

# Introduction

This was the one to attend [the Dawn Service at Gallipoli]. In a secular age, this was the Australian and New Zealand church. Alone among the nations, we had chosen one consecrated day not to trumpet a victory but to remember ancestors who had suffered and died trying. What those we remembered were trying to do is not immaterial for in the context of their time it was an attempt to take a place in a world beyond their distant shores and it was an attempt to fight what most of them were led to believe was an assault on a way of life that was their own. That they discovered that the world in which they found themselves was confusing and treacherous, and that many have come to debate that they were misled and misused by an Empire that saw them as mere colonials, is not immaterial either [...] In choosing Anzac Day as the most important national day of the year – and the first ceremonies were in 1916 [...] Australia and New Zealand were not celebrating war. They were remembering the shock and pain that came with giving birth to a couple of little nations in a world gone mad and honouring their children who did not give up, even in defeat.

Tom Wright, *Walking the Gallipoli Peninsula: making the most of your Visit to the Battlefields*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2010 pp. 219–20.

## THE ARGUMENT (*What we must know and comprehend*)

1. UNDERSTAND the uniquely aggressive nature of the Bismarckian-Wilhelmine Empire.
2. UNDERSTAND the immediate threat to Australasian security posed by the German naval presence in the Pacific
3. UNDERSTAND the self-perception of the majority of Australians and New Zealanders at that time as loyal subjects of the British Empire.

4. UNDERSTAND that the nation was a community *under God*.

Australians and New Zealanders of present and future generations seeking to understand why their nations, as distant overseas Dominions in the British Empire, had no choice but to be involved in the Great War (1914–1918) need to start with a solid grasp of the political culture of Prussia–Germany. Without this knowledge, any explanation will remain meaningless. It was the German ‘power elite’ who had unleashed the war and they did so for objectives that have now become indisputably clear. In the past, that is during the inter-war period, there had been a so-called ‘war-guilt debate’ which produced a large number of serious works of scholarship from the international community with varying degrees of political motivation. The Germans had even set up a ‘War Guilt Desk’ in their foreign ministry to support authors willing to re-examine the lead up to and course of the Great War, with a view to exculpating Germany from the charge of sole war guilt as had been insisted upon in Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles. The number of works by both German and non-German scholars who accepted grants to do so is most impressive.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, at the conclusion of the Second World War, German historians were compelled to try and answer the question, ‘where did it all go wrong?’ And that is what produced the so-called ‘Fischer controversy’.

What this historiographical debate has brought out into the open as never before are the peculiarities of the power structure of Prussia–Germany. It was founded by Otto von Bismarck in 1871 emphatically as a military monarchy which enshrined the German version of the ‘divine right of kings’ (*Königtum durch Gottes Gnaden*). This meant that Bismarck’s political objective was to retain as far as possible an antiquated form of government by suppressing the demands of the democratic socialist movement, the rights of the

Roman Catholic element of the population as well as those of the moderate liberal movement. Essentially, Bismarck devised a constitution to stifle parliamentary democracy and to secure the status and power of the ruling classes. Among the latter the aristocracy and the army were pre-eminent, closely followed by the industrialist classes. Interestingly, the university professors virtually to a man all supported the Prussian solution to the German question that is Bismarck's solution. Prussia–Germany's uniqueness, given that every nation state is unique in its own peculiar ways, was distinguished by the privileged role of the army. Here the Prussian tradition, as shall be seen in chapters two and three, retained its potency. The army was the most important element in Prussia–Germany and it determined the course of German foreign policy as well as domestic policy. On this question of 'militarism' there is a vast range of research which goes a long way to explaining the peculiarity of German history.

The period of German history between 1871 and 1914 may be designated as a time when the old ruling elites struggled feverishly against the rising tide of social democracy on the domestic front and desperately sought to shore up alliances to prevent France from embarking on a war of revenge for the losses of territory sustained in the war of 1870. Prussia–Germany at this time strove to avoid so-called 'encirclement'. That meant she needed to be in an alliance with two other Great Powers of like character, namely monarchist and anti-parliamentary, and together they could checkmate France from even thinking about *revanche*. Bismarck had set the pattern of being, as he called it *à trios*, meaning in a war alliance with two other Powers. In that way France would be unable to realise her putative ambition of revising the settlement of 1871.

