the Christian churches more generally will also be considered as many sources discuss the churches broadly, rather than focusing on the Catholic Church in particular. The literature considered in this review falls under four main headings: significant histories of Catholics in Australia; literature on grief and the rehabilitation of veterans; literature on the churches and Anzac; literature on sectarianism and the participation of the churches in public life.

General Australian Catholic Histories

The first important body of literature to review and situate my research into is the histories of Australian Catholics. There are a number of good histories of the Church in Australia that investigate the life and contribution of Catholics to broader Australian society, from colonial times until the 1960s. Patrick O'Farrell in his *The History of the Catholic Church and Community* gives a detailed history of Australian Catholics, focusing on the reigns of several key prelates. O'Farrell describes his history as "a necessarily selective attempt to distil and delineate the essence of the major phases of the church's history."²⁶ Edmund Campion's *Australian Catholics*, like O'Farrell's history, explores the Church in Australia from colonisation until the middle of the twentieth century, although his work differs from O'Farrell's in that it is primarily based on religious magazines and pamphlets to provide a picture of the "everyday lives of lay men and women"; in this aim Campion sees himself as

²⁶ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History* (Melbourne: Griffin Press, 1977), v.

presenting a “significant rewriting of Australian Catholic history”.²⁷ O’Farrell, however, makes no apology for his clerical focus, insisting that it is an “appropriate reflection of historical reality”²⁸. Perhaps Campion’s focus reflects the time in which he wrote, with his history being published in the late 1970s when there was a particular emphasis on lay involvement in the Church. It is interesting to note, too, that it is a lay man, O’Farrell, who focuses on the clergy, and a clergyman, Campion, who focuses on the laity. Both these perspectives are utilised in this thesis, with the intention of producing a history of a unified Church, both clergy and laity. These works are very helpful for giving broad overviews of the movement and character of the Church in Australia through time, but because of their broad scope are necessarily brief in their discussions of the events, people and culture of the Church. Both O’Farrell and Campion mention, for example, the Knights of the Southern Cross, but devote little more than a paragraph in total to the society. Neither looks in particular at the effect of war on the Church. Thus, while helpful for providing a framework within which to situate the topics explored in this thesis, O’Farrell and Campion only mention in brief what this thesis aims to explore in detail.

Like O’Farrell and Campion, Naomi Turner delivers a detailed and primary source focused history of the Church in Australia. She, like Campion, concentrates in particular on the laity, analysing data through a social history lens.²⁹ Her scope is, of course, much larger than this thesis, encompassing all the years that Catholics have lived in Australia up until the 1990s, and investigates the whole of Australia, not just Sydney. Despite her social history methodology, her analysis is centred on the laity’s experience of being Catholic and does not extend in any significant way to analysing the influence of the Church on society or vice versa. The section that covers the time period investigated in this thesis looks at the years 1889-1939 and covers many more topics than this thesis; as my thesis focuses exclusively on Sydney during the first ten years after the war it provides a deeper and more specific exploration than is possible in Turner’s broad history. Unlike Turner, whose social history lens is limited to examining the Catholic laity, Katharine Massam’s work *Sacred Threads* does examine the relation of Church and society. Massam is concerned with the “interactions of religion and culture” in Australian society,³⁰ looking at the effects of each on the other. Her work, however, focuses on the experience of Catholics in Adelaide and Perth, with only a limited account of Sydney Catholics.³¹

²⁷ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood: Viking Penguin, 1987), 1.

²⁸ O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, vi.

²⁹ Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: a social history* Vol II. (North Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1992).

³⁰ Katharine Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia, 1922-1962* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1996), 5.

³¹ Massam, *Sacred Threads*, 5.

Thus while providing a model for a history of the Catholic Church in Australia that is interested in examining the relations between religion and society and the inner life of Catholic communities, her work does not examine the Church in Sydney after World War I.

Some other key historians of Catholic history include Hilary Carey, whose works, such as her books on the Catholic Women's League and religion and colonialism in the British Empire, while brilliant, are either focused on a different time period or do not focus on the war's effect on the Church.³² Similarly James' Murtagh's history of Catholics in Australia, written during a time that saw the Church hierarchy becoming involved more directly in the political landscape, focuses on the interaction between the Church and liberalism and is more specifically on the nineteenth century.³³ Each of the works mentioned above are excellent histories of the Church in Australia; this thesis hopes to flesh out some of the ideas and events they mention in passing, acknowledging an indebtedness to their thorough research and insight into the character and culture of Australian Catholics. Thus, building on their foundation, on general histories of the Church in Australian society, this thesis will provide a more specific interrogation focusing on Sydney in the post-war years, looking at the impacts of war on the Church.

Literature on grief and the rehabilitation of veterans

Although literature on the role of the churches in the rehabilitation of veterans and dealing with post-war grief is limited, if not non-existent, texts on the topic of rehabilitation and grief more generally give a framework for areas in post-war society in which the Church may have been involved. In discussing the structures in place for the support of grieving families and the memorialisation of the fallen, Marina Larsson speaks of the role of the community in creating private and public spaces to support such families. While she briefly mentions that churches were often a place where bereaved families found support, she does not elaborate on the point.³⁴ Bart Ziino is another historian, writing on grief and mourning, who briefly mentions the churches. In his work on the role of war graves in Australians' grief and mourning, he acknowledges that many found comfort in their grief through their Christian faith,³⁵ but at the

³² See for example: Hilary Carey, *Truly Feminine, Truly Catholic* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1987); Hilary Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British Empire 1801-1908* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³³ James Murtagh, *Australia, the Catholic Chapter* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959).

³⁴ Marina Larsson, "A disenfranchised grief: Post-war death and memorialisation in Australia after the First World War," *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 1 (March 2009): 79-95.

³⁵ Bart Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2007), 33.

same time also argues that many were “unable to draw sufficient consolation through the strength of their faith”.³⁶

Like Larsson, Jen Hawksley investigates grief in post-war Australia, focusing on the parents of veterans.³⁷ While discussing the different experiences of grief of parents whose sons died as opposed to those whose sons came back wounded or disabled, Hawksley mentions the place of religion in helping with the loss or change of circumstances. Hawksley says that those parents whose sons were buried overseas found consolation in knowing that a chaplain had been present at the burial and that a cross was erected at his grave.³⁸ This, along with the epitaphs that parents paid to have on their sons’ foreign graves, illustrate that “conventional Christian references” were a “balm” for the grieving parents.³⁹ While Hawksley and Larsson do not discuss the role of the churches or religion in the healing process of grieving parents in further detail, what they do say provokes the question: if Christianity was a consolation to the parents in that small way, in what other ways did the churches contribute to the consolation of the grieved and the rehabilitation of the broken?

In the role of comforter of the grief-stricken, perhaps the people most ministered to by the churches were the mothers and widows of fallen men. Joy Damousi suggests this in her article on the language of grief as articulated by grieving mothers. Damousi makes the point that during ceremonies remembering the fallen, churchmen and chaplains addressed themselves particularly to women.⁴⁰ Damousi’s focus is women and grief rather than the churches, but as with Larsson and Hawksley, her picture of the post-war years hints at a place for the churches in ministering to those affected by the tragedies of war.⁴¹

Jay Winter, in his cultural history of post-World War I Europe,⁴² explores the role of churches in practically supporting war-widows and orphans, providing an international example to support the passing comments made by Damousi about the Australian experience. Winter states that, in the European context, Protestant, Jewish and Catholic groups “worked to ease the plight of widows, orphans, and aged parents”, making up for the “shortcomings of

³⁶ Ziino, *A Distant Grief*, 21.

³⁷ Jen Hawksley, “‘In the Shadow of War’: Australian parents and the legacy of loss, 1915-1935,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 33, no. 2 (2009): 181-194.

³⁸ Hawksley, “In the Shadow of War”, 189.

³⁹ Hawksley, “In the Shadow of War”, 189.

⁴⁰ Joy Damousi, “Private loss, public mourning: motherhood, memory and grief in Australia during the inter-war years,” *Women’s History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 370.

⁴¹ Damousi and Larsson address the issue of grief and rehabilitation after World War I in more detail in their books on the topic. As with their previously mentioned texts, however, the churches have no more than a momentary feature. See Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Marina Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs: living with the scars of war* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009).

⁴² Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

central authorities”.⁴³ Where the state had too many claims upon it in the years immediately following the war to adequately provide support for those who had lost husbands, fathers and sons,⁴⁴ the churches, says Winter, stepped in and did their best to fill “the gap”.⁴⁵ Thus, while speaking specifically of the case of European countries, Winter’s work at least prompts further investigation into the Australian case to see whether it mirrored the European model.

Thus, on post-war grief and the rehabilitation of soldiers, the available literature points to the Church playing a not insignificant role but does not give any kind of systematic treatment of the Church’s place. International studies provide more detailed accounts of the role of churches in post-war rehabilitation in Europe, but Australian accounts are lacking. Many briefly remark on the topic, but no one thoroughly elaborates on their comments or investigates further, leaving space for more detailed treatment.

The churches and Anzac

A second area of relevant literature is that on the relationship of the Church with Anzac Day and its public celebration. K.S. Inglis, a significant Australian historian particularly in the area of the history of Anzac Day and memorialisation, argues that the relationship between the churches and Anzac Day was complicated, but that ultimately Anzac Day was a civil sacred ceremony, not a religious sacred ceremony.⁴⁶ Inglis is of the opinion that, partly in response to the continued sectarian division of Australian society, and partly as a result of the “scepticism” of the returned soldiers to institutional Christianity, Anzac Day was under civic control and was, in many cases, guided by the intention to separate the civic and religious spheres.⁴⁷ According to Inglis, the significant attendance at Anzac Day services was largely due to a need for a “civil religion” in an “almost post-Christian society” that could no longer provide the “nourishment of spirit” sought by its youth.⁴⁸ In Inglis’ eyes, the Anzac tradition replaced traditional Christianity in fulfilling this need. Inglis’ account of the role of the churches in the formation and celebration of Anzac Day, then, is one in which the part they played was unremarkable. Reflecting on Inglis’ legacy in Australian history, Graeme Davidson considers

⁴³ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 30.

⁴⁴ Joan Beaumont also makes a similar claim to this about the Australian case, but does not, like Winter, go on to say that the churches had a role in filling this gap. She talks instead of the RSSILA and other charitable associations. See Joan Beaumont, *A Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Crowns Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 752-8.

⁴⁵ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 48.

⁴⁶ K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2008).

⁴⁷ Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 202-203.

⁴⁸ Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 572.

that argument Inglis' greatest gift to future historians: that the Anzac tradition filled the hole left by the inability of "traditional faiths" to "provide comfort in the face of the mass slaughter" of World War I.⁴⁹

This side-lining of the churches' role in the commemoration of Anzac Day in Australia has been called into question by more recent historians, such as David Wetherell. In a recent critique of Inglis' *Sacred Places*, partly titled "Sacred Absences", Wetherell critiques Inglis' account of the role of religion in the post-war commemoration, arguing that Inglis ignores religion on the false charge of its irrelevance in the lives of post-war Australians; in so doing, says Wetherell, he completely ignores evidence to the contrary.⁵⁰ Wetherell's basic argument is that for whatever reason, be that political or personal in nature,⁵¹ Inglis' work shows a widespread criticism of, or sometimes a complete disregard for, the churches' role in the erection of war memorials and the evolution of Anzac traditions, despite the fact that some of the first memorials erected were in churches.⁵² According to Wetherell, Inglis' first mistake was the assumption that the average Australian soldier was not religious; this assumption is based on Bill Gammage's assertion that "the average digger" did not discuss religious matters in his correspondence.⁵³ Wetherell argues that rather than illustrating the indifference of Australian men to religion,⁵⁴ the lack of discussion could just as easily provide evidence that most Australian men, particularly young men, were "reluctant to write or talk publicly about things close to the heart".⁵⁵ While Wetherell contents himself with addressing specific statements or omissions that Inglis made, and does not directly address the issue of the role of the churches in post-war Australia more generally, he ends his article with the stated hope that a new generation might appear on the Australian historiographical horizon, a "post-Inglis generation" that is "less prejudiced" against the churches.⁵⁶ A recent work that contributes

⁴⁹ Graeme Davison, "Ken Inglis: threads of influence," *History Australia* 14, no. 4 (2017): 521.

⁵⁰ David Wetherell, "K.S. Inglis' war memorials and the churches: Sacred absences in the landscape," *St Mark's Review* 235 (2016): 107-124.

⁵¹ Wetherell, "K.S. Inglis' war memorials," 113.

⁵² Wetherell, "K.S. Inglis' war memorials," 121.

For example, the first memorial in Canberra, before the Australian War Memorial, was in St John's Anglican Church, (<https://www.stjohnscanberra.org/>).

⁵³ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Melbourne: Penguin Publishing, 1975), xiv.

⁵⁴ David Reynaud and Michael Gladwin also critique Gammage's assertion, arguing that a lack of religious references in letters and diaries does not necessarily mean that Australian soldiers were irreligious, and that the question of Australian soldiers' religiosity is far more complex than Gammage or Inglis allow. See David Reynaud, "Signs of Spiritual Crisis or Evidence of Unexpected Commitment? Attitudes to Compulsory Church Parades in the First AIF," *Journal of Religious History* 41, no. 1 (March 2017): 97-110; and "Religion and the Anzac legend on screen," *St Mark's Review*, no. 231 (April 2015): 48-57; Michael Gladwin, *Captains of the soul: a history of Australian Army chaplains* (Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2013).

⁵⁵ Wetherell, "K.S. Inglis' war memorials," 120.

⁵⁶ Wetherell, "K.S. Inglis' war memorials," 121.

towards answering Wetherell's plea is Darren Mitchell's thesis, "Anzac Rituals – Secular, Sacred, Christian".⁵⁷ Mitchell explores the influence of Christian liturgy and thinking on the early development of Anzac Day rituals, arguing that this dimension has been overlooked or minimised. Mitchell argues that early Anzac Day rituals were heavily based on Anglican forms and that Anglican clergy were heavily involved in the formation of the service. His thesis does not address the impact of Catholicism or sectarianism on Anzac Day services, thus his focus is divergent from this thesis, but it provides further evidence of the importance of religion in the post-war era and its influence on the formation of national ceremonies.

While not specifically on the topic of the churches' role in Anzac traditions and commemorations, several more general works make mention of the churches' involvement. Alistair Thomson agreed with Inglis that there was an attempt in Anzac ceremonies to create a kind of civil religion in place of Christianity. Thomson, however, attributes this attempt to a smaller group within the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) that was ultimately defeated by the general populace who thought the "disavowal of religion" a "trademark of communism".⁵⁸ Joy Damousi also mentions the churches in the commemoration of the fallen, noting that not only were they a part of official Anzac ceremonies run by the RSSILA, but that the churches were also involved in the creation of Anzac traditions through the church services held each Anzac Day in commemoration of the casualties and veterans.⁵⁹

The literature on the relationship between the Anzac tradition and the Christian churches reveals a divided opinion among academics on the place of Christianity within that tradition and even within the lives of the Anzacs. Thus, building upon Wetherell's initial comments on and hope for a generation of historians "less prejudiced" against the churches, this thesis will aim to delve into the different narratives on the formation of Anzac Day and the public commemoration of the dead in relation to, and from the perspective of, the Church.

Religious sectarianism in post-war Australia

Another theme in the current literature worth investigating for this thesis is religious sectarianism in Australia. Towards the end of his work on the Australian churches *during* World War I, Michael McKernan states that the most obvious result of the war, and the enduring legacy it left for the churches was a phenomenal increase in sectarian division that

⁵⁷ Darren Mitchell, "Anzac Rituals – Secular, Sacred, Christian." PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2022.

⁵⁸ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 134.

⁵⁹ Joy Damousi, "War and Commemoration: 'The Responsibility of Empire'" in *Australia's Empire* ed. Deryck Schreuder & Stuart Ward (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 298.

would characterise Church involvement in society for the ensuing years.⁶⁰ Whether or not this resulted in the churches becoming irrelevant in Australian society, as McKernan claimed, has not been pursued, but the war's legacy of an enduring sectarian bitterness is borne out by historians such as Jeff Kildea⁶¹ and Patrick O'Farrell.⁶²

In his history of the Catholic Federation, Jeff Kildea gives an account of Catholic-Protestant relations, arguing that the cessation of the war, rather than bringing about an end to the sectarian bitterness of the conscription referenda, only increased it.⁶³ The causes of the continuing sectarianism were many. They ranged from such things as the Sr Ligouri affair,⁶⁴ Cardinal Mannix's arrest on the high seas and the deportation of a German Catholic priest,⁶⁵ to the expressed intention of the Catholic Federation to have proportional representation of Catholics in politics by the establishment of a specifically Catholic political party.⁶⁶ According to Kildea, this "Roman domination" of politics in the advocating for Catholic representation was answered by a Protestant backlash, which ended in the election of an "avowedly anti-Catholic Nationalist Government in 1922".⁶⁷ Kildea's assessment of the state of Protestant - Catholic relations following the war, then, is in agreement with McKernan's argument.

O'Farrell too, in his history of the Catholic Church, highlights the sectarian nature of the religious scene in post-war Australia. Like Kildea, O'Farrell points to the Catholic Federation's formation of a specifically Catholic party as one of the key instigators/carriers of sectarian division.⁶⁸ O'Farrell also makes mention of the education issue and Ireland's fight for independence resulting in the formation of the Irish Free State,⁶⁹ as being key issues in the relationship between the churches, more specifically the Catholic Church and the government in the post-war years. Continued Catholic aloofness from ecumenical prayer events, according to O'Farrell, also kept alive the fire of sectarianism.⁷⁰ Thus, while historians such as Kildea and O'Farrell give evidence for the claim that the post-war years were characterised by increased sectarianism, they do not speak of the churches in the post-war era in relation to any other issue.

⁶⁰ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 177.

⁶¹ Jeff Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia 1920-1925* (Sydney: Citadel Books, 2002).

⁶² O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*.

⁶³ Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric*, 200.

⁶⁴ This was the affair of a Catholic nun leaving her convent and seeking protection from Protestants, which resulted in a divisive court case and a series of kidnappings. See Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric*, 218.

⁶⁵ Kildea, "Paranoia and Prejudice: Billy Hughes and the Irish question 1916-1922," in *Echoes of Irish Australia: Rebellion to Republic* ed. Jeff Brownrigg et. al. (Galong: St Clements Retreat and Conference Centre, 2007), 163.

⁶⁶ Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric*, 201.

⁶⁷ Jeff Kildea, "Sectarianism, Politics and Australia's Catholics," *The Sydney Papers* (Winter, 2002): 166.

⁶⁸ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 346.

⁶⁹ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 338 - 341.

⁷⁰ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 336.

The picture such historians paint of hostile relations between the churches prompts questions about how this division affected their participation in public life and in the rehabilitation of veterans. Did the sectarianism noted by Kildea, McKernan and O'Farrell result in their inability to effectively participate in the reconstruction of Australian society? Rather than being able to minister to Australians, did the sectarianism resident in their public interactions only add to the brokenness of the post-war years?

Thus, while there are few works specifically on the Catholic Church, or on Christian churches more generally, in the years after World War I, the sources on the rehabilitation of veterans and on the formation of Anzac services point to the Church's involvement in these areas. Using the general framework provided by the current literature on the post-war years, this thesis will attempt to add more detail to the picture of Australian history of that time, giving a more detailed account of the place and relevance of the Catholic Church in that larger history.

RESEARCH AIMS, METHOD & METHODOLOGY

As can be seen from an overview of the current literature, there is a gap in our knowledge about the churches in the years between the end of World War I and the Great Depression. The question that this thesis aims to answer is: *How did the Catholic Church in Sydney respond to the challenges of life after the war?* As such, this thesis aims to explore the place and influence of the Catholic Church in New South Wales, predominately in the Archdiocese of Sydney, in the interwar years of 1919-1929. It looks both at the Church's response to the challenges of post-war Australia and the impact of war on the Catholic community. In particular, this thesis focuses on some of the societies and institutions that were established during those years to deal with what the Church, as a body of persons, saw as the most pressing needs of the time. To avoid too broad a scope, this thesis focuses on those responses to post-war problems that resulted in the establishment of new Catholic organisations in the decade following the end of the war. The aims of this project are to:

- analyse the cultural and social picture of the Catholic Church in Sydney between 1919-1929.
- assess the nature and extent of the Catholic Church's actions to meet the needs of those affected by war.

- examine the work of Catholic societies begun during those years and assess to what extent they were a response to the problems of the post-war world.
- assess the significance of the Catholic Church to post-war society.

Method

The method undertaken for this research is primarily archival research. I examine the editorials, news articles, advertisements and opinion pieces in Catholic and other Sydney newspapers. For this, I use the National Library Trove Archives, which has digitised copies of many newspapers from across Australia during this and other eras. There are limitations to using newspaper sources; newspapers can only give a limited account of what people thought at the time as they only publish what the editors select. To mitigate against this limitation, throughout the thesis, wherever such information is available, care has been taken to provide details about the editor or outlook of the newspaper as well as any information about the author of the article or letter published in the paper. At the same time, the information gathered from newspapers is only a part of the evidence for the arguments made, as archival material has also been used to support the arguments and statements made here.

As the Catholic Church is the focus of this thesis, church documents from available archives are used to gather information about its activities in the post-war years. In particular, the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives are utilised for the archives on parish and archdiocesan life in the interwar years, as well as the archives on Catholic societies, such as the Knights of the Southern Cross and the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association.⁷¹ In dealing with the topic of the Church in post-war Australian society, I investigate the possible role of institutions set up by the Church, such as hospitals run by religious orders or charitable social justice societies, in the reconstruction and rehabilitation work of the inter-war years. With many historians of this era noting the enormous task of caring for those physically and mentally wounded by the war, I investigate the role of church-run institutions in assisting in this task. For this purpose, the archives of such institutions as the St Vincent de Paul society, which experienced an increased demand during the inter-war years, are used, where available.

The digitised World War I collections, of posters, diaries, letters and photos, available at the State Library of New South Wales are also utilised in the introductory chapter of the

⁷¹ Note that there is no consistency in the primary sources regarding the apostrophes in the organisation's title. Some sources include both apostrophes (Soldiers' and Sailors') while others only include an apostrophe after Sailors'. The original grammar of each source has been retained in quotations and references, which means that there is some inconsistency throughout reflecting the inconsistency of the sources.

thesis, as the collection of soldiers' letters are used in the discussion of the state of religion and the place of the Church during the war, which, in turn, provides some context for the discussion of the Church during the post-war years. Similarly, the archives of the Australian War Memorial are utilised in the background discussion of the topic, the state of the Church during World War I and the religiosity of Australian servicemen and women, and for the information they can provide on the celebration of Anzac Day.

Methodology

Given that the subject of this thesis is the Catholic Church, the methodological framework employed in this research project will be that of religious history. In this way, the thesis will contribute to the historical and historiographical understandings of the Catholic Church during a pivotal era in Australian history, the years immediately following World War I.

In general terms, religious history is from the perspective of a particular religious tradition, analysing it and its interactions with society more broadly. As such, religious history is the history of institutions, individuals and communities that make up a religious tradition. However, religious history cannot be limited to histories of institutions or individual people. Bruce Mansfield, founding editor of *Journal of Religious History*, notes that the writing of religious history in Australia has “predominately” focused on institutions and biographies of key figures, usually clergy or professed religious, but argues that such histories only “earn their stripes as religious history” if they “make contact with a religious culture”.⁷² According to Mansfield, the writing of religious history must involve “exploring the inner life of communities and persons” which inevitably leads “to a tracking of the intellectual and spiritual currents of an age”.⁷³ If, as Mansfield argues, contact with a “religious culture” is an essential element of the process of writing religious history, it is important to have a clear understanding of what is meant by “religious culture”. A religious culture is formed of those elements that make up the everyday life of religious communities and persons. As such, it comprises individual and communal activities: family devotions, “forms of worship” and the “theological justifications” of these, the worship practices of religious communities and schools.⁷⁴ Referring to Katharine Massam’s work on Catholic communities in Australia,⁷⁵ Mansfield suggests that “spirituality” would be another word to describe what he has labelled as “religious culture”. So

⁷² Bruce Mansfield, “Writing Religious History in Australia,” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 27 (2006): 11.

⁷³ Mansfield, “Writing Religious History,” 11.

⁷⁴ Mansfield, “Writing Religious History,” 10.

⁷⁵ Massam, *Sacred Threads*.

religious history is a history concerned with the institutions, individuals and community life or culture of a particular religious tradition. This raises the question, to what extent does the subject matter of religious history coincide with that of theology, and to what extent is it a separate discipline?

While both theology and religious history are concerned with the actions, the worship and devotions, of a religious community, the two are distinct disciplines in the way they use the gathered information. For theology, the investigation of a religious culture, the modes of worship, the communal and individual expressions of devotion and piety, are held up to the measuring stick of faith, of revelation in Scripture and tradition. The job of theology is to ascertain whether the religious culture is in line with faith, to assess “any tendency in them towards superstition or bigotry” and whether the spirituality is “too accepting or too rejecting of the surrounding world”.⁷⁶ The religious historian, on the other hand, when confronted with evidence of the inner life of a religious community does not try to “justify or defend” it in light of theological principles, but rather attempts to understand it.⁷⁷ The historian’s purpose is to set forth, among other things, the components of that culture, the external forces that shaped the culture, and the influence that the religious culture had on surrounding society. Thus, while there is an overlap in the content of the two disciplines, the aims of each distinguish them as distinct disciplines.

As a complementary, and secondary, methodological approach to religious history, data will also be analysed through the lens of social history. Social history is a fitting methodological approach for this thesis as social history aims to give an historical account from the viewpoint of large groups of people and their human and social behaviours.⁷⁸ Just as religious history is concerned with the elements that make up a religious culture and the expression of that culture, so social history is concerned with the essential elements of a society: its politics, its economics, its institutions.⁷⁹ Thus, in like vein to religious history, social historians may employ the biographical and the statistical as “methodological possibilities”.⁸⁰ Further, the use of a social history approach, together with religious history, is particularly apt for a thesis on the Church in the post-war era, as we see the Church work towards a particular social vision. After the war many reflected on what Australian society

⁷⁶ Mansfield, “Writing Religious History,” 11.

⁷⁷ Mansfield, “Writing Religious History,” 11.

⁷⁸ Peter N. Stearns, “Social History,” *Oxford Bibliographies Online* DOI:10.1093/OBO/9780199756384-0131 Last modified 29 May 2015.

⁷⁹ Werner Conze “Social History,” translated by Charles A. Wright, in *Journal of Social History* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1967): 7-16.

⁸⁰ Conze, “Social History”, 15.

should look like, and the Church was no exception. In using a dual methodology, a proper analysis of the Church's actions in the post-war years, from social and religious history perspectives, is enabled. In this way we can investigate whether and to what extent religion may have been used as a means for organising responses to the world.

Thus, the thesis will utilise both religious and social history perspectives as it will analyse a large group of people, the people of New South Wales, in reference to their social and religious behaviours. The use of a complementary methodological approach, in the implementation of both a religious history and a social history perspective will allow for a more thorough discussion of the Church in post-war New South Wales. Analysing data as it relates to religion — what it reveals about the religious culture of the Church in Sydney — and at the same time analysing data as it relates to society and social groups — enables a greater understanding of the interaction between the two.

Potential Significance

As the role of the Church in the rebuilding work of the years immediately following World War I has not been extensively written about, this thesis will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of that aspect of the post-war years. This thesis will aim to contribute to the religious history of Australia by giving an account of the Catholic Church's role in facing the challenges of the years after World War I. In doing so, this work will also be a response to Michael McKernan's statement that after World War I the churches were "increasingly irrelevant".⁸¹ Further to contributing to a fuller account of that period of Australian history, this thesis will aim to be one response to David Wetherell's plea for a "post-Ingليس generation" of Australian historians who in their accounts of Australian history will be "less prejudiced against the churches".⁸² Of course, as it only focuses on the Catholic Church, this thesis' argument will only be a partial response to McKernan's argument, but it is to be hoped that it will prompt other answers to his statement. In responding to McKernan's claim and in focusing on the Church and its relevance in the post-war era, a new area of interest and legitimate research is opened up for discussion. This thesis is a contribution towards a better understanding of the role of religious institutions and laity in the tumultuous period between the two wars, with a focus on the 1920s. Thus, the potential of this thesis to be a significant contribution to current scholarship lies in its specific history of the Catholic Church in Sydney

⁸¹ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 172.

⁸² Wetherell, "K.S. Inglis' war memorials," 121.

from 1919-1929, and its attempt to answer questions raised by previous scholarship on the topic of Australian churches during and after World War I.

Limitations

Even with the temporal and spatial limitations of looking at the Catholic Church in Sydney during 1919-1929, the range of possible topics and events to examine related to the effects of war, are vast and broad. The decade after the end of World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression was a tumultuous and society-altering one. With war touching most facets of Australian life and society, the years directly following its end saw great changes to the economy, to national life, to health and the welfare system, to the understanding of the roles of men and women; very little was left untouched by war. While separated by a span of over ten years, World War I was deeply connected to the Great Depression. As Beaumont argues, the war “did not cause the Great Depression, but this conflict bequeathed some structural weaknesses in the international economic system on which Australian prosperity depended.”⁸³ The losses incurred from failed repatriation schemes, such as the soldier settlement scheme,⁸⁴ and the general cost of the welfare payments to veterans and veterans’ families were other legacies of war that contributed to the economic turbulence of the interwar years. Another legacy of war was the impact of the Spanish Flu. This had a significant effect on Australian society broadly, but also specifically on the churches, particularly in Sydney. The story of the Catholic Church in Sydney and how it responded to the outbreak has been told in part by others,⁸⁵ but is also an area worth further research. These are merely some examples of the broad and varied challenges of life after the war. To cover every aspect of the challenges of the post-war era, and how the Church responded to them, would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, in determining the limits of this research, what will be discussed are only those responses of the Church that resulted in the formation and establishment of a new organisation to deal with the apprehended problem. The thesis is, then, limited to discussing the work of the

⁸³ Joan Beaumont, *Australia’s Great Depression* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2022), 5.

⁸⁴ Beaumont, *Australia’s Great Depression*, 21.

⁸⁵ Jeff Kildea, “A Tale of Two Pandemics: the impact of Spanish Flu and COVID-19 on Religious Observance”, *Australasian Catholic Record* 91, no 1 (2021): 3-16.

Catholic Church in Sydney during the years 1919-1929 that responded to an issue arising from the experience of war that took the form of a new organisation or society.

Ethical considerations

As this research will be conducted using archives and preserved communications only, no ethical clearance is necessary. There are, however, several ethical considerations to be kept in mind throughout the researching and writing process. As McKernan notes in his later reflections on the writing of *Australian Churches at War*, the sectarian issue in the post-war years, brought up during World War I, was not just a divisive and sensitive issue then, but many still carry the wounds of growing up in a deeply divided sectarian nation.⁸⁶ Hence, in writing on this divisive time of history, a sensitivity is required to the denominational differences of Australian Christians and to the wounds that this divide caused.

Care must also be taken that opinions and statements are always made on the basis of rigorous and authentic research. To this end, attention must be given to the use of gathered evidence so that it is not distorted or given partially in order to support a particular statement or opinion. Further, as with all academic work, care must be taken that, if not the work of the student, the opinions and statements are attributed to the source from which they came. Thus, while no ethical clearance is required, as with any research and written work involving the actions, thoughts and words of other people, this thesis must be written with great sensitivity and academic integrity.

Additional note on methodology: issues in writing Australian Catholic religious history

Having already broadly discussed the nature of religious history, it is important to note some of the constraints or tensions found in writing religious history in Australia, and in writing religious history of the Catholic Church. To begin with, if religious history, as Mansfield argues, must investigate the inner life of a religious community, the relationship between a religious culture in a particular historical time, and the religious culture more generally must be taken into account. Specifically, to what extent is the religious culture of the Catholic Church in Sydney in the interwar years distinct from the religious culture of the Catholic Church more generally? Mansfield explains this problem as the “tension between the ‘now’ of the historian...and the ‘now’ of the subject”; a tension that is perhaps more pronounced for historians studying the Catholic Church, as “tradition matters, historically and as a theological

⁸⁶ Michael McKernan, “Churches at war: Then and now,” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 33 (2012): 63-71.

category”.⁸⁷ In other words, religious history of Protestant denominations may not face the same problem that “continuities” of faith “may give a deceptive air of familiarity to past religious landscapes”, as tradition is not such an essential component of many Protestant religious cultures, as it is for Catholics.⁸⁸ Thus, in studying the Catholic Church in interwar Sydney, the particular historical circumstances that shaped the religious culture must be taken into consideration, but so too must the broader religious culture of the Catholic Church. As Christopher Dawson argues, “the main stream of Christian culture is one and should be studied as an intelligible historical unity.”⁸⁹ This is relevant not only to the question of a historically distinct religious culture, but a regionally distinct religious culture. Does the assertion that there are significant regional differences between geographically separate Catholic communities largely reflect a “smug parochialism” that is “disturbingly un-Catholic”?⁹⁰ This tension was felt in the researching and writing of this thesis; many of the observations about the religious culture of Sydney Catholics also apply to the religious culture of the Catholic Church as a unified whole. When claims are made in this thesis about the Catholic Church broadly, not only in Sydney, it is an acknowledgement that the devotional, liturgical, doctrinal and moral teachings and practices of the Church are unified across the Universal Church.

Another possible tension in writing Australian Catholic religious history, related to those already mentioned, is the relationship between the Church as an institution and the Church as a community of the faithful. Particularly in the context of a pre-Vatican II Church, the distinction between these two was not of much note. In an era when the laity were merely expected to “pay, pray and obey”,⁹¹ was the culture of the Church as community of faithful markedly distinct from the Church as an institution?⁹² The temptation to read the historical data from the perspective of the current situation of the Church, where religious cultures abound,⁹³

⁸⁷ Mansfield, “Writing Religious History,” 15.

⁸⁸ Mansfield, “Writing Religious History,” 15.

⁸⁹ Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Essays* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 1. Although he makes this argument in the context of the writing of Medieval history, the point is still pertinent to this context, as it is a comment about the unity of Catholic religious culture throughout history.

⁹⁰ Josephine Laffin, “Panel. ‘Australian Catholic History - Developing or Declining?’ Summertime for Catholic History,” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 27 (2006): 62.

⁹¹ Cliff Baxter, *Reach for the Stars 1919-2009 NSW Knights of the Southern Cross Bold Men of Faith, Hope and Charity* (Ballan: Connor Court Publishing, 2009), 5.

