

GOD IN AUSTRALIAN GREAT WAR POETRY

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It is not unusual for a poet to talk about God and heaven, nor his relationship with God, but we may discern certain characteristics which might be specific to man's attachment to God in war poetry. William Blake spoke about God's gifts to His creatures in his poem „The Little Black Boy” showing that God not only affected nature, but was also able to enter it for us „Look on the rising sun, there God does live, / And gives his light, and gives his heat away; / And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive / Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday” (Appelbaum 3). Blake shows in these words that God loved His creatures so much that He directed nature for our comfort, and by so doing, He made a world which only required of us that we respect it, and in so doing we show our love for God. To this end we will reflect on God in Australian Great War poetry, and how He is considered by the poets who formulated poetic relationships with Him.

We will look specifically at four of many possible aspects of man's relationship with his Creator as it occurs in the poetry of World War One, and from this we will see how Australians of the time considered God, knowingly or not, as the true spiritual essence of the world and life around them as Blake would attest to. As is seen in this poetry, Australian poets saw God's likeness in their fellow man and the countryside, and formed relationships with God, but also recognised that the war itself had functioned as a desecration of God's image and man's theistic relationship.

The poets which appear in this paper represent only a small amount of the Australian Great War poets who spoke of God and heaven. There are many poets who spoke about God in terms of His absence, such as those poems which talk about hell and the evil of war. But the poets who appear here may be considered as a good representation of what we might call „God's poets”.

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GOD SEEN IN MAN

One of the most prolific writers of man's relationship with God is Private Reynold Cleve Potter, a member of the 21st Battalion. In his poem „Remembrance”, he speaks of a friend in Arms, Private W. J. England, who went missing in action. He speaks of his God-like qualities. „He caught God's sunshine as it fell; / And meted it to all. // A God-like man, of God-like mind, / Embracive, noble, bright, / A heart like Nature's, large and kind, / Diffusing life and light”. (Matthews 91) Potter's verse consistently affirms his desire to keep God in his life throughout the war years, as can be seen in his 1917 poem „Jesus lover of my soul”. A short poem which seeks the unification of man with God: „Jesus lover of my soul / Let me to thy bosom fly / While the shots of battle roll / While the turmoil still is high / Hide me, oh my Saviour, hide / Till the battle cloud is past. / Safe into the haven guide / Oh receive my soul at last” (Matthews 77).

However, while Potter wrote much about man's relationship with God, it is Frederic Manning who would characterise the realisation of God being seen in one's fellow man. He sees God in his fellow man, notably in his poem „The Face”. The distortion and gruesome sights of war make us realise the loss of human beauty, which is an image, as it were, of God, and war has broken that image. „I thrust aside the cloud, as it were tangible, / Blinded with a mist of blood. / The face cometh again / As a wrath of sleep: / The very mask of God, / Broken” (Manning 15). Manning's horrific dream, which brings to mind the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Ivor Gurney, shows that the soldier sees in his fellow sufferers, the face of God which has been broken by war. Manning continues the theme of God's image in his poem „Worship”. He sees God's grace mirrored in „thy” face. By looking into the face of the poem's object, Manning declares that he is in paradise, for this is the image of God's grace. „God's very grace / Is perfect in thy face, / Mirrored such wise / That I mine own soul there imparadise” (Manning 49).

In J. Le Gay Brereton's „The Dead”, he further echoes Manning's „The Face” and even declares the rather Nietzschean idea that God is dead. „Farewell, high-hearted friends, for God is dead / If such as you can die and fare not well / – If when you fall your gallant spirit fail” (Brereton 25). We know God in our friends, and if they can die, then so too God must die. This is, of course, metaphoric, but a theme of great interest and shows the depth of the poet as he clings to God through his friend and his friend through God.

Nina Murdoch's poem „Supposing”, also echoes Manning's „The Face”. Heaven, she says, is in the embrace of her loved one. Again, we find poets finding God in those they love. „...Heaven is here in your arms' hollow” (Murdoch 49).

In part 9 of H. Patterson's epic poem „Song of the Anzac” (Helles – Achi Baba), he shows Christ in action where one man carries the burden of another as if the wounded man is physically encumbered with the sins of the world. „Christianity in action, love that bears another's burdens.” (Patterson 51) Like so many stretcher bearers at Gallipoli, Patterson shows them as „splendid men”, „carrying their Christly toil” (Patterson 50). „...They [the dead] are in God's perfect keeping; / Turks will venerate our dead brothers, risen, as Christ, no longer sleeping” (Patterson 82).