This arrangement unravelled in 1890 when the so-called 'Re-insurance Treaty' of June 1887 between Germany and Russia was not renewed after Bismarck's enforced retirement in 1890. Due to German miscalculation Russia was free after 1894 to initiate and

establish an alliance with France thus contributing to the diplomatic isolation of Germany among the Powers. The ensuing decade then saw Prussia–Germany embark on a most aggressive foreign policy and a reactionary domestic policy designed to stifle the growth and appeal of social democracy among the working classes. A central element in all this was the ‘Tirpitz Plan’ to out-build the Royal Navy in capital ships. Further, the upsurge in Pan–Germanism lent to German diplomacy in that era a most ominous character. In short, it was based on the bluff theory as the perceptive German political commentator at the time, Kurt Riezler (1882–1955), observed. It meant that Germany had to be so massively armed in ships and men that by acting aggressively in international relations the national goal could be achieved by simply giving opponents the impression that if compliance to German aims was not granted then there would be a resort to war. One had to be strong enough to be able to demand a favourable result.

The point about this mentality is that it leaves no way out if the nation is confronted with an alliance of enemies that is numerically and materially superior. Then there is a need to take a calculated risk. This happened in the July–August crisis of 1914. The war-time German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, called it a ‘leap in the dark’ in his memoirs. In a word, the ruling classes of Prussia–Germany had by August 1914 at the latest come to the conclusion that in order to realise their long-term objectives they would have to resort to all-out war to destroy the *Entente Cordiale* of Britain, France and Russia. The German ambition was twofold: first, imperial expansion with vast annexations of European and overseas territory (‘place in the sun’); second, at the same time guarantee that the monarchies and ruling aristocratic and industrial elites would remain inviolate from the revolutionary aspirations of the democratic and republican working class; all this to make Prussia–Germany secure for imaginable time.

This means that any attempt to try to explain the origins and course of the Great War without taking into account the foreign and domestic politics of imperial Germany would render the result historically untenable. Expressed in a different way it shows that the Great War was only made possible by the ruthless, if nervous, ambition of Germany's ruling elites, especially the army. This is of key importance. The Wilhelmine Empire has to be understood for what it was, namely a *military monarchy*.

Having thus determined to re-draw the map of Europe and the world, and being well aware that she had conjured up a world of enemies, an astonishingly confident Prussia–Germany went ahead in the belief that her destiny under God demanded that she make a bid for world power, *Gott mit uns* and *Gott strafe England*. German Protestant theology played a central part in the formation of German political will insofar as the *mentalité* of most educated Germans accepted and expected that the state should adopt an aggressive foreign policy. Germany only needed a suitable pretext on which to launch her plans. This was provided by the assassination of the Austrian crown prince and his wife during a state visit to Sarajevo in Serbia on 30 June 1914, an event that precipitated the so-called 'July Crisis' which, as the most recent and exhaustive research has shown, was manipulated by Germany to cast Russia in the role of aggressor against the aggrieved ally of Germany, Austria–Hungary. All attempts, especially by Britain, to resolve the crisis by negotiation foundered on German diplomatic machinations. And when the Germans invaded Belgium as the first phase of their plan of attack, the Schlieffen Plan, Britain had no other course than to hasten to the aid of Belgium and France. Thus the world war that everybody in the West feared became a brutal reality.

For the generation of Australians and New Zealanders who were born between the two world wars Anzac Day is unequivocally the national day of remembrance for the fallen in the bloodiest conflict in which either nation has ever been embroiled, the Great War of

1914–1918, then often called the ‘Kaiser’s War’. Subsequent conflicts, such as the Second World War, the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia, the Vietnam War, the East Timor intervention and now the contributions being made in Afghanistan and Iraq, were and are all fought by invoking the ‘Anzac spirit’ that flourished in the war of 1914–1918 in which the qualities of bravery, determination and endurance of a volunteer and civilian army were forged and proven in battles of unparalleled savagery. These values have been appropriated by subsequent generations as characterising the essential Australasian values. Thereby, as the rhetoric of remembrance of the ‘Kaiser’s War’ frequently re-iterated, Australia had won her credentials as a nation, having played her part in the defence of freedom, alongside the other Commonwealth countries and allied nations against what was then called the ‘Prussian menace’, meaning the authoritarian, class-ridden, anti-democratic values of an Empire which acted in complete contempt for the rights of small nations and human rights in general. Australia and New Zealand by way of contrast stood for democracy, decency and a ‘fair go’ for everybody. The bullies of this world, from then on, could always reckon with the opposition of the antipodean cousins.