⁹² Naomi Turner, in her social history of the Catholic Church in Australia, makes no distinction between the culture of the community of believers and the culture of the institution of the Church, noting that the spirituality of Catholicism in Australia between 1889-1939 was characterised by “certainty” and “stability”, concluding that the Church was “an unchanging institution”. See Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: A Social History* Vol. 2 (North Blackburn: CollinsDove, 1992), 71.

⁹³ A preliminary sweep of the current Catholic Church reveals a proliferation of distinct religious cultures within the institution. Opus Dei, the Charismatic Renewal movement and Traditional Latin Mass communities are just a few examples of the variety of religious cultures existent within the current institution of the Catholic Church.

must be resisted, as the pre-Vatican II Church, while maintaining “intelligible historical unity” with the post-Vatican II Church, is quite distinct in terms of the religious culture of each. This thesis is based on the point of view that the Church is both an institution and a community of people, that the work of the laity is the work of the Church just as the work of the clergy is the work of the Church.

The last point to note in terms of the writing of religious history applies not so much to the writing of Catholic religious history, but to the Australian historiographical context. A number of historians since the late twentieth century have pointed out how little attention has been paid to religious history in the Australian historiographical scene.⁹⁴ Stuart Macintyre suggests that this is because historians writing religious history have “failed to show how their subject bears on the society at large”.⁹⁵ In utilising a dual methodological approach, this thesis aims to counteract this alleged problem in religious history. American evangelical historian, Robert D. Linder also ascribes this lack of attention to religious history in Australian historiography as the result of a lack of understanding of the contribution of religion to the development of Australian culture and society. In his words, “most professional scholars have ruled out all expressions of Christianity as having any significant impact on the development of Australian culture.”⁹⁶ Melissa Bellanta explores this idea that Australian culture and society has not been significantly shaped by religion in further detail in her article on religion and politics in Australia. She argues that the idea that a society reaches “maturity through a loss of religion” had “greater potency in Australia than elsewhere”, as in the Australian context “the notion of a young colony emerging from the shadow of its mother country, guided by an anti-clerical and pragmatic spirit of independence, has brought a nationalist twist to the collective loss-of-faith plotline.”⁹⁷ Despite the seemingly widespread idea in contemporary Australia that the foundations of Australian democracy and society are “definitely and deliberately not Christian”,⁹⁸ this thesis will operate on the assumption that, and indeed attempt to contribute to an understanding of how, religion has been a significant shaping factor in Australian society.

⁹⁴ See for example: Robert D. Linder “Dry souls of Christendom: The challenge of writing Australian Evangelical history,” *Fides et Historia* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 33-50; Melissa Bellanta, “A Hard Culture? Religion and Politics in Turn-of-the-Century Australian History,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 1 (2010): 55-65.

⁹⁵ Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia Volume 4*, 385.

⁹⁶ Linder, “Dry souls of Christendom,” 42.

⁹⁷ Bellanta, “Hard Culture,” 56.

While outside of the scope of this thesis to discuss in great detail the argument that Australia is a “secular”, and therefore non-Christian, society, for a good discussion on the idea of the “secular” in Australia, see Stephen A. Chavura and Ian Tregenza, “A Political History of the Secular in Australia, 1788-1945”, in Timothy Stanley ed. *Religion after Secularization in Australia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 3-31.

⁹⁸ Helen Irving’s opinion piece in *Sydney Morning Herald* June 3, 2004, quoted in Chavura and Tregenza, “A Political History of the Secular,” 4.

Based on Dawson's assertion that "it is impossible to understand a culture unless we understand its religious roots",⁹⁹ Manning Clark's emphasis on religion as a "force in Australian history",¹⁰⁰ and Linder's argument that "religion and anti-religion, sectarianism and denominationalism, and spiritual and moral dilemmas lie at the core of Australian life and hold the key to understanding much of the history of the country",¹⁰¹ this thesis will aim to contribute towards the growing of the body of Australian religious history. If, as Manning and Linder among others have asserted, religion/faith has been an important factor in the development of Australia as a nation, then Australian religious history is an important and worthy area of study. After all, as Linder observes, Australian history is "far too interesting to be left to the secularists."¹⁰²

Chapter structure

Chapter One of this thesis analyses the place of the Catholic Church in society at the outbreak of and during the war. Drawing on newspaper articles from the time, as well as archival material relating to the religious experience of soldiers and padres overseas and the conscription referenda of 1916-17, this chapter explores the Church's response to the declaration of war, the Church and soldiers, and the Church in the conscription referenda. As McKernan asserts that it was largely because of their response to the war that the churches became irrelevant to Australian society, it is important to explore the Church's participation in war-time Australian society.

Chapter Two explores the Church's involvement with veteran affairs. In particular it looks at the Church's engagement with and role in shaping early Anzac Day ceremonies, and its part in broader memorialisation of those who fought and those who died in the war. This chapter also features a study of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), and the establishment of the Church's own organisation for veterans, the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association (CRSSA).

Chapter Three looks at the broader picture of the Catholic Church after the war and its response to some of the social changes it brought about. With the issues of population growth and the stability of the family of key concern, this chapter explores how the Church interacted

⁹⁹ Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Stuart Macintyre, "Always a Pace or Two Apart" in *Manning Clark: Essays on his Place in History* ed. Carl Bridge (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 25.

¹⁰¹ Linder, "Dry souls of Christendom," 50.

¹⁰² Linder, "Dry souls of Christendom," 50.

with the discussions going on in broader society. This chapter also examines the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in the post-war years and assesses to what extent its work was a response to the problems of the post-war world.

Chapter Four examines the way the Church responded in the interwar years to the heightened sectarianism provoked by the conscription debates. In particular, this chapter focuses on the Knights of the Southern Cross, placing its work and aims within the context of Australia after World War I, showing how it responded to a number of problems that Catholics faced, brought to light during the war. This chapter concludes by studying the 28th International Eucharistic Congress, held in Sydney in 1928, as the culmination of the work and activity of the Church in the 20s and the changing place the Church had in Australian society.

Conclusion

It is clear, then, that this thesis has the potential to offer insight into important and understudied areas of Australian history, namely the role and significance of the Church in the tumultuous years directly following World War I. In so doing, this thesis may also contribute to a greater understanding of the role of religion in Australia's history. Further to these general aims, this thesis may inspire current Australian Catholics to greater involvement in the Church's mission, through the example of the history of the Church's work in Australia. At the very least, this thesis will expand our current understanding of the effect of war on Australian society, through its dedicated focus on a particular group in Australian society and its response to the war. As with all good histories, it must begin first by looking at the context, asking what was the place of the Church during the war that led to its position in the post-war years?

Chapter One

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WORLD WAR I

The church's insistence that it alone was the repository of religious truth, thus precluding ecumenical engagement, its marriage laws ... and its maintenance of a separate education system committed the church to an attitude of estrangement from aspects of Australian society.¹

In order to understand the place of the Catholic Church in Australian society after the war, it is important to understand its experience of World War I. Investigation into the Church during the war not only aids our understanding of the history of the Church, but also of broader society, as Pam Maclean argues, the “pronouncements of church leaders and their analysis of public opinion are important sources for historians seeking to tap the mood of a diverse group of people”.² After an overview of the cultural and social picture of the Church in Sydney at the outset of war, this chapter will look at three aspects of the Church and its engagement with society during World War I: the Church's attitude to the war; the Church and Australian soldiers; and the Church and the conscription debates of 1916 and 1917. In focusing on these areas, the main primary source materials are the Catholic, Protestant and secular newspapers from the time, used in particular for their publication of numerous letters from soldiers and chaplains writing from overseas. The collection of Australian soldiers' and chaplains' letters and diaries available through the Australian War Memorial archives have also been used, along with war time collections of posters and propaganda from the same archives.

The Church at the outbreak of the war

Unlike contemporary Australia, in 1914 “most Australians identified in some way or another” with one of the many Christian denominations.³ A far cry from the just over 50% who identified as Christians in the 2016 Australian census, in 1911 nearly 96% of the population indicated that they considered themselves Christian.⁴ Of those the largest proportion were Anglican, followed by Catholics, who made up about 23% of Australia's population; in New

¹ Jeff Kildea, “What Price Loyalty? Australian Catholics in the First World War,” *The Australasian Catholic Record*, (2018): 30.

² Pam Maclean, “War and Australian Society,” in *Australia's War*, ed. Joan Beaumont (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 73.

³ Maclean, “War and Australian Society,” 73.

⁴ “1911 Census - Religion” Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed March 2021, www.ausstats.abs.gov.au

South Wales this proportion was higher than the national proportion, closer to 25%.⁵ The level of religiosity of those who claimed to be Christian is a question worth considering. McKernan notes that although the census figures revealed a decidedly Christian population, clergymen lamented the fact that the census responses of the majority were not accompanied by “any form of commitment to a church”.⁶ A prominent Melbourne Anglican expressed his belief that less than 5% of the significant proportion of purported Anglicans were regular churchgoers.⁷ It was this prelate’s opinion that the Catholic Church did not suffer this problem; comparing the situation in the Anglican Church with the Catholic Church, he “marvelled at the hold of Rome over her adherents” and the “large numbers” that attended Mass each Sunday.⁸ While it seems there was a higher attendance rate among Catholics, Catholic clergy also bemoaned the fact that, despite the churches being full on a Sunday, there were still significant portions, one city priest estimated 40%, of those who considered themselves Catholic that were not regular attendees.⁹ Regardless of the above ruminations and fears, however, it is undeniable that the churches’ role in “mediating between public life and ordinary people” was crucial.¹⁰

Up until well after World War I, to be a Catholic in Australia was virtually synonymous with being Irish. As Jeff Kildea put it, “Catholics were mostly Irish by birth or descent, the Irish were mostly Catholics”.¹¹ The Sydney Catholic newspaper the *Freeman’s Journal*, described as containing “Irish-Catholic news and intelligence, original and selected articles on religious and general topics, selected poetry”,¹² proclaimed in 1856 that the “nationality of Ireland consists in, for it is inextricably interwoven with, its Catholicity. You cannot separate the one from the other.”¹³ Although there were English and other European Catholics in Australia in the early twentieth century, A.D. Gilbert observes that “Catholics who were not of Irish extraction were a small and comparatively inconsequential minority”, indeed, “Irish-Catholics frequently spoke and acted as if oblivious of their existence.”¹⁴ However, it is

⁵ Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War* (Canberra: Catholic Theological Faculty and Australian War Memorial, 1980), 6. Although Beaumont and Robson both put the Catholics at 21% of the overall population, L.L. Robson, *The First A.I.F. A study of its recruitment 1914-1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 88; Beaumont, “The Politics of a Divided Society,” in *Australia’s War*, ed. Joan Beaumont, 49.

⁶ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 7.

⁷ L.V. Biggs, quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 7.

⁸ L.V. Biggs, quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 7.

⁹ J. M Cusack, “Some Impressions of a City Priest,” *Manly*, 1 no. 1, (1916): 52-6, in Patrick O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, Vol. II (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 209.

¹⁰ Maclean, “War and Australian Society,” 73.

¹¹ Jeff Kildea, “Sectarianism, Politics and Australia’s Catholics,” *The Sydney Papers* (Winter, 2002): 161.

¹² *Australian Periodicals with Literary Content, 1821-1925*, quoted in “The Freeman’s Journal”, *Austlit*, last updated 15 October 2014, <https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/C277588>

¹³ “Catholic Immigration,” *Freeman’s Journal* Saturday 27 December 1856, 2.

¹⁴ A.D. Gilbert, *The Churches and the Conscription Referenda, 1916-1917*, Masters Thesis, Australian National University, 1967, 129.

important to note that even though little distinction was made in early twentieth-century Australia between being a Catholic and being Irish, the ‘Irishness’ of Australian Irish Catholics was of a unique, Australian kind.¹⁵ At the time of the outbreak of World War I, the majority of the Catholics in Australia were Australian born, with less than two percent being born in Ireland.¹⁶ Australians of Irish descent were still fiercely loyal to Ireland, but, as O’Farrell notes, for those living in Ireland, “primary loyalties” were to “family, then, clan, then town, region, or at widest county”, while for the Australian Irish, local Irish loyalties “became much less meaningful: more meaningful in Australia was the distinctions of being ‘Irish’ from Ireland.”¹⁷ However, although small in numbers, the influence of the Irish-born was “far beyond its numbers”,¹⁸ as the Australian Catholic clergy were still predominately Irish-born, with the majority of them embarking for Australia almost immediately after their ordination in Ireland. Thus, as McKernan notes, “[i]t is little wonder that the Irish priest-exiles carried with them intense feelings of loyalty and affection for Ireland wherever they went.”¹⁹ The Catholic newspapers, such as the *Freeman’s Journal*, attracted a significantly larger readership than their Protestant counterparts²⁰ and were “organs of Irish-Catholic opinion”, devoting much space to “News from Home”, the life of contemporary Ireland.²¹ For Catholic clergy and for the Catholic newspapers, Catholicism in Australia and the cause of Ireland were so linked that the two were seen as “one cause, its elements distinguishable, if at all, only in terms of emphasis”.²² As shall be discussed in further detail later in this thesis, although many of the clergy and some newspapers maintained this fusion of the causes of Ireland and Australian Catholicism, the years of the war and those following saw Australian Catholics begin to distance themselves from Ireland at the same time that Ireland was establishing its independence from Britain.

The overriding mood of the Australian Catholic community, as the Catholic newspapers reveal, is that they felt themselves to be “an aggrieved and persecuted minority surrounded by the dominant Protestant society”.²³ Perhaps the circumstance that was both most emblematic and the biggest contributor to this feeling, the issue that “chronically and most

¹⁵ Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1986), 252.

¹⁶ O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, 252.

¹⁷ O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, 197.

¹⁸ O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, 252.

¹⁹ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 18.

²⁰ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood: Viking, 1987), 128-129. Also, McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 22.

²¹ Gilbert, *The Churches and Conscriptio*n, 129.

²² O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, 252.

²³ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 5.

clearly divided the two communities [Catholics and Protestants]”²⁴, was the ‘education question’, or in Archbishop Carr’s words, the fight to secure “education justice”.²⁵ This fight was one of the key contributors to Catholic culture in the early twentieth century, and influenced the relationship of the Catholic Church with the Protestant churches and broader society. In the context of the place of Australian Catholics in post-war society, it is important to understand the factors that shaped the Catholic community's sense of injustice at the hands of the government and Protestants generally.

The “education question”,²⁶ as it was termed by Australian Catholics, was the campaign to receive State funding for Catholic schools, which had been withdrawn in New South Wales from 1883, consequent upon the implementation of the Public Instruction Act 1880.²⁷ The Public Instruction Act was the result of the movement in the mid to late 1800s towards education becoming “free, secular and compulsory”,²⁸ as part of an effort to achieve “strong central administration over the schools”, for the twofold purpose of offering education “to each Australian child and to improve education standards”.²⁹ The task of providing education to all Australian children, “scattered as they were over vast distances”, was a difficult one, and the decision to stop funding denominational schools, often “small [and] economically non-viable”, was not made as an attempt to discontinue religious education in schools.³⁰ The desire of many of those who worked for non-denominational schools was to see implemented a “common Christianity” or a “general religious instruction”, in place of the dogmatic, and hence sectarian, religious instruction that took place in denominational schools.³¹ Thus, as Ely argues, the “secular” of the new public schooling was not “no religion”, but a minimal, and Protestant, Christianity.³² For Catholics, there were obvious problems, as the ‘general’ or ‘minimal’ Christianity put forward was certainly Protestant and thus it was

²⁴ Kildea, “Sectarianism, Politics and Australia's Catholics,” 163.

²⁵ “Training College and Novitiate,” *Advocate* 15 August 1914, 23.

²⁶ “Archbishop Carr and State Education,” *The Catholic Press* 29 July 1899, 23.

²⁷ “Public Instruction Act 1880,” *History of New South Wales government schools* education.nsw.gov.au Last modified 5 November 2019.

²⁸ “Public Instruction Act 1880”

²⁹ Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia A Social History* Vol. 1 (North Blackburn: CollinsDove, 1992), 151.

³⁰ Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol. 1, (North Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1992), 151, 168. See also Chavura and Tregenza, “A Political History of the Secular,” in *Religion after Secularization in Australia* ed. Timothy Stanley, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 14.

³¹ Chavura and Tregenza, “A Political History of the Secular,” 14. Robert Lowe, for example, argued for a secular education based on “General” or “reasonable” Christianity. See Stephen Chavura and Ian Tregenza, “Introduction: Rethinking Secularism in Australia (and Beyond),” *Journal of Religious History* 38, no. 3 (2014): 304.

³² Richard Ely, “Now You See It: Now You Don't! Issues of Secularity and Secularisation in Publicly Funded Elementary Schools in the Australian Colonies during the Middle Third of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Religious History* 38, no.3 (2014): 377-397.

seen, particularly by the hierarchy, as “persecuting sectarianism”,³³ and another instance of the fact that they were “a merely tolerated religion in a Protestant British government and society.”³⁴ In their pastoral letter of 1879, the Catholic bishops denounced it as “godless education” that would inevitably “fill the country with indifferentists, not to speak of absolute infidels”.³⁵ The issue the Church had with the legislation, was not only that they no longer received State funding, but that they were required to pay taxes towards schools to which they would not send their children:

...[This] use of Catholic funds - of taxes paid out of Catholic pockets - for establishing a system of education throughout the land, which not merely Catholics cannot safely make use of, but which they firmly believe is calculated to sap the foundations of Christianity, is an act so galling to every feeling of fair-play, that we do not see how any free man, with any spirit in him, can allow it to pass unchallenged.³⁶

Catholics, considering “the restriction of government assistance to state-run schools” as “an unjust burden on Catholic parents who in good conscience could not send their children to state schools”,³⁷ saw their own schools as providing “a refuge” and “protection against...a hostile society”.³⁸ Thus, the struggle over the education question had the effect of creating among Catholics “a sense of separateness”,³⁹ that made them at once “exclusive and excluded”.⁴⁰ The Catholic schools, continued despite the withdrawal of government aid, were “one of the main reasons for the distinctiveness of Australian Catholic culture”,⁴¹ and were attended by “social isolation for the Catholic community and a heightened temperature of sectarian distrust”.⁴² In the context of discussing the place of Australian Catholics in post-war society, it is important to understand the previous and ongoing events that shaped the Catholic community.

The Protestants, on the other hand, could not understand the Catholic insistence on maintaining their own schools, particularly in the face of such adversity. The Protestant response to the Catholic position was not only one of confusion, but open suspicion and hostility.⁴³ *The Methodist* newspaper in 1911 claimed that Catholics kept their children

³³ See, for example, “Archbishop Carr and State Education,” *The Catholic Press* 29 July 1899, 23; Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol. 2, ((North Blackburn: Collins Dove, 1992), 158. “The Pastoral Address”, *Freeman’s Journal* 3 December 1862, 4.

³⁴ Chavura and Trengenza, “A Political History of the Secular,” 7.

³⁵ *A Pastoral Letter of Archbishops and Bishops exercising jurisdiction in New South Wales on Education, 1879.* F. Cunninghame & Co, Sydney, 4.

³⁶ *A Pastoral Letter*, 4.

³⁷ Kildea, “Sectarianism, Politics and Australia's Catholics,” 164.

³⁸ Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol. 1, 171.

³⁹ Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol. 1, 171.

⁴⁰ Kildea, “Sectarianism, Politics and Australia's Catholics,” 163.

⁴¹ James Franklin, “Catholics Versus Masons,” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 20, (1998): 1

⁴² Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1987), 95.

⁴³ Kildea, “Sectarianism, Politics and Australia's Catholics,” 164.

separately educated so that they could indoctrinate them with “the narrowest and most bigoted notions”,⁴⁴ while another Protestant paper went further:

There is a strong feeling that the Roman Catholics teach their young people doctrines that are subversive of the harmony of the country. The separated teaching on religion on which the Romanists insist as a *sine qua non* of education is alone a matter for deepest regret, and there is very widespread conviction that the loyalty of Roman Catholics to the British crown is of the thinnest quality and may in time prove the undoing of Australia.⁴⁵

For many Protestants, government funding for Catholic schools amounted to state endowment of “the most undesirable elements in our community and not the most loyal”, this latter point was in reference to their claim that Catholic religious and priests, Catholic school teachers, were essentially the mouthpieces of a foreign power, the Pope.⁴⁶ The struggle over education, begun in the middle of the nineteenth century, would shape and underpin Catholic-Protestant relations for much of the twentieth century; it was a festering wound for Catholics and a continuing cause of distrust for the Protestants. It stirred up questions of the fundamental virtues of each group, justice, loyalty and faith, that would be questioned again and again in the years of the war and after.⁴⁷

Australian Catholics' Attitude to the Outbreak of War

There is some question about how well-informed Australians were as to the causes of the war when it broke out in 1914. C.E.W. Bean emphatically argued that they were “as well understood by Australians as by any other people”.⁴⁸ Attributing Australia’s knowledge of the lead-up to the war to the “British tradition” of a free press, Bean claims that all the events that led to war were detailed in Australian newspapers that were “religiously perused” even by “the loneliest boundary-rider, in his hut thirty miles from the main homestead of the furthest sheep-station”.⁴⁹ This optimistic view of the average Australian’s understanding of the events of June

⁴⁴ “Sectarianism and Education,” *The Methodist* 21 January 1911, 1.

⁴⁵ *Australian Christian World* 23 December 1910, 2, quoted in Kildea, “Sectarianism, Politics and Australia’s Catholics,” 164.

⁴⁶ “Manifesto of the Australian Protestant Defence Association, 1902,” in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 181.

⁴⁷ That it was still a current issue during the war years is clear from both Protestant and Catholic newspapers, for example *The Methodist*, four days after Australia was declared at war, published an article praising the state school system and casting aspersions on “the Roman Catholic Church” showing “unrelenting opposition to our admirable and vigorous system of State education”. “Our State Educational System,” *The Methodist* 8 August 1914, 7.

That it was an ongoing issue between Protestants and Catholics will be looked at in greater detail throughout the thesis.

⁴⁸ C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume 1* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 12.

⁴⁹ Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, 12.

and July of 1914 is not shared by Manning Clark, who claimed that the news of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination on 28th June was met by a "provincial complacency", as Australians continued on with their local concerns largely untouched by worry over world affairs.⁵⁰ McKernan follows Clark's line of thought that Australians paid more heed to the worrying drought that was affecting the country and the upcoming federal election than to European statesmen and negotiations.⁵¹ Both Bean and Clark, however, point out that whatever their understanding of the events in the lead-up to war, Australians did not realise until "the last days of the crisis" that Britain, and therefore Australia, "was itself involved in this impending struggle of nations."⁵² When it was apparent that Australia was at war, the news was greeted with a measure of enthusiasm, much as it was in European countries.⁵³ The difference was that while for the Europeans this war "represented a new chapter in a very old book", Australians were fairly new hands when it came to war; their conceptions of war were "remote and romantic".⁵⁴

With enthusiasm for the war at "jingoistic" levels and official speeches all framed in terms of Australia's patriotic duty, it is not surprising that church leaders also treated the outbreak of war with little aversion; as McKernan states, "[i]t would have been a brave church leader indeed, who contradicted that mood."⁵⁵ As "patriotism swept the land", and "orators strove to surpass each other in protestations of loyalty", clergymen added their voices to the "virtually unanimous" response to war.⁵⁶ Whatever the truth of religious commitment among those claiming to be Christian, the Australian people did look to their ministers of religion to speak for them in moments of national significance. Mclean argues that in "a real sense the nation looked to clergymen to speak for them",⁵⁷ and McKernan concurs that in times of national crisis or celebration "a clergyman was expected to have something to say to interpret the event and to solemnise it."⁵⁸ Most churches, seeing Australia's "interests and Britain's as substantially identical", and strongly confident in their belief that "nothing happened unless permitted by God, who only sanctioned what was ultimately good", were quickly caught up in

⁵⁰ Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), 190.

⁵¹ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 24.

⁵² Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, 13.

⁵³ For the European mood of Excitement at the outbreak of war see for example: Bertrand Russell, "London: Average Men and Women were Delighted at the Prospect of War," in *Sources of European History: Since 1900* (New York: Cengage Learning, 2010), 53-4.

⁵⁴ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 24, 30-1.

⁵⁵ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 25.

⁵⁶ Gilbert, *The Churches and Conscription*, 26. As Gilbert notes, enthusiasm may not have been unanimous, but it was certainly the only response effectively articulated in the early stages of war.

⁵⁷ Pam Maclean, "War and Australian Society," in Beaumont *Australia's War*, 73.

⁵⁸ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 8.

the patriotic enthusiasm.⁵⁹ Many characterised it as a “confrontation between good and evil”, giving the war a “sense of religious conflict”.⁶⁰ Protestants and Catholics alike characterised the coming suffering as God’s chosen method of calling Christians to repent and reform their lives. Archbishop Kelly, in an address a few days after the declaration of war said that “what was happening was the judgment of God for not minding the true and sound principles of religion.”⁶¹ This emphasis on the activity of God in human affairs was a hallmark of church, particularly Protestant, leaders’ pronouncements on war, coupled with an admonishment to prayer and the practice of virtue, specifically “patience, reserve, humility and above all, patriotism”; this last virtue in particular they saw as growing from true religion.⁶²

It might be expected that there would be some hesitation on the part of the predominately Irish Catholic community in responding to ‘the call of Empire’, but in August of 1914 Catholics in Australia and Ireland saw the interests of Ireland, Australia and the Empire coincide.⁶³ With Ireland expressing its willingness to stand alongside Britain, Australian Irish Catholics were relieved of the worry that participation in the war on Britain’s side was “a betrayal of Ireland”.⁶⁴ Thus, Sydney paper *The Farmer and Settler*, the self-described “rural voice” of NSW,⁶⁵ assured readers of Irish commitment to the war: “so great is Irish loyalty, and so generous is the response to Britain’s appeal that Earl Kitchener will be able to send whole regiments of Irish to the front”.⁶⁶ Australian bishops claimed the same thing for their flocks. Archbishop Duhig in Brisbane told Catholic soldiers that “he hoped they would reflect honour on their religion as Catholics, on their country as Australians, and on the Empire and King for whom they had volunteered to fight”.⁶⁷ Even Mannix, who would later win such notoriety and be branded ‘disloyal’ during the conscription debates, said that he “hoped that the efforts of the Allies would be crowned with success and that the result would bring honour to the British Empire”.⁶⁸ Archbishop Kelly in Sydney commented that “it is a good thing to have young men stand shoulder to shoulder, and know that they have a country worth fighting for.”⁶⁹ Catholic leaders’ early response to war expressed patriotism but more mildly than their

⁵⁹ Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 106; and McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 24.

⁶⁰ Meredith Lake, *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 108.

⁶¹ “The Judgement of God,” *The Catholic Press* 6 August 1914, 12.

⁶² McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 25.

⁶³ Kildea, “What Price Loyalty?,” 30.

⁶⁴ Kildea, “What Price Loyalty?,” 31.

⁶⁵ “The Farmer and Settler,” *Austlit*, last updated 30 January 2014, <https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/6973422>

⁶⁶ “Irish Loyalty,” *The Farmer and Settler* 8 September 1914, 1.

⁶⁷ “Queensland News,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 17 September 1914, 17.

⁶⁸ “Bazaar at Balaclava,” *Tribune*, 10 October 1914, 2.

⁶⁹ “The Archbishop and the War,” *The Catholic Press* 13 August 1914, 27.

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Protestant counterparts. Unlike most Protestant clergy, whose theological reflections on the war tended in the direction of the moral duty of Christians to fight, the Catholic discussion of the theological aspect of the war, although brief, centred predominately around the idea of a just war. Thus, in his sermon on the Sunday following the declaration of war, Archbishop Kelly outlined the three conditions necessary for a just war, concluding that a war that satisfied these three conditions would be “blessed by God”.⁷⁰ Kelly followed this with a caution, however, that even given the justness of the war, it should not “be carried on a single day after it has been decided which side is likely to conquer or when it is clear that to continue will only mean absolute destruction”.⁷¹

On the surface, Catholics and Protestants seemed united in their understanding and support of the war. However, differences were discernible in those early days, in most cases quite subtle, that would in the course of the war become the basis for dispute and division.⁷² McKernan’s argument, based on the public speeches and sermons of Catholic and Protestant church men, is that Catholics “had a far less exalted view of the consequences of the war”; where Protestants looked for “moral and religious renewal”, Catholics anticipated “practical and pragmatic benefits”.⁷³ Catholic clergy expressed the hope that the war would bring about the resolution of the two most pressing issues for Catholics: the education question and employment discrimination⁷⁴ stemming from sectarianism. In the same sermon in which he discussed the conditions of a just war, Kelly anticipated that

[i]f this war pleased God, the people of the various religions would have such esteem for one another that there would be no more disabilities put upon their schools, and the question would not be asked in connection with their public work whether a person was Catholic or not.⁷⁵

Archbishop Carr in Melbourne also mentioned the education question in the context of a discussion of Catholic participation in the war. He assured his audience, gathered to raise funds for a Catholic school, that they “should not fear that in undertaking [to fight]...we are doing anything to distract public attention or divert help from the main object of our present anxiety”, this “anxiety” being the government funding of Catholic schools.⁷⁶ Catholic newspapers were quick to point out the possible ramifications of war on Australian society, showing a caution

⁷⁰ Kelly outlined the traditional Catholic conception of a just war, satisfying three conditions, as articulated by St Thomas Aquinas: 1) a decision by a sovereign authority, 2) a just cause, 3) a right intention.

⁷¹ “The Archbishop and the War”.

⁷² McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 30.

⁷³ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 19.

⁷⁴ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 when examining the Knights of the Southern Cross.

⁷⁵ “The Archbishop and the War”.

⁷⁶ “Training College and Novitiate”.

foreign to Protestant papers. In the week following the outbreak of war, *The Catholic Press* included an article on the effect of the war on the working class. “Even at this early stage in its development, the effects of the war are being keenly felt by many of the tradespeople in the Commonwealth”, it warned.⁷⁷ Acknowledging that employers were also feeling the strain, they insisted, however, that it was the employees who were “most severely affected”.⁷⁸ In the same issue *The Catholic Press* included “A Note of Warning” about the little that was known about the war. “Australia still knows very little about the war”, it reminded its readers, “we must realise that instead of the war being in any way near a conclusion...the titanic conflict has merely started”, adding that “Australia would be wise to think and talk a little more about her own defence than she hitherto has done”.⁷⁹ The other major Sydney Catholic paper, the *Freeman’s Journal*, also included articles of warning about the effect of the war on the working classes. Discussing the industrial disturbance occasioned by the war, the *Freeman’s Journal* suggested that although “it may be doubted if the Government has the power to prevent unwarranted increases in food prices”, but if “the cost of living can be kept down to the normal during the war, the great masses of the people will be greatly helped to survive a period of industrial disturbance and of social destitution.”⁸⁰ Thus, from the outset, it is clear that although Catholics were supportive of the war effort, their support was mixed with concerns about the effects of war on Australian society, particularly the prospects of the working classes and the security of the nation. These early differences between Catholics and Protestants in how they thought about the war were only the foundation for their growing division throughout the years of the war and after.

CATHOLICS IN THE WAR: OVERSEAS AND ON THE HOMEFRONT

With approval given to the war, albeit cautiously, Catholics joined the war effort with the rest of the population, their participation fairly indistinguishable from any other group of Australians. Although far away from the main theatres of conflict, Australia’s early experience of war was nonetheless a period of adjustment to a society at war.⁸¹ The first convoy of Australian troops left Australia in November of 1914,⁸² and so began the divide in Australia’s

⁷⁷ “The Shop-Girl the First to Go,” *The Catholic Press* 13 August 1914, 8.

⁷⁸ “The Shop-Girl the First to Go,” 8.

⁷⁹ “A Note of Warning,” *The Catholic Press* 13 August 1914, 26.

⁸⁰ “The Industrial Crisis,” *Freeman’s Journal* 13 August 1914, 22.

⁸¹ Stephen Garton and Peter Stanley, “The Great War and its aftermath, 1914-1922,” in *The Cambridge History of Australia Volume 2 The Commonwealth of Australia* ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 48.

⁸² Garton and Stanley, “The Great War and its aftermath,” 42.

experience of war between those who went and those who stayed. Thus, the history of Australian Catholics in World War I is in some ways a dual history: a history of Australian Catholics overseas and a history of Australian Catholics at home. This section will analyse both, beginning with the experience of Australian Catholics overseas, chaplains and soldiers, and then Australian Catholics at home.

Catholic Padres

With the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) opening voluntary recruitment on 10 August, the need arose for chaplains to accompany the battalions being formed. Commonwealth Military Force (CMF) chaplains had been established in 1913, with a representative of each of the four major denominations — Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist — appointed as Chaplains-General in the armed forces, each bearing the rank of a Major-General.⁸³ Army chaplain and historian Tom Johnstone argues that this system, of having a Chaplain-General for each denomination, was “unique in world armies”, and sprung from the need to conform to the Australian context of there being no one established church.⁸⁴ Although before the war the CMF chaplains had been established in such a way that there should be an equal number of chaplains from each of the denominations, at the beginning of World War I officials decided, “apparently on their own initiative”, that a better system would be to allocate chaplains in proportion to the percentage of the population each denomination represented.⁸⁵ Thus each brigade, consisting of four battalions, would have four chaplains appointed to it, two Anglicans, one Catholic, and one other Protestant.

When the need for chaplains arose, as the first brigade was being formed, the Catholic response was slower than the Protestant one. It was the job of the Chaplain-Generals to choose their chaplains, and the Anglican and other Protestant Chaplain-Generals were soon swamped with applications.⁸⁶ On the other hand, it seemed that Catholic chaplains tended not to volunteer but were rather selected,⁸⁷ or at least their ‘volunteering’ came only after prompting from their bishop, as in the case of Father T. Mullins who wrote of his surprise when asked to go to the front, but eventually decided “to accede to the request of the Bishop”.⁸⁸ It seemed that

⁸³ Tom Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac Australian Catholic Service Chaplains* (Virginia: Church Archivists’ Press, 2000), 18.

⁸⁴ Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac*, 18.

⁸⁵ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 40.

⁸⁶ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 44.

⁸⁷ Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac*, 19.

⁸⁸ Diary of Chaplain the Rev T. Mullins (M.C.), AWM, file L/12/11/1436, 1. (quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 45.)