One of Australia's great female poets, Margery Ruth Betts, shows in her poem „Silenced”, a comparison between a dead soldier and Christ, and that silence speaks

for the dead who yet live. This poem begins with Betts talking of a young soldier who was killed before he could have given something to the world: „...men have lost the words you might have said, / As though men would have gained had you grown old”, and ends with her talking about Christ being killed before His work could have saved more: „There still were sick unhealed and babes unblest, / That day He gave His body to the cross. / Let silence speak the rest” (Betts 34). She recognises that the dead soldier is still near to her. Betts goes further still in her poem „The Young Dead”, where she invokes an image of the holy Mass when the priest consecrates the wine into blood. „For us, your yielded youth is gathered up / Like to the wine in God’s uplifted cup, / Which kneeling at His altar steps we take” (Betts 20).

In all of these poets, God is seen in their fellow man and this invocation serves to unite man and God into a common cause; a cause which may uplift the exiled heart and find peace. St. John wrote that unless mankind embraces one another in a brotherly love, then the perfection of true happiness is impossible. „No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us” (1 John 4:12). St. John, like the poets mentioned above, knew that God reveals Himself in us and through our works, and this is why war is considered by so many poets as hell, for hell is the destruction of all that is good.

DESECRATION AND BLASPHEMY

When contemplating God within the cannon of Australian Great War poetry, we may also notice that the poets observed that war was something akin to the desecration of God in the world and a blasphemy against God in mankind. Several poets make some sort of comment about this phenomenon, and they all have in common the feeling of sin against God. Yet, this sin was not something the poets saw as pertaining to the combatant, as much as the political machinery which caused the war in the first place. This machinery may ultimately be run by man, but the soldier was not the bearer of the sin of war. Potter makes the point very clearly in his poem „Still ascending, still unending”, where he writes „Struggling mortals past Hell’s portals / Plunged in lurid flame, / Torn and bleeding, Hell’s fires feeding / With carnage; blight and shame. / Not theirs, O God, the shame who fight / But theirs who caused this awful blight” (Matthews 114). For Potter, the soldier was the victim of war and war was a desecration of God’s created world.

Yet, while some poets, such as Brereton, considered the rather Nietzschean idea that God is dead in his poem „The Dead” as mentioned above, others, such as Manning, recognised the horrific profanity of war in „The Face”. In essence, Manning shows us that war desecrates the sanctity of God, and is thus a sacrilege against God. The „broken” mask of God had appeared in the nightmarish horror of the poet who saw „A boy’s face, white and tense, / Convulsed with terror and hate, / The lips trembling...” (Manning 15). Manning’s nightmare would go on to then see a red smear falling down the boy’s face, whose face was delicate and blonde, and as Manning notes, „The very mask of God”. But the horror of this image was a blasphemy against God’s image in Manning’s fellow man. It is a powerful, yet frighteningly tormented poem that shines the brightest light on the profanity and sacrilege of war.

In Potter's 15 stanza poem „Regrets”, written in 1917, he identifies that war has covered God's face and alludes to the sin of Cain against Abel. „But clouds soon spread o'er the day God's face / And hushed was the joy and mirth / And a tumult fell on the human race / And madness and hate had birth / The thunder crashed / And the lightning flashed / And harmony fled from the earth” (Potter 129). Potter's imagery may arouse thoughts of an evil covering God's creation as clouds block out the sun and cast thunderous shadows all over the land. The metaphor as it applies to war is quite distinct and profound.

In J. Le Gay Brereton's „Hymn to the God of War”, he shows that man has desecrated God's shrine by the act of war. „And lo, we come to thy shrine, / O God, but we ask for no grace, / For our hearts are made glad with a wine / That is death to the craven and base, / And thy shrine shall be burnt for our mirth / And thine altar be turned to thy bier, / For, if Love be our Lord upon earth, / What corner is left for thee here? / The veil of thy temple is rent –” (Brereton 2012–18). Brereton brings to light the idea that man ultimately damns himself by his own acts and by these acts he commits God to His death by burning Him on His own altar. Pity for the sacrilegious character of this act may be found in a nurse's poem „Tourists in the Cathedral”, written by Catherine E. Bonwick. She pities those who fail to understand the real treasures of the church in her poem. „For this historic building, which to some / Means solace, inspiration, peace most real, / Where earthly cares and heaven seems to touch, / Remains for you / Merely an old museum to hurry through – / Is it impertinence for us to feel / Pity for you, who somehow miss so much?” (Bonwick 20–21) Both Bonwick and Brereton may indicate that God's Church is also found in the abstract existence of life itself.