This received version of the significance of Australia’s participation in the Great War has since the Second World War been subjected to vigorous challenges by ‘nationalist’ and ‘leftist’ writers as well as by the more strident feminist historians. The notion that the 1914–1918 war was none of Australia’s business and that the young Dominion was pressured by a manipulative mother country to supply cannon fodder for her nefarious imperialist ambitions has been advanced as a quasi-orthodoxy. Such a view, of course, diminishes the Anzac tradition, robbing it of its nobility by casting Australian leaders in 1914–1918 in the role of willing lackeys of the crafty Whitehall masters and thus portraying the volunteers as dupes of the despised imperial connection.<sup>2</sup> As well, ‘leftist’ writers attack

the conservatism and putative racism of earlier Commonwealth governments which themselves evinced 'Prussian' characteristics in their alleged contempt for organised labour, for the working class in general and, of course, for the rights of Aborigines.

Feminist writers, for their part, challenge the exclusive maleness of Australia's foundational myth, associated as it is with the blood-letting and sacrifice of comrades-in-arms on the battlefield. Women, so it is argued, are unjustly left out of the story. Where, it is asked, is the appreciation of the sacrifice of women in child-bearing who in a literal sense give birth to the nation?<sup>3</sup>

All of these challenges to the 'Anzac myth' have arisen out of the general debate about Australian national identity, and they are part of the cut and thrust of the normal civic discourse that must take place in any open society in which all views of the past have a right to be aired. What the nationalist-left and feminist positions do, however, is to build up their case in a quite a-historical way by prioritising their *present* political concerns and values over what was at the time of the Great War perceived by contemporaries as the *great* issue. In other words, these writers are guilty of the fallacy of *presentism*, namely of writing about the past as if the people of that time should have had in their mind the values and ideas of the present. There is a failure to appreciate the wide-spread sense of the real threat of 'Prussianism' to the security of the British Empire of which Australia and the other Dominions perceived themselves as loyal members. In the view of the nationalist-left today, Australia's membership in the Empire was an anachronism. If Australia in 1914 had already been a republic then it could not have been forced into a dispute which not only brought great loss of life but also retarded the nation's social, political and cultural development.<sup>4</sup> Worse still, the nation became even more tightly enmeshed in the Empire, a fact that prolonged Australian spiritual backwardness and 'cultural cringe' down to the present day. This, it is submitted, is not the scholarly way in which to write history.

It should *not* be an ideological weapon but a genuine discipline seeking to reconstruct the past as objectively as possible.

It will be argued here that these views are untenable because, essentially, their advocates for whatever reasons fail to understand the 'world context' in which the Antipodean British dependencies lived during the so-called age of imperialism. The nationalist-left and feminist historians seem to imagine that Australia's remoteness from the flashpoints of international rivalry allowed national development in a condition of 'splendid isolation'. How such a view could be seriously entertained especially in the light of sound research by such able scholars as Neville Meaney, WJ Hudson, David Walker, Jeffrey Grey, Peter Overlack and Jürgen Tampke is a historiographical mystery.<sup>5</sup> There seems to exist a tendency among some Australian scholars only to consult those works which confirm their preconceived ideas. This is scarcely fair dealing or honest scholarly procedure. It is a state of affairs reminiscent of historical scholarship in Prussia after the founding of the German Empire by Bismarck in 1871. In the lead-up to that event the 'Prussian school' interpreted the course of German history to have been pre-determined to blossom into the so-called 'Prussian solution'. When that actually materialised the 'Prussian school' laboured with single-minded enthusiasm to establish their version of German history as *the* orthodoxy so as to win the hearts and minds of those sections of German society who were less than convinced of the rightness of Prussian dominance. Any scholars suspected of not sharing that orthodoxy were rigorously excluded from university posts. The 'Prussians' strove for and maintained their orthodoxy ruthlessly. They claimed and exercised a monopoly over the interpretation of history. It was an example of political-cultural pedagogic hegemony which had dire consequences for the development of German democracy as has now been recognised. It is almost bizarre to observe that some Australian nationalist historians, in their anxiety to define national identity in accordance

with their pre-conceptions, are guilty of the same kind of attempt to exert a political-cultural pedagogic hegemony as the once notorious 'Prussian school' in Germany.