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the strong ties between a priest and his parish, and the stricter hierarchical structure of the Church, made Catholic priests less likely to volunteer until requested to do so by their bishop.⁸⁹ Unfortunately this seems to have resulted in a shortage of Catholic chaplains that lasted throughout the war; in 1917, for example, AIF headquarters requested 11 more Catholic chaplains as it was “absolutely necessary for one Roman Catholic chaplain to be with each Brigade”.⁹⁰

Despite the initial hesitancy of Catholic priests to volunteer, they threw themselves wholeheartedly into their work, becoming indispensable to those that they served. A Protestant medical officer wrote in a letter to his family that the troops had a preference for Catholic chaplains: “we have another RC padre. He also is a jolly fine chap...Strange tho’ it is the RC padres are the men we like to get in our battalions.”⁹¹ Because of the Catholic emphasis on the importance of the sacraments, in this context confession and the administering of the last rites in particular, Catholic padres were keen to be in the thick of it all where they could best administer to their men. As Fr William Finn, chaplain to an Irish brigade, said: “the place of the priest is with the dying soldier”.⁹² Thus, it was not surprising that a Catholic chaplain, Fr John Fahey from Perth, was the only Australian chaplain who landed with the troops at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915.⁹³ At Gallipoli, their untiring efforts to be “with the dying soldier” to administer the sacraments, meant that chaplains were very much in the line of fire. Fahey recalls numerous near misses in the course of his ministrations at Gallipoli:

I had four shrapnel bullets through my haversack...I was shot twice through my overcoat without the skin being touched. I had a book shot out of my hand, the jam tin I was eating out of was shot through...four shells burst in my dug-out and rattled me...a shell burst over a dug-out and buried me in clay.⁹⁴

In France, trench warfare demanded a different strategy for the chaplains to care for their men, as the chaplains lived “as administrative officers” away from the front line, and also therefore apart from the men they served.⁹⁵ How they were to carry out their ministry, and indeed what

⁸⁹ This was not unique to the Catholic Church in Australia, the same situation was noted in England and Ireland, see James Hagerty, “Catholic Army Chaplaincy and Episcopal Tensions: The Vatican and the Appointment of an *Episcopus Castrensis*” in *The Clergy in Khaki: New Perspectives on British Army Chaplaincy in the First World War* ed. Edward Madigan and Michael Snape (New York: Routledge, 2016), 128.

⁹⁰ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 41-2.

⁹¹ Doig Letter in Robin S. Corfield, *Hold hard, cobbers: The story of the 57th and 60th Australian Army Infantry Battalions, 1912-1990* (Glenhuntly: 57/60th Battalion (AIF) Association, 1991), 83. Quoted in Johnstone.

⁹² Quoted in Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac*, 36.

⁹³ Daniel Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality: The First AIF Soldiers Speak* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018), 246. Johnstone notes that a New Zealand Catholic chaplain, Fr McMenamin, was also with the troops at the first landing.

⁹⁴ “Fr Fahey in the Trenches,” *Advocate* 31 July 1915, 20.

⁹⁵ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 56.

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that ministry consisted of, was therefore largely up to the discernment of the chaplains. While for many Protestant padres the new conditions prompted a shift in focus to include the social welfare of their troops, organising entertainment and providing material comforts, Catholic chaplains were as ever focused on being available to give the sacraments to the Catholic soldiers.⁹⁶ This took the form of hearing confessions before an attack and giving the last rites after battle. Catholic padres did all they could to ensure that every Catholic soldier was able to go to confession before battle. Fr King, of Sydney, wrote to the Archbishop Kelly asking him to

assure Catholic families...[that] ample opportunity was afforded the priests...to secure the spiritual safety of almost every Catholic man under their command...many a careless boy came back to the Church on the very threshold of his death.⁹⁷

The “sobering influence” of impending battle brought many soldiers to seek out confession and the effects this sacrament had on the men was well noted by others in the battalion; one wrote that the “earnestness shown by the R.C. soldiers” made “a great impression”, as they noticed in their fellow soldiers who were Catholics “a wonderful exhilaration and readiness for anything that might befall after they had interviewed their priest and made peace with God”.⁹⁸ There were even instances recorded of Protestant soldiers convincing fellow soldiers, who were Catholics, to go to confession before battle.⁹⁹ An English Anglican paper noted the significant positive impression given by the Catholic chaplains’ readiness and availability to celebrate the sacraments and Catholic soldiers’ frequent reception of the same; they expressed their concern that this would result in many “going over to the Church of Rome”.¹⁰⁰

As previously mentioned, the emphasis Catholic padres placed on the importance of each Catholic soldier receiving the sacraments, led to their being very involved with the men of their battalion and very visible to the troops. This resulted in a great admiration for the Catholic padres as the quality in padres most praised was fearlessness under fire and a genuine care for the men.¹⁰¹ As one ardent Protestant noted in his diary about a Catholic chaplain, “[he] was universally voted as ‘one of the best’” on account of the fact that he “risks his life to give absolution to men out in No Man’s Land, and that sort of thing”.¹⁰² Another soldier wrote

⁹⁶ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 56-58.

⁹⁷ *The Catholic Press*, 19 October 1916, quoted in Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac*, 53.

⁹⁸ J.J. Kennedy, *The Whale Oil Guards 53rd Battalion* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1919), 20. Quoted in Johnstone.

⁹⁹ Kennedy, *The Whale Oil Guards*, 115.

¹⁰⁰ “Catholic and Anglican Churches”, *The Catholic Press* 19 October 1916, 4.

¹⁰¹ Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 235.

¹⁰² Diary of Frederick Eales Brown, 1 October 1917, MSS 1360, AWM. Quoted in Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018), 235.

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about his Catholic chaplain: “though it is against orders for the chaplains to come to the front there, that is where he is found, attending to the wounded”.¹⁰³ In his study of religious attitudes of the men of the AIF, David Reynaud found that the most common criticism levelled against the chaplains was “the relative invisibility of certain chaplains”.¹⁰⁴ It seems that this charge was not often laid against Catholic padres, but rather the reverse with many noting how present the Catholic padres were in the brigades. One Protestant soldier lamented how little he saw of his chaplain, but mentioned that “I have seen a lot of Roman Catholic Padres, they visit their flock and find them out individually but ours don't bother”.¹⁰⁵ In describing the life of a Catholic chaplain overseas with the forces, Fr Edmond McAuliffe said:

To every brigade in the line there is attached a Catholic chaplain...He is with the brigade everywhere. He is with them in billets, when marching up to the line, and in the line. Everywhere he is with them: everywhere he can hear confessions and he attends them when wounded, and he pays them the last sad rites, reading the burial ceremony...When a big battle is coming off the fact is always kept a secret. But secrets do leak out, and somehow it is always the chaplain who is the first to discover the secret. It is an anxious moment. He tries to get all the boys, and especially those, if any, who escaped him before, and he hears their Confessions, gives them general Absolution, Communion and says Mass for them.¹⁰⁶

All that is not to say that Catholic chaplains on the whole were better men than Protestant padres, but that it is evident that the sacramental nature of the Catholic chaplains' ministry, and their consequent involvement with the troops was noted and admired by Catholics and Protestants alike. In brief, because the sacraments are tied to the Catholic understanding of salvation, and because the priests are the only ministers of the sacraments,¹⁰⁷ the Catholic chaplains had a very strong sense of duty to the men they served that took the form of being with them as they prepared for battle and as they lay dying which made them much loved members of the army.

Catholic Soldiers

The character of the Australian soldier, the typical Anzac, has long been established as a “rough, hard-bitten, cynical, worldly, irreligious, irrepressible, reckless, womanising,

¹⁰³ “Soldiers' Letters,” *Gisbourne Gazette* 26 January 1917, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 237.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Clive Hunter, 10 March 1916, Quoted in Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 237.

¹⁰⁶ “The Chaplain at the Front,” *The Catholic Press* 10 October 1918, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Priests are the only ministers of the sacraments of Confession, Communion and the Last Rites, the three sacraments required. (Some of the other sacraments are able to be administered by lay people, but they are not relevant to this context).

gambling, independent-minded hell-raiser”.¹⁰⁸ In particular, the secularity of the Australian soldier has been widely accepted as fact. Much of this characterisation can be traced back to C.E.W. Bean’s official history of the Anzacs, and his portrayal of the typical digger; while over time the “legend has evolved”, most writers “adhere to the basic characteristics outlined by him”.¹⁰⁹ Bean’s stated opinion of the typical Australian’s religion was that:

He was seldom religious in the sense in which the word is generally used. So far as he held a prevailing creed, it was a romantic one inherited from the gold-miner and the bushman, of which the chief article was that a man should at all times and at any cost stand by his mate.¹¹⁰

This opinion of the religious nature of the Anzacs has been an accepted premise of most who write about the character of the AIF since Bean.¹¹¹ Bill Gammage’s seminal study of the experiences and attitudes of Australian soldiers in World War I draws from, and seems to confirm, Bean’s opinion. In his analysis of the letters and diaries of 1,000 soldiers, Gammage found three topics in particular that received little attention in soldiers’ writings: religion, politics, and sex, “and of these” he said, “perhaps the most surprising is religion.”¹¹² From this he concludes that “the average Australian soldier was not religious”.¹¹³ Considering that many of the quotations he includes from soldier diaries and letters include many references to God and the supernatural, what he means by religion must be made clear. Gammage’s notion of the soldiers’ lack of religion seems to rest on his claim that the typical Australian was “not a keen churchman: he avoided church parades, or if he could not avoid them he tended to show sudden enthusiasm for whichever denomination worshipped within easiest marching distance”, and that he “distrusted chaplains...because they were officers”.¹¹⁴

More recent studies of the AIF have suggested, however, that this conception of Australian soldiers as a secular and irreligious bunch while probably true as a very broad

¹⁰⁸ Robert D. Linder, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War 1914-1918* (Adelaide: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity & Open Book Publishers, 2000), 12-17.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Reynaud, “Signs of Spiritual Crisis or Evidence of Unexpected Commitment? Attitudes to Compulsory Church Parades in the First AIF”, *Journal of Religious History* 41, no. 1 (March 2017): 97.

¹¹⁰ C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac: The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* Volume 1 (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 6.

¹¹¹ Reynaud argues that Bean’s treatment of religion and the AIF “accidentally” gives the impression of secularity, as Bean had been intending to write a book entirely devoted to the chaplains of World War I, but was prevented from doing so by time and financial constraints. Thus, Reynaud argues that the lack of reference to religion and chaplains is not because it was unimportant in the AIF, but because Bean intended to treat the topic in detail in a separate work. See Reynaud, “Signs of Spiritual Crisis”, 98

¹¹² Gammage, *The Broken Years* (Melbourne: Penguin Publishing, 1975), xiv. Wetherell responds to this claim by suggesting that rather than illustrating a lack of interest in religion, the relative lack of discussion could just as easily provide evidence that most Australian men, particularly young men, were “reluctant to write or talk publicly about things close to the heart”. See Wetherell, “K.S. Inglis’ war memorials”, 120.

¹¹³ Gammage, *The Broken Years*, xiv.

¹¹⁴ Gammage, *The Broken Years*, xiv.

generalisation, deserves a “closer reading of the evidence” to fill and refine the “brush strokes, and gaps and silences” of the stereotype.¹¹⁵ Daniel Reynaud’s study of 1,000 soldiers’ letters and diaries,¹¹⁶ revealed that of those whose letters and diaries constituted “substantial data”, 60% recorded evidence about religion, with nearly half of these recording positive attitudes towards religion.¹¹⁷ This data, coupled with the not unsubstantial number of soldiers who converted to Christianity during the war, illustrates that “religious observance among the men of the AIF was far from negligible”.¹¹⁸ Reynaud’s general conclusion about the Anzacs and their attitude to spiritual things, is that “far from being indifferent to spiritual matters”, their letters and diaries “reveal an interest in matters of the soul more widespread than previously imagined, with significant numbers demonstrating a deep engagement with God, religion and the human spirit.”¹¹⁹ Indeed the argument that soldiers were a secular lot was explicitly addressed and refuted by a Catholic chaplain during the war. Father Fahey argued that:

There seems to be an impression abroad that Australians are not religious. This I have found to be a false impression, due to a superficial acquaintance with the Australian character.... underlying the Australian character¹²⁰ there will be found a current of religious feelings strong and deep.¹²¹

Many soldiers’ letters and diaries testify to the truth of Padre Fahey’s words. One such soldier is Sergeant James J. Makin of the 21st Battalion. In his fairly long and detailed diary, Makin includes many details about his religious experiences at the Front, including many instances of voluntarily attending daily Mass, benediction, stations of the cross and vespers, and his abiding trust in God “to protect us in this hour of trial”.¹²² Noting attendance numbers at such services, Makin observed that “the congregation was small” at a 7am weekday Mass during a time of little activity, but on a Saturday morning before an operation he noted “a great many of our brigade were present” and again the next day, “the men from the battalion here quite filled the

¹¹⁵ Reynaud, “Sign of Spiritual Crisis”, 99.

¹¹⁶ The same sample size as Gammage’s study.

¹¹⁷ Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 29.

Those who expressed negative attitudes towards religion must not be taken to constitute outright secularity, as often the negativity expressed was rather a desire for a better experience of religion, e.g. poor sermon, not being able to hear a service, lack of services available etc.

¹¹⁸ Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 298.

¹¹⁹ Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*.

¹²⁰ It is interesting that Fr Fahey speaks of the “Australian character” as that is the question that Bean seeks to address. Bean however, attributes much of the uniquely ‘Australian’ character to the influence of public schools. This is interesting to note, because the majority of Catholics would have attended Catholic schools. Does Bean’s analysis of the ‘Australian character’ then focus on the Protestant majority, ignoring the Catholic section of Australians?

¹²¹ “Captain Chaplain Fahey, D.S.O., Tells His War Story,” *Freeman’s Journal* 27 June 1918, 20.

¹²² Diary of Sergeant James J. Makin. AWM RCDIG0001463, 71.

little village church to its full capacity”.¹²³ Another Catholic soldier, Wilfred Denver Gallwey, after saying that he went to Confession and received Communion “every chance I get”, also observed that religious activity was highest while in the midst of danger, “[y]ou would be surprised at the interest soldiers take in religion on the battlefield. There are all good men while over here. Sad to say some of them forget as soon as they get back here amongst such wickedness.”¹²⁴

In his argument that the soldiers were “not religious”, Gammage adduces the unpopularity of church parades.¹²⁵ This is irrefutable; they undoubtedly did attract a great deal of resentment.¹²⁶ Attitudes to church parades, however, cannot be taken as merely an indication of religious feeling, as the parades were not solely religious events. In the first place, church parades were compulsory, thus for some their dislike stemmed not from the religious nature of the parades but simply because they were enforced.¹²⁷ But for many it was the additions and exertions that were attached to the church parades that made them unpopular. As one chaplain noted:

Formal religion and enforced Church Parades... [are] too often used as an excuse for a weekly clean up of equipment beforehand, and a long inspection afterward, thus imposing a burden of two or three hour's duration, neither the digger nor the chaplain had much time for. But a disinclination to submit... did not prove a lack of religious feeling, but merely a spirit of protest against an out of date military custom.¹²⁸

Added to these complaints were many directed not at the idea of a church parade itself, but rather that the manner in which it was carried out made it ineffective in its ministrations of religion. Many complained that they could not hear the service, or that the sermon topic was unsuitable or sectarian, or that there were not enough hymn sheets for everyone to see.¹²⁹ Thus, far from expressing anti-religious sentiment, a number of criticisms levelled against church parades were that they were not satisfactory in being a time of worship.¹³⁰ Therefore while Bean and Gammage’s generalisation of the Anzacs as not being interested in religion may hold true for a significant portion of the Australian troops, the comparatively little evidence

¹²³ Diary of Sergeant James J. Makin. 61-66.

¹²⁴ Wildred Denver Gallwey 2 DRL 0785 AWM. Quoted in Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 142-143.

¹²⁵ Gammage, *The Broken Years*, xiv.

¹²⁶ Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 34.

¹²⁷ For example. one devout young soldier said he was “rather annoyed” at being forced to go to church parade, but recorded many instances of attending voluntary services. Noel Glendinning Linton, quoted in Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 37.

¹²⁸ Sidney Alexander Beveridge Papers, 1 DRL 0618, AWM. Quoted in Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 43.

¹²⁹ Reynaud, “Signs of Spiritual Crisis”, 103.

¹³⁰ As Reynaud concludes: “to equate that unpopularity [of the church parades] simplistically to an overriding secularism among the Australian soldiers is to miss the fact that reactions to the parades were diverse, and that negative attitudes were often the result of factors other than spiritual disdain.” Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*, 65.

available to work with does give a more detailed picture of the religious character of the men of the AIF and adds nuance and detail to the generalisation.

It is worth noting that of the soldiers studied by both Reynaud and Gammage, Catholic soldiers were under-represented. While Catholics made up approximately 20% of the AIF, Catholics only make up 10% of Gammage's study,¹³¹ and a similar percentage of Reynaud's.¹³² While no bias was intended by those authors, as they could only work with the available materials, it does at least bear keeping in mind that Catholics are proportionally underrepresented¹³³ in both studies. Similarly as Bean's informants were, for the most part, officers¹³⁴ and Catholics were significantly under-represented among the officers,¹³⁵ it seems safe to assume that Bean's sources of information were predominately among the Protestant — mostly Anglican — soldiers. To what extent Catholic soldiers, taken as a whole, may have had different attitudes towards religion than their Protestant counterparts is difficult to determine. However, given the sectarian state of Australian society, and that Catholics tended to be educated separately, it would seem fair to assume that some differences in religious attitudes would be present. For example, as Catholics were already under compulsion (under pain of mortal sin) to attend Mass on Sundays, would they have had a problem with church parades being compulsory? Similarly, while the men were wont to complain at any whiff of sectarianism in a church parade, McKernan notes that "they exempted Catholics from this general rule", because the Catholics had "maintained, vigorously, a separate identity, even to the extent of paying for their own school system. Catholics were perceived as different."¹³⁶

It would certainly seem true from the testimonies of both Protestant and Catholic chaplains that Catholic soldiers evidenced higher attendance rates at religious services. Many Protestant padres noted low attendance at communion services, attributing this poor result to the men's lack of religious knowledge. As Canon Garland remarked, "we have failed to give our men church teaching".¹³⁷ This lack of serious commitment led some padres to question the future of the church in Australia.¹³⁸ These "gloomy assessments" of the state of religious

¹³¹ Detailed in Appendix 1, Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 281.

¹³² Reynaud provides a list of the soldiers and their religious adherence in the back of his book from which the percentage can be calculated.

¹³³ Proportionate to the number of Catholics who enlisted in the AIF.

¹³⁴ Inglis, "Introduction", in Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, xxxv.

¹³⁵ Graham Wilson, "Catholics Need Not Apply? A case for anti-Catholic bias in the selection of AIF Officers," *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 36 (2015): 77-92.

¹³⁶ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 137.

¹³⁷ *Church Standard* 22 February 1918, quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 48.

¹³⁸ For many Protestant denominations, taking communion is a sign of formal church membership, and even if they were a regular churchgoer, they might not be prepared to commit themselves to communion. See McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 48.

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knowledge and commitment were not shared by the Catholic chaplains.¹³⁹ Catholic chaplains wrote of the high attendance rate of Catholic soldiers at Mass and Confession. Fr Gilbert wrote to his superiors back in Australia that:

I always have a big number of men at Holy Communion on Sunday...Every Sunday the number of communicants increases. ... The other night I was called out of bed between eleven and twelve o'clock by two who wanted to go to confessions, prior to their departure for the front next morning. Yesterday morning I had over 1000 at Mass, and I have as many at Communion as I can hear Confessions, and would have many more if I could hear more.¹⁴⁰

Catholic chaplains claimed that the reason for the higher attendance of Catholics, was due to the Catholic school system which insisted on rigorous religious instruction.¹⁴¹ The importance of the sacraments in the life of a Catholic must also be acknowledged in the greater participation of Catholics in religious services.

Another important aspect of life in the army for Catholic soldiers, was that while living with men from many different denominations, an ecumenical spirit absent in life back in Australia was being formed. This did not take the form of shared liturgical or religious services between Protestants and Catholics, but rather an appreciation for each other and an acknowledgement that they all worshiped the same God. As one Presbyterian fellow wrote of a Catholic chaplain, "I shall never believe that a Church which can produce such men is altogether evil".¹⁴² One soldier, commenting on the friendship between a Methodist chaplain and a Catholic chaplain said: "in their example, their character, their splendid attitude in all circumstances, hundreds gained a new conception of religion".¹⁴³ A Catholic soldier noted the new understanding many Protestants had of Catholics in his reflections on the example of the nursing religious in Malta who attended Australian wounded:

Most [wounded] were of course Protestants, but have gone away converted from the non-Catholic to the Catholic view of convents and nuns. This awful war is doing a lot of good in ways we hardly suspect. It is certainly breaking down the barriers of bigotry and bringing Catholic life and ideals before men who were almost ignorant of their existence.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 48.

¹⁴⁰ "Australia's Hero Priests At the Front," *The Catholic Press*, 20 January 1916, 11.

¹⁴¹ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 48.

¹⁴² A. Stevenson, quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 139.

¹⁴³ Ambrose Cull, *At All Costs*, 67, quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 139.

¹⁴⁴ Fr Fahey's letter, *Advocate*, 2 October 1915, 13.

On the home-front: Catholics and conscription

One of the tragedies of Australia's experience of the war is that while a kind of ecumenical fraternity was being forged between soldiers and padres of different denominations in the trenches, there was no such "breaking down [of] the barriers of bigotry" at home, in fact the reverse result came about. The seeming unity of the Christian churches in their response to the outbreak of war had led some to be optimistic about the future of the sectarian issue in Australian society. Many of the Protestant denominations, for example, began discussions about forming a union of churches, acknowledging that what divided them, minor doctrinal differences, was of lesser importance than what united them, their common enemy.¹⁴⁵

Protestants were still baffled by Catholics' refusal to take part in shared prayer services, but even in the face of such continued refusals, there seemed to be a greater unity within Australian society than before the war.¹⁴⁶ Sectarian animosity, however, was never far from the surface, and it only needed an opportunity to bubble over. That opportunity came with the conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917,¹⁴⁷ when Australia became the first country in the world to ask its citizens whether conscription should be implemented.¹⁴⁸ The battle of words and insinuations that followed was vitriolic and aggressive; from pulpit to newspaper, all public platforms were utilised in the debate.

Appealing to the people of Australia to support the campaign for compulsory conscription, Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes argued that voting against conscription amounted to "basely abandon[ing] our gallant boys at the front".¹⁴⁹ Pro-conscriptionist newspapers and politicians called the referendum the "supreme test of nationhood" in which "we rise above our party feelings and personal quarrels" and decide "whether as Australians we have a heart for any fate".¹⁵⁰ Ostensibly, it was the slump in recruitment and the "desperate need for reinforcements", that prompted Hughes to push the conscription agenda.¹⁵¹ The issue was given a keener edge considering that other British dominions such as New Zealand and Canada

¹⁴⁵ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 156-157.

¹⁴⁶ Maclean, "War and Australian Society", 74.

¹⁴⁷ Although technically a plebiscite as it the outcome had no constitutional binding force, sources from the time refer to it the two polls as referenda rather than plebiscites. Thus, in this work the term referenda will be used so as to be consistent with the sources.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Hamel-Green, "Australia says no to war: The WW1 conscription," *Green Left Weekly* no. 1091, 19 April 2016, 10.

¹⁴⁹ "Appeal to Australia", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 October 1916, 11.

¹⁵⁰ "Appeal to Australia".

¹⁵¹ *Australian War Memorial* "Conscription, 1916-17" <https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/anzac-voices/conscription/>

had already introduced conscription and Australia's contribution, taken as a proportion of population, was considerably below that of Canada or New Zealand.¹⁵²

From the outset the great majority of Protestant churches and clergy, seeing the war as "a means of national redemption", favoured conscription.¹⁵³ Michael McKernan argues that this support of conscription was the "culmination" of the Protestant argument that "the war had religious significance", that it was a "moral crusade from which no citizen might excuse himself."¹⁵⁴ The Protestant churches were firmly aligned with the 'Yes' campaign, "united in preaching that Christians had a moral duty" to vote in favour of conscription,¹⁵⁵ with a great number also appealing to Australian citizens' patriotic duty to support the Empire.¹⁵⁶

On the other hand, the Catholic response¹⁵⁷ to the issue of conscription was more "complex and diverse" and there was some change in their response between the first and second referenda.¹⁵⁸ In the first referendum in 1916, the Catholic Church's official stance was "one of neutrality" while Church leaders were in disagreement in their personal opinions.¹⁵⁹ Archbishop Kelly in Sydney personally supported conscription, finding a scriptural precedence for conscription in the example of Saul,¹⁶⁰ while Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne aligned himself with the 'No' campaign, though he played a minor role in the 1916 referendum.¹⁶¹ In the lead-up to the first referendum, the Apostolic Delegate to Australia circulated a letter to all Australian Catholics urging them to "record their votes in accordance with the dictates of conscience", stating that as the "question of conscription [did] not affect the Church as a Church" the Church would not hold an official position.¹⁶²

However by the second referendum, Catholic opposition to conscription was more complete. The significant reason for heightened Catholic opposition to the question of conscription was that the government's conscription proposal did not include exemptions for

¹⁵² E.M. Andrews, "The Anzac Illusion," in Gare & Ritter, *Making Australian History*, 299.

¹⁵³ Beaumont, "The Politics of a Divided Society," 48.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Jeff Kildea, "Australian Catholics and Conscription in the Great War" in *The Journal of Religious History* 26, no.3, (October 2002), 299.

¹⁵⁵ Kildea, "Australian Catholics and Conscription," 299.

¹⁵⁶ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 110.

¹⁵⁷ Much has been written on conscription and the causes of the defeat of both referenda. Much has also been written on the role of Australian Catholics in the conscription debates. It is outside the scope of this thesis, however, to include a full discussion of the extent that their Catholicism, Irishness, and or their working-class background affected their attitude to conscription. For the purposes of this thesis, it is enough to discuss the effects of the denominational divide on the question of conscription, without looking in detail at all the possible causes.

¹⁵⁸ Maclean, "War and Australian Society," 73.

¹⁵⁹ Kildea, "Australian Catholics and Conscription," 300.

¹⁶⁰ Kelly noted the verse 1 Samuel 14:52 where Saul conscripts any able-bodied men he chooses, see SAA, "Kelly Correspondence, Sermon Notes". File A0526.

¹⁶¹ Beaumont, "The Politics of a Divided Society," 53.

¹⁶² Printed in *The Catholic Press*. 5 Oct 1916, 25.

seminarians and teaching brothers.¹⁶³ At the same time, the government also proposed increased taxation for bachelors and widowers who did not enlist. This alienated Catholics from the pro-conscription cause and worsened their relationship with the Hughes government, as again, seminarians and teaching brothers would not be exempt from this “Bachelor Tax”; Catholics saw this as being “directed at Catholics” as Catholic clergy were required to remain celibate.¹⁶⁴ “[T]here can be no doubt”, declared the *Freeman’s Journal*, “that the trail of the sectarian serpent runs through the whole sorry business”.¹⁶⁵ The second referendum also saw Archbishop Mannix become a very “prominent and controversial” advocate of the ‘No’ campaign,¹⁶⁶ attracting large scale criticism from pro-Empire leaders for his “Australia first” views.¹⁶⁷ A man with “considerable powers of oratory”, Mannix was able to attract crowds of over a hundred thousand to anti-conscription rallies.¹⁶⁸ While the significance of Mannix’ opinions in contributing to the outcome of the referendum is “debatable”,¹⁶⁹ Billy Hughes attributed the increase in Catholic opposition to conscription to Mannix; in a manifesto on conscription, sent to Australian soldiers serving abroad, Hughes devoted “more than half” of the document to attacking Mannix and his anti-conscription position.¹⁷⁰ The sectarian division arising out of the conscription debates also had very practical ramifications for many Australians, for example, with documented cases of Catholic workmen being sacked after Mannix delivered a particularly heated anti-conscription speech.¹⁷¹

The bitter sectarian feelings aroused by these debates are evident in the pamphlets and posters from the time. A striking example is “the Anti’s Creed”, a piece of propaganda that remains “perhaps the most notorious polemic of the conscription campaigns”.¹⁷² Identifying the ‘No’ campaign with Catholicism, in imitating the Apostles’ creed, “the Anti’s Creed” painted the anti-conscriptionists as cowardly, selfish and disloyal to Australia and Britain:

I believe the men at the Front should be sacrificed.

I believe that Britain should be crushed and humiliated.

I believe that disloyalty is true citizenship.

¹⁶³ Kildea, “Australian Catholics and Conscription,” 305.

¹⁶⁴ Kildea, “Australian Catholics and Conscription,” 302.

¹⁶⁵ “Marked Down for Slaughter Catholic Religious and the Bachelor Tax,” *Freeman’s Journal*. 11 October 1917, 24.

¹⁶⁶ Beaumont, “The Politics of a Divided Society,” 53.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix: Wit and Wisdom*, (Melbourne: Freedom Publishing, 1982),60.

This point will be discussed later in the thesis in relation to the Catholic veteran society. But it is significant that there was an ‘Australia First’ rhetoric present among Catholics during the war.

¹⁶⁸ Beaumont, “The Politics of a Divided Society,” 53.

¹⁶⁹ Beaumont, “The Politics of a Divided Society,” 53.

¹⁷⁰ Kildea, “Australian Catholics and Conscription,” 304.

¹⁷¹ Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, 187.

¹⁷² Beaumont, “The Politics of a Divided Society,” 52.

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I believe in Considine,...Mannix and all their works¹⁷³

I believe I'm worm enough to vote No.

Those who don't believe in the above Creed will vote YES.¹⁷⁴

A Protestant newspaper declared that Catholicism was disloyal "at heart" and desired the "downfall and dismemberment of the Empire as a great Protestant power",¹⁷⁵ while leading Protestants denounced Catholics as plotting to "let Protestant boys die so that the sons of Rome could marry their sisters".¹⁷⁶ As with the debates surrounding education in the previous century, Catholics again were held under scrutiny in regard to their loyalty to the Empire. At every moment of tension between Catholics and Protestants, it seems, British Protestants drew on the tradition established at the time of the Reformation that "asserted that Catholic loyalty could not be relied upon", as the pope had "the power to compel Catholics to commit treacherous acts against their country".¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

In the years leading up to 1914, an age of little ecumenism, when the divide between Catholics and Protestants was also largely an ethnic divide, the education debates and the Catholic insistence on maintaining their own schools had the effect of inculcating a ghettoish culture among Catholics. With the announcement of war, Catholics hoped that their participation would win concessions in relation to education and employment, which would turn them from the persecuted minority that they considered themselves to be, to fully fledged and accepted members of society. At the outbreak of war some hoped a unity was beginning to be forged, as on the surface Protestant and Catholic churches responded to war in the same way: supporting Australia's participation in the war and seeing it as in some way part of God's will. However, while the Protestant churches tended to look for spiritual outcomes from the war, Catholics hoped for pragmatic ones: an end to education and employment discrimination, and a greater acceptance in Australian society. While this latter goal was seemingly achieved overseas among the troops, with Catholics and Protestants each recognising the good qualities of the other and disregarding the doctrinal disputes, Catholics at home during the war saw instead a greater sectarian animosity erupt, with the conscription debates of 1916 and 1917. For Catholics after the war, there was a tension between the experience of the veterans, who had

¹⁷³ This line directly, or perhaps indirectly, associates Mannix with Satan as it echoes the Catholic Baptismal promise in which Catholics reject "Satan and all his works".

¹⁷⁴ Excerpt from a poster entitled "The Anti's Creed". RC00317 AWM.

¹⁷⁵ "Where Does Romanism Stand," *The Methodist*. 8 December 1917, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, 187.

¹⁷⁷ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 113.

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enjoyed a kind of ecumenism in the trenches, and those at home who had experienced the heated sectarian disputes of the conscription debates. The world after the war, for Catholics in Australia, was not only one broken by war but also divided along sectarian lines. The chaplains' experience overseas also showed areas for improvement within the Church; while Catholics recorded higher participation than Protestants at religious services in the army, chaplains still observed that a number were poorly formed in their faith and they foresaw that after the war there would be a need for a strong faith community to keep the men in the practice of their faith.¹⁷⁸ With this context in mind, we turn to the immediate post-war era, looking at the work of the Church in relation to veterans and memorialisation.

¹⁷⁸ See for example Fr Bossence's observations quoted in McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 45.

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AFTER THE WAR: THE CHURCH AND VETERANS

The First World War had put Catholics beside Protestant in the trenches, in the munitions factories, in the war graves. But the passion of the conscription referenda had kept them apart.¹

Despite the expressed hope of many Australians that the war would promote a better understanding between Christians of all denominations in Australian society, the shared experiences of veterans was not enough to mend the sectarian brokenness back home stemming from the conscription referenda. The debates over the observance of Anzac Day in Sydney are emblematic of the struggle to achieve unity between Catholics and Protestants, which ultimately ended in the foundation of a specifically Catholic veterans association. This chapter will explore how the war furthered the divide between Catholics and Protestants, but also, somewhat paradoxically, how at the same time it inculcated a desire to work towards greater unity. In particular this chapter will focus on the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association as a key example of the effect the war had on Catholic-Protestant relations. In focusing on these areas, the main source for primary source material is the Sydney Archdiocesan archives, which contain the only known extant archives of the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association. Newspaper articles dealing with the lead up to and the foundation of the Catholic veterans' society will also be used to piece together the history of the organisation. This chapter will also critically engage with a number of key works in the large body of histories of Anzac and Anzac Day.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS AND LOYALTY

Australian Catholics entered World War I with a mind to show that they were every bit a good Australian: loyal, brave and upstanding, and to thereby win greater acceptance from, what they saw as, an often hostile, Protestant-dominated society. In so doing, they also hoped to achieve a number of pragmatic results for the Church:² an end to discrimination in employment and in

¹ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood: Viking, 1987), 89-90.

² This was certainly the opinion of the clergy, such as Archbishops Kelly, Carr & Duhig. It is difficult to determine, however, how much/whether such reasoning can also be attributed to the laity, those Catholics who did sign up. As this seemed to be the official line of the Catholic Church in Australia, and no particularly significant alternate visions were proposed by the laity, we can assume that if they were not consciously thinking in such a way, they at least had no strong objections to it.