Manning makes a further contribution here in his poem „The Lost Angel”. He identifies a very human flaw: „Soiled am I now with dust, and frustrate glories / wane, and are tarnished on my darkened brows; / Yea, all my love is for the joys that perish. / How may mine eyes behold my naked soul?” (Manning 57). Manning shows that the desecration and sacrilege of which Brereton and Bonwick speak, also applies to the human body, which becomes stained with the dust of sin and naked with the exposure of guilt. This is quite opposite to Potter's claim of „Not theirs the shame who fight”, but it may be rather more connected with the feeling of guilt, which many soldiers felt.

While poets recognise the sacrilege of war, they also saw a need to fight back against it. In „Vae Victis” (woe to the vanquished), Betts defies the enemy of the free world who thinks it has killed her loved one and silenced God's call to love thy neighbour. The following shows this: „Oh, vast and implacable wrong, oh, cannon and Kaiser and sword, / Think you that the guns have slain his soul or silenced the word of the Lord? // Free from the cleaving, clamorous flesh, and earthly passions and pains, / For it is not his strength you have broken, wrong, but his chains”. (Betts 24) Betts notes in this poem that on one hand, the killed man is now free of human bondage and thus stronger to help those left behind, while on the other hand, the killed Christ is stronger by virtue of His conquering death. For Betts, the defilement of God in war is no victory for Evil over Good, but an awakening of the need to have fortitude in our faith in God. It is, in fact, a call to fight the Good fight. A call to Arms.

EPITHALAMIUM – WEDDED IN WAR AND DYING AS ONE

W.J. Turner speaks of the common unity of men in his poem „Epithalamium for a Modern Wedding”. The poem itself talks about how beauty dies, but Turner shows that, as two become one, husband and wife, they go into eternity together. This also holds with the marriage (so to speak) of soldiers in comradeship. „We that so long have held each other dear, / Join hands, Beloved; purposing to be / One hand and life, one effort and career, / One soul and Self, into eternity” (Turner 36). Turner, Australia’s only Georgian poet, writes about a certain difference between love and lust, and that being married, husband and wife will soon realise that it is only love that lives into eternity. „I no longer seek to hold / Beauty with enchanted eyes; / ‘Tis vain for beauty dies...” (Turner 37). While Turner’s „Epithalamium” celebrates marriage, it also recognises his understanding that marriage may be considered metaphorical for one’s love of comradeship or one’s fidelity with God.

When it comes to a soldier’s comradeship with his friends, there may be seen certain aspects of duty, loyalty and sacrifice. Tom Skeyhill’s poem „Fallen Comrades”, notes that soldiers were often knelt in prayer for friends who were killed in action. „Whilst coming from the trenches / And glancing over there, / I’ve oft seen many a khaki form, / Kneeling in silent prayer” (Skeyhill 35). In this action of silent prayer, Skeyhill gives great meaning to Turner’s „Epithalamium”. These comrades are wedded in their friendship which was fired and blessed in the crucible of war, yet in death, they are at their physical end, even though they live on as youthful beauty does for all eternity, for the young dead of war shall not grow old.

Brereton echoes Turner’s „Epithalamium” and furthers Skeyhill’s „Fallen Comrades” in his poem „Home”, where in the final stanza he says; „Here we are wed, and here / We live under God’s own eye” (Brereton 2012–21). Brereton identifies the grave as the final marriage bed and the soldiers as the wedded couple, where one mourns over the other’s death. This love is not the physical love between a man and a woman, but that love of which Christ commanded of us: “Just as I loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

Another very good female poet, May Kidson, echoes Turner’s „Epithalamium” writing in her poem „The Call” that two become one, and love’s burning passion fades into a connection of thought-waves. „Over the walls of Time and space, / I hear your spirit call; / Listening I catch the message sent, / Know Love still all in all. // Where two souls meet as one, dear heart, / Finding the other’s mate, / E’en Time’s own scythe can never mow / Those blossoms sown by Fate. // So I can face the long years, dear, / And what life yet shall see, / Knowing full well that thought-waves meet / Ever for you and me” (Kidson 23). Kidson, a master of the mother’s undying love for her son, shows that the union of love between two people, as long as it is love and not love’s counterfeit, is eternal just as Turner says in the first stanza of „Epithalamium”.