The present study is written with the aim of presenting facts that have either been intentionally ignored or have hitherto been unavailable, in order to 'set the record straight' about how Anzac Day originated and how it was established to become the great national day of remembrance of the nation's fallen in war, 'the one day of the year'. As we show, the Day was shaped largely in the mind of one extraordinarily energetic, public-spirited and organisationally gifted Anglo-Catholic priest, Canon David John Garland, who by virtue of his spiritual insights as an Anglican, was able to devise a ceremony of remembrance that was essentially religious but which had the appearance of being a thoroughly secular event. Such an appearance was essential of course to allow the Roman Catholic section of the Australian population to participate. Garland was nothing if not sensitive to the exclusivist claims of Rome at that time and their divisive effect on the Australian community. Above all, Garland and his supporters wanted a nationally unifying day of remembrance and a symbolic act of penitence for the sin of war and of the collective neglect of the things of almighty God. Consequently, this study will break new ground in that it takes account of the 'world context' and in particular, of the activity of Canon Garland, although the source material that would enable a detailed biography of the man is not extant to the necessary degree, much essential material having been irretrievably lost. Sufficient evidence survives, however, to allow us to draw historically reliable conclusions.

Given these objectives the study is organised first to examine whether the Anzac commemoration is a sacred or profane event.<sup>6</sup> It draws upon the pioneering ideas of the famous German theologian, Rudolf Otto, and others to help set the boundaries of the discussion. This is followed in chapter two by an essay on the place

of the British Pacific Dominions in the world situation in the late imperial era. Chapter three examines the German threat from the New Zealand perspective.

In chapter four the focus is on the genesis of Anzac Day, and here it is necessary to take due account of Garland's formation and of his world view and career as a gifted organiser, agitator and advocate of causes in the national interest. The fifth chapter investigates the peculiarities of Garland's Irish background, especially the phenomenon of Orange-ism. In chapter six the remarkable story of Canon Garland's sojourn in New Zealand is recounted, illustrating to what extent he became such a well-known personality who developed close relationships with not only Church dignitaries but also prominent politicians and imperial officials.

In chapter seven the peculiar situation of the Diocese of Brisbane under its patrician English Archbishop St Clair Donaldson is examined because it was there that Garland attained prominence for his work in promoting the Bible in State Schools League. It also examines in particular the self-perception of the Anglican hierarchy and its role in promoting Empire solidarity in time of war. The pivotal role of the Brisbane-based Anzac Day Commemoration Committee in campaigning for a solemn observance of Anzac Day is recounted in chapter eight.

There follows in chapter nine a detailed account of Garland's chaplaincy in the Middle East where he in particular established a warm relationship with the Greek Orthodox Church, a fact that subsequently influenced his public ministry after the war in Brisbane. In chapter ten, Canon Garland's indefatigable work of 'memorialisation' of the fallen is portrayed.

Chapter eleven traces the legislative process of institutionalising Anzac Day in New Zealand, and then, in chapter twelve, the process of bringing the Anzac Day legislation in each of the Australian States into line is examined. In chapter thirteen the internecine dispute over the essentially spiritual nature of Anzac

Day is explained. The final chapter, fourteen, traces the main events in Garland's life until his death in 1939. An Epilogue attempts to draw the threads of the redoubtable priest's life together.

Curiously, historians of chaplaincy in the Great War have yet to pay any attention to Canon Garland. Indeed, the Anglican contribution to Australian national identity is comparatively under-researched. Happily, this is now changing.<sup>7</sup> In any case it is largely disregarded by those who perceive themselves as especially called to set the national agenda in historiography. By way of contrast, the Irish-Roman Catholic dimension to Australian history is considerably developed.<sup>8</sup>

The major source for this study has been the files of the ADCC in Brisbane. These have been augmented by a range of Commonwealth and State Government records under the appropriate departments. As well, of central importance have been the newspapers of the Anglican Church to which Canon Garland made frequent contributions. A remnant of the Canon's personal papers is held by the Oxley Library in Brisbane.

Finally, in order to head off the inevitable criticism of the use of long quotations it is reiterated here that elegance of style is not the paramount objective of writing history; rather it is to tell the truth and to be seen to be telling the truth. Consequently, it will frequently occur that the reader encounters large verbatim sections of letters and newspaper reports. These are intended to inform the reader as accurately as possible of how things actually were and how observers *at the time* perceived them.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The massive publication of German foreign affairs documents ranging from 1871 to 1914 entitled *Die Grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette* edited by Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and