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taxation in regard to the lack of funding for Catholic schools.³ If Australia's experience of the war had been limited to the experience of the men in the trenches, then this goal may have been at least partially achieved. As the soldiers often declared, both when overseas and when they had returned home, "sectarianism was unknown" in the trenches, and they expressed a desire to see a greater cohesion between Protestants and Catholics in Australian life.⁴ But when they got back to Australia, they found a community even more deeply divided. A further cause of concern for the future harmony of Australian society, was the increasing identification of people and groups into two distinct sections of society: the "loyalists" and the "disloyalists".⁵ Growingly, Catholics were identified, predominately by the ultraloyalist Freemason groups but also by wider Protestant Australian society, as belonging to the latter group. What it meant to be 'loyal', however, was a matter of debate.

Monarch and Pontiff

Questioning the loyalty of Catholics was not a new phenomenon in Australia, or indeed in any part of the British Empire. As Kildea points out, "Catholic loyalty had been a matter of concern since Elizabethan times",⁶ given substance with the publication of the papal bull *Regnan in excelcis* that "forever absolved" English Catholics from allegiance to the Crown.⁷ This created a lasting suspicion about the nature of Catholic citizens' loyalty to the British Empire; of what did their loyalty consist if they owed their first allegiance to the Pope, above the monarch? That there were differences between Catholic and Protestant allegiance to the Empire was undeniable, but whether this difference amounted to a distinction between disloyalty and loyalty is another question altogether. A contributing factor to the wariness with which English Protestants viewed Catholics' loyalty was the confused ideas about what it meant to pledge allegiance to the pope. For many Protestants, the pope exercised a powerful force over Catholics to the extent of compelling them to commit "treacherous acts against their country".⁸ In principle, they considered papal authority to be "absolutely opposed to the British

³ See for example: "The Archbishop and the War," *The Catholic Press* 13 August 1914, 27, and "The Archbishop's Speech", *Advocate* 15 August 1914, 23.

⁴ See for example Chaplain Goodman's address, *Freeman's Journal* 22 Jun 1922, 22; also Thomas Henley's letter to the editor "Disloyalty," *The Daily Telegraph* 29 March 1925, 4.

⁵ See for example: *Argus* 4 October 1917, quoted in Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1980), 207; Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Melbourne: Penguin Publishing, 1975), 20.

⁶ Kildea, "What Price Loyalty?," 29.

⁷ Pius V, *Regnans in excelsis*. Papal Bull, 5. Papal Encyclicals Online, papalencyclicals.net Specifically, the bull absolves them from "oath[s]...and from any duty arising from lordship, fealty and obedience".

⁸ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 113.

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Constitution” and “essentially a Foreign Power”.⁹ In the early years of the war this notion was reinforced in the minds of Australian Protestants by the appearance of an oath, purportedly from the Knights of Columbus, but in fact a spurious oath circulated, presumably, for nefarious reasons. This ‘oath’ however played on all the Protestant fears about Catholic loyalty to the Crown and their allegiance to the pope, as the swearer of the oath had to say:

[B]y virtue of the keys of binding and loosing...[the pope] hath power to depose heretical kings, princes, States, Commonwealths, and Governments, and they may be safely destroyed. ... I do now denounce and disown any allegiance as due to any heretical king, prince, or State, named Protestant or Liberals, or obedience to any of their laws, magistrates, or officers.¹⁰

Against the backdrop of the history of the pope’s authority over his flock and involvement in temporal affairs — the Crusades, the deposition of King Henry IV, and the bull *Regnans in excelsis* are striking examples — there was little chance that Protestants would not take it as an authentic representation of Australian Catholics’ view toward the pope and the Empire. The declaration of the pope’s infallibility in 1870, often misunderstood by Protestants as extending to anything the pope said, only added substance to this vision of the pope’s absolute authority over Catholics and his ability to command their obedience.¹¹

This concern was given a keener edge in the context of the war, as the pope’s neutrality and constant calls for peace were directly opposed to the Protestant mantra in Australia that this was a holy war against the forces of evil and that victory was the only fitting conclusion. As *The Methodist* put it in reply to the publication of the Pope’s peace note in 1917, “a task has been undertaken that the moral consciousness of the world demands shall be carried through to a satisfactory issue. ... mediators must hold off till Germany has learned the lesson that pride goeth before destruction”.¹² The *Sydney Morning Herald* characterised the Pope’s peace notes as siding with “the lawless henchmen of medieval dynastic despotism” against the “champions of human right and liberty”.¹³ Opining that the war represented a moment in which “differences of religious allegiance seemed so meaningless”, the *Herald* saw it as allowing the Catholic Church an opportunity to redeem itself from having “sold its soul to potentates” at the time of the Reformation.¹⁴ Because they had characterised the war as a

⁹ Mr Wilson M.L.A.’s speech to the Protestant Federation, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 Dec 1920, 15.

¹⁰ “Elections: A Dastardly Anti-Catholic Circular Exposed,” *The Catholic Press*, 13 August 1914, 11.

¹¹ *Constitution prima de Ecclesia* 4.9, in Peter Armenio, *The History of the Church*, (Woodridge: Midwest Theological Forum, 2007), 672.

¹² “The Pope on Peace,” *The Methodist*, 25 August 1917, 9.

¹³ “The Pope’s Peace Efforts,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 October 1917, 11.

¹⁴ “The Pope’s Peace Efforts,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 October 1917, 11.

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struggle for the moral soul of the world, the pope's calls for peace, and assertion of neutrality, were seen by most non-Catholic Australians as supporting the other side; the fact that Austria was a Catholic country also helped to reinforce this idea. The Vatican's neutrality and calls for peace were thus seen by many Protestants as an explicit attempt to "lower the Flag and to bring the British people under the heel of the Romish Church"; they claimed that the Vatican was "in league with Germany to crush England and trample the Union Jack under foot".¹⁵ Under the leadership of the pope, Catholics, they claimed, sought to "pervert Australia into a fief of the Papacy."¹⁶

England and Ireland

As previously discussed, in the early twentieth century the religious scene in Australia was split along ethnic as well as denominational lines, with Catholics predominately being of Irish extraction. It is undeniable that Australian Irish Catholics held a great love for and allegiance to Ireland, with the major feast day of the Australian Catholic Church being St Patrick's Day, and the Sydney Catholic papers devoting large sections of their paper to Irish news, "News from Home". The programme of a musical concert given to mark the inauguration of a memorial fundraising committee paints a picture of Australian Catholics' devotion to Ireland, with the first piece being "Echoes from Erin", although this was followed up with a number of distinctly Australian pieces, songs entitled "Australia" and "The Toast is Anzac".¹⁷ For Australian Catholics there was no contradiction between being loyal to Australia and loyal to Ireland. But for Protestant Australians, there was a glaring omission in the concert programme — the national anthem, God Save the King, was not played; for them the concert was an example of the kind of disloyalty evidenced by the Australian Catholics. This point of view was expressed by Sir Joseph Cook, who had served as Australia's prime minister in 1913-14, "let us be through and through Australian and through and through British, for no man can be a true Australian who is not at the same time a Britisher."¹⁸ This was the crux of the matter for Protestant and Catholic notions of what it meant to be a loyal Australian; did being a true Australian necessitate being a true Britisher, or could there be a national identity that was not tied to the identity of the British Empire, a proudly Protestant empire? The Grand Master of the

¹⁵ "Neutrality The Papacy and the War. Address by Chaplain Wilson," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1920, 8.

¹⁶ "Disloyalty Cowardice. Priest Versus the Press," *The Methodist* 29 May 1920, 1.

¹⁷ Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, *Souvenir Programme of Complimentary Concert and Speech Night, October 18th 1921*. File A0567.

¹⁸ "Disloyalty. Bogus Australianism Condemned by Federal Ministers," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1921, 8.

Orange Lodge accused the Catholic schools of teaching disloyalty in that the children were not taught the national anthem, however he went on to lambast them because “Australia first was their doctrine”; a doctrine which amounted in the eyes of the editors of the *Sydney Morning Herald* to a “bogus Australianism”.¹⁹ In the eyes of such militant Protestants and self-professed ‘loyalists’, proclaiming “Australia first” was considered seditious behaviour and ultimately a declaration of disloyalty to the Empire.²⁰ This issue of the nature of what it meant to be loyal was a sticking point for Protestants and Catholics that took on particular significance in the post-war discussions about national identity and national ceremonies.

AUSTRALIANS AND REMEMBRANCE: THE BATTLE FOR ANZAC DAY

As, in some sense, Australia’s first national day, Anzac Day has attracted no little attention in the academic world from the time of the landing at Gallipoli, although it is in recent years that it has received the most attention. It has become, in the words of Anglican bishop and historian Tom Frame, “one of the nation’s most controversial cultural habits”,²¹ but it was no less contentious in the early years during and after the war.

Anzac Day was a chance for the young nation, not long federated, to remember those who had died for their country and therefore to celebrate the nation for which they laid down their lives. Initial discussions revolved around what form the ceremonies of the day should take, reflecting different ideas about the nature of the day. Was it to be a solemn commemoration, a kind of non-denominational “All Souls Day” for Australia, as Canon Garland envisaged it?²² Or should it be a celebration²³ of the goodness of Australia that led these young men and women to fight for it? Different answers to that question then led to differences of opinion on whether it should be commemorated on 25 April, or on the Sunday

¹⁹ “Disloyalty. Bogus Australianism Condemned by Federal Ministers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1921, 8.

²⁰ “The L.O.I.,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1920, 10. Also, “Disloyalty. Bogus Australianism Condemned,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1921, 8.

²¹ Tom Frame “Anzac Day: Controversy and Criticism”, in *Anzac Day Then and Now* ed. Tom Frame (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2016), 1.

²² John A. Moses & George F Davis, *Anzac Day Origins, Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration* (Canberra: Barton Books, 2013), 31.

²³ See for example: Gareth Knapman, “Anzac: Celebration or commemoration?” in *Anzac Day Then and Now*, ed. Frame 31-53; Ken Inglis, “Anzac Day: The One Day Will Endure”, in *ANZAC Remembered Selected Writings by K.S. Inglis* ed. John Lack (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1998), 11-13.

closest to it, and then whether it should be a public holiday.²⁴ For some a public holiday would mean that it would not be holy or sacred enough, for others if it were not a public holiday it would show a lack of respect or sense of how important the occasion was to Australia. These questions, while mostly concerning practical matters, also revealed a deeper discussion: about what it meant to be Australian. Did being Australian mean being generally Christian but non-denominational? Did being Australian mean being Empire men first and foremost? Could you be Australian and not sympathetic to the cause of the Empire? These questions were answered in various ways over the ensuing decades after the landing at Gallipoli, and in some ways are still being asked today. However, at the time, these questions were particularly divisive among Christian denominations. This was especially the case in Sydney,²⁵ where discussions of the way Anzac Day should be commemorated added fuel to the sectarian fire and was one of the predominant factors in Catholics establishing their own association for Catholic returned servicemen and women.

From the first anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, in 1916, it was clear that there was a great difference of opinion about the nature of Anzac Day and consequently the appropriate activities that should take place on the day. Judging from the letters to the editor and the editorials published in Sydney newspapers, the dominant view of Anzac Day in 1916, in the debate about whether it should be a day of celebration or commemoration, was that it should be a fittingly solemn day to commemorate the great sacrifice of those who gave their lives for their country. Hence we read in *The Sydney Morning Herald* that “Anzac Day should not be celebrated on the lines of ...Australia day, but in a serious manner befitting the occasion.”²⁶ *The Methodist* also declared that “the occasion should be marked by commemorative or memorial services”.²⁷ The Catholic *Freeman's Journal* devoted much space to an article entitled “Anzac Day. How We Should Celebrate it”, arguing that “public rejoicings” were not favourable to the majority.²⁸

Perhaps the incident that best exhibited this clash between those who wanted it to be a celebration and those who wished it to be a solemn day of commemoration was the issue of the illumination of various public buildings in Sydney on Anzac Day that would cost £1000 of public funds. Proposed by the Lord Mayor of Sydney, it appears that the idea originally belonged to the Returned Soldiers Association, which at that point in the war was filled mainly

²⁴ Moses & Davis, *Anzac Origins*, 292-304.

²⁵ Knapman, “Anzac: Celebration or commemoration,” 49.

²⁶ “Anzac Day,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 April 1916, 9.

²⁷ “Anzac Day,” *The Methodist*, 15 April 1916, 7.

²⁸ “Anzac Day. How We Should Celebrate It,” *Freeman's Journal*, 6 April 1916, 22.

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with young veterans.²⁹ The backlash from Sydney residents was intense. One mother of a soldier wrote to “raise my voice in protest against such a wicked waste of public money”,³⁰ while another wrote that in the face of the constant calls to economy it was “scandalous” to see such extravagance.³¹ It was not only the seeming waste of money in a time of war, however, but the celebratory tone that the illuminations would give to the day. An editorial in the *Freeman’s Journal* noted that, “the war is still with us; our heroic dead are scarcely cold in their graves”, suggesting that the deeds of those brave men would “not be forgotten by another generation because a patriotic country did not clash the cymbals or bang the drum on the first anniversary.”³² Those calling for a solemn day of commemoration seem to have taken their cue from Canon Garland in Queensland. In March of 1916 the *Sydney Morning Herald* included an article detailing Garland’s proposal for the commemoration of Anzac Day in Queensland, where “the intention is to keep the day as one of solemnity, placing first its religious observance, in a manner to be decided by each denomination.”³³

In 1916, there was little in the debates about Anzac Day that brought up the sectarian divide. Sydney Catholics celebrated Anzac Day with a solemn ceremony that included a Litany of the Saints, an address by the archbishop and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.³⁴ The service was attended by a number of Sydney dignitaries, including the state governor and the Lord Mayor. In his short address, Archbishop Kelly spoke not only of the sorrow for those who died but the need for “strong men”, men of virtue, to rise up and take the place of those departed. He also touched on the sectarian issue, urging Australians to “put away sectarianism from our national life. Let us belittle no man’s belief...it is not religion that desires to persecute but sectarianism and sectarianism will not give us strong men.”³⁵ This was one of the very few mentions of sectarianism in any of the discussions about or speeches for Anzac Day; it was in marked contrast to the commemorations in the early years *after* the war, particularly 1919, which followed in the wake of the two highly divisive conscription referenda.

In 1919, the Sydney Anzac Day celebrations were in the hands of the NSW branch of the RSSILA,³⁶ as it had been the previous year.³⁷ Owing to the presence of the Spanish Flu,

²⁹ Knapman, “Anzac: Celebration or commemoration,” 50.

³⁰ “To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1916, 13.

³¹ “To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1916, 13.

³² “Anzac Day. How We Should Celebrate It,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 6 April 1916, 22.

³³ “Anzac Day,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March 1916, 5.

³⁴ “Anzac Day,” *The Catholic Press*, 13 April 1916, 32.

³⁵ “Anzac Day at St Mary’s,” *The Catholic Press*, 27 April 1916, 19.

³⁶ The Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia, often referred to as the RSSIL or the RSSILA in sources from the time, now known as the RSL.

³⁷ “Anzac Day,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 April 1918, 8.

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Anzac Day ceremonies were mostly postponed; it was suggested that each religious denomination hold a service on the day, with a parade planned for a later date.³⁸ As in previous years, a united church service was also held after the parade, but this year it became the source of a bitter quarrel between Catholics and Protestants. A series of letters to the editor published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* illustrate the causes and heat of this argument. It began with a letter from H.A. Conant, the editor of the Catholic *Freeman's Journal* and a man who “moved actively in political circles”,³⁹ claiming that the “Catholic community, which sent something like 80,000 Australian Catholic soldiers to the front, is anxious to know the Ministry’s warrant for making the official celebration of Anzac Day, a purely Protestant affair.”⁴⁰ Pointing out that the Government was well aware that Catholics could not participate in any kind of non-Catholic religious ceremony, he asked how the government would “dare” to make a State event an “exclusively Protestant” one, in a country “which is supposed, constitutionally, to respect the religious scruples of...the Catholic equally with those of the Anglican”.⁴¹ The RSSILA was allowed to respond through the editor’s comments published below the letter, which stated that the united service was arranged by the Anglican Dean of Sydney, at the request of the League, and that Catholics were not invited because it was known that their religion forbade their participation, not from any sectarian or discriminatory impulse.⁴²

Conant’s letter received fiery response. Phillip Cook wrote to protest that Conant’s complaint should not be towards the organisers of the event, but rather that it should be levelled at the Catholic Church hierarchy. He argued, “[t]his is not the first Anzac celebration. On no occasion has the R.C. community officially taken part, and it is late in the day for even a layman to protest, assuming that your correspondent is sincere.”⁴³ He then proceeded to give a series of examples of why he believed that the Catholic Church did not deserve any “special treatment”, noting that St Mary’s Cathedral was flagless on Anzac Day; that Catholics were underrepresented in all areas of enlistment, including officers and chaplains — taking leave to make the “reasonable” inference that “when a sacrifice was to be made the priests were below their quota, but when anything was to be gained they were considerably above” — and finally that the Church had made no “special effort” to assist the raising of patriotic funds during the

³⁸ SAA, *Letter to Kelly from secretary of RSSILA*, 23 April 1919. File A0567. See also “Anzac Day,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1919, 8.

³⁹ Conant was editor of the *Freeman's Journal* from 1915 until the 1930s. “The Story of the “Freeman” and the “Press”,” *Catholic Weekly*, 29 June 1950, 1.

⁴⁰ “Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 May 1919, 18.

⁴¹ “Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 May 1919, 18.

⁴² “Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald”

⁴³ “The Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1919, 9.

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war. In short, he laid a series of charges against the patriotism and loyalty of Catholics as his “case that the Roman Catholic Church has no claim for special consideration”.⁴⁴

Conant responded, after describing Cook’s letter as an “example of the invincible hostility of a certain section towards the Catholic Church”, by clarifying his concern. Setting aside questions of the number of Catholics who enlisted, or whether Catholic school children “bought lollies...in a profligate and disloyal spirit”, Conant argued that the issue was the mixing of State ceremonies and Protestant services. In his words:

the gathering was of a public and “official” character, and the Governor-General, as the King’s representative, carried out “official” and public duties - the presentation of decorations - amid religious ceremonies of an exclusively Protestant character, to which the RSSIL admit that our Catholic authorities were not invited... The important thing for the moment is the league’s warrant for making the Anzac Day commemoration officially Protestant in tone and form, although Australia, as a nation, recognises no particular religion.⁴⁵

This spurt of letters prompted the Dean of Sydney, the organiser of the combined service, to address the issue officially. Clarifying that the State involvement, the giving of medals, did not take place within but after the religious ceremony, the Dean concluded by expressing his deep regret that “the Roman Catholic Church could not join with us”, but reasoning that “surely no one will argue that because of that a combined service ought not to be held, and that at such a service the Governor-General cannot be officially present.”⁴⁶

The argument started and maintained over many issues in the letters to the editor flowed over into editorials. The *Freeman’s Journal*, under the editorship of Conant, published an article on the same day as Dean Talbot’s response, lambasting the government and the RSSILA for letting sectarianism influence national Australian celebrations.⁴⁷ In its typical passionate style, the newspaper accused the government of “shirking its duty” by handing the day over to the RSSILA to “do what they liked with, and as a result a national and patriotic movement was deformed into a brutal insult to the Catholics who died or fought, in the war”. They pointed out that it was not just that the service included “the ‘official’ presentation by the Governor-General of decorations won in the war”, but that the RSSILA *knew* from previous occasions that Catholics could not attend a Protestant service, and yet went ahead with their

⁴⁴ “The Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald”

⁴⁵ “The Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 May 1919, 8.

⁴⁶ “The Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1919, 7.

⁴⁷ “Anzac Day in Anti-Catholic Hands,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 29 May 1919, 20.

plan. Like Conant, the *Freeman's Journal* was concerned with the mixing of state ceremonies with a Protestant service.⁴⁸

It is clear from the letters to the editor that the issue for Catholics was not that a united Protestant service, from which Catholics would necessarily be excluded, was held to honour Anzac Day; after all there had been no fuss raised all throughout the war or on previous Anzac Days at the practice of united Protestant services. What was at issue was whether the official giving of medals took place within a Protestant service, thus excluding Catholics from attending a public event, because of their well-known theological objections to participating in mixed denominational services. The justice of the Catholics' claim of discrimination rested on whether or not the united service was an 'official' or state ceremony; ultimately the question was whether the giving of medals was a part of that ceremony or a separate event.

Despite Dean Talbot's denial of the giving of medals forming part of the Protestant service,⁴⁹ Catholics could be forgiven for assuming that they formed one and the same event. The impression given by how the RSSILA spoke of the day, and the newspaper reports, which made no distinction between the two activities, but labelled them both simply as "the official programme", all seemed to indicate that in the mind of the RSSILA, the united Protestant service formed part of the official event, which also included the giving of medals.⁵⁰ Similarly, the fact that the Anglican Dean of Sydney was asked to organise the event by the RSSILA seemingly invested the event with an official air, if not status. Thus, Catholics felt justified in making their complaint that the combined service and giving of medals was insulting and discriminating to Catholics, as the organisers knew and acknowledged that it was an event that Catholics could not in good faith attend. In the eyes of most Protestants, however, the assertion of discrimination against the Catholics rang hollow as they saw it as a self-inflicted exile.⁵¹ As one Anglican cleric put it, commenting on the sectarian disagreements that erupted in Sydney over this issue, it "was an unfortunate turn, for Rome itself caused non-

⁴⁸ The article did not just stop at calling out the government and the RSSILA, but also called out the Catholic Mayor of Sydney, for his silence on the issue. While it illustrates that the *Freeman's Journal* was not partisan in its condemnation of those involved, it does not necessarily illustrate that some Catholics were content to go to a Protestant service. Catholic state officials were given special leave to attend Protestant services if required by their office, although the practice was discouraged. The Mayor's silence on the issue, however, may suggest that he did not consider it significant slight on the Catholic community.

⁴⁹ "The Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1919, 7.

⁵⁰ See for example: "Anzac Day," *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 May 1919, 9; "The Town Hall Service, To the Editor of the Herald," *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 May 1919, 8.

⁵¹ Not only did they see no cause for complaint from Catholics as it was their own church's law that prohibited them from joining in, but they also were both regretful and sometimes irked by the Catholics' continual stance of exclusiveness. See "The Town Hall Service", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1919, 7; and McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 64-5.

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participation”.⁵² Many also pointed to the experience of the troops overseas, and their lack of sectarianism, concluding that a memorial service for those who fought should be in the manner of the men themselves, in this case, non-sectarian. This was a somewhat misleading claim as it overlooked the fact that even while chaplains would minister to anybody regardless of creed when in the thick of fighting or burying, while Protestant ministers frequently ran combined services, and even sometimes were required to by the military authorities, Catholics always maintained, and were officially allowed to maintain, separate services.⁵³ In short, the precedent of ecumenism displayed by the troops that they appealed to was inapt as it never amounted to united religious services between Catholics and Protestants.⁵⁴ That is not to say that Catholics did not desire to continue the fellowship between Catholics and Protestants formed in the trenches, on the contrary, they often lamented the division in post-war society.⁵⁵ They were adamant, however, that in order to perpetuate the unity of Catholic and Protestant veterans, any public memorial services should be strictly non-religious. In trying to avoid sectarian problems, then, Catholics were key agitators for Anzac Day services to be secular, with no religious elements. This was not to claim that religion was unimportant in the remembrance of the fallen, the idea was always to have a separate religious ceremony that would commemorate the dead in the manner fitting to each denomination.

It is worth highlighting Talbot’s point that the combined service had been a feature of the previous Anzac Days, from 1916 on. Given that this was so, it would seem unreasonable for Catholics to make a point of this particular celebration. Apart from the question of the giving of medals, the atmosphere of the years after the referendum, with Catholics’ heightened sense of being discriminated against and having their loyalty questioned, coloured their perception and influenced their reaction to any perceived slights. The exchange of letters and the protests of discrimination did not lead to anything other than a sense of ill-usage on one side, and exasperation on the other, but it would remain in Catholics’ memory and become one of a number of reasons for the establishment of a Catholic veterans’ organisation.

⁵² Moses & Davis, *Anzac Day Origins*, 285.

⁵³ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 137-9.

⁵⁴ It is interesting to note how entrenched the separatism of the Catholic Church was in the Australian army. For example, the official army ceremony for the Consecration, Blessing and Dedication of Colours, lists the same prayers to be said by the Church of England chaplain and ‘other Protestants’, while the Roman Catholic chaplain has a different set of prayers. SAA, *Chaplains Course. Australian Military Forces. Ceremony and Form of Service for the Consecration, Blessing and Dedication of Colours*. File A0555.

⁵⁵ See for example, Fr Clune and Fr Goodman’s addresses printed in “Catholic Diggers at the Town Hall,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 June 1922, 22.

THE CATHOLIC RETURNED SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' ASSOCIATION

A year after the furore over the united Anzac Day service of 1919, Catholics decided that the time was right for the formation of a specifically Catholic veterans' organisation. The immediate catalyst for this was not, in the end, a matter that specifically related to veteran affairs; it was provoked, rather, by the opinions and actions of various members of the RSSILA executive on the topic of the deportation of a Sydney Catholic parish priest of German extraction.

The case of Father Jerger: traitor or casualty of sectarianism?

The case of Father Jerger, and the question of his deportation for disloyalty, if judged solely on the statements made that were reported as being 'disloyal', would be a fairly uninteresting case that might have warranted an article and a few letters to the editor and then been promptly forgotten. In the "loyalist hysteria" of the war years, however, Father Jerger was a textbook case of suspicion for disloyalty.⁵⁶ He was a German by birth (although he believed himself to be a naturalised British subject),⁵⁷ was connected to Archbishop Mannix and the Irish community through the Catholic Church, and was an anti-conscriptionist. The first allegation made against Father Jerger, and the key evidence for the case,⁵⁸ was made by a parishioner in relation to a single sermon that Father Jerger delivered on the topic of conscription. According to Father Jerger, his statement was:

Now as far as Australia is concerned. Under the voluntary system she has given roughly 300,000 men - roughly 3 out of 50 whilst England has given 3 out of 84... Hence many people think that Australia has done her share. But whatever you do, vote on this matter conscientiously, as good citizens.⁵⁹

Although the matter was taken up by Alderman Ness, the mayor of Marrickville and chairman of the local recruiting committee,⁶⁰ and a file on the priest was sent to the Defence

⁵⁶ Gerard Henderson, "The Deportation of Charles Jerger," *Labour History* 31 (November 1976): 61.

⁵⁷ Based on a legal technicality this later proved to be a mistaken belief, and it was only for this reason, that he was an alien and a citizen of the German Empire, that deportation could even be considered.

⁵⁸ See Henderson's detailed analysis of the case, where he shows that the subsequent allegations brought against Fr Jerger were ultimately unsubstantial or even false and later retracted.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to delve into all the fine details of the case, it is only analysed here in the context of the reactions to the case that brought about the establishment of the CRSSA. For a comprehensive overview see Henderson, "The Deportation of Charles Jerger," 61-78.

⁵⁹ Jerger to Mahon, 11 Oct 1916. *Mahon Papers*, National Library of Australia, MS 973 Series 5 451. Quoted in Henderson, "The Deportation of Charles Jerger," 61.

⁶⁰ Marrickville was the parish to which Father Jerger was attached.

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Department,⁶¹ nothing further was done until the issue was stirred up again during the second conscription campaign. Following further allegations, this time that Father Jerger was actively discouraging enlistment,⁶² and after significant agitation on the part of Ness, Father Jerger was finally interned in February of 1918. Perhaps if Ness had not been involved it would have been harder for the issue to have become a source of sectarianism; it was certainly the consensus at the time, and remains so, that Ness' involvement in the affair forced the Department of Defence to act.⁶³ It is also difficult to see how sectarianism did not influence Ness' unrelenting drive to see Father Jerger interned given his statements about the Church shortly after the internment, reported in *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

he [Ness] felt he was forced to come into conflict with the Roman Catholic Church. In a country like this there should be no sign of disloyalty, but as one who was jealous of Empire and country he found he was forced to throw tolerance to the wind, take off the gloves and fight the Roman Catholic Church in order to defeat its aims and objects. The Roman Catholic Church, he had proved beyond doubt, was disloyal to the backbone.⁶⁴

Given this, and Ness' constant efforts in his role as president of the Protestant Federation and member of the League of Loyalty to "fight the Roman Catholic Church",⁶⁵ it is hardly surprising that the issue of Father Jerger's internment became another cause of sectarian heat. After his internment in 1918, Father Jerger's case did not again attract significant public attention until 1920, when the question of his deportation was brought forward, and with it the renewal of the sectarian bitterness that had characterised his internment.

The official hearings and debates on the topic of Father Jerger's deportation provoked large scale demonstrations both for and against the deportation. It was here that the RSSILA was involved in a way that became the final straw for Catholics to begin their own veterans' association. In May of 1920, Sir Charles Rosenthal, president of the Metropolitan District Branch of the RSSILA,⁶⁶ wrote to *The Daily Telegraph* to encourage readers to attend a meeting to "support the Federal Government in its decision relating to Father Jerger"; the meeting

⁶¹ *Argus* 23 July 1920, in Henderson, "The Deportation of Charles Jerger," 76.

⁶² *Argus* 11 February 1918, in Henderson, "The Deportation of Charles Jerger," 65.

⁶³ Both supporters and opponents of Ness at the time acknowledged his role in the affair, see *Caulfield News* 19 Aug 1918, and *Freeman's Journal* 21 February 1918. See also Mark Lyons "Ness, John Thomas", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric*, 186; Henderson, "The Deportation of Father Jerger," 65.

⁶⁴ "Australian League of Loyalty," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1918, 8.

⁶⁵ Lyons, "Ness, John Thomas," *ADB*.

⁶⁶ "Returned Men Roman Catholics Break Away," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 November 1920, 8.

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was officially arranged by the RSSILA.⁶⁷ Rosenthal wrote a few weeks later to *The Daily Telegraph*, again on the topic of Father Jerger's deportation. In this letter he addressed the issue of sectarianism more specifically, claiming that "sectarianism no one wishes to see introduced into our national life, but the time has come when the nettle must be grasped".⁶⁸ Continuing on, Rosenthal claimed:

If the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church...choose to ally themselves with the doctrines of disloyalty...indeed to actively and openly support them, then they must not be surprised if a large and tolerant majority of the community at last rouses itself from its lethargy and becomes...a dominant factor in our national life.⁶⁹

Given the RSSILA's siding with the Hughes' government's decision to deport Father Jerger, and the statements of various members of the executive about the disloyalty of the Catholic Church, it is understandable that many Catholics took this as "the last straw with Catholic returned soldiers, who had already felt injured at the slanderous attacks made on their good name", particularly as the RSSILA made no official comment or effort to distance itself from the anti-Catholic statements made by members of its executive.⁷⁰ It is not surprising, then, that in October of 1920, the *Freeman's Journal* announced the successful launch of the "Catholic Returned Soldiers Association of New South Wales", later named the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association of N.S.W.⁷¹ Nor is it surprising that the same Sir Charles Rosenthal, after accusing the leaders of the Church of being disloyal, should deplore the "action of the Roman Catholic members [of the RSSILA] to break away...and form an organisation of their own...contrary to the constitutional points of the league which aimed at being non-sectarian."⁷²

In some ways it was almost inevitable that the Catholics would form their own veterans' organisation. In the post-war years the sharpened sectarian divides of the war had not only not died, but were continually being poked by the sometimes rash and always provocative words of Catholics such as Mannix, and Protestants such as those involved in the Protestant Federation, League of Loyalty and the Orange Lodge. To imagine that in that atmosphere the RSSILA could maintain a non-sectarianism acceptable to Catholics and yet also acceptable to the rigorous standards of 'loyalty' demanded by many Protestants, and indeed Prime Minister Hughes, was something of a fairy tale. In short, the RSSILA's attitudes towards the war, and

⁶⁷ "Supporting the Federal Government," *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 May 1920, 12.

⁶⁸ "Father Jerger's Case," *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1920, 5.

⁶⁹ "Father Jerger's Case," *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1920, 5.

⁷⁰ Fred Cahill Letter to the Editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1922, 10.

⁷¹ "Catholic Returned Soldiers' Association," *Freeman's Journal*, 28 October 1920, 19.

⁷² "Returned Men Roman Catholics Break Away," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 November 1920, 8.

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the values it upheld, made it “impossible for the organisation to be politically neutral”, particularly as they sought “to have ‘disloyalists’ dismissed from the public service”,⁷³ which in turn alienated many Catholics who tended to be on the receiving end of the charges of disloyalty.

The foundation and purpose of the CRSSA

Launched under the auspices of the Catholic Club, and with clerical approval, the Catholic Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Association of New South Wales held its first “reunion of Catholic soldiers”, with an address on the aims and objects of the newly formed association, on the Sunday closest to Armistice Day 1920.⁷⁴ At the Requiem Mass celebrated on that day to honour fallen soldiers, Monsignor King, a chaplain during the war, gave a sermon in which he gave the context for the establishment of the organisation. He pointed out that Catholics’ religion was being “assailed and they were being held up to ridicule and told that they were disloyal”.⁷⁵ “[A]s an Australian”, he declared, he would not permit this insult, and nor would other Catholic veterans.⁷⁶ Monsignor King then briefly addressed the idea of a Catholic veterans’ body; it was not “in antagonism to any existing organisation”, he insisted, or “to galvanise militarism”, or indeed a “subtle move in any direction”. They only wished “from time to time to bear in memory those who had fought and died for an ideal” and to stand together “for strength in the practices of their religion”.⁷⁷ After the Requiem Mass the soldiers “crowded” the hall next door to hear the official aims and objects of the association. Here again, the reason given for why the association started was “on account of the attitude of the press in regard to their propaganda of the alleged disloyalty of the Catholics generally”⁷⁸ and mention was also made of the “drift of the Imperial League towards sectarianism”.⁷⁹

⁷³ David Hood, *Conservatism and change: the RSL and Australian society, 1916-1932*, PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1994, 186-8.

⁷⁴ “Catholic Returned Soldiers’ Association,” *Freeman’s Journal* 28 October 1920, 19; “Returned Soldiers Catholic Association”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1920, 8; “Catholic Returned Soldiers Armistice Day Celebrations”, *The Catholic Press* 8 November 1928, 23.

⁷⁵ “Roman Catholic Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1920, 10.

⁷⁶ “Roman Catholic Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1920, 10.