For Edwin Field Gerard (better known as Trooper Gerardy), some soldiers were running to God, as Australians slowly conquered the Holy Land where the Christian faith was born. „The land of Christ and David, / Where Christian faith was born, / Seemed weary, and content to sleep / Till resurrection morn. // And Christmas came to meet us / By hill and palmy hod, / When all the bells of Bethlehem / Were pealing

forth to God" (Gerardy 82). He states that the bells of Bethlehem rang out to tell God they had arrived, almost as though Christianity was reborn in Bethlehem that Christmas. In this, we may note that Gerardy unites man with God as a form of Turner's „Epithalamium". Gerardy also gives testament to Christian hope in his poem „Our Immortal Dead": „Grieve not above the mounded sod! / The hidden dead shall be reborn / With thee on resurrection morn / Within the kingdom of God" (Gerardy 95). Gerardy gives Godly pity for Skeyhill's prayerful soldiers who kneel next to their dead comrades, and in clear sympathetic resonance, the image of eternity rings through.

Yet, even beyond the war, the connection made clear by Turner might be seen in our daily lives where the bond is unbreakable. Rose-Soley shows that there is a strong connection with the dead in her „L'Entente Cordiale". The first stanza shows how the dead remained with the living in some way. „The pale dawn crept on All Saints' Day, / The air was peopled with our dead; / 'Comrades and friends,' Our Colonel said, / 'We mourn them, too, ces braves Anglais'" (Rose-Soley 25). This shows a poetic glimpse into the eternal connection between those who love each other and Rose-Soley gives one of the best examples of this.

AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The eternal relationship between man and God as put forward in Turner's „Epithalamium", is further revealed in various poems which indicate the deep relationships man has with God. One of the best examples of the private closeness a soldier has with God is found in Manning's „ἀντάρκεια", where he shows a personal and private knowledge of God. „...the progeny of dreams / I father; even this England which is mine / Whereof no man has seen the loveliness / As with mine eyes: and even too, my God / Whom none have known as I: for these I fight" (Manning 29). Manning states very clearly the reason he is a soldier, and it is because of his sense of duty to his private knowledge of home and God. The things he, and only he, has seen and known through his experience.

A New Zealand poet ironically known only as 'Philistine' writes „A Soldier's Prayer", where he says, after giving thanks to God, that his suffering is some sort of soothing comfort – represented by the crucifix he wears under his blanket. „Altho' it's the herd I'm livin' with, / An' the ungodly with what I mix, / Beneath me rough grey blankets still / Is the soothin' feel of me crucifix" (Bolitho 24). The privacy of Manning's „ἀντάρκεια" is echoed here by 'Philistine', for no one can see or know his personal experience with the crucifix beneath his blanket.

God's comforting protection of us may also be seen in Potter's „I crouch low in the cold muddy trenches", where he notes that perhaps God has allowed the death flags to furl so that the next day may be easier to bear. „Maybe the great God in his mercy / Bade the Demons their death flags to furl / That our hearts may be eased on the morrow" (Potter 186). In „I'm stumbling into battle", Potter also finds comfort in God's presence in the trenches with him. „'Courage, I will be your refuge. / I the stormy path have trod. / Fear not those who fain would kill thee. / Still! And know that I am God'" (Potter 140–141). Potter, like 'Philistine' feels a personal protection

from God, and like Manning, he recognises an intimacy which transcends the horrors of the trench.

In Leon Gellert's „The Trumpets of Heaven”, he shows that after the patriotic songs which called men to war (where they then died), that God showed His revenge on the world by allowing vast battalions of dead to cross the skies as stars. These are metaphoric for images of the dead who look at us with their blinding eyes. „A call on the height! And from the blinding skies / Come white battalions with their blinding eyes” (Gellert 21). Gellert shows God as one who wants us to see that the dead have a terrible knowledge because of their death in duty. Having died after the great patriotic songs that took them to war, they now see all eternity, still dutiful to each other and bound to God. L.E. Homfray shows in „Some Day”, that in God, man will one day understand why we must die. „Some day, some time, in God's eternal wisdom, / Our troubled souls shall reach that Better Land, / Where, looking back upon life's day of sadness, / Our restless hearts shall know and understand” (Homfray 14). Gellert develops the idea in „Now 'neath the Cool Stars”, but takes it to a more personal level. „Now 'neath the cool stars / I know thee more. / Here where the world wars / By the winding shore” (Gellert 48). The poem is directed to his lover (wife or girlfriend) back in Australia, but it certainly signals Gellert's man and God relationship from „Now 'neath the Cool Stars”.