⁷⁷ “Roman Catholic Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1920, 10. Also “Catholic Returned Soldiers’ Demonstration,” *Freeman’s Journal* 11 November 1920, 19.

⁷⁸ Gallagher’s speech, recorded in the *Freeman’s Journal* 11 November 1920, 19. Interestingly, in the *Sydney Morning Herald’s* account of Gallagher’s speech, although they report his saying there was a “campaign of calumny against Catholics”, it seemed to imply he was speaking here of the RSSILA, while no mention was made of the role of the press in this ‘campaign’. The *Freeman’s Journal* article, however, makes specific mention of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in relation to the anti-Catholic bias in the press.

⁷⁹ “Roman Catholic Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1920, 10.

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It is worth quoting at length here the aims and objects of the association as they appeared in the newspaper accounts of the day, and as sent later to Archbishop Kelly for his approval:

Aims and Objects.

- a) To perpetuate the ties of comradeship created by a mutual service in the Great War.
- b) To preserve the memory of fallen Catholic soldiers and establish in their honour an annual Commemoration Day, on which a Solemn Requiem Mass is to be celebrated in every Diocese in N.S.W.
- c) To inculcate loyalty to Australia, and to cultivate a national sentiment.
- d) To guard the honor [sic] and good name of the Catholic Church, and to induce members to take an active interest in all that concerns the Church in general, and their own parish in particular.
- e) To inculcate a spirit of mutual assistance among members.
- f) To co-operate with anybodies [sic] having for their objects, the promotion of the interests, and advancements of Returned Soldiers, upon such terms and conditions as may be mutually agreed upon.
- h) [sic] To establish Diocesan branches throughout N.S.W.⁸⁰

While a number of these aims mirrored the aims of the RSSILA, some, as would be expected of a Catholic organisation, related specifically to Catholic concerns and the support of the Church. In some respects these seem hardly fitting in a veterans' organisation as they were not concerned with veterans as veterans, but rather the needs of the Church generally. This, however, was not the case in the eyes of the founders of the association. It was precisely because they were veterans that they saw the defence of the Church as being fitting as they conceived that "an organisation of Catholic returned soldiers would constitute a most effective force for defending the Church."⁸¹ In the context of the association forming in the midst of the fuss over the deportation of Father Jerger and the RSSILA's involvement, this was a key object of the CRSSA.

While both the CRSSA and the RSSILA had as a primary aim the preservation of the memory of those who "suffered and died for the nation",⁸² and the establishment of an annual commemoration day, the CRSSA was very clear about the manner in which this commemoration would be executed. With the 'insulting' and 'discriminatory' united Anzac Day services organised under the auspices of the RSSILA still fresh in mind, the CRSSA stated

⁸⁰ SAA, *Rules and By-Laws of the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association of N.S.W.* File A0567.

⁸¹ "Catholic Returned Soldiers' Association," *Freeman's Journal*, 11 November 1920, 19.

⁸² Aims of the RSSILA, quoted in McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 212.

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emphatically that the commemoration of the dead would take the form of an annual Requiem Mass offered in each parish. This pointed not only to the disturbance over the 1919 Anzac Day service, but also to a theological difference between Catholics and most Protestants that had further complicated efforts at holding non-sectarian commemorations, namely the notion of praying for the dead.⁸³ For most Protestant denominations praying for the dead was, if not sacrilegious, at the very least useless, while for Catholics the idea of remembering the dead but omitting to pray for their souls would have been shocking and dismissive of the theology of salvation which included as central praying for the souls in Purgatory. Thus the CRSSA declared that Catholic soldiers would be commemorated in a Catholic manner with a Mass said for the repose of their souls.

The aim to perpetuate the comradeship formed in war and the assistance of veterans and their families was common to the RSSILA and the CRSSA and was carried out in much the same manner through the organisation of social events for veterans. The RSSILA was especially successful in that aim, helping veterans sustain friendships as they navigated returning to civilian life.⁸⁴ The CRSSA also made that aim a primary one; within the constitution of the CRSSA, it insisted that after the “business” of each CRSSA meeting was completed the focus should be on getting “card games going, music refreshments etc”, and that these meetings should be held at least monthly.⁸⁵ As shall be discussed later, these social gatherings later had a dual purpose of socialisation and fundraising for the memorial fund.

A striking note of difference, perhaps the greatest difference between the two associations, was the aim of each that dealt with loyalty. The RSSILA had as a central object that it would “inculcate loyalty to Australia *and the Empire*”⁸⁶ while the CRSSA beginning with the exact same words, declared its intention to “inculcate loyalty to Australia” leaving out “the Empire” and adding “and to cultivate a *national sentiment*”.⁸⁷ This theme was heavily emphasised in the speeches at the inauguration of the association. The chairman, after declaring that the association intended to foster Australian sentiment which, he said “badly needed fostering”, went on to clarify the CRSSA’s opinion on national sentiment and the

⁸³ Canon Garland, when planning the Anzac Day service that became the norm in Queensland, was acutely aware of this difference and the difficulties in forming a service that would walk the line of theological convergence; thus he instituted the idea of the two minutes silence, to allow everyone to pray - or not - in whatever form or content they chose. Catholics were still prohibited from attending this service, as it retained elements of a religious service, and they could not worship with Protestants, however it illustrates Garland’s awareness of the extent of theological differences that made forming a service acceptable to all very difficult. Moses and Davis, *Anzac Day Origins*, 169.

⁸⁴ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 212.

⁸⁵ SAA, *Rules and By-Laws of the CRSSA*.

⁸⁶ Aims of the RSSILA, quoted in McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 212. Emphasis added.

⁸⁷ SAA, *Rules and By-Laws of the CRSSA*. Emphasis added.

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empire. Declaring that “none of them wished to be accused of disloyalty to the British Empire, under which they enjoyed their free institutions”, he insisted that it would “be a healthy thing in the community if a wild outcry occurred whenever the Australian Anthem was not sung or the Australian flag not hoisted”.⁸⁸ He concluded “we are Australians first, and if we do not love our country we are no use to the Empire.”⁸⁹ This theme was reiterated in subsequent speeches on the day, with one speaker declaring that they “wanted to put Australia first because it was best of all”, and opining that the RSSILA “did not represent the true Australian spirit.”⁹⁰ *The Catholic Press* went even further in its opinion piece on the need for the CRSSA, declaring that anyone who did not put Australia first “in his thoughts and deeds, as well as in his utterances, is a traitor to 300,000 of his comrades.”⁹¹

The founders and executive of the CRSSA were quick to stress that although the association was formed directly as a result of the inadequacy of the RSSILA to support and cater for Catholic veterans, they did not discourage members from retaining RSSILA membership. Perhaps to reinforce this idea, in the early years of the association the executive of the CRSSA also held positions in the RSSILA, as in the case of the President of the CRSSA who was head of an RSSILA sub-branch.⁹² The organisation itself aimed to work with the RSSILA and other veteran groups for “the promotion of the interests, and advancements of Returned Soldiers,” under mutually agreed upon terms and conditions.⁹³ In this way, the CRSSA did not take upon itself to work by itself towards political gains for veterans, but supported the RSSILA in their work in that area. Working with other organisations, however, did not always prove successful as they were sometimes thwarted by the argument that, by their very existence, they encouraged sectarianism. Such a case came about through their participation in a round table conference aimed at forming a united federation of all veteran organisations to be an effective voice for veteran concerns.⁹⁴ Representatives of the CRSSA were in attendance, and as a result the president of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers’ Mothers, Wives and Widows Association refused to be associated with the federation. She claimed that the presence of a member of the CRSSA violated her organisation’s constitution which was strictly non-sectarian.⁹⁵ It was the constant irony of the Australian Catholics’ position that in

⁸⁸ “Roman Catholic Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1920, 10.

⁸⁹ “Roman Catholic Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1920, 10.

⁹⁰ “Catholic Returned Soldiers’ Association,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 November 1920, 19.

⁹¹ “Catholic Returned Soldiers,” *The Catholic Press*, 11 November 1920, 24.

⁹² “Catholic Diggers,” *The Catholic Press*, 22 June 1922, 15.

⁹³ SAA, *Rules and By-Laws of the CRSSA*.

⁹⁴ “Soldiers’ Conference,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 1922, 4.

⁹⁵ “Soldiers’ Federation,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 1922, 5. See also “Federation of Soldiers,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 1922, 17.

banding together to fight sectarianism they only increased the sectarian strife. Throughout the years of the CRSSA's activity, the executive and members showed an awareness of this tension, wanting to work towards a unified and non-sectarian society, but at the same time perpetuating sectarianism by existing as a specifically Catholic group. Thus at the majority of meetings, while many of the speeches focused on the attacks on Catholics, at the same time there was a speech that expressed the hope that if the association achieved its goals then the need for the association would disappear and the veterans could once again form one body, undivided by sectarian issues.⁹⁶

While attempting to work with other veteran groups on general veteran issues, the main focus of the CRSSA was on those aspects that made their wholehearted participation in the RSSILA impossible: a form of remembrance that was suitable for Catholics, justice for Catholics in the public sphere, and the promotion and cultivation of a specifically Australian loyalty.

Catholic Remembrance

As previously discussed, the CRSSA resolved to institute an annual Requiem Mass to commemorate Catholic soldiers who died during the war. It was celebrated every Anzac Day in St Mary's Cathedral,⁹⁷ usually by a veteran chaplain and from the newspaper reports of the occasion it was always well attended by members of the CRSSA and family members of veterans.⁹⁸ Apart from this annual remembrance, the CRSSA turned its attention to an enduring form of remembrance with their proposal to erect a war memorial in the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral.⁹⁹ This intention to erect a memorial, first discussed in June of 1920 — before the CRSSA was officially formed — became the pet project of the CRSSA and was announced by Monsignor King in his sermon at the memorial Mass organised by the CRSSA in November of 1921.¹⁰⁰ Monsignor King acknowledged the efforts made across Australia to commemorate the dead through memorials, but went on to say that “as Catholics, [they] did not consider these as sufficient outlet for their esteem and veneration for those who have made the supreme

⁹⁶ See for example Fred Cahill's letter to the editor “Catholic Diggers,” *The Catholic Press* 22 June 1922, 15; Father Clune's address “Catholic Diggers,” *Freeman's Journal* 22 June 1922, 22; “Catholic Returned Soldiers,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 June 1922, 14.

⁹⁷ Some years the CRSSA also organised a Requiem Mass in memorial of those who had died within the octave of All Souls' Day. See for example “Catholic Returned Soldiers and Sailors' Association,” *The Catholic Press*, 27 October 1921, 32 and “The Crypt in St. Mary's Cathedral,” *The Catholic Press*, 17 November 1921, 21.

⁹⁸ See for example “Catholic R, S & S Association,” *Freeman's Journal*, 28 April 1921, 22.

⁹⁹ The CRSSA established a committee, the Catholic Returned Soldiers and Sailors' Memorial Fund Committee.

¹⁰⁰ “Memorial to the Heroic Dead,” *Freeman's Journal*, 10 November 1921, 27; also “Memorial to the Heroic Dead,” *Catholic Press* 10 November 1921, 23.

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sacrifice” and that they therefore desired “to have a special memorial placed within the sanctified walls of the Mother Church of Australia”.¹⁰¹ Just as the CRSSA was intended to be a state wide association, so the memorial was to commemorate all the fallen from New South Wales, not just those from Sydney.¹⁰² The notion was enthusiastically taken up by the association, and a string of fundraising events followed, including lectures,¹⁰³ dances, euchre parties¹⁰⁴ and concerts;¹⁰⁵ these events were not only functions to raise money but also to fulfil one of the primary aims of the association, the continuance of the “ties of comradeship” forged in the war.¹⁰⁶ The original proposal was for a portion of the crypt in the Cathedral to be set aside as a memorial,¹⁰⁷ “to symbolise in stone and perpetuate in Masses admiration and gratitude...for those Catholics who were among ‘the bravest men God ever made’”.¹⁰⁸ Suggestions were also made that the memorial take the form of providing vestments and sacred vessels for the celebration of Requiem Masses, in that way it would be both sacred and something to be used so that the memorial was constantly before their eyes.¹⁰⁹ The CRSSA’s plans and activities for the memorial were not undertaken in a hurried manner, as the crypt, the chosen space for the memorial, was as yet unfinished.¹¹⁰ Further, fundraising in the interwar years was a slow affair, in 1922 the CRSSA wrote to Archbishop Kelly to ask for his sanction of a widening of the fundraising appeal to beyond the Sydney metropolitan area.¹¹¹ However, the association noted the following year that “owing to the fact that so much unemployment prevailed” the raising of subscriptions had not as yet been vigorously pursued.¹¹² Obviously funds continued to come at a subdued pace, as it was not until 1931, 10 years after the campaign for a memorial was first launched, that the memorial was officially installed into the crypt of the Cathedral.¹¹³

After much discussion about what form the memorial should take, in the end the association decided on a bronze sculpture of a fallen soldier, and George Lambert, who had

¹⁰¹ “Memorial to the Heroic Dead,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 November 1921, 27.

¹⁰² SAA, *Letter from F. Cahill to Archbishop Kelly 27th March 1922*, File A0567.

¹⁰³ “Catholic Returned Soldiers’ Association Preparing for Anzac Day,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 March 1924, 26.

¹⁰⁴ “Catholic Returned Soldiers and Sailors’ Association,” *The Catholic Press*, 1 September 1921, 30.

¹⁰⁵ SAA, *Souvenir Programme of Complimentary Concert and Speech Night 18 October 1921*, File A0567.

¹⁰⁶ SAA, *Rules and By-Laws of the CRSSA*, 3a.

¹⁰⁷ “The Flag Soldiers’ Memorial,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October 1921, 14.

¹⁰⁸ “The Crypt in St Mary’s Cathedral,” *The Catholic Press*, 17 November 1921, 21.

¹⁰⁹ “Catholic Returned Soldiers. General Meeting,” *The Catholic Press*, 3 May 1923, 39.

¹¹⁰ “Catholic Returned Soldiers and Sailors’ Association of NSW,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 May 1923, 8. The Cathedral was not finished until 1928, and the Crypt was still being finished in the 1930s.

¹¹¹ SAA, *Letter from F. Cahill to Archbishop Kelly 27th March 1922*, File A0567.

¹¹² “Catholic Returned Soldiers. General Meeting,” *The Catholic Press*, 3 May 1923, 39.

¹¹³ “Bronze Figure of Dead Australian Memorial to be Placed in St. Mary’s Basilica,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 April 1931, 19.

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been an official war artist, was chosen to create it.¹¹⁴ Described as a combination of an accurate depiction of a soldier and a saint,¹¹⁵ the sculpture is reminiscent of the many pietà statues found in Catholic churches throughout the world,¹¹⁶ but represents a “striking exception” to the norm of soldier sculptures in Australia, which were predominately depicted in a standing position.¹¹⁷ This change from the usual form found in similar sculptures of soldiers in civic memorials points to the purpose of this memorial as a specifically Catholic memorial that would serve not only to remind those who saw it of the fallen, but also to assist in prayer and the Mass, in the same way as other religious works of art.¹¹⁸ The sculpture was originally placed in the crypt, as planned, but it was moved to the main body of the cathedral in later years for greater visibility, as in its original spot it was only seen by those who made their way down to the crypt.¹¹⁹ Thus, the CRSSA fulfilled its aim of providing a specifically Catholic form of remembrance both through the annual Anzac Day Requiem Masses and through the erection of the memorial in the Cathedral.

Other works of the CRSSA

Apart from the specifically veteran related aims of the association, the CRSSA also carried out the work of any good Australian Catholic organisation: participation in parish life and the defence of Catholics against the charges of disloyalty. To this end the CRSSA was involved in any of the large-scale Archdiocesan events: marching in the St Patrick’s Day processions, present at significant Masses held in the Cathedral, and involved in the crowning glory of Australian Catholics, the Eucharistic Congress of 1928, to be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. The idea behind their participation in all these events was to be a visible refutation of the charge of disloyalty. Catholics, disloyal? Look at these men marching in Catholic processions, men who answered the nation’s call, who are exemplars of loyalty. As Archbishop Kelly noted, “no more fitting answer can be given to those who impugn the loyalty of Catholics than by a solid representation of Catholic men who heard the call and took their

¹¹⁴ AWM, *A stone monument by George Lambert in St Mary's Cathedral called The Memorial*. (Donor Reveille, Sydney). H15651. NB: The War Memorial wrongly describes it as a stone monument, it is in fact cast in bronze. See also Martin Terry, “Lambert, George Washington (1873–1930)”, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, published first in hardcopy 1983, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lambert-george-washington-7014/text12197>.

¹¹⁵ Graeme Sturgeon, *The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788-1975*, 94. Quoted in Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 169.

¹¹⁶ Michelangelo’s Pietà is the most famous example.

¹¹⁷ Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 169-70.

¹¹⁸ That it was their intention that the memorial should assist in the celebration of Mass is clear from various speeches made during the fundraising campaign. For example, see “Catholic Returned Soldiers. General Meeting,” *The Catholic Press*, 3 May 1923, 39.

¹¹⁹ Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 170.

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place with other Australians”.¹²⁰ Another way in which the association endeavoured to show the loyalty of Australian Catholics and to work towards unity between Protestants and Catholics was through the cultivation of a national sentiment. With religious groups largely being split along ethnic lines, they recognised the need to cultivate a sense of Australian nationalism that would transcend ethnic and religious differences and give a common goal to unite them, as the war had done for Catholic and Protestant soldiers. Accordingly, the CRSSA used every opportunity to call for Australia to be guided by the principle of ‘Australia first’. They discussed the need for the fostering of Australian sentiment at every meeting, and they also encouraged the singing of the Australian anthem¹²¹ and the flying of the Australian flag at every official event. This desire and aim of the association, to cultivate national sentiment and thereby unite Australians of all denominations, is succinctly summed up in the second verse of ‘Advance Australia Fair’, which they considered to be the Australian anthem,¹²² the version that the CRSSA sang at important events:

Beneath our radiant Southern Cross,
In knighthood's bond we stand,
To help the weak, to right the wrong,
That truth may rule the land.
For conscience' sake and Freedom's cause,
That all may justice share,
This is our aim when we acclaim
Advance, Australia Fair!
This is our aim when we acclaim
Advance, Australia Fair!¹²³

¹²⁰ “Catholic Returned Sailors and Soldiers,” *The Catholic Press*, 19 July 1928, 23.

¹²¹ It is interesting that they called for the “Australian anthem” to be sung, as ‘Advance Australia Fair’ was not Australia’s national anthem until much later. Nor were the words to the ‘anthem’ that they suggested the same as our current national anthem. At the time ‘Advance Australia Fair’ was little more than a patriotic song, that Catholics were calling it the ‘anthem’ illustrates how seriously they took the movement towards a less Imperial Australianness.

¹²² The first verse of this ‘anthem’ was decidedly Christian in character:

“Australian's sons! Let us rejoice,
For we are strong and free;
Defenders of our glorious faith,
We guard its liberty.
Our standard high, across the sky,
In beauty shining there,
Points out the way, wherein we may
Advance, Australia Fair!”

¹²³ SAA, *Souvenir of the First Annual Communion of the Catholic Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Association of NSW, 11 November 1928*. File A0567.

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Therein lay the aims of the CRSSA, to defend the Church against the attacks of disloyalty by encouraging a sense of Australianness that transcended the division between British Protestants and Irish Catholics, so that first and foremost they were Australian.

Conclusion

In the later years of the war and after, it became obvious that the Church's hope that their participation in the war would bring about their greater acceptance in the Protestant dominated society was not only unfulfilled but even that the situation worsened. In Sydney, this realisation that the unity forged in the trenches had not been transplanted back into Australian society was given concrete form in the official observance of Anzac Day and the discussions that this engendered. It was these disagreements over the form the ceremony should take, and the inclusion of religious elements, which if run by Protestants would automatically prohibit Catholics from attending, that sparked the idea of a specifically Catholic veterans' group. While initially joining the RSSILA, Catholic veterans ultimately found, despite the RSSILA's intention of being a 'non-sectarian' association, that in the 'loyalist hysteria' of the post-war years this was nearly impossible and that consequently the atmosphere was hostile to Catholics. Thus it was that Catholic veterans, with the support of the Catholic chaplains who had served with them, formed their own veterans association, which aimed, somewhat ironically, to promote unity between Protestants and Catholics. This they hoped to achieve partly through the cultivation of a national sentiment.

The discussions about the proper way to observe Anzac Day and the beginning of a specifically Catholic veterans' society illustrate the difficulty that Australians faced in creating or observing national holidays, as the divide between their different conceptions of what it meant to be Australian was too vast for most Catholics or Protestants to be able to come to a consensus. The CRSSA is a clear example of the Catholic tendency in those years to separation for both theological and cultural reasons. At the same time, however, the CRSSA also exemplifies the desire that existed among Catholics for a transcending of religious and ethnic differences through a sense of Australian identity that was not tied to either. This dovetailed with a broader move among Sydney Catholics, as shall be argued later in this thesis, towards a lesser emphasis on Ireland and all things Irish. This chapter has argued that despite clear desires for greater unity between Protestants and Catholics, the increased sectarianism after the war resulted in the formation of a specifically Catholic veterans organisation to meet the needs of Catholic veterans. Their main needs, as evidenced by the objects of the association, were fellowship, remembrance of the fallen, and the promotion of a sense of Australianness that they

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had experienced in the trenches. It is interesting to note that while the association aimed to assist other veteran organisations with political lobbying and such matters, it had no explicit aim to assist with the physical rehabilitation of veterans or the support of the war widows and their children. What does this, the Church's actions in regard to Anzac Day and the formation of the CRSSA, demonstrate of the relevance of the Church to society? It illustrates that the Church's first priority was its own flock, that if they were concerned with being 'relevant' it was only to Catholics. On the one hand, this perpetuated the fairly insular nature of Sydney Catholics but on the other the aim was to make a more just society so that Catholics could freely and fully participate in it. The next chapter investigates the work of the Church in the post-war era in those matters that were not specifically related to veterans, but were issues stemming from the war nonetheless.

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AFTER THE WAR: THE CHURCH AND AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Never indeed was there a time when we should “stretch the bounds of charity” more than in these days ... never perhaps as today has humanity so needed that universal beneficence which springs from the love of others, and is full of sacrifice and zeal. For if we look around where the fury of the war has been let loose we see... multitudes reduced to want of food, clothing and shelter; innumerable widows and orphans...¹

The work of the Church in the interwar years was not only concerned with veterans’ affairs, but also focused on engaging with and responding to the broader social changes that were in some way caused or precipitated by the war. At a whole Church level, in the wake of the death and destruction of World War I, Pope Benedict XV urged all Catholics “with all zeal and diligence” to “bring aid to the needy, comfort to the afflicted and protection to the weak, and to give opportune and appropriate assistance of every kind to all who have suffered from the war”.² In Europe, this need for charity was eminently visible, one had only to look to see that wherever “the fury of the war ha[d] been let loose” the result was “immense regions utterly desolate, uncultivated and abandoned; multitudes reduced to want of food, clothing and shelter”.³ In those regions it was to the Catholic Church, alongside other Christian churches, that the task fell of filling “the gap between what the state could or would provide” and what was required.⁴ In Europe, religious orders did much to care for the six million children “deprived of their fathers by the Great War,”⁵ and Catholic and Protestant lay groups assisted many families with their search for information about their missing or deceased loved ones.⁶ Thus, the churches in Europe, necessitated by the inability of the “central authorities” to deal with the enormous work left by the war, did all they could to “bring aid to the needy, comfort to the afflicted and...appropriate assistance of every kind to all”.⁷ The situation facing the Church in Australia was markedly different. But while the problems and changes in the post-war era in Australia, a continent largely geographically isolated from the theatres of war, were different from those faced by many European countries, the Church in Australia also worked to

¹ Benedict XV, *Pacem dei munus pulcherrimum*, 10.
http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xv_enc_23051920_pacem-dei-munus-pulcherrimum.html

² Benedict XV, *Pacem*, 13.

³ Benedict XV, *Pacem*, 10.

⁴ Jay Winter, *Sites of Mourning, Sites of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 48.

⁵ Winter, *Sites of Mourning*, 47.

⁶ Winter, *Sites of Mourning*, 30.

⁷ Benedict XV, *Pacem*, 13.

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“bring aid to the needy” and “appropriate assistance of every kind to all who have suffered from the war.”⁸

Having already discussed the Church’s relations with veterans and their affairs, this chapter will explore the Church’s activities in the post-war years more broadly, particularly its works in relation to those left impoverished, orphaned or isolated by the war, and its response to broader social changes occurring at that time and in part caused by the war. This chapter will look in particular at marriage and family in post-war Australian society, examining the changes and discussions about these that arose in society as a result of the war and the uncertainty about the future. Issues relating to marriage and family preoccupied many in the 1920s, with questions of the place of women in society, the acceptability or otherwise of birth control and divorce, and the propagation of the population, which was often entangled with eugenic movements. As this thesis is concerned with the Church specifically, this chapter’s examination of marriage and family in the post-war years will focus on those areas that the Church showed itself concerned with, through its proclamations from the pulpit and its engagement with broader society through the press. It will not, then, be a comprehensive discussion of women, marriage and family in 1920s Sydney, but rather an examination of the Church’s concerns and activities in relation to marriage and family in 1920s Sydney.

After the war, with its death, destruction and instability, population growth was a serious issue of concern. The stability of the country was, in many ways, dependent on the stability of families, and the desired continuation of the White Australia Policy was contingent on adequate population growth. At the same time there were many challenges to the nuclear family, with divorce and extra-nuptial births on the rise, as has been previously discussed in the introduction to this thesis. In looking at the Church’s response to these discussions and concerns, this chapter will focus in particular on the St Vincent de Paul Society and its work in establishing the St Anthony’s Home.

This chapter will also look more broadly at the charitable works of the Church in areas largely overlooked by the government, in its preoccupation with veteran affairs and in a time of few welfare benefits. The St Vincent de Paul Society was one of the largest and most active charitable organisations within the Catholic Church at the time and thus a study of the Society’s major works reveals some of the issues that were seen as most pressing in the eyes of the Church. The main sources used here for the investigation of the Church’s social concerns are the archives of the St Vincent de Paul Society, the articles and letters to the editor in a

⁸ Benedict XV, *Pacem*, 13.

range of secular and Christian newspapers, and the sermons and sermon notes of key prelates in Sydney. While the archives of the St Vincent de Paul Society are not extensive for the interwar years, there were a number of documents relating to the missions and works investigated in this chapter, suggesting that these were the particular focus of the Society during these years. The main source for the works of the Society, other than St Anthony's Home, is the history of the first hundred years of the Society in Australia, compiled from the annual reports of Conferences from all across Australia. As such it provides an informed summary of the major works of the Society during that time.

CONTEXT: SEX AND MARRIAGE IN POST-WAR SOCIETY

Among a host of societal changes brought about by the war, “foreseen and feared” by clerics,⁹ were the dramatic changes to ideas and practices about sex and marriage. Questions of sex and marriage did not only concern the private lives of citizens but also the future and stability of the nation as it attempted to heal from four gruelling years of war and the loss of 60,000 Australian men.¹⁰ While the problem of marriage, and the lack of marriageable men created by the war, was particularly acute in Europe,¹¹ it was still an important issue in Australia. The post-war years saw a sharp increase in divorces: in 1921, for example, there were 1,383 divorces compared to the 619 of 1914, and the numbers increased each year.¹² Divorce was not only sought by more couples, but public discussions also began seeking an easing of divorce laws.

Matters of sex and divorce

While many of the social changes regarding sex and marriage that the war was seen as causing may have occurred anyway, it is evident nonetheless that the war brought into public awareness and hastened changes in attitudes to sex.¹³ Perhaps it was the statistics on venereal disease (VD) among Australian troops that first brought the topic into the public discussion, with “shockingly high” numbers, up to 60,000 soldiers, being treated for a sexually transmitted

⁹ John Connor, Peter Stanley & Peter Yule, *The War at Home. The Centenary History of Australia and the Great War Vol. 4.* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2015), 201.

¹⁰ Craig Tibbits, “Casualties of War,” *Australian War Memorial*, <https://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/article2>

¹¹ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Publishing, 1998).

¹² Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1980), 222.

¹³ Conner, Stanley & Yule, *The War at Home*, 201.

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disease.¹⁴ Lisa Featherstone argues that it was the “very urgency” of the VD statistics among the troops that “opened up discussions about sex” in the most public talk of the topic that Australia had ever experienced.¹⁵ The concern was not only expressed by the church: religious, medical, feminist and military authorities all saw it as a crisis.¹⁶ Venereal disease was not the only indicator of changes in sexual behaviour as statistics on extra-nuptial births also tell a story.¹⁷ The war showed how unpredictable and short life could be which in turn seemed to “excuse moral lapses”, while the distance and dangers being faced by men serving overseas “exerted pressure on relationships and on conventional responses”.¹⁸ *The Bulletin* magazine noted that many women abandoned and facing a pregnancy outside marriage claimed that the child’s father had died at Gallipoli, earning them a more sympathetic treatment than would have previously been given.¹⁹

It was also *The Bulletin* which noted a growing desire for knowledge in sexual matters among young women. Consequent upon one mid-twenty year old woman writing to the publication seeking advice to remedy the fact that she was an “innocent of innocents; a greenhorn as regards anything to do with sex matters”,²⁰ *The Bulletin* received an “astounding avalanche of correspondence” from more “ignorant innocents”.²¹ *The Bulletin* concluded that these letters showed “a dangerous ignorance of elementary sex-matters for a country whose education system claims to be enlightened.”²² Featherstone’s article on the rise of sex education during the interwar years in Australia argues that it was only in the wake of the war, with “public and state concerns over population, disease and family”, that many expressed the opinion that there was a great need for sex education.²³ Previously, the chief objections to sex education was that knowledge of sexual matters would lead to promiscuous behaviour.²⁴ Confronted with high numbers of VD infections and worries about the propagation of the population, however, that anxiety was overridden by the greater need of “shor[ing] up the nuclear family” and the “protection of a healthy white race”.²⁵ Interestingly, although the high

¹⁴ Tibbits, “Casualties of War”.

¹⁵ Lisa Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl: the formation of new knowledge in interwar Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 34, no. 4 (2010): 460.

¹⁶ Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl,” 459.

¹⁷ On average, 10 per cent of births were out of wedlock. Connor, Stanley & Yule, *The War at Home*, 201.

¹⁸ Connor, Stanley & Yulp, *The War at Home*, 201.

¹⁹ *The Bulletin*, 1915 quoted in Connor, Stanley & Yule, *The War at Home*, 201.

²⁰ *The Bulletin*, vol. 37 no. 1918, (16 November 1916), 2.

²¹ *The Bulletin*, vol. 37 no.1921 (7 December 1916), 2.

²² *The Bulletin*, vol. 37 no. 1921 (7 December 1916), 2.

²³ Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl”, 461.

²⁴ See Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl”, 460; Editorial, “The prevention of the spread of syphilis”, *Medical Journal of Australia* 27 July 1929, 127.

²⁵ Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl,” 461.

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VD statistics were related to male troops, sex education was primarily for girls and young women, as it was considered that it was “they who would have to protect themselves from sexual advances”.²⁶ Although Featherstone argues that ultimately very little was achieved by the sex education that was offered during the 1920s,²⁷ the “strong discursive impetus” towards a greater knowledge of sex for the purpose of protecting “women and the white race”²⁸ illustrates the concerns of many in post-war Australia and some of the social changes that the war brought about.

The years after the war also saw a significant rise in divorce and at the same time serious and protracted discussion of the desirability of marriage ‘till death do us part’. For many couples the strain of life after the war “proved too much” for their marriage.²⁹ Two years after the end of the war the divorce rate had nearly doubled what it had been in 1914,³⁰ and by 1927 it was being claimed that in New South Wales, one in every seven marriages ended in divorce, and it took three judges to “cope with the business of the Divorce Court”.³¹ In 1922, a lecture in Sydney by the controversial ex-Anglican priest and writer Mr Robert Keable³² on the topic of divorce fomented controversy over his suggestion that divorce should be made easier and that the authority of marriage rested on a moral code that “was not worth the paper it was written on”.³³ While Keable was particularly concerned with divorce in the case of one party becoming insane, he also advocated a more “progressive” view of marriage, that “if a man and a woman felt they could swing together that made the marriage...and if they swung apart in the course of life it was a tragedy, but it was one of the facts of life.”³⁴ His lecture attracted a great deal of criticism, as would be expected, but also a great deal of support from people who thought that the traditional view of the indissolubility of marriage had had its day. As one supporter wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*, “the present agreement to ‘live together for better or

²⁶ Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl,” 460.

²⁷ She argues that it was ‘partial knowledge at best’, that it was oblique and that because it was not offered in schools it was not generally or widely taught. Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl,” 466.

²⁸ Featherstone, “Sex educating the modern girl,” 466.

²⁹ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 222.

³⁰ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 222.

³¹ “Marriage Failures,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 November 1927, 3.

³² Robert Keable was an English novelist, who toured to Australia to promote his novel, considered quite scandalous, in 1922. Keable’s own marriage and his ideas about marriage could be seen as directly stemming from his war time experience. He was one of those whose marriages were tested by the time apart. Serving as an Anglican chaplain during the war, he began an affair with a nurse that led to him leaving the priesthood. His wife was a devout Catholic and therefore would not divorce him, leaving him unable to marry his mistress as he desired. It seems very likely that it was this experience that led to his controversial opinion on marriage and divorce, which he proclaimed around the world on his book tour. For more on Keable’s life and views see: Hugh Cecil, *The Flower of Battle: How Britain Wrote the Great War* (Secker and Warbury, 1995), 155-170. Also, “Popular Novelist,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 November 1922, 5.

³³ “Modern Marriage. Lecture By Mr. Robert Keable,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 November 1922, 10.

³⁴ “Modern Marriage.”

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for worse, till death do us part,' is the root cause of bitterness in all married life".³⁵ Signing himself as "One who Fell in", he suggested that a marriage contract should rather state "that the parties agree to live together in the bonds of matrimony as long as both agree to do so."³⁶ It was this kind of opinion on marriage that one Anglican cleric caustically wrote of when he suggested that the marriage vow would have to be updated to "I, John, take thee, Mary, to be my wedded wife until one of us gets drunk, or until one of us goes mad, or one of us gets locked up, or goes to live somewhere else for three years. Until then I pledge to thee my troth".³⁷ His idea of what was needed was not "a lessening of the marriage tie" but rather "a gingering up of the love, devotion, and privilege of one with another until death parts us."³⁸

The discussion about extramarital sex and divorce was spurred on in the mid-twenties by an American judge's proposal of companionate marriages as a means of lowering the divorce rate.³⁹ Judge Lindsey was a nationally famous reformer in the US, and when he began speaking on and encouraging companionate marriages in the mid-1920s he gained a very large audience.⁴⁰ A copy of his article for a United States paper was published in Sydney's *The Sun* and began a discussion about the merits of his suggestion. Judge Lindsey,⁴¹ arguing that many divorces resulted from "totally inexperienced" couples "taking the plunge" only to discover their mistake too late, proposed a form of "marriage-on-probation" for a year, after which time "the parties should know whether they are mutually adapted".⁴² This would, he argued, prevent those couples who discovered that they were not well suited from entering an unhappy marriage and obviate their later divorce. This proposal merited immediate censure from the

³⁵ "To the Editor Marriage Laws," *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1923, 4.

³⁶ "To the Editor Marriage Laws," *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1923, 4.

³⁷ "New Marriage 'Vow'," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 January 1921, 11.

³⁸ "New Marriage 'Vow'"

³⁹ For a detailed overview of Lindsey's views and the history of 'companionate marriages' see:

Simmons, Christina. "Companionate marriage," in *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality*, eds. Patricia Whelehan, and Anne Bolin. Wiley, 2015.

⁴⁰ Rebecca Davis, "'Not Marriage at All but Harlotry': The Companionate Marriage Controversy," *Journal of American History* (March 2008): 1139. For the purposes of this thesis, we are only interested in the idea that he put forward and how it stirred up conversations in Australian society. For more on the history of Lindsey's ideas and the controversy it provoked in the US, see the above article, which gives an excellent account of this.

⁴¹ Judge Lindsey fomented much controversy by this suggestion, beginning a discussion that reached many continents. Bertrand Russell, in his 1929 book, *Marriage and Morals* mentioned Lindsey and the extent of the controversy that his initial suggestion had, see Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals* (1929) https://archive.org/details/marriagemorals00russ_, 162-165. Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Casti connubii* was also seen as a direct response to Lindsey's proposal of trial marriages, and Keable's suggestions about divorce. See Pius XI, *Casti connubii*, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html

⁴² "'Companionate' Trial Marriage 'Shameful and Damnable' Prelates Condemn," *The Sun* 14 August 1927, 2.

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Church.⁴³ Asked for comment on the idea by *The Sun*,⁴⁴ Archbishop Kelly wrote that “the very notion of ‘companionate marriages’ is to be abhorred” and denounced it as a “grievous outrage” on the “natural principle of human wedlock, because of the scandalous occasions and irreparable depravity that would follow, and because of personal and social ruin”.⁴⁵ In this opinion Kelly found an interesting ally in the suffragette and socialist Adela Pankhurst Walsh,⁴⁶ who also wrote to *The Sun* to express her opinion on the folly of the idea of companionate marriages. Not only did she see companionate marriages as damaging to the next generation, who would “grow up without the incentive to the nobler ideals of a life-long union”, but also as a danger to the continuation of the human race, as it would lead to men and women choosing partners with the qualities that would “please [them] for a few months” rather than the qualities necessary for good parenthood.⁴⁷

This latter concern, population growth and in turn the continuation of White Australia, was shared by the broader Australian community and it underpinned many of the post-war discussions of sex, marriage and women. The need for population growth was very much on their minds, particularly as they felt the vulnerability of Australia against foreign attack. One correspondent wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* to express his concern over conditions that would lead to a falling birth-rate. Writing gloomily of England’s decision to devise a scheme to check falling birth rates, he said such measures would prove futile as “women of the present day are out to enjoy themselves...the pleasure of which they are not going to be deprived of for the sake of bearing children.”⁴⁸ Many expressed a real concern that the climate in the post-war world, of promiscuity, the use of contraception and divorce all increasing, spelled doom for the future of Australian society and White Australia. As one pessimist wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*, “there will be no such thing as home life, as we understand it. Men and women will seek their own pleasures. The white race will disappear, and will be replaced by black and brown races if the white people continue to commit suicide.”⁴⁹ The concern over the need for

⁴³ Both in Australia, and universally. Lindsey himself believed that Pius XI’s 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii* was directly responding to him. Whatever the truth of that, Pius XI certainly specifically condemned companionate or trial marriages. See Davis, “Not Marriage at All,” 1158, and Pius XI, *Casti connubii*.

⁴⁴ Letter from the editor of *The Sun* to Archbishop Kelly, SAA A0565.

⁴⁵ Kelly letter to *The Sun*, SAA A0565, also “‘Outrage’ Companionate Marriages ‘Social Ruin’ Church’s Strong Attack,” *The Sun*, 19 August 1927, 9.

⁴⁶ This was not the first time that Adela Pankhurst Walsh and the Church were ideological allies, so to speak. In the conscription referenda she had also campaigned against conscription, as Mannix and other Catholic prelates did.

⁴⁷ “Marriage Woman’s View,” *The Sun*, 21 August 1927, 3.

Pankhurst was not the only unusual ally of the Church in this opinion, some eugenicists, such as Kelvin Knight, feared companionate marriages would increase ‘race suicide’, see Simmons, “Companionate Marriage”.

⁴⁸ “Future of Marriage,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 March 1928, 6.

⁴⁹ “Future of Marriage”. It should be noted that many sources from this time refer to birth control as “suicide” or “race-suicide”.

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Australians to reproduce to hold up the White Australia Policy was very much on people's minds in the wake of the war. The editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, opined that most Australians were aware that their future depended on the propagation of white people, that "the populating of the country by white people" was "in its own defence", and that it demanded "the most urgent attention of all Australians".⁵⁰ Myra Willard, a student at the University of Sydney, wrote a thesis on the history of the White Australia Policy in Australia, arguing that it had both a positive and a negative aspect to it; the negative being the barring of certain people from the country, the positive being the "obligation to people Australia with members of the white race."⁵¹ The *Sydney Morning Herald* commented on this thesis saying that "that duty", of propagation, "has not been sufficiently alive" in Australia, and called for a greater response to this duty,⁵² echoing Willard's argument that the realisation of the positive form of the policy was "a movement scarcely begun".⁵³ As one correspondent to the *Sydney Morning Herald* observed, in such an "empty country" as Australia, a policy such as the White Australia Policy could only be sustained by its citizens propagating and peopling the country.⁵⁴

It was this concern, among others, that prompted many to condemn the use of contraception, a position captured most succinctly in the use of the phrase "race suicide" to describe birth control. Not to its credit, the Church also used such arguments to discourage the use of contraception. For instance the Bishop of Sale argued that "from a national point of view...[contraception] must be a cause of grave anxiety to those who rally to the battle-cry of a White Australia."⁵⁵ Archbishop Kelly also adduced this argument, reminding his readers in the course of a discussion of the evils of contraception, that "Australia wanted Australians, and every life was an asset of high value...there was a duty at home, and that was the preservation of child life."⁵⁶ This was not their primary concern, the morality of contraception was of course foremost, but it is regretful that the Church also adduced the argument of protecting a White Australia against other races.

⁵⁰ "White Australia," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1928, 10.

⁵¹ "White Australia," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 1924, 12.

⁵² "White Australia," 9 February 1924, 12.

⁵³ Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (London: Cass, 1967), 212-213.

⁵⁴ "Migration. White Australia," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1924, 13.

⁵⁵ Bishop Phelan of Sale, Lecture "The Twin Evils of Society: Divorce and Race-Suicide," in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 229.

⁵⁶ "Archbishop Kelly Attacks the Government and University Professors, 1923," in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 297.

The Church's response to issues of marriage and sex

The Church's response to the questions about the easing of divorce and the idea of probationary marriage was, as would be expected, unequivocal condemnation and a reiteration of the importance of chastity and of traditional marriage that is faithful and fruitful. The Church was firmly on the other side to Judge Lindsey, urging that the result of companionate marriages would not be less divorces, but in fact more. In his reply to *The Sun* on the issue of companionate marriages, Kelly asserted that in a society such as theirs, "holding Christian ideals upon morality", that the topic should "not be open to a discussion" in the press.⁵⁷ Rather than thinking that this proposal would lead to fewer divorces, he was at one with the Anglican cleric who opined that "if there was less dragging of sex in the mire before marriage there would be less divorce afterwards".⁵⁸ This opinion was shared by Bishop Phelan of Sale, who devoted a lecture to this topic, claiming the modern practices and views on sex as a direct consequence of the war, in his words: "of all the evils for which the late war was responsible, probably the greatest was its lowering effect on female modesty and chastity".⁵⁹ This lowering effect, evident by the census data which showed an "astoundingly large percentage of marriages where the bride had ceased to be a virgin before she became a wife", led in turn, he argued, to an increase in divorce. The discernible increase in divorces where the cause stated was adultery on the woman's part, was due, he said, to the increase in extramarital sex among young women, in his words, "the maiden who is not faithful to God before her marriage is not likely to be faithful to her husband after marriage".⁶⁰

It was not only the "dragging of sex in the mire before marriage" that the Church saw as a significant cause of divorce, they were also very concerned with the issue of religiously mixed marriages.⁶¹ Archbishop Kelly, in particular, considered this the primary cause of divorce among Catholics. It was certainly an issue of sufficient significance to the Church hierarchy to be brought into discussion at nearly every annual meeting of the Archbishops of

⁵⁷ Kelly letter to *The Sun*, SAA A0565, also 'Outrage' Companionate Marriages 'Social Ruin' Church's Strong Attack", *The Sun*, 19 August 1927, 9.

⁵⁸ Bishop of Armidale, "Marriage Failures," *The Daily Telegraph* 15 November 1927, 3.

⁵⁹ Bishop Phelan of Sale, Lecture "The Twin Evils of Society: Divorce and Race-Suicide," in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 229. Archbishop Kelly devoted a pastoral letter to this same topic, decrying the lack of modesty in modern fashions and the resulting 'depravity', i.e. unrestrained sexual behaviour. See Kelly, "Pastoral Letter 1921," in O'Farrell, 291.

⁶⁰ Bishop Phelan, "The Twin Evils of Society," 229.

⁶¹ In this context mixed marriages means marriages between Catholics and Protestants.

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Australasia in the interwar years.⁶² Archbishop Kelly adduced the example of Solomon⁶³ in warning his flock against entering into mixed marriages.⁶⁴ He was very concerned with the potential danger mixed marriages posed to the faith of the Catholic party entering into one.⁶⁵ In his 1923 Pastoral Letter outlining Australia's spiritual and temporal necessities, he identified as essential "the elimination of mixed marriages by strengthening our belief in the one true Church, outside whose fold no one can be saved if culpable or indifferent in her regard."⁶⁶ Although the Church had been preaching against mixed marriages for decades before the war, the interwar years saw an increase in both the number of mixed marriages and in sermons and pastoral letters warning the faithful against them. In his 1923 Pastoral Letter, Archbishop Kelly lamented that "mixed marriages are spreading wider and wider amongst us, even as a rising tide...in one parish, out of 94 marriages 47 were 'mixed'...[the] dark shadow of culpability falls on a large and growing number of our rising generation."⁶⁷

In discussions of the rise of divorce and mixed marriages and the suggested remedies, the Church tended to focus on women. The Church had long held women to be the guardians of morality in society, as one Australian cleric described it:

Catholic women have a great mission in this age of democracy - to be the custodians of virtue, the upholders of religion, the models of Christian life, the light of the home, the leaven of society, and lastly the makers of the laws which will eliminate evil, preserve the venerated ideals of the past, and foster the growth of a truly Christian nation.⁶⁸

With such a view of the Catholic woman's role in society, it is little wonder that the Church viewed with concern various changes to women's dress and behaviour in the years of the war and after. Many Catholics, clergy and laity, complained that the war had a noticeable "lowering effect" on women's dress and on the freedom with which young women socialised unchaperoned; "promiscuous acquaintanceship, unchaperoned outings, late wine suppers,...[going] round as recklessly as young men about town"; all these were considered to

⁶² See for example SAA, *Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting of the Archbishops of Australasia. October 1921*, A0546.

⁶³ 1 Kings 11:4 describes Solomon being led away from the worship of God by the example of his pagan wives who worshipped false gods.

⁶⁴ SAA, *Kelly Sermon notes*, File A0526.

⁶⁵ While Archbishop Kelly's primary concern seems to have been the potential for the loss of faith of the Catholic spouse, Katharine Massam argues that one of the primary concerns of the Church in regard to mixed marriages was "fear for the souls of children" born to mixed marriages, fear that the faith would not be passed on. See Katharine Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia, 1922-1962* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1996), 51.

⁶⁶ Kelly, "Lenten Pastoral Letter 1923," in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 228-9.

⁶⁷ Kelly, "Pastoral Letter, 1923," quoted in Turner, *Australian Catholics Vol II*, 47.

⁶⁸ Fr T.A. Fitzgerald, *Australasian Catholic Record* IX, no. 3 (1903): 392, in Turner *Australian Catholics Vol. II*, 58.

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“make a woman the easy prey of a designing man”.⁶⁹ The Church was not alone in lamenting the change in women’s dress and behaviour. In a case of assault on a teenaged girl in Parramatta, while convicting and punishing the male perpetrator, the Judge decried the behaviour of mothers who let their young girls be out late at night with no supervision, referring to the “danger to public morals of such uncontrolled girls”.⁷⁰ The defence lawyer in the case condemned the immodesty of women’s fashion, arguing that “the skirts worn nowadays by girls are an open invitation to boys to go with them”.⁷¹ In the age of the “flapper”, it was not only the Church that was concerned with the effect the new fashions in clothing and recreation, such as going out late at night to dances unchaperoned, would have on the moral tone of society and the stability of the home. In 1928, a deputation from the Salvation Army and the Racial Hygiene Society met with the Chief Secretary and the Commissioner of the Sydney Police to suggest that something needed to be done about the thousands of “immoral women” on the streets of Sydney, describing the modern flapper women as “clandestine prostitutes”.⁷² This attack on modern young women was fiercely contradicted by many prominent women in Sydney who argued that modern women were not particularly immoral, that “the morals of to-day are no worse than those of 50 years ago; it is only that they are more openly discussed.”⁷³

For the Church, their concern with the modern dress and behaviour of women was, in the first place, for the spiritual dangers, but also for the larger social dangers already mentioned, that is increase of divorce and extra-nuptial births, and also an increase in birth control. As we have seen, this latter concern was also shared by the broader Australian community, who were keenly aware of the necessity for population growth, particularly as they felt the vulnerability of Australia to foreign attack.

The Church’s response to the questions regarding sex and marriage that were brought up in the post-war era, was to reiterate the time-honoured teachings of the Church on the issue and to remind their faithful, and society more generally, of the “certainty and stability” of the teachings of the Church.⁷⁴ Despite their best efforts at teaching the faithful the dangers of

⁶⁹ “Twin Evils of Society: Divorce and Race-Suicide,” *Advocate*, 12 July 1923, 18-20; “Girls on the Road to Ruin. Having ‘A Good Time’,” *The Catholic Press*, 14 October 1915, 26.

⁷⁰ “Girls Who Roam the Streets,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 August 1928, 3.

⁷¹ “Girls Who Roam the Streets,”

⁷² “Girls Under Sixteen On City Streets,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 August 1928, 3. Here again we see an agreement in opinion between the Church and another group whose opinions would usually be the antithesis of the Church’s. On the issue of companionate or trial marriages, this eugenic society was at one with the Church, but the Church certainly condemned eugenics. See for example “Can Contempt Go Further”, *Catholic Press* 1 September 1927 quoted in Turner, *Australian Catholics Vol II*, 47.

⁷³ “Girls Under Sixteen On City Streets,”

⁷⁴ Turner, *Australian Catholics Vol II*, 71.

going against the Church's teaching on marriage and family, mixed marriages, divorce and children born out of wedlock continued. Thus, in its usual style, the Church continued to teach what was right, but also provided the means to care for those who were facing problems as a result of failing to live up to those teachings. Such a means was the St Vincent de Paul's Society's establishment of the St Anthony's Home for abandoned children and for unmarried mothers and their babies.

THE CHURCH AND CHARITY AFTER THE WAR: ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

The Catholic Church, alongside churches of other denominations, had a long history of charity work and supporting the most vulnerable in Australian society. Usually working without any state funding,⁷⁵ the Church's charitable institutions included hospitals, such as St Vincent's Hospital which was established to care especially for the poor free of charge,⁷⁶ orphanages and hostels. One of the most significant charitable groups in the Church was the St Vincent de Paul Society, who saw charitable activity as deeply theological and a practical expression of their faith; in their words, they "esteem[ed] ourselves happy...in offering something to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor, and in being able to bring some relief to His suffering members."⁷⁷ The work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, both during and after the war, not only provides further example of the activities of the Church but also gives further evidence of the effects of the war on Australia, as the Society attempted to meet the needs of the poor in a time when public resources were devoted to the war and the care of veterans. As John Murphy has argued, the years of the war and after saw an inactivity on the part of the government in regard to social policy, as Australia became a "welfare laggard" except in the area of war veterans, widows and their families.⁷⁸ While the needs of veterans and their families were significant, there were many others who required support and assistance in the post-war years. The need for charitable institutions such as St Vincent de Paul was clearly great.

⁷⁵ John Murphy, "Church and state in the history of Australian welfare," in *Church and State in Old and New Worlds* ed. John Gascoigne and Hilary M. Carey (Brill, 2010), 272. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁷⁶ Anne-Maree Whitaker, *St Vincent's Hospital 1857–2007: 150 years of charity, care and compassion* (Sydney: Kingsclear Books, 2007), 2–3.

⁷⁷ Society of St. Vincent de Paul, *Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul* (Sydney: National Council of Australia, 1976), 25.

⁷⁸ Murphy, "Church and state in the history of Australian welfare," 278. Also John Murphy, "The Failures of the 1920s: Maternalism and National Insurance," in *A Decent Provision Australian Welfare Policy, 1870 to 1949* (Routledge: Ebook, 2011), 129.

Despite the ‘call to arms’ severely depleting membership numbers across all the branches, the years of the war saw the St Vincent de Paul Society helping more cases than in the pre-war years.⁷⁹ Raising funds for the relief of distress in war-torn countries, establishing halls for the celebration of the sacraments at military camps, and looking after war widows who had been left destitute⁸⁰ were just some of the many works the Society undertook during the war. Proclaiming a “new era of progress” with the end of the war seeing donations and membership numbers rising, to over 40,000 members,⁸¹ the Society expanded its horizons to meet the growing needs of the post-war years.⁸² The needs were great indeed. One regional branch of the society in South Australia wrote in their annual report of the years directly following the war that “never in the history of our Society has so much poverty and distress prevailed in our parish”, both because of the “distress from the world-wide conflict” and poverty as a result of crop failure.⁸³ These years saw the Society maintain their previous Special Works, such as finding shelter for the homeless, assistance for the blind, providing financial assistance to the destitute and establishing bursaries to pay for poor young men who wanted to join the seminary, but also saw an expansion of new works that met the specific needs of the time. One such work in Sydney was the establishment of the Orphans’ Picnic, a series of entertainments and activities organised for the many children of the orphanages around Sydney.⁸⁴ As we shall see, in the interwar years the Society devoted much time and many resources to the care of orphans and abandoned children. Nowhere could this aid be seen more clearly than in the setting up of and service provided by the St Anthony’s home for babies and unwed mothers. It was at first considered an unsuitable work for the Society. It is not clear why it was considered an unsuitable work, perhaps because it was a men’s society and it was seen as a job for women, or perhaps because the existence of such a work seemed to condone immoral activity. Whatever the case, the Society began the work of the St Anthony’s Home in the face of criticism, but history proved its detractors’ fears unfounded: the work flourished and served many desperate souls.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ S.F. Egan, *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Australia - 1854-1954 - the First 100 years*. In the St Vincent de Paul Archives, Lewisham. Unfortunately, this history has no page or section numbers.

⁸⁰ This was in the early years of the war, when “Australia was not fully geared to handle the plight of some widows”. Egan, *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul*.

⁸¹ As testament to the relevance and importance of the Society, by 1928, membership numbers had doubled the pre-war numbers, and the number of cases they assisted had tripled.

⁸² Egan, *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul*.

⁸³ West Terrace Conference Annual Report, quoted in Egan, *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul*.

⁸⁴ Egan, *The Society of St Vincent de Paul*.

⁸⁵ Egan, *The Society of St Vincent de Paul*.

St Anthony's Home

St Anthony's Home was the particular vision and mission of one member, Br Denis Haugh,⁸⁶ although the need for it had previously been discussed by other Catholic associations, such as the Catholic Women's League.⁸⁷ Br Haugh, the proprietor of a tea warehouse in Surry Hills,⁸⁸ and from 1911 Catholic delegate to the Child Welfare Department,⁸⁹ was well aware of the "stark reality of life facing young unmarried mothers in Sydney".⁹⁰ Haugh's concern was for both the young unmarried mothers, and for the increasing numbers of abandoned children; there was a need, he saw, for both the physical care and protection of mothers and babies, but also for the spiritual welfare of the children who would be put up for adoption, that if possible they could be placed with Catholic families.⁹¹ The work began on an informal basis, with Haugh finding emergency shelter and care for individual cases as he discovered them, but it was very evident that a longer-term solution that could cater for large numbers was needed and needed immediately.⁹² Although Haugh began the work of finding homes for orphans in 1916, in 1922 with the "urgent need of protecting and saving girl-mothers" on his mind, the first home to care for mothers and babies was set up, after purchasing a property in Petersham in July of 1922.⁹³

The importance of this mission was apparent by its main and enduring problem: a lack of space to accommodate the numerous applications it received.⁹⁴ Within seven months of St Anthony's Home opening in Petersham, they were on the lookout for new, larger premises as they were unable to cater for the number of cases they received in their Petersham quarters.⁹⁵ Fortuitously, a good site came on the market in 1923, when a Grammar school closed down and, with the help of Archbishop Kelly, the property was acquired for the expansion of St Anthony's Home. Renovations were undertaken and more land acquired through the generosity of the laity and the "untiring support" of the priests of NSW, so that the new home was opened

⁸⁶ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*. Centre of Care Limited, SVDP Archives, 1-2.

⁸⁷ SAA, *Letter from Archbishop Kelly to CWL*, 6th September, File A1047, Diocesan Correspondence with CWL 1913-1930.

⁸⁸ Egan, *The Society of St Vincent de Paul*.

⁸⁹ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 2.

⁹⁰ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 1.

⁹¹ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 1.

⁹² *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 2-3.

⁹³ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 2.

⁹⁴ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 4-5.

⁹⁵ St Vincent de Paul Society, *The History of St Anthony's Home Twenty-Five Years of Achievement and Example*, SVDP Archives, 10.

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in May 1925.⁹⁶ Within the first two years at Croydon, St Anthony's Home had over 180 admissions of “girl-mothers”, and cared for over 400 children, which included organising over 300 adoptions,⁹⁷ and the numbers only increased each year so that by 1928 they were again looking to expand their premises.⁹⁸

St Anthony's Home was neither a maternity hospital, nor yet a standard orphanage, but combined elements of both. It was primarily for unmarried mothers and their babies, who had no support, financial or physical; it gave them a home for a year, free of charge, where they could recover and live with their baby. At the end of the year, an admitted mother could leave “when [she] could take one of three options: leave the baby, or take it with her, or adopt it to the Home.”⁹⁹ One of the many ways it aimed to help these young unmarried mothers was to give them privacy, “the shelter and protection of the Home, far from the critical eyes of self-righteous society” which “safe-guarded their reputation” so that, if they so desired, they could return to society without anyone knowing their situation.¹⁰⁰ The Home not only organised adoptions for those mothers who decided on the third option, but also for numerous abandoned infants and children; a large part of their mission was finding good Catholic families to adopt the many deserted children they came across.¹⁰¹

In his address at a fundraising event for St Anthony's Home, Archbishop Kelly highlighted the vital importance of the work of the Home and the need for the laity to give generously in the absence of government aid. Kelly pointed out a series of concerning statistics: that in Sydney, which had the highest concentration of illegitimate births,¹⁰² the number of such births in a year was over 2,500, and the percentage of children who died within their first year was over 6%.¹⁰³ Answering the clear duty of “the preservation of child life”, the Home was an “encouragement and hope” for all those who needed its services, it stood as a reminder that “there is no such thing as an illegal child [every] child born is in the image of God.”¹⁰⁴ St Anthony's Home continued its vitally important work for decades, weathering the drought of the Depression years, when any meagre Government support that they had been

⁹⁶ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 9.

⁹⁷ Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Fourth Annual Report and Balance-Sheet, St Anthony's Home, 1925-26*, SVDP Archives, 19.

⁹⁸ *The History of St Anthony's Home*, 10- 12.

⁹⁹ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 9.

¹⁰¹ *St Anthony's and St Joseph's Home*, 9.

¹⁰² I have retained the use of the phrase ‘illegitimate births’ to refer to babies born to unmarried mothers so as to be in keeping with the phrasing of the primary sources.

¹⁰³ “Archbishop Kelly Attacks the Government and University Professors, 1923,” in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 297.

¹⁰⁴ “Archbishop Kelly Attacks the Government and University Professors, 1923,” in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 297-8.

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receiving was discontinued, and when personal donations declined as the country felt the pinch of unemployment and depression.¹⁰⁵ Throughout all the difficulties of lack of funding and lack of space that it faced over the years, the Home continued to provide care for the vulnerable women and children who sought shelter there.¹⁰⁶

It is worth noting here that although the work was primarily carried out by a lay organisation, it received the full support of the clergy, including Archbishop Kelly, who helped raise funds to support the work, spoke at fundraising events, encouraged the faithful to assist the Home and spoke enthusiastically of its work. Here was a practical response by the Church, clergy and laity, to the rapid social changes wrought by the war.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the key social issues that preoccupied post-war discussions, focusing in particular on the post-war concerns about marriage and family. As an issue of grave concern to many in post-war Australia, marriage and family had always been and continues to be, a focus of the Church's teaching and charitable work. St Anthony's Home was the Church's practical response to a pressing need in the post-war era, the concern that underlay discussions and worries over increasing evidence of immoral sexual behaviour and divorce, namely the need for population growth for reasons of stability and security. Both the Church and broader society were concerned with the stability of the family unit as the stability of the country was, in many ways, dependent on it. Of course, this was not the only concern or motivation behind the establishment of the Home. The motivation was both social and spiritual, the need to care for women and their babies both by giving them a home and by looking after the spiritual life of the women who came and the children who were given for adoption. Evidenced by the high demand it experienced, St Anthony's Home was a vital mission in Sydney, an example of the important charitable work the Church undertook in the post-war years. The Church's involvement in the discussion and activities relating to marriage and family in the post-war years illustrates its relevance to all those it ministered to. To the women and babies who were cared for at St Anthony's Home the Church was very relevant.

¹⁰⁵ *The History of St Anthony's Home*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ More recent reviews, such as the 2004 Australian Senate inquiry into institutional care, of the work of orphanages and mother and baby homes in Australia have criticised various aspects of the way these institutions were run. The aforementioned inquiry, and other works investigating the negative effects of mother and baby homes, post-dated the period reviewed in this chapter. While this does not mean that the identified inappropriate practices did not exist in those early years, there were also no sources available to say that they did. This thesis is not attempting to be a celebration or an apology, but a presentation of the evidence that was available at the time of writing this thesis..

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This chapter has looked at one of the key social issues, stemming from the war, that preoccupied the Church in Sydney in the post-war years. The next chapter will continue the examination of the social and political issues that occupied Sydney Catholics after the war, looking at further areas of the Church's interaction with society in the post-war years.

Chapter Four

BUILDING A CATHOLIC CONFIDENCE: THE KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS AND THE 28TH INTERNATIONAL EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS

If it were a fact that the community generally was not giving fair play to Catholic young men and women, and if it were a fact that these Catholic young men and women were being kept out of employment, then that imposed on all the Catholic body...an obligation to look after their own friends, and to give help to members of their own creed.¹

One of the enduring legacies of the war in relation to the Australian churches, as we have seen, was an increase in sectarianism. At the end of his book on the churches during the war, Michael McKernan claims that “the most obvious result of the war for the Australian churches” was a “significant increase in the level of sectarian hatred.”² In the Catholic community, this had the effect of galvanising them in their mission for justice and solidarity. Coinciding with movements towards a more Australian and less Irish church, this in turn helped to build a greater sense of confidence among Australian Catholics. This chapter will explore some of the societies and events that helped shape and give confidence to Sydney Catholics in a time of increased sectarianism. In particular, it will explore the Knights of the Southern Cross and the 28th International Eucharistic Congress that took place in Sydney in 1928. For the Eucharistic Congress, an abundance of reports, articles, letters, opinion pieces and advertisements were published in all the major secular and religious newspapers of the time. Archival material relating to various Catholic societies of the 1920s also provides information on the Congress. Despite the abundance of primary source accounts of the event, there is surprisingly little on it in the secondary sources; this chapter’s discussion of the Congress is then an important contribution to the history of Catholics in Australia.³ For the Knights, the main sources available are from the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives and the only published history of the NSW branch of the organisation, written by Cliff Baxter. Baxter’s book relies heavily on the archives of the Knights, which, despite many efforts, were unavailable for my research. Accordingly, the information on the Knights used in this thesis

¹ Archbishop Mannix Communion Breakfast Speech at Balaclava, 15 June 1922, in Patrick O’Farrell *Documents in Australian Catholic History Vol. II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 354.

² Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914–18* (Sydney: Canberra: Catholic Theological Faculty, Australian War Memorial, 1980), 177.

³ O’Farrell’s history of Australian Catholics, for example, has one paragraph on the Congress, Campion’s *Australian Catholics* devotes two paragraphs to the topic. Turner includes a slightly longer section on the Congress, but it is substantially a long reproduction of a primary source account of the event, with little commentary.

has been pieced together from the Archdiocesan archives, Baxter's book and any references made to the society in secondary literature. While Baxter's book tells the story of the first 100 years of the Knights, my focus is their beginning in the years immediately after the war, and how they responded to the heightened sectarianism that stemmed from it. In situating the Knights within the post-war context and focusing exclusively on the early years of the Society, this chapter's examination of the Knights is an original and important contribution to the history of the Knights in NSW and the history of Australian Catholics more broadly.

Context: the need for Catholic solidarity

During the war, a frequent criticism levelled against the Church by outsiders was that they did not put the war ahead of every other concern: that they continued with business as usual, raising funds for Church buildings, agitating for educational and employment justice and protesting for Home Rule for Ireland. If any time required Catholics to open from their insular culture and join with their fellow Australians for a shared cause, surely the war and dealing with its aftermath was that occasion. This latter argument was shared by Australian Catholics: as we have seen from their response to the outbreak of war, they wanted to use this opportunity to end sectarian divisions between Catholics and Protestants. However, Catholics made it very clear that unity between Australian Christians was contingent upon the ending of discrimination against Catholics in education and employment. When the war did not bring about this end, it galvanised Catholics in their mission for justice. Speaking of the effects of war on society, Dr O'Reilly, the rector of the Catholic college at Sydney University, argued that "in every other country the people have learned a little wisdom as a result of the war", but in Australia, in Sydney in particular, he argued that "there is more bitterness, malevolence, and brutal venom in public life" than ever.⁴ As McKernan argues, the years of the war "introduced a terrible divide into Australian life, a divide significantly based on religious adherence".⁵ While they felt themselves to still be a persecuted minority, Catholics devoted themselves to the building up of their community and working politically to achieve specific wins for Catholics. The years directly after the war, years of increased sectarianism resulting from the war, saw a flourishing of Catholic social life, with clubs, societies and associations proliferating across Sydney. They embodied Archbishop Mannix's words, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that in light of the fact that Catholics were a minority in a society

⁴ Very Rev. Dr O'Reilly, speech at Granville, in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 335.

⁵ Michael McKernan, "Independence Day," in *Making Australian History Perspectives on the Past since 1788* eds. Deborah Gare and David Ritter. (Melbourne: Cengage Learning, 2008), 349.

that did not extend justice to them in certain key areas, Catholics had an obligation to “look after their own friends, and to give help to members of their own creed.”⁶

One of the most important of these Catholic societies that sprang up at this time was the Knights of The Southern Cross, which O’Farrell argues was to become “by far the most powerful and cohesive lay organisation in New South Wales”.⁷ It was an organisation whose aims aligned with many of the interests of the wider Sydney Catholic community in the interwar years: Catholic solidarity, justice for Catholics in the public sphere, and the cultivation of well-formed Catholics who would take their place in public life and work towards the building up of Australia. They were an example of the kind of work that Bishop Dwyer called for when he urged Catholics to take their place in public life, to “promote the true welfare of this country on the only lines along which true welfare lies”, to “protest against injustice to what they believe the claims of God or of Religion”.⁸ To fail to act for justice for the Church and for the true building up of the country, in his mind, amounted to “sinning by omission and neglect of duty”.⁹

*The beginning of the Knights of the Southern Cross*¹⁰

The Knights of the Southern Cross was clearly a much needed organisation in the Australian Catholic scene; there are numerous independent examples of someone proposing such a society, including the name, across many Australian states.¹¹ While it was ultimately in Sydney that the organisation took root and spread, Victoria and South Australia had also seen agitation to begin such an organisation in the years prior to its foundation.¹² Even in Sydney where the idea finally came to fruition, it was the result of many people’s ideas and hard work coming together. For this reason, it is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of the organisation.

⁶ Mannix, “Breakfast Speech at Balaclava,” in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 354.

⁷ Patrick O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, (Melbourne: Griffin Press, 1977), 380.

⁸ Bishop Dwyer, Maitland, “Lenten Pastoral Letter,” 1913, in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 307.

⁹ Dwyer, “Lenten Pastoral Letter,” 307.

¹⁰ It is worth noting here the difficulty in obtaining sources on the Knights of the Southern Cross. First, because they are a secret society (or were particularly secret during the early years that this thesis looks at) there are very few sources from the time that mention them. Secondly, the KSC headquarters suffered a fire which also affected their archives, further restricting the available documents in the history of this organisation. Thirdly, although every effort was made, I was unable to access the KSC archives, and so had to rely solely on the documents in the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives and any other documents I could find in source books or online.

¹¹ Cliff Baxter, *Reach for the Stars 1919-2009 NSW Knights of the Southern Cross Bold Men of Faith, Hope and Charity* (Ballan: Connor Court Publishing, 2009), 85.