In „The Soldier”, Gellert shows that in death the soldier receives the light of God; that war is a noise inhuman, but death, the result of war, gives peace. „See where they sleep / In battered lines. / Here lies his bed / So long and deep, / And on his broken head / A shaft from Heaven shines” (Gellert 54). It may be understood here that the other side of the broken head is heaven. In „God's Heroes”, L.E. Homfray recognises that the unknown deeds of the dead shall be known by God. „Their names may not remembered be, / Their sacrifices all unknown, / But they shall stand in God's great day / As heroes round His Altar Throne” (Homfray 13).

In „Somewhere at sea now thy husband sleeps”, Potter recognises God as the one who knows all, even when a sparrow falls. He notes that the life God gave, He'll keep. This indicates Potter's belief that those who live in God will be saved, even in the hell of war. „We know that He marks the sparrow's fall / And the life that He gave He'll keep” (Potter 18). Yet, Potter furthers his post-death understanding in the poem „This is my hope”. Potter hopes that after the death of this life that there will be no second death. In this poem he raises Saint Augustine's concept of the 'second death'. „This is my hope till trump shall sound / On that eternal shore / And Christ shall call my soul to life / And death shall be no more” (Potter 47).

Potter brings to light another aspect of man's intimate relationship with God in his poem „Still ascending, still unending”. He talks about how any struggle is vain if God is against it. „Oh! Death thou art impervious still, / I only answer at God's will” (Potter 114). Potter also echoes McCrae's notion of the 'just war' in her „My Soldier”. „Not theirs, O God, the shame who fight / But theirs who caused this awful blight” (Potter 114). McCrae shows us her notion of the Just War in her poem „War”, which evokes virtues we might ascribe to God. „Hate, torture, pillage, greed, / Fear, famine, vengeance, need, / Broken hearts, shattered law, / God denied... This is War! // Might, mercy, sacrifice, / Strength, valour, crushing vice, / Chivalry without flaw / God declared... This is War!” (McCrae: The Clear Call – 30).

Many times these poets talk to God in a direct conversational way. In „My Soldier”, by McCrae, the woman talks to God in a way that is rather familiar. „God! How I love him for his need of me!” (McCrae 16) In „The Call”, she says „We are too safe, of God! / Too safe we here / We need Thy chastening rod / To wake our fear” (McCrae 17). McCrae is talking directly to God in these poems in the same way she would talk to her father. In May Kidson’s poem „Spirit Children – War Days. 1918”, she talks to God in a very familiar way, just like McCrae. She talks to God, telling Him of her sorrow that she will never have children because her husband died in the war. „O God! To think no child of thine / Shall ever nestle on my knee –/ No living memory of thee / About my yearning heart entwine” (Kidson 8).

These intimate moments between man and God also included a realisation that God lived among us. Bonwick, shows that the church is a place where we know God, but also where we live. The church is a place of those who gather in God’s name and thus illustrates the idea that God is in us. The poems „We Came on a Freighter” and „Someone Sleeps in Church” are two examples. „These churches, grey and old, / That seem to hold / Not just the love of God, but all the sum / Of all the joy and all the tragedy / From hearts abrim with thankfulness, or numb / With bitter grief” (Bonwick 5). „Sleep on: nor fear disgrace. / God knows just why / You cannot keep awake / Within this place!” (Bonwick 19) While Bonwick identifies the church as a place where we live with God, Betts takes us to the streets. In the final stanza of her poem „A Mean Street”, Betts shows that Christ is amongst us, and heaven is only at the end of the street. The ‘street’ is a metaphor for life, and Betts uses this very well. „Just such a mean and common little street, / Where such a common man as Christ might live; / Living and dead, you knew that it was sweet, / And worth whatever things a man could give. / You stretched your hand to touch them, neighbour, friend, / Your hand that was redeemed and cleansed and shriven, / Then went your way. And at the mean street’s end / You found the gates of Heaven” (Betts 40–41). For Betts, heaven is not a place, as much as it is a life in God.