¹² In Melbourne, for example, prominent Catholic, Sir Michael Chamberlain, wrote a letter to the Catholic paper the *Advocate*, expressing his concern for the spread of Freemasonry among Catholic men, and opined that what was needed was a new Catholic organisation along the lines of the Knights of Columbus. See “Chamberlain, letter to the editor,” *Advocate* 11 August 1917, 18. See also, Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 85.

Cliff Baxter, in the only history of the Knights in New South Wales, points to the early discussions of a Newcastle school inspector, Joseph Lynch, and a young Irish priest, Fr Bernard McKiernan. Drawing on the unpublished memoirs of these two men, Baxter gives an insight into the inspiration for the beginning of the Knights. For Joseph Lynch, it began with a near death experience that caused him to reflect on the legacy of his life: “I reviewed my past. I had been reasonably successful in my life’s work. ...[but] there were many good things that might have been done, or at least might have been attempted.”¹³ His life’s work was education, after teaching for several years Lynch had risen to the role of school inspector for the Newcastle area. It was in this role that he was confronted with the pressing problems facing the Church. He was concerned particularly with the plight of young Catholic men who were lured or fell away from the Faith and became Freemasons. In his travels he saw many “ill-equipped Catholics who have fallen away from the Faith through weakness, ignorance, self-interest or reading of rationalist literature”, noting that “many of the Catholic youth of the country, good in themselves, fall into evil courses lured by bad companionship, and deprived of proper entertainment and guidance.”¹⁴ He was pondering these concerns when a chance meeting on a train introduced him to the young priest Fr Bernard McKiernan, who shared Lynch’s concerns about Catholic young men. Fr McKiernan was particularly concerned with the role of the Freemasons, as he saw “the inroads made on the faith of our Catholic young men by such organisations as the Freemasons” and on the other hand that “many fine Catholic men, young and old” were hindered from realising their full potential “because they would not join the Masonic fraternity”.¹⁵

The history of the influence of Freemasonry in Australia is important and relatively unstudied. James Franklin, in his article on the Freemasons and their relation to the Catholic Church in Australia, considers the story of the “influence of the Masons” as “one of the great untold narratives of Australian History.”¹⁶ When assessing the existence of Masonic employment discrimination against Catholics, Franklin comments on the difficulty of proving “that any given failure to get a job is due to underhand motives.”¹⁷ Preference for fellow Masons was practiced by Masonic employers,¹⁸ but whether this amounted to a targeted anti-

¹³ In July of 1917 Lynch underwent an operation at Lewisham Hospital, which caused him to reflect that if the operation had been unsuccessful, what could he have claimed to have done with his life? See Lynch’s Memoir, in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 69.

¹⁴ Lynch’s Memoir, in Baxter, 47 & 73.

¹⁵ McKiernan Memoir, in Baxter, 48-49.

¹⁶ James Franklin, “Catholics Versus Masons,” *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 20, (1998): 6.

¹⁷ Franklin, “Catholics Versus Masons,” 9.

¹⁸ Franklin, “Catholics Versus Masons,” 9.

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Catholic discrimination is another question. Of course, given that the Freemasons maintained high membership numbers, with many prominent businessmen included in their ranks,¹⁹ and given that Catholics were prohibited from joining the Society, a network of Masonic preferential employment amounted to a network that barred Catholics from employment, whether or not this was an explicit intention. Further, whether or not the anti-Catholic intention existed or not, it was certainly perceived as existing by the Catholic community at large. There is very little concrete data to confirm or deny the extent of the issue; at the very least there is little to contradict the Catholic perception that the Masonic fraternity was a significant problem for Catholic workers.

Lynch and McKiernan envisaged an organisation that would remedy the threefold problem with which they were concerned: the growth of rationalism, the spread and activity of Freemasonry, and the ignorance among young Catholics. These were not new concerns, for years Catholics had been talking about the dangers of rationalist literature,²⁰ the influence of Freemasonry²¹ and the need for young men to be actively involved in the faith life,²² but they were repeated with greater frequency in the latter years of the war and after, in the face of the growing outspoken anti-Catholic position of the Freemasons in the Orange Lodge.²³ The association they proposed to form would be for men, along the lines of the American society the Knight of Columbus, which would provide formation for young men to prevent their “philosophical seduction” by either rationalism or freemasonry, with the further aim that they could thereby provide an “antidote to ignorance”.²⁴ Although filled with enthusiasm for the project, and having a clear constitution and plan for its progress, Lynch had great trouble in establishing the association, and if not for a chance encounter with Patrick Minahan MLA, it is likely his ideas would have progressed no further.²⁵

In 1919, Patrick Minahan, a prominent Catholic businessman, Labor politician²⁶ and supporter of Catholic organisations, approached Lynch with an offer to join a new Catholic

¹⁹ Franklin, “Catholics Versus Masons,” 7.

²⁰ Convention of Victorian Catholic Societies and Sodalities, “An Australian Catholic Federation. A Personal Appeal to Every Catholic.” in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 302.

²¹ Sir Michael Chamberlain, “How to Counteract the Influence of Freemasonry,” letter published in *The Advocate* 11 August 1917, 18.

²² Anon., “Our Catholic men and Church Attendance,” *Australasian Catholic Record* October 1907, 467,469,471-3. in Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol II 12-13.

²³ The Orange Lodges were specifically and avowedly anti-Catholic. They were also Masonic lodges, but they were not the only kind of Masonic lodge. See *Dictionary of Sydney*, “Grand Orange Lodge of New South Wales”, dictionaryofsydney.org. And Elizabeth Willis, “Orange Lodge (Loyal Orange Institution)” *eMelbourne* (Melbourne: The University of Melbourne, 2008).

²⁴ McKiernan Memoir, in Baxter, 49.

²⁵ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 79.

²⁶ Minahan was an elected member of Parliament, holding various offices and seats from 1910 - 1927. See “Mr Patrick Joseph Minahan”, *Parliament of New South Wales* www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/

men's society that he intended to establish along the lines of the Knights of Columbus, which was to be called the Commercial Men's Association. After reading the draft constitution, Lynch realised the proposed association was very similar to the organisation he had envisaged and swiftly joined Minahan in the association.²⁷ Minahan too had been long labouring over the establishment of such an organisation; he had put the idea before Archbishop Kelly, but Kelly encouraged him to devote himself to existent Catholic men's associations rather than starting another one. Both Lynch and Minahan, however, were convinced that the current Catholic men's associations were more social than active and that a new, proactive organisation was needed. It was only after a few years of separately working to establish an organisation that when the two joined forces the Knights of the Southern Cross began. Although the first meeting took place in March of 1919, it was not until September that their constitution was approved, and they were thus officially formed.²⁸

The constitution set out the three objects of the association: the fostering of the interests of the Church, Australia and the other members of the association.²⁹ Their aims were both inward and outward focused, directed at building up the Church and thereby building up the world; their aim answered, whether intentionally or otherwise, both Mannix's call to "look after their own friends, and to give help to members of their own creed"³⁰ and Dwyer's call to "promote the true welfare of this country".³¹ It is important to note, however, that the interests of the Church were primary, and their goal of helping the country more broadly was intended to occur through their work for the Church; the thought was that in helping Catholics they were helping Australia. In detail, their constitution aimed at:

- (a) Fostering the spirit of mutual support among Catholics equal efficiency of service being attainable.
- (b) Securing redress of any injustice that may be imposed upon members or upon our fellow Catholics.
- (c) Assisting members where circumstances warrant such action.
- (d) Extending a beneficent influence towards Catholic youth's [sic] with a view [sic] to their later efficiency as Catholic citizens
- (e) Defending Catholicity and Catholics against bigoted and ignorant attack wherever made and against insidious [sic] rationalist and materialistic propaganda.

²⁷ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 79.

²⁸ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 81. See also SAA, *KSC Constitution*, 11 August 1919, File A0977.

²⁹ SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

³⁰ Mannix, "Breakfast Speech at Baclava", in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 354.

³¹ Bishop Dwyer, Maitland, "Lenten Pastoral Letter," 1913, in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 307.

(f) Fostering a social spirit among Catholics.³²

It is important to note that the constitution specifically disavowed any particular political influence or platform. Taking into account the politically fractured nature of post-war society, the Knights attempted to steer clear of political controversy, claiming that the association “knows no politics, and it knows no political parties...[it meets] on the common platform of Religion and Charity, and the disruptive forces that disturb us outside have no place amongst us here.”³³ Given the context, with a dispute among Catholics as to whether the Democratic Party or the Labor Party should be given Catholic support,³⁴ this was an important component of being a truly effective Catholic organisation.³⁵ This did not mean that they were disinterested in politics or seeing Catholic political interests properly represented, but they did not want the association to become a lobby group and proposed instead that the most effective way to help the Catholic cause was via a grass-roots style campaign: educate and equip Australian Catholics to fight back against bigotry and change public opinion, particularly in regards to Catholic loyalty and the Catholic education issue. As the initial constitution stated, if membership was “enlarged to thousands prepared to stand together for our religious and civic rights we will have brought into existence a force for good, undreamt of, and which must be productive of immediate benefit” to Australian Catholics.³⁶

Their hope for a large membership was very quickly fulfilled. Minahan wrote to Archbishop Kelly, the spiritual director of the association, to tell him of its “astonishing progress”: a mere six months after the constitution was accepted, the society had spread throughout NSW and a branch had been established in Melbourne.³⁷ The next three years saw the association spread across Australia, with branches in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia.³⁸ It was in New South Wales, however, that they maintained the strongest membership, becoming by the end of the 1920s the “most powerful behind-the-scenes force in lay Catholic community participation”, according to O’Farrell.³⁹

³² SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

³³ SAA, *KSC Address to New Members*, File A0977.

³⁴ P.S. Cleary, *The Catholic Federation Explains Why it Set Up the Democratic Party, February 1920*, SAA, quoted in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 313. There was a good deal of discussion about whether a specifically Catholic party (the Democratic Party) would be the best means of achieving justice for Catholics, or whether they should rather concentrate on getting good Catholics elected to positions within the Labor Party, and use that party to gain justice. See also O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 347.

³⁵ It is also interesting given Minahan’s position as a prominent member of the Labor Party, as well as a co-founder of the Knights. Perhaps this in itself was motivation for the inclusion of this clause, to avoid giving the impression that the Knights were another political lobby group.

³⁶ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 83.

³⁷ SAA, *Letter from P.J. Minahan to Archbishop Kelly* 13 February, 1920. File A0977.

³⁸ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 98.

³⁹ O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 380.

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This was perhaps the defining feature of the first phase of the Knights: establishment and expansion. Baxter sums up the twenties for the Knights as “a golden age of faithful loyalty and solidarity... a time of enormous growth.”⁴⁰ Clearly many Catholic men shared Minahan and Lynch’s opinion that such an organisation was very necessary for the support and growth of the Church in Australia.

The first act of the association was to procure a premises on Elizabeth Street in the city. Here was a space for robust discussions and a well-equipped library for learning and character formation,⁴¹ where the “thrust was towards reading good books of a spiritual nature and discussing them”.⁴² This was important as the Knights were very concerned with the need for an educated laity; how else, they asked, could the Church be defended against the attacks of the ignorant and prejudiced?⁴³ The legacy of Irish Catholicism was that for many years good education was limited to the clergy and in Lynch’s opinion this was “not good enough in Australia”, an educated laity was a necessity.⁴⁴ While the hierarchy were not as emphatic about the specificity of the need in the Australian context, they did support the proper intellectual formation and education of the laity, explaining that the importance of reason for faith meant that the Church was always “on the side of intellectual culture” and the “fast friend of all true education”.⁴⁵

Once established, the Knights began their work of building unity among Catholics and fighting for justice. Their work was varied, taking up any current problem or supporting good initiatives from other Catholic organisations. In the early years, throughout the twenties, the Knights’ work within the Church was primarily the latter work, assisting other Catholic associations in their endeavours. As the president of the North Sydney Branch of the Knights wrote to Archbishop Kelly, “the Knights are anxious to help the priests in any way they can, and especially in work like this — bringing the young fellows to the Sacraments”.⁴⁶ While they

⁴⁰ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 101.

⁴¹ O’Farrell notes that the books were not only intellectual: the library contained many works of good quality literature, illustrating the Knights’ intent of a formation that was not solely intellectual. See O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 380.

⁴² Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 94.

⁴³ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 93.

⁴⁴ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 94.

This was particularly important in Australia where Protestants often accused Catholics of being unthinking followers of their priests who did not think for themselves. Thus to countermand this impression, and to better their place in broader society, it was incumbent upon Catholics to be educated and engage in public discussions.

⁴⁵ Archbishops and Bishops of NSW, “Pastoral Letter on Catholics and University Education,” 21 November 1923, in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 244.

Although O’Farrell argues that, despite this abstract and general support of education, Archbishop Kelly considered that “60 per cent of higher education was unnecessary”. Education, for Kelly and other bishops, was specifically for the end of spiritual advancement. See O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 379.

⁴⁶ SAA, *Letter from J.C. Hartnelt to Archbishop Kelly*, 5th February 1921, File A0977.

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supported any activity for men that brought them to the Church, the Knights were particularly concerned with activities that were also spiritually and intellectually formative. For example, the Knights were keen supporters of the debating clubs that proliferated in parishes. Speaking of this work, Baxter argues that the “rise of Catholics in public life, in trade unions and in politics can be attributed to these early efforts”.⁴⁷ Their desire to extend “a beneficent influence towards Catholic youth” with the goal of “their later efficiency as Catholic citizens” and to equip Catholics to defend “Catholicity and Catholics against bigoted and ignorant attack wherever made and against insidious rationalist and materialistic propaganda” was clear in this particular work of the Knights.⁴⁸ This was an example of how the Knights disavowed association with any particular political platform, but instead encouraged their members to be efficient citizens and participators in politics for good causes.

The Knights were also much concerned with the issue of discrimination in employment at the hands of Freemason employers who held, in word or in practice, that “No Catholics Need Apply”.⁴⁹ As previously discussed, this discrimination against Catholics by Freemasons was an ongoing issue that Catholics frequently spoke out against.⁵⁰ Even a cursory look at Catholic newspapers from the time reveal significant references to the evils of Freemasonry and its role in oppressing Catholics.⁵¹ This issue was given particular significance at the time of the Knights’ beginning, as work and unemployment were very much at the forefront of people’s minds in the wake of the war. With “the conditions of life below standard for many thousands” owing to “unemployment [in] the aftermath of the war”,⁵² any obstacle to finding employment was a serious matter. The Knights, who from the very beginning had been aware of and concerned with the influence of Freemasonry in Australia to the detriment of Catholics, set out to secure “redress of any injustice that may be imposed upon members or

⁴⁷ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 104.

⁴⁸ SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

⁴⁹ Herbert Moran, a Sydney surgeon of the time, testifies to his experience of seeing many such notices in business windows. See Herbert Moran, *Viewless Winds: Being the Recollections and Digressions of an Australian Surgeon* (London: Peter Davies, 1939), 10.

⁵⁰ It is certainly an enduring story, with many accounts of Catholics claiming they could not get work because of Freemason employers, and it is certainly the case that a number of businesses run by Freemasons put up signs saying “Catholics Need Not Apply”. Further, some Freemasons accused Catholics of trying to become Freemasons to better their employment chances, which would support the Catholic claims that a Masonic fraternity, existing between many prominent businessmen, was responsible for much employment discrimination against Catholics. (See letter quoted in “Masonic Attitude. Catholics Not Wanted in the Lodges,” *Freeman’s Journal* 17 August 1922, 6.)

There is very little concrete data to confirm or deny the extent of this issue; at the very least there is little to contradict the Catholic perception that it was a significant problem for Catholic workers.

⁵¹ See for example, *Southern Cross*, 12 May 1916; “All About People: Tittle Tattle,” *The Catholic Press* 5 August 1920, 22; “How Catholics are Defamed,” *Freeman’s Journal* 23 June 1921, 23; “Catholics and Heretics,” *The Catholic Press* 24 November 1927, 21.

⁵² “Archbishop Kelly on Unemployment,” in O’Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 294.

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upon fellow Catholics”.⁵³ To this end, the Knights, who counted many prominent businessmen in their numbers including co-founder Minahan who owned a shoe factory, pursued a “policy of mutual aid” and adopted a system of preference in employment, all other things being equal.⁵⁴ They also worked to end the discrimination, for example by mounting claims against particular instances of discrimination, attempting to secure redress for complaints that Catholic workers brought to them.⁵⁵ To ensure that the complaints were legitimate and “not made lightly”, anyone who claimed to have been discriminated against because of their religion was “required to detail the circumstances in a statutory declaration” that was then investigated by the governing executive of the Knights.⁵⁶ Once a claim was proven to be legitimate, the Knights pursued various courses of action, including simply meeting with the top management or, if this failed, applying counter-pressures or boycotts of the business.⁵⁷ The Knights were eager to pursue any legitimate course of action that would result in an end to discrimination against Catholics in the workplace. The last two verses of the Knights of the Southern Cross Anthem reveal this mission:

We give our aid to a brother distressed
We take up the cause of a brother oppressed
For the cause of one is the cause of all
While he suffers the stings of adversity.
Then gird we on.
The feet of our youth are enmeshed in snares
Their progress barred and the world never cares
We'll free their feet and we'll clear their way
To a Christian life of prosperity.⁵⁸

It is for this work that the Knights are most remembered; any mention of the early work of the Knights in histories of the period refer to this work, often describing them as a kind of Catholic Freemason society.⁵⁹ The Knights themselves, however, denied the comparison, saying that any “points of resemblance” were “minute and negligible” while “the points of contrast are great and significant”.⁶⁰ Be that as it may, they did work to counteract the influence of the

⁵³ SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

⁵⁴ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 99.

⁵⁵ Again, it is important to note here that the secrecy of the society – particularly in the early years – means that very little documentation/sources can be found to give particular/specific examples of the work of the Knights.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 122.

⁵⁷ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 123.

⁵⁸ SAA, *KSC Anthem*, File A0977.

⁵⁹ See for example Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol II, 57; Hilary Carey, *Truly Feminine, Truly Catholic* (Kensington: UNSW Press, 1987), 21; Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 119-120; Franklin, “Catholics versus Masons”, 10.

⁶⁰ “KSC Short Instruction to New Members,” quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 128.

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Masonic employment discrimination against Catholics. Perhaps it is remembered because this was their most visibly successful work other than their work on the International Eucharistic Congress, which will be discussed in detail later. In her history of Australian Catholics, Turner suggests that the decline in employment discrimination from the 1930s can be attributed to the success of the work of the Knights, coupled with the weakening of sectarianism.⁶¹ While there seems to be no documented evidence to support Turner's claim, at the very least it is reasonable as the Knights clearly intended to "advance" the material and employment interests of their members against the discrimination of the Masons,⁶² and there was a noticeable improvement in Catholics' employment prospects in the years following the Knights' beginning.

Another reason why the Knights were often thought of as a Catholic Freemason society, and one of the distinguishing features of the Knights in the early years of its activities, was the strict secrecy that surrounded the members and their activities. Passwords were required at meetings,⁶³ and potential new members were not told the nature of the association until they had been vetted and approved by a branch executive.⁶⁴ One member recalled that he did not even tell his wife that he was attending meetings of the Knights, but said rather that he was attending a "pig meeting".⁶⁵ A reader of *The Catholic Press* who wrote to the paper to ask for information on the Knights was told simply to ask his parish priest for details.⁶⁶ The pledge that new members had to take for admission to membership gives a picture of how seriously this secrecy was taken; the first three pledges dealt with the issue. New members, in the presence of the members and officers of the branch had to raise their right hand and pledge:

1. To treat as confidential the business and discussions of all meetings of this Society.
2. Not to disclose to any outsider the names of Members of this Society.
3. To keep absolutely secret the passwords of the Society, to use them only for the purpose of gaining admission to meetings, and to give them only to the Officers appointed to take them.⁶⁷

The Knights were clear to explain that this secrecy was prompted by "ordinary prudence" to prevent "against victimisation or anti-Catholic influence," and to have "assured to us the right to discuss freely and frankly the private and business interests of those on whose behalf we

⁶¹ Turner, *Catholics in Australia* Vol II, 57.

⁶² SAA, *KSC Address to New Members*, File A0977.

⁶³ SAA, *KSC Vote for Admission to Membership*, File A0977.

⁶⁴ "Instruction on Conditions for Admission," quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 135.

⁶⁵ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 380; Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 134.

⁶⁶ "Queries Knights of the Southern Cross," *The Catholic Press* 27 September 1928, 6.

⁶⁷ SAA, *KSC Vote for Admission to Membership*, File A0977.

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desire to act”.⁶⁸ They described the secrecy as analogous to the secrecy of families: “do not families keep their matters to themselves?”⁶⁹ They also were quick to assure members that this secrecy did not in any way involve them “in anything conflicting with [their] religious or civic principles.”⁷⁰ The former was particularly important, as the Church had a long-held suspicion of secret societies, and the 1917 Code of Canon Law warned the faithful to be “cautious of secret associations, or those which are condemned, seditious, or suspect, or those which distance themselves from the legitimate oversight of the Church”.⁷¹ Obviously some suspicion had been cast on the lawfulness of the Knights, as in 1935 an article appeared in the *Catholic Freeman’s Journal* addressing whether the Knights were an approved Catholic association. Assuring readers that lawful ecclesiastical authorities had “examined the rules and regulations, and have satisfied themselves that no injury to religious, moral or civic obligations could possibly result from membership in the society”, the article went on to note that each member of the Knights of the Southern Cross “acknowledges that he is subject religiously first and foremost to the Catholic Church” and that “the Society to which he belongs is a very secondary and subordinate association acknowledging the right of supervision by competent ecclesiastical authorities.”⁷² It must have been a frequent question, as the Knights regularly assured their members that it did not conflict with their faith to be a part of this secret society: “do not be troubled in conscience... We are silent, but only for strategic reasons. From the moral or ethical point of view we could withstand any criticism”.⁷³

We see then, the Knights’ work throughout the twenties: the establishment and building up of the society in branches and membership, the procuring of premises, and the beginning of their work in forming Catholic men and supporting them in employment opportunities. This latter work was the foundation for what would become one of their most important works during the years of the Great Depression, when they established employment committees and ran training programs to assist those in dire economic straits.⁷⁴ The extent and success of their work is difficult to adequately evaluate for a number of reasons, not least of all because they were a secret society who swore to keep their activities confidential. The rapidity with which the society spread throughout Australia, and the large membership it maintained

⁶⁸ SAA, *KSC Address to New Members*, File A0977.

⁶⁹ “KSC Short Instruction to New Members,” quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 128.

⁷⁰ SAA, *KSC Address to New Members*, File A0977.

⁷¹ *The 1917 Code of Canon Law*, curated by Dr Edward N. Peters (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), Canon 684.

⁷² “Is the K.S.C. Approved?” *Catholic Freeman’s Journal* 19 September 1935, 11.

⁷³ “KSC Short Instruction to New Members,” quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 128.

⁷⁴ “1991 National Presidents’ Report”, quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 228-9, 122-3.

indicate that it was widely considered to be an important Society in the life of the Church in Australia. Both Turner and Baxter claim that the easing of employment difficulties for Catholics in the 1930s is at least partially due to the work of the Knights, as was the presence of an educated and active laity in the 1930s and onwards.⁷⁵

Australia for the Australians

It is worth noting an aspect of the Knights which illustrates and exemplifies a broader trend in the Catholic Church in Sydney from the years of the war and after, that is, the lack of an explicitly Irish focus and the promotion of Australianness. The Knights stated very specifically in their constitution that it was an “Australian” association that aimed to foster the interests of Australia.⁷⁶ “We are Australian”, declared the society, “and our Society knows no other nationality”.⁷⁷ Given the divisiveness between English and Irish stemming from the furore over the fight for Irish independence and the conscription debates, as a society that hoped to bring an end to sectarianism⁷⁸ this was crucial. Further, divisions over national interests not only existed between Protestants and Catholics, but within the Catholic community too.⁷⁹ In insisting on the society being “Australian”, the Knights were acting in the same vein as many other lay Catholic associations of the interwar years. The previously discussed Catholic Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Association is an obvious example, with their aim to “inculcate loyalty to Australia and to cultivate a national sentiment.”⁸⁰ The move to focus on Australia ahead of Ireland was not limited to the laity, however; one of the most visible proponents of this was the clerical association the Manly Union. The Manly Union was a group of Australian-educated priests, formed at the only Australian seminary at the time, Manly, who advocated for the promotion of an Australian priesthood.⁸¹ Like the Knights and the CRSSA, it was predominantly the war that sparked the emphasis on Australia for the Manly Union. As one priest wrote in the journal of the Manly Union, “during the war, Australia shook herself free to a great extent of external influences...some die-hards are loath to make this admission,

⁷⁵ Turner, *Catholics in Australia*, 57; Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*.

⁷⁶ SAA, *KSC Constitution*, File A0977.

⁷⁷ SAA, *Address to New Members*, File A0977.

⁷⁸ O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 380.

⁷⁹ A private exchange between two prominent Catholics, Justice Heydon and John Meagher, during the conscription debates illustrates this tension. After Heydon publicly criticised Mannix’s anti-conscription stance, he and Meagher exchanged a number of letters illustrating the different points of view of between Australian Catholics who were of Irish heritage and those who were not. While they both agreed that the vast majority, “seven eighths”, of the Catholic population were strongly aligned with the interests of Ireland, Heydon was also emphatic that to be Catholic did not mean putting the interests of Ireland before the Empire. See SAA, *Kelly Correspondence (09/036)*, 23 November 1917 - 27 November 1917, File A0547.

⁸⁰ SAA, *Rules and By-Laws of the CRSSA*, 3c, File A0567.

⁸¹ O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 358.

and it seems that it is going to devolve upon our Australian-born clergy to give the lead in the cultivation of a truly Australian national sentiment".⁸² The Knights, along with other associations such as the CRSSA and the Manly Union, were concrete examples of a Manly priest's assertion in a letter to the Melbourne newspaper *Tribune* that the "cry of Australia for Australians has become a real thing in Australia to-day."⁸³

The Knights and other Catholic societies in the interwar years

The Knights of the Southern Cross were not the only Catholic society that began or flourished during the interwar years. In fact, in his work on the contribution of Catholics to Australian society Edmund Campion designates solidarity and the work and success of Catholic societies as a distinguishing feature of the Church during the interwar years.⁸⁴ As we have seen with the Knights supporting the work of other Catholic associations, many of the Catholic societies shared some aims with the Knights, namely Catholic solidarity and the formation and entertainment of the laity, particularly the youth, to ensure their active and informed participation in the life of the Church. As previously mentioned, the heightened sectarianism, a legacy of the bitter conscription debates and questions of loyalty between Protestants and Catholics during the war, added fervour to the Catholic effort to build up the Church. It was imperative against the attacks of the Protestants that the Church should attend primarily to strengthening and supporting their own. Writing in 1925, one Jesuit priest summed up the importance and work of the Catholic societies at the time: "they were powerful aids to the health of parish life, promoted esprit-de-corps and a sense of solidarity among parishioners, provided an outlet for restless youth, [and] distanced the likelihood of religiously mixed marriages".⁸⁵ For the Church in Australia, the highpoint of the twenties and the triumph of the Catholic societies was the 29th International Eucharistic Congress that took place in Sydney at the end of 1928. In many ways the Congress was a visible representation of the many of the aims of the Knights: a spirit of mutual support among Catholics, a "beneficent influence" on young Catholics, a "defense against ignorant and bigoted attack", and the fostering of a social spirit among Catholics.⁸⁶ Here was a moment of the "harmony" they "dreamed" could be possible in Australia.⁸⁷

⁸² Urbanus, "Pleading our Cause," *Manly* vol. 1, 3 (1920): 26.

⁸³ Fr Cusack, "Letter to the Editor," *Tribune* 16 March 1922, in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 206. Father Cusack was an outspoken member of the Manly Union.

⁸⁴ Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 121.

⁸⁵ Father Eustace Boylan SJ, quoted in Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 128.

⁸⁶ SAA, 'Objects' *KSC Constitution*, A0977.

⁸⁷ SAA, *KSC Hymn*, A0977.

THE INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

International Eucharistic Congresses began in the late 19th century, and were one example of the many activities and teachings of the Church on the importance of the Eucharist in the faith and life of the Church.⁸⁸ The Eucharistic Congresses were intended to assist in a renewal of faith in the Eucharist and thereby “provide the remedy for ignorance and religious indifference”.⁸⁹ The Congress would last for a week and include a series of public conferences, catechetical meetings, times of adoration and culminate with the Eucharistic procession over which the Pope or his Legate presided in a “visible expression of the Universal Church communion”.⁹⁰ It was the Apostolic Delegate to Australia, Archbishop Cataneo, who brought the Congress to Sydney. When Cataneo led a pilgrimage of 70 Australians to Rome in 1925, Pope Pius XI was “deeply impressed by the Australian pilgrims’ commitment to travel such a long way” and consequently agreed to his suggestion that the Congress should be held in Sydney.⁹¹ When the Congress took place in Sydney, between 2 and 9 September 1928, it was only the fourth time it had taken place outside of Europe.

The 29th International Eucharistic Congress in Sydney was the most significant event for Australian Catholics to date. The Congress was a spectacular occasion, encompassing a range of events over a “week-long celebration of the Catholic faith”.⁹² Opening with the blessing of the newly finished St Mary’s Cathedral, itself a proud symbol of the confidence of Australian Catholics,⁹³ the Congress ended with the procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Sydney as 500,000, some estimated 750,000, spectators lined the streets.⁹⁴ It was not only a significant event for Catholics, however, it was significant for the whole of Australia. As the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a paper that was “usually no friend to Catholicism”,⁹⁵ stated in its glowing editorial:

Never before has a religious celebration of such magnitude been held in Australia.

Never before have the representatives of so many countries assembled here on the one errand. Never have so many eminent divines been in our midst. And those who are not

⁸⁸ Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, “International Eucharistic Congresses,” https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/, I.

⁸⁹ PCIEC, “International Eucharistic Congresses,” I.

⁹⁰ PCIEC, “International Eucharistic Congresses,” V.

⁹¹ Samantha Frappell, “International Eucharistic Congress 1928,” *Dictionary of Sydney*, 2012, http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/international_eucharistic_congress_1928.

⁹² Frappell, “International Eucharistic Congress 1928.”

⁹³ “Building St. Mary’s Cathedral: The Work of a Century,” *The Catholic Press* 6 September 1928, 30.

⁹⁴ “The Spark that Fired a Continent,” *The Catholic Press* 13 September 1928, 40.

⁹⁵ Turner, *Catholics in Australia Vol. II*, 86.

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members of the Roman Catholic Church deem it a privilege to offer their felicitations to the gathering. They appreciate the honour that has been conferred upon Sydney.⁹⁶

As over 200,000 international visitors were expected,⁹⁷ in addition to the visitors to Sydney from other parts of Australia, a great deal of work was needed to organise a seamless event. Preparations for the Congress began two years before September 1928, and it was made clear that all Catholics and Catholic organisations were “expected to give unqualified help” in the many preparations needed for the Congress to be a success. The Knights were quick to offer their support, starting by giving their general secretary paid leave for two years to work on the organising committee, and later by acting as marshals throughout the Congress.⁹⁸ The list of tasks to complete was daunting; the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January of 1928, expressed its concern at the preparations needed to cope with the sheer number of people who would converge on Sydney in September. Castigating “Sydney”, by which they presumably meant Sydney Catholics and residents of Sydney more broadly, for being “unreasonably calm” about the coming Congress, the *Sydney Morning Herald* went on to point out that “the problems of transport, accommodation, and entertainment are at least a thousand times more complex than the arrangements for a Royal Agricultural Show” and that Sydney was “not used to such a colossal invasion”, where the expected international arrivals would “augment the population of Sydney by one-fifth for several weeks”.⁹⁹ The problem was fairly acute, as investigation revealed that only 8,000 hotel rooms existed within a 20 mile radius of Sydney.¹⁰⁰ Despite such warnings, the committee was unflappable, seeking assistance from all and sundry, including public appeals for accommodation that resulted in six cells at Manly police station being offered!¹⁰¹ The Catholic Women’s Association also greatly helped the committee in relation to finding appropriate accommodation, offering homes and hiring a building in the City to house the visitors.¹⁰²

To assist in planning and advertising the Church utilised modern technology, using the radio for the first time. There had been some discussion about the appropriateness of having

⁹⁶ “Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1928, 12.

⁹⁷ Estimates were significantly different between different newspapers. While the *Sydney Morning Herald* put it at 200,000 the *Daily Telegraph* put it at 50,000, “Sydney Will Soon be Invaded Huge Army of Visitors for Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 August 1928, 5.

⁹⁸ See Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 118; Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 106.

⁹⁹ “Eucharistic Congress. 200,000 Visitors are Expected. Accommodation Problem,” *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 January 1928, 11.

¹⁰⁰ “Eucharistic Congress. 200,000 Visitors.”

¹⁰¹ “Mr Marlen’s Offer Not the Only One,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1928, 11; Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 107.

¹⁰² SAA, *Biennial Report of the Catholic Women’s Association*, 1929, File A1047.

sacred things broadcast on “secular waves”,¹⁰³ but after Pope Pius XI utilised the radio to broadcast from St Peter’s Basilica in 1925 any such argument was done away with.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the committee engaged to broadcast progress reports of preparations for the Congress on Station 2UE, also broadcasting services from St Mary’s Cathedral each Sunday evening.¹⁰⁵ This proved to be an effective method of advertising, as the *Daily Telegraph* reported a significant increase in demand for listeners’ licenses, which they attributed, at least in part, to the Congress.¹⁰⁶ The broadcast was not only to be used in the lead-up, the events of the Congress, for the first time in the history of Eucharistic Congresses, were to be “broadcast in every country of the world”.¹⁰⁷ The Sydney Congress was also the first time that a Congress made use of amplification, and it was used on a grand scale, with speakers lining the route for the procession to amplify the accompaniment music for hymns, and speakers used in all the halls in which speeches at the conference took place.¹⁰⁸ The use of amplification was not just significant in the history of Eucharistic Congresses, but it was also a significant moment in the history of amplification as it was thought to be “the largest ever attempted and successfully accomplished” at that time.¹⁰⁹ The use of radio for the Congress was to have lasting effects on the Sydney Catholic community as it was the catalyst for the foundation of a permanent Catholic radio station, 2SM.¹¹⁰ 2SM would later host the famous “Radio Replies” of the Rev. Dr Rumble and be a significant channel of Catholic outreach in the 1930s and beyond.¹¹¹

Sectarianism and the Congress

The broader community response to the Congress taking place in Sydney was generally positive. The NSW Premier, a Protestant, was quick to express his support of the event, stating that he “fully appreciate[s] the importance of the International Eucharistic Congress which is to be held in Sydney...which will be an outstanding event in the religious history of Australia”, and expressed his belief that the Congress would “strengthen the conviction that the only sound foundation for a healthy national life is that of true religion.”¹¹² A non-Christian, calling

¹⁰³ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ “A Very Modern Eucharistic Procession,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 September 1928, 17. Pope Pius XI was a great promoter of the use of modern technology in evangelisation, later founding Vatican Radio, in 1931.