However, E. Nea-Smith, saw God everywhere. In her poem „Spring Ritual... In Bushland”, she notes that the pride of true Australians was completely inhabited by God. „Merrily rustled leaflets, / To the music of the air. / Nature thrilled divinely, / Ah! God was everywhere” (Nea-Smith 14). Further, the true Australian was naturally inclined to God because of the beautiful flora and wild landscapes of his homeland. Nea-Smith says in her poem „Australia!”, that God gave us Australia; a land filled with beauty. „Our lovely land by God endowed, / Reason have we to be proud. / Her beauty holds us unified, / She is our boast, our joy and pride” (Nea-Smith 3). As we know from many Australian Great War poets, Australian flora was most highly prized.

In the case of war, poets asked God the eternal question – „Why?” Kidson, in her „When ‘the Kit’ Comes Home Alone”, says; „O God! Dear God! Why, why, should such things be?” (Kidson 9). Kidson foreshadows recurring memories of the biblical writing of Moses: „Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!” (Job 19:26–27). Like Manning’s private knowledge of God in „αὐτάρκεια”, Kidson sets down man’s utter reliance on God. Potter might have the last word here in his poem „The war at last is over”, Potter makes a plea to God

asking that we never suffer war again. „Great God of Might and Mercy, may this ne'er be our lot / From the mainspring of our lives we make this prayer / Far rather would we perish and so pass by all forgot / To whatever fate awaits us 'Over There'" (Potter 209).

CONCLUSION

Considering this Australian poetry from the Great War, one is compelled to see that Australian poets generally followed the message of the Gospel, which is to love one another as Christ has loved us. These poets were clearly religious people to varying extents, but they all recognised that the destruction of their fellow man was a desecration of God. They saw through their poetic words, that God dwelt among them, that God was defiled by war, that they were forever united with God, that they were intimately connected to God and that they needed God to deliver them from war and human strife. There is a great plethora of Australian Great War poetry which talks about man's connections with God; far too much to include here, but the message of these poets is clear, that without God they would not see value in their fellow man.

GOD IN AUSTRALIAN GREAT WAR POETRY

SUMMARY

Throughout the ages poets have spoken about God and to God in all manner of ways. They cried out for help and sung out in praise, and the tones of their verse have been anything from base familiarity to exultant praise. But all poets have recognised God as a standard for mankind's sense of morality and ethics, as well as the locus of the true self. However, poets who found themselves living in times of war often spoke of God in a more earnest and even urgent way. They saw God as a means of protection and succour. As someone to be with in good times and to turn to in the worst moments. This is of course most normal, however, the Australian Great War poets, who also saw God in these ways, saw God in their fellow man and the world around them. They saw the destruction caused by war as a desecration of God and a sacrilege against Him. Australian poets, men and women, servicemen, nurses and civilians, saw God as the first and last refuge of sane men. Not in any pantheistic way, God was seen in the soldier's fellow man and the landscape of Australia. In the case of man, who was made in God's image, Australian poets saw God's image in the reflection of innocence and good deeds, while in the case of the Australian landscape, poets saw God's hand of creation. For the Australian Great War poet, God was the binding factor of human existence.

GOTT IN DER AUSTRALISCHEN POESIE DES ERSTEN WELTKRIEGS

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Seit Jahrhunderten haben Dichter auf verschiedene Art und Weise über Gott und mit Gott geredet. Sie riefen um Hilfe, indem sie die Herrlichkeit Gottes besangen, aber die Töne ihrer Gedichte ergaben sich nicht aus irgendeinem Zusammenhang mit der Erfahrung der glorreichen Herrlichkeit. Alle Dichter erkannten jedoch Gott als Quelle für den Sinn der Menschheit, für die Moral und Ethik sowie für den Ort des wahren Selbst. Mittlerweile redeten die Dichter, die während des Krieges lebten, über Gott lebendiger und sogar beharrlich. Sie nahmen Gott als Beschützer und Helfer wahr, als jemanden, der sowohl in guten als auch in schlimmsten Zeiten gut ist. Das ist selbstverständlich, aber die australischen Dichter des Ersten Weltkrieges, die Gott auch auf Kriegswegen trafen, sahen Ihn in ihren Mitmenschen und in ihrer Umwelt. Sie nahmen die Kriegszerstörung als Entweihung Gottes und Sakrileg gegen Gott wahr. Australische