¹⁰⁵ “All About the Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1928, 9.

¹⁰⁶ “Eucharistic Congress Broadcasts,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1928, 7.

¹⁰⁷ “50,000 Will be Able to Hear Elaborate Eucharistic Arrangements Millions Overseas,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 August 1928, 3.

¹⁰⁸ “A Very Modern Eucharistic Procession,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 September 1928, 17.

¹⁰⁹ “A Very Modern Eucharistic Procession.”

¹¹⁰ Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 135.

¹¹¹ O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, 373.

¹¹² “Mr Bavin’s Message. Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1927, 6.

himself “Thinker”, wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* to express his support of the Congress, seeing it as a boon both for Sydney and Australia, writing that “a quarter of a million people coming to Sydney on the lowest-possible reckoning”, would be beneficial not just “from the spending power of these people, [but also] the publicity given to Australia when they return home”, in addition to the employment opportunities the influx of visitors created for “unemployed Australian workmen”.¹¹³ The *Daily Telegraph* opined that “believers and unbelievers alike can find occasion for thought in a rite, or series of rites, that has survived the fall of dynasties and the wreck of empires.”¹¹⁴ Many could see these benefits and supported the Congress regardless of their own religious affiliation.

This was not so for a number of Protestant groups all around Australia, however, who could not support the Congress despite the benefits it would bring the country because of their outrage at the “idolatry” of the Blessed Sacrament being processed through the streets of Sydney. One Presbyterian minister warned that if it went ahead “there will probably be bloodshed”.¹¹⁵ The Australian Protestant Defence Association,¹¹⁶ the general assembly of the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia,¹¹⁷ the Adelaide Presbyterian Assembly,¹¹⁸ the joint Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference,¹¹⁹ the Churches of Christ,¹²⁰ and many other Protestant individuals wrote to the papers and to the Premier to express a “strong protest” over the procession of the Eucharist. It is worth noting that all the protests were at this specific part of the Congress: they did not protest the holding of the gathering but of the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. As the Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference said “the elevation of the Hosts in the streets of that city...[is] a direct challenge to the pith of Protestantism.”¹²¹ The Loyal Orange Institution of Queensland opposed “our public thoroughfares being utilised for this idolatrous display [and] insult to our Reformation principles and our Protestant faith”.¹²² The Adelaide Presbyterian Assembly made the protest that the procession was “a superstitious act” under the British Constitution and one that was “repugnant to the religious principles of the vast majority of the people of the Commonwealth, and likely to lead to a

¹¹³ “Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 1928, 6.

¹¹⁴ “Conference Visitors,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1928, 6.

¹¹⁵ “Procession May Mean Bloodshed” Presbyterian Minister on Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1928, 5.

¹¹⁶ “Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 May 1928, 7.

¹¹⁷ “Eucharistic Congress Free Presbyterian’s Attitude,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 1928, 18.

¹¹⁸ “Eucharistic Congress. Presbyterian Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1928, 12.

¹¹⁹ “Eucharistic Congress. Victorian Methodists’ Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1928, 18.

¹²⁰ “Churches of Christ Eucharistic Congress Procession. Strongly-Worded Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 April 1928, 13.

¹²¹ “Eucharistic Congress. Victorian Methodists’ Protest,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1928, 18.

¹²² “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Brisbane Courier*, 30 June 1928, 21.

serious disturbance”; given those facts, the Assembly asked that the government prohibit the procession as the British government had done in 1908 when the International Eucharistic Congress was held in London.¹²³ Although the *Daily Telegraph* featured an article intimating that the government was divided over the question of allowing the Blessed Sacrament to be processed through the streets,¹²⁴ the government ultimately concluded that there was “no reasonable ground upon which the Ministry could rightly interfere”, and suggested that “any further agitation in this direction would be detrimental to that broad spirit of tolerance which has always characterised the Protestant people.”¹²⁵ For Catholics this was a momentous occasion, it was a symbol of the how far the Church had come in finding its place in Australian society, in the “utmost cooperation of a Government that one hundred years ago had set its face against the Church and bidden its ministers begone.”¹²⁶

Perhaps more surprising than the Protestants who protested against the procession were those who supported it. The President-General of the Methodist Conference, for example, sent a “message of good will” to the committee of the Congress, expressing his hope that the Congress would impress upon Australians “the supreme importance of those great spiritual realities for which the Universal Church of Jesus Christ is the Divinely appointed witness among men”.¹²⁷ An Anglican cleric went further: praising the devotion to Our Lord that brought together so many Catholics, he asked “Could our own Church do the same thing? Could we in Sydney muster for a religious ceremony anything approaching this vast concourse?”¹²⁸ He thought not. Comparing his church to the Catholic Church, he opined that the elements of the Catholic Church that made such a demonstration possible were its unity — both intellectual and liturgical — its attention to teaching the faith to children, and the leadership of its hierarchy. To his mind, the procession put to rest any faint ideas that may have been lingering in the minds of non-Catholics that “the Roman Catholic acts in ignorant fear of his priest”, for to see the “long procession of returned soldiers and University graduates” was

¹²³ “Eucharistic Congress. Presbyterian Protest,” The procession was not technically prohibited by the government, but there was a great furore over the issue, with many Protestant groups putting pressure on the government to ban it. In the end the Church agreed to abandon the procession of the Eucharist, but the handling of the affair led to a senior political figure, who was a Catholic, resigning from office. For further on this issue see Geraldine Vaughan, “‘Britishers and Protestants’: Protestantism and Imperial Identities in Britain, Canada and Australia from the 1880s to the 1920s”, *Studies in Church History* 54 (2018): 364. See also: Carol A. Devlin, “The Eucharistic Procession of 1908: The Dilemma of the Liberal Government,” *Church History* 63 (1994): 407-35.

¹²⁴ “Govt. Divided Over Eucharistic Congress Problem,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 March 1928, 2.

¹²⁵ “Eucharistic Congress. Permission to Carry the Host,” *Brisbane Courier*, 20 April 1928, 6.

¹²⁶ “World Peace and the 1928 Eucharistic Congress,” *America* 39, 26 (6 October 1928): 610.

¹²⁷ “The Eucharistic Congress and Our Separated Brethren,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 19 January 1928, 24.

¹²⁸ “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Freeman’s Journal* 27 September 1928, 31, reprinting an extract from the *Church Standard*.

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to disbelieve it.¹²⁹ The prominent place given to veterans in the procession, marching both near the front and holding the canopy over the Blessed Sacrament, suggests that impression was intended by the organisers.¹³⁰

This unity between Protestants and Catholics, despite the fears of a serious disturbance suggested by some, was one of the most remarkable features of the Congress; that in a decade which had seen some of the worst sectarianism, a religious event took place with the support of both Catholics and Protestants and others. Even the Communist paper, the *Workers' Weekly* commented on this, observing bitterly that “the sectarian hatchet has been buried...and all sections of the master class participate in the proceedings.”¹³¹ The *Catholic Press*, which was always quick to point out any whiff of sectarianism or discrimination, applauded that “the barriers of creed broke down...generous Australian hearts knew nothing but welcome...It aroused the interest of a whole continent as never before”.¹³² The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that the international Catholic visitors were warmly welcomed by Protestant leaders, and the Congress saw the Premier give an address in St Mary's Cathedral; this was the first time that a Protestant had ever spoken from the pulpit in St Mary's.¹³³ A further event of significance in illustrating the absence of sectarianism from the Congress was a garden party held at Government House to honour Cardinal Cerretti, which was attended by the Prime Minister, the Anglican Archbishop and the chief Rabbi of the NSW Jewish community; an ecumenical gathering if ever there was one.¹³⁴ No doubt this unity, and the government allowing it to go ahead despite the protests it received, were due to the economic benefits it promised to bring Australia and the potential to boost its international image. As the *Brisbane Courier* said, “the Congress, which is attracting distinguished visitors from all parts of the globe, should focus the eyes of the world on the Commonwealth.”¹³⁵ The Congress was “putting the country on the map” in some sense, in that a “widespread and increasing interest in Australia” was noticed in overseas newspapers in the lead up to the Congress.¹³⁶

The Congress saw the arrival of thousands of international travellers: bishops, papal representatives, religious orders and Catholic laity, as well as various members of the European

¹²⁹ “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Freeman's Journal* 27 September 1928, 31, reprinting an extract from the *Church Standard*.

¹³⁰ “Order of Procession,” *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 31.

¹³¹ “Spiritual Revival and Literature Ban,” *Workers' Weekly*, 7 September 1928, 2.

¹³² “Hail! The Eucharistic King,” *The Catholic Press* 13 September 1928, 48.

¹³³ “Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1928, 12.

¹³⁴ “Garden Party Given by the Lieutenant-Governor,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 September 1928, 14.

¹³⁵ “General News,” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 March 1928, 12.

¹³⁶ “Notes of the Week Political and Otherwise,” *The Catholic Press*, 22 December 1927, 27.

nobility.¹³⁷ This was of clear economic benefit and an increase in prestige for Australia. While the majority of the visitors came from Europe and the United States, clerics and laity also made their way from Africa, Asia and from the Middle East, representatives of the various Middle Eastern Catholic rites.¹³⁸ These visitors caused a stir in some quarters; the Indian Bishop Chulaparambil, described in most secular press accounts as speaking “admirable English”, was regarded by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as one of “the more notable” arrivals for the Congress and it was speculated that it was the first time a “native Indian bishop” had visited Australia.¹³⁹ In relation to his presence, the Communist Party complained that it was an example of the government's hypocrisy as it was a contradiction of the White Australia Policy for non-white delegates to the Congress to be present.¹⁴⁰ In another notable arrival, the papers also commented on the “warm welcome” accorded to the German Archbishop and his entourage.¹⁴¹ Where eight years previously Fr Jerger had been deported for being born in Germany, now Australians welcomed the German prelates and laity with open arms. Speaking of this, Archbishop Duhig said that this was one of the “great objects” of the Congress, “to promote international understanding and international as well as domestic peace.”¹⁴² The vast numbers of international arrivals was also important from the point of view of the place of Catholics in Australia. Just as Australian soldiers had marvelled at the universality of Catholicism and the example of a Catholic nation when they were stationed in France,¹⁴³ so now for all Australians, in a country where Catholics were in the minority, the influx of 200,000 Catholics from all over the world was a reminder of the universality of the Church and its prominence in a great number of countries. Archbishop Duhig declared that “[t]he full significance of the congress is now dawning on...all Australia” as the vast numbers of international travellers illustrated

¹³⁷ “Film of Eucharistic Congress,” *Brisbane Courier*, 10 September 1928, 3; “Eucharistic Congress Overseas Delegates Arrive,” *Western Argus*, 28 August 1928, 6; “50,000 for Fares of Delegates,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1928, 2; Frappell, “International Eucharistic Congress 1928”.

¹³⁸ “Conference Visitors,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1928, 6.; Work of Christian Orphans,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1928, 9; *Western Argus*, 11 September 1928, 9; “People of Many Lands for Eucharistic Congress,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 1928, 5.

¹³⁹ “Notable Arrivals Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August 1928, 14; *Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1928, 2.

¹⁴⁰ “Eucharistic Congress. No Discussion Wanted,” *Workers’ Weekly*, 31 August 1928, 2. Their complaint was not that the White Australia Policy was “waived” for this occasion, but that it was typical that it would be waived for a “capitalist” event, while the Government did not allow “foreign workers” to attend a Communist conference. See also “The White Australia Bogey,” *Workers’ Weekly*, 10 August 1928, 3. Their position on the White Australia Policy is however, unclear; in one article entitled “White Australia”, for example, they suggest support for the policy, saying that Australian women were “endangering our national pride by associating with “Asiatics”, see “White Australia,” *Workers’ Weekly*, 31 August 1928, 3. Another article suggests that they are fierce opponents of the policy, seeing it as a kind of capitalist conspiracy to keep the working class under their thumbs, “The White Australia Bogey,” *Workers’ Weekly*, 10 August 1928, 3.

¹⁴¹ “Tribute to Fallen Soldiers International Assembly,” *Western Argus*, 11 September 1928, 9.

¹⁴² “Tribute to Fallen Soldiers International Assembly,” *Western Argus*, 11 September 1928, 9.

¹⁴³ “Captain Chaplain Fahey, D.S.O., Tells His War Story,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 June 1918, 20.

“what a marvellous force for good in the world is the Catholic Church”, which brought together “so many people of different races and colour and customs” in a magnificent display of “the unity of the Church throughout the world.”¹⁴⁴

A magnificent display it certainly was. The *Sydney Morning Herald* declared that apart from any spiritual significance, it was noteworthy purely from as an outward show “it was wonderful with its pageantry and its glowing colour.”¹⁴⁵ An American delegate to the Congress wrote of it: “the pomp and splendor that were Australia’s in her hour of glory are even now stored in the memories of the devout who gathered on the heights of Sydney to witness its impressive ending or are portrayed in pictures and written into records that men from afar may see and read.”¹⁴⁶ All the events of the week long Congress were crowded and successful, with some particularly poignant moments, such as the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Patrick’s Church Hill, in commemoration of the preservation of the Blessed Sacrament in that spot in 1818 by Father Jeremiah O’Flynn before he was deported.¹⁴⁷ The high point of the Congress was, of course, the much campaigned against procession of the Eucharist through the streets of Sydney. Here was displayed the vitality of the Church, with its many societies and associations, with its school children from the Catholic schools that continued despite the discrimination against them in government funding, with the Catholic returned soldiers a visible answer to the charge of disloyalty so frequently levelled against them.¹⁴⁸ Here at last was a moment for Australian Catholics to rejoice in being both Catholic and Australian, rejoicing in their Catholicism, in its universality, its beauty and tradition, and rejoicing in their Australianess in the freedom they enjoyed to practice their faith, in the “Australian spirit” that triumphed in letting the procession go ahead.¹⁴⁹

On the morning of the final day of the Congress, a solemn Mass at St Patrick’s Manly was celebrated with over 5,000 clergy assisting.¹⁵⁰ The procession began directly afterwards, with the thousands who had attended Mass processing down to the wharf. The centre of the procession was the Monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament, which was carried aloft by Cardinal Cerretti, the papal legate. Holding the ornate white and gold embroidered canopy, which had been made by the nuns in Leichhardt, were Catholic veterans, Victoria Cross

¹⁴⁴ “Tribute to Fallen Soldiers International Assembly,” *Western Argus*, 11 September 1928, 9.

¹⁴⁵ “Eucharistic Congress,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1928, 12.

¹⁴⁶ “World Peace and the 1928 Eucharistic Congress,” 610.

¹⁴⁷ Eris O’Brien, “The Blessed Sacrament in Australian Catacombs,” *Freeman’s Journal* 6 September 1928, 37. Also: Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 114.

¹⁴⁸ “The Eucharistic Congress,” *Freeman’s Journal* 27 September 1928, 31.

¹⁴⁹ “The Real Australian Spirit,” *Freeman’s Journal* 13 September 1928, 24.

¹⁵⁰ Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 115.

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winners and other veterans in rotation; a visual statement of Catholic loyalty.¹⁵¹ The procession then proceeded unto a specially decorated barge, and a flotilla of smaller vessels, which set sail for Circular Quay while five biplanes flew overhead. When the vessels reached the Quay the full procession began, with all those who were waiting there to march to the newly completed St Mary's Cathedral. Over 20,000 formed the procession, made up of large contingents of the various Catholic societies and associations,¹⁵² while hundreds of thousands lined the streets, removing hats and kneeling in reverence as their God passed by.¹⁵³ The procession was a display of the vibrancy of the Catholic Church in Sydney, the number, vitality and variety of Catholic lay and religious organisations were exhibited for all to see. The crowds followed the procession until it reached the Cathedral where Cardinal Cerretti mounted the steps and then gave the immense, kneeling crowd benediction while thousands of voices lifted to sing sacred hymns. "Who could forget '28?" asked the Knights of the Southern Cross,¹⁵⁴ for who indeed could forget the blessed, sacred occasion. It was a triumph for Catholics who had been fighting for justice and fair play. A symbol of the progress of Australia in distinction to the Empire, which had disallowed such a procession in England, the Congress was also a fleeting foretaste of the kind of acceptance that Catholics fought for. As the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* opined at the end of the Congress, "the rebuke they received on Sunday [the Congress] may produce a different spirit in the hearts of the people who have sown discord. We want good will and good fellowship to make Australia what it should be, and it ought to be the aim of [all] to live in the greatest harmony."¹⁵⁵ While the Congress did not bring about an immediate change within Australian society and Catholics' place in it, it was a moment of hope for Catholics as well as the foundation of many future Catholic endeavours, including a greater emphasis on outreach to those outside the Church.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some self-improving and self-defending endeavours of the Church in response to its experience of war. With their participation in the war not having effected the acceptance in the community they desired, Sydney Catholics saw an increased need for a defensive arm for the Church, to fight for a better place within the community. The Knights of

¹⁵¹ "The Eucharistic Congress," *Freeman's Journal* 27 September 1928, 31.

¹⁵² The Procession included mounted policemen, veterans, boy scouts, Children of Mary, University students, teaching orders, religious orders, priests and bishops. See "Order of Procession," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 31.

¹⁵³ "Order of Procession," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 31.

¹⁵⁴ "Who Could Forget '28?," *Advance Australia* 1970, quoted in Baxter, *Reach for the Stars*, 112.

¹⁵⁵ "The Real Australian Spirit," *Freeman's Journal* 13 September 1928, 24.

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the Southern Cross are a prime example of how the Church responded to this need in the post-war years. An effective force for improving the lot of Catholic workers, the Knights also fought discrimination through the education of Catholic men, so that a stronger, larger force was mobilised. The Knights' mission had both a spiritual and a temporal aim. Their main concern was with the spiritual advancement of Catholic men, intending to teach, support and encourage them in their faith. Their secondary aim, only slightly less important than the first, was to secure justice for Catholics in the public sphere, with the vision of a harmonious and prosperous Australia, free from discord and sectarianism. Like the Catholic Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Association, the Knights emphasised that one of their objects was the furthering of Australia and a genuine Australian spirit. They exemplified the broader trend in the Catholic community in Sydney in the years after the war towards a more Australian and less Irish character to the Church.

The fruits of the work of such organisations as the Knights could be seen in the success of the 29th International Eucharistic Congress held in Sydney. Here was a triumphant display of Catholicism that was not only tolerated, but generally appreciated by the wider, non-Catholic Australian community. It was a historic moment for the Church in Australia, when thousands of Catholics marched through the streets of Sydney as the Church proudly displayed its vitality, diversity and loyalty in a manner that had been prohibited in Britain some few years earlier. Australia proved itself more tolerant than its motherland. The International Eucharistic Congress is a fitting bookend for the decade immediately following the war. During the war, Australians appeared on the world stage in a new way, going out to the world and making a name for themselves. In the Congress, held in the closing years of the 1920s, Australia, specifically Australian Catholics, welcomed the world to Australia. While in the war the universality of the Church had been a cause of suspicion and charges of disloyalty, in the Eucharistic Congress the universality of the Church was admired by the majority of Australians.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to answer the question of how the Catholic Church in Sydney responded to the challenges of life after the war, and in doing so address McKernan's claim that the Australian churches became increasingly irrelevant after the war. To achieve this aim, this thesis analysed and examined the life of the Church in Sydney during the years in question. What were its concerns and activities, what did it see as the pressing problems stemming from the war and how did it address them, and, therefore, how relevant was it to Australian society? These were the questions that guided this thesis' analysis of the Church in the interwar years of 1919-1929. While looking specifically at the effects of war on the Church, and the Church's response to these, the thesis has also aimed to give a fuller account of the history of the Church during these years, examining its life and activities.

Making up a little less than a quarter of the population, Catholics in Sydney at the beginning of the war had a strong sense of self-identity as a "persecuted minority", distinctly Irish in a British majority. The injustice of the continued lack of funding for Catholic schools, despite much agitation, coupled with the strong Irish character of the Australian hierarchy were key factors in Sydney Catholics' perception of themselves as being under attack and the consequent need to band together to form defensive organisations. As this thesis has argued, with the onset of the war Catholics were optimistic that it presented a chance for change in the position of the Church in society, seeing it as an opportunity to prove their loyalty through service and thereby win the justice they sought in education and employment. Ultimately, however, despite some early positive moves towards greater unity between Catholics and Protestants, the war had the effect of deepening the divide in Australian society, largely due to the conscription debates and the simmering suspicions about Catholic loyalty. The debates and controversies between Catholic and Protestants in the later years of the war set the tone for the Church's involvement in society in the post-war years: a turning into itself to build up and sustain its members against what it saw as the attacks of the world. As we have seen, then, many of the key works of Sydney Catholics between 1919 and 1929 were aimed at building a strong and defensive Church. The CRSSA formed as an association to fight for Catholics so "that all may justice share", the Knights began to combat the influence of Freemasonry and to keep Catholic men strong in the practice of the Faith, and at the same time St Anthony's Home was very concerned with placing Catholic orphans with Catholic families for the continued building up of the Church. The first two of those interwar organisations had very clear aims to

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fight for Catholic justice. In pursuing this aim, among others, they all are examples of the legacy of the war on the Church: heightened sectarianism leading to greater solidarity within the Church.

It is interesting, however, that while occupied with the defence of the Church, and the maintenance of a fairly insular Catholic culture, a concurrent trend in the Church was the creation of a more specifically Australian identity, both within the Church and in broader society, to lessen the sectarian divides by creating a culture that was neither British nor Irish, but acceptable to both. Thus, the work of the CRSSA to establish national identity through the promotion of an Australian anthem and flag distinct from the British flag and anthem, and the possibility of a national celebration that was not specifically Protestant. In like manner, the organisation of priests, the Manly Union, agitated for the cultivation of a 'native priesthood' of Australian born men, rather than the preference for Irish born prelates that had existed for decades. It was the experience of the men and chaplains in the trenches that crystallised and drove this desire; with many expressing their joy at the harmony that existed between Protestants and Catholics among the troops, and their desire to see that implemented back in Australian society. It was thus the Catholic veterans' group, comprised of both servicemen and chaplains, that was one of the most vocal agitators within the Church for an Australian identity. This extended too to their desire for and actions towards an Anzac Day that was not specifically Protestant and British. While very little was seemingly achieved towards the end of creating an Australian identity, it is significant that the war produced this movement even if it barely realised any concrete achievements. In this way we see the Church attempting to be able to minister to and engage with society more generally. While the Church was specifically and vociferously Irish, its engagement with a British culture was necessarily limited. Consequently, in attempting to create a distinct Australian identity, the Church was expanding its possibility to engage with broader society.

At the outset of this thesis, one of the key areas which looked like a promising avenue of research to explore the Church's actions to meet the needs of those affected by war, was the rehabilitation of veterans. Based on the history of the Church's work in charitable aid and caring for the sick in particular, it seemed safe to assume that the Church would have been very involved in the care and rehabilitation of veterans. It was one of the surprises of research that I did not uncover significant works by the Church specifically dedicated to the physical rehabilitation of veterans. Perhaps because of the fierce rivalry and tension between Protestants and Catholics, the work of rehabilitation largely fell to secular and state institutions. It also seems that in Australia the care of veterans was seen not as the work of charities, but as the

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work of the government. As the president of the Returned Soldiers Association said in 1916, the association “hates the very idea of charity in relation to those who have given the community far more than the community can ever repay”.¹ Perhaps too, the churches felt that their role was in the spiritual rehabilitation of the veterans and their families, rather than the physical which seemed to be adequately covered by the state aided by such institutions as the RSSILA and the Red Cross. This would explain the Church’s focus on the building up and instruction of their flock and their increased devotion to a vibrant parish life in the years following World War I. As Edmund Campion argues, the post-war era was one of great Catholic “solidarity”. Parish life after the war was “not solely religious...it was social, literary, dramatic, intellectual and sporting”.² On the intellectual front, Campion notes that compared to the other Christian denominations, Catholics “subscribed to and kept alive an astonishing range of weekly newspapers and monthly magazines”.³ The interwar era was one of the establishment of new societies and clubs, parish missions, parish picnics, with the crowning glory of the Eucharistic Congress of 1928. In short, it was an era aimed at the formation and growth of the Catholic faithful. So what of the work of rehabilitation and remembrance? Catholics erected memorials and celebrated Masses for the dead. They consoled grieving parents and were spaces where bereaved families could find support. Perhaps their idea of rehabilitation was to give people something to live for, a community to live with, and a full social calendar to provide connection and support. Perhaps their main focus was not healing the wounds of war specifically, but rather providing the life that would heal those who needed it, and at the same time be open to those less affected by the war. This is not to say that the Church did nothing for the physical needs of veterans and their families. As we have seen with the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, they did indeed care for widows and orphans and any in financial distress. The work of the CRSSA was also specifically aimed at veterans, but their focus was their social needs and their desire to properly remember their lost comrades.

The concerns of the years after the war were not only related to veterans and their needs, there was also a deep concern for the stability, security and future of the Australian population, which manifested itself in discussions of marriage and family matters. As has been illustrated, the Church was keenly involved in those discussions, and actively and concretely worked for their vision for marriage and family. One striking example of this was St Vincent de Paul Society’s St Anthony’s Home, examined in Chapter Three, which aimed to support

¹ Hugh D. McIntosh, “A Message to Returned Soldiers,” Sydney, 9th August 1916, in SAA, File A0567.

² Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood: Viking, 1987), 124.

³ Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 128.

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Catholic families by caring for unwed mothers and their babies, and worked to place Catholic orphans with Catholic families. In this work, the Church proved itself very relevant to the hundreds it ministered to, while at the same time addressing and contributing a practical response to the post-war concern of increasing the population. In examining the work of these Catholic societies, Chapters Two, Three and Four have all engaged with this thesis' aim to assess the actions of the Church in meeting the needs of those affected by war and assess to what extent these societies were specifically responding to the problems of the post-war world.

The final aim of this thesis was, by examining the Church's activities and missions in the years after the war, to address and evaluate McKernan's claim that after the war the churches became "increasingly irrelevant"; that their actions and influence during the war demonstrated their irrelevance to Australian society.⁴ What is the measure of relevance? Who are the people to whom it is judged relevant or otherwise? If you take its own members, the Catholics of Sydney, was the Church less relevant to them after the war than before? Based on the evidence of this thesis, of the number and variety of clubs, associations, organisations and activities that began in response to the needs of Sydney Catholics, it would seem that the Church was certainly relevant to its own members. If active involvement in the life of the Church and its mission can be taken to be a measure of the Church's relevance to its flock, then I think it is evident that the Church was relevant. It is my argument that it was, and that nowhere could this be seen more vividly than the International Eucharistic Congress of 1928, that showcased the variety and vitality of Catholic social, charitable and missionary groups. It was not only a visible illustration of the relevance of the Church to its own members, however. It was not only teaching orders who taught at Catholic schools or members of the clergy who were on display in the hundreds of thousands strong procession. It was also Catholic veterans who had fought for all Australians, members of religious orders who ran hospitals that cared for all and sundry, members of the St Vincent de Paul Society who cared for the financially destitute. It was a display too of the contribution of the Church to broader Australian society.

In responding to McKernan's claim, this thesis has also examined some of the assumptions and claims that his thesis rests upon. One of these claims was that the reason the churches became less relevant after the war was due to the clergymen's "lack of restraint" at the outset of war, adding to "the rhetoric of hysteria when they might have helped control it."⁵ Because of this initial enthusiasm, people lost confidence in the churches when the death toll

⁴ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War* (Canberra: Catholic Theological Faculty, Australian War Memorial, 1980), 177.

⁵ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 177.

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mounted up and the reality of the sacrifice that the war entailed became clear. McKernan's argument is that the churches became out of touch with the people because of their outlook on the war. However, this thesis has shown that the Catholic position on the war had, from the outset, been less romantic and far more pragmatic than their Protestant counterparts. Indeed, it was one of the chief charges levelled against them, that they did not support the war to the degree that many thought necessary to be considered a true, loyal Australian. Similarly, McKernan sees the conscription defeat, and the fact that "clergymen campaigned strenuously for a 'Yes' vote", as emblematic of the lack of influence of the church over their flocks.⁶ Again, however, Catholic clergy generally were against conscription, although there were a few outspoken supporters the general belief was that all Catholics opposed conscription. It is interesting that although McKernan often elucidates the differences between the Catholic and Protestant response to the war, in drawing his conclusions he conflates the two and speaks of all the churches as having had the same experience. As my first chapter has shown, this was not the case. Protestants and Catholics experienced the war in quite different ways, and the testimonies of the chaplains about the faithfulness or otherwise of the soldiers they ministered to was also generally different. McKernan's argument for the "increasing irrelevance" of the churches is based on his opinion that the clergymen became out of touch with their people, particularly in relation to their conception of war and conscription, however, arguably these two points are not true of the Catholic Church, or at the very least are not true to the same degree. This thesis, then responds to McKernan's claim as it relates to the Catholic Church. Whether his claim is true of the Protestant churches is outside the scope of this thesis, but certainly a worthy avenue of further research.

Was the Church less relevant after the war? It is the argument of this thesis that it was not demonstrably so, that if the Church was not more relevant at the very least it was not less. The war had the effect of galvanising Catholics as a distinct group, driving even those were nominal Catholics into a greater sense of loyalty to the Church. This reality is reflected in each of the associations studied in this thesis, particularly the Knights of the Southern Cross and the CRSSA, who each explicitly in their constitutions aimed at protecting and promoting the Church against what they saw as the hostile forces of society. The main focus of the interwar years of 1919 to 1929, for the Catholic Church in Sydney was consolidation, the building up and support of its own flock. This focus was largely due to their experience during the war and

⁶ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 176.

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afterwards, and the sectarianism that grew from the conscription debates and the discussions of what it meant to be a loyal citizen.

In telling the story of the post-war years from the perspective of Sydney Catholics, in trying to get into contact with the inner life of a religious community, there has been much food for thought in regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the community at that time. In brief, an assessment of Australian Catholicism from 1919 to 1929 looks very similar to D.G.M. Jackson's assessment of the Church in 1949, quoted at length because his assessment could be applied here with equal truth:

In a number of ways the Catholic Church in Australia appears to be one of the most active and flourishing religious communions in the English-speaking world...despite losses, the mass of loyal adherents remains impressive. It is sufficient to sustain a vast organisation of churches, schools, seminaries, religious Orders and manifold hospitals...on great occasions they display their faith with a militant mass - enthusiasm and devotion which are very impressive indeed. ...but there is another side of the Australian Catholic picture...it must be said that while Catholics dwell in the midst of their fellow-citizens the Church still remains an alien...the Catholic Church in Australia is simply failing to leaven the other four-fifths...⁷

This then is a picture of the Church in Sydney during the interwar years of 1919-1929, tracking some of the major effects of war on the Church and its response to these. Of course there are many aspects to Catholicism in Sydney during those years that have not been touched on, the work of the Catholic Women's League and the completion of St Mary's Cathedral are two striking examples, but as both of these works began before the war, and were not as directly related to the question of the effect of war on the Church, they were left aside. The history of the former, too, has been well documented by Hilary Carey, and this thesis had nothing to contribute on that head.⁸ It is an exciting prospect, however, that there are a number of studies currently being undertaken on St Mary's Cathedral, as it is currently an under-researched field in Australian Catholic history. Being limited to the work of those Catholic groups and societies that responded to war and its effects, this thesis has raised questions and opened avenues that would be fruitful areas for further research. This thesis has focused on Sydney, but similar studies involving other geographical areas would be worth pursuing. The growth of an Australian born clergy and its effects on the character and influence of the Church on broader society would be a valuable and interesting study to conduct, particularly after World War I, as

⁷ D.G.M. Jackson, 'Australian Catholicism: Today and Tomorrow,' *Twentieth Century*, Vol. IV, No. 2, (December 1949): 16-17, in O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 396-7.

⁸ Hilary Carey, *Truly Catholic, Truly Feminine* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1987).

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more has been written on the topic up until 1915.⁹ So too would the exploration of how the proliferation of Catholic societies in the 1920s led to the concerted and energetic activities of Catholic Action in the following decade. More broadly speaking, those areas identified in the limitations section of this introduction would also be valuable areas for further research: the Church's involvement in the economic recovery after the war and the lead up to the Great Depression, and the effect of the Spanish Flu on the Catholic Community. These are only some of the avenues for future research inspired by the findings of this thesis.

The organisations studied in this thesis have not received a great deal of academic attention. The main history of the Knights was written more as a popular account of their work, while there has been no serious writing, that I could find, on the CRSSA. Both are important associations that had significant impact on the life of the Church in Sydney in the 1920s and on broader society. It is also interesting that in the time that I have been writing this thesis, at least two new branches of the Knights have been established or revived in NSW as young men want to contribute to the life of the Church in the form of the Knights. It is my hope that this thesis' examination and analysis of the story of the foundation of the Knights, and of Catholic life in the 1920s, will inspire more such revivals. The state of the Church and its relation to broader society may be quite different now than it was in the 1920s, but the work of the Knights was also to respond to the particular circumstances of the time, this history of their foundation and early works has the potential to be a model and inspiration for those who, like the early Knights, wish to strengthen and defend the Church in the pursuit of truth and justice. In like manner, it is important, as we continue to celebrate Anzac Day, to discover more of the factors that played a part in the formation of the services and memorials.

This thesis has shown that the Church in post -World War I Australia did play a significant role in the lives of its own members, that Catholic organisations responded to particular social challenges of the period, and that there was a move towards both a more nationalist definition of and a reemphasis on the international perspective in Australian Catholicism, culminating in the 29th International Eucharistic Congress of 1928. In studying the Catholic Church in Sydney in the decade following World War I, this thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the history of Australia in the 1920s and, more specifically, to the history of the Catholic Church in Australia, while challenging the claim that Australian churches became less relevant after the war.

⁹ See for example Kevin Livingston, *The emergence of an Australian Catholic priesthood, 1835-1915* (Manly: Catholic Theological Faculty, 1977).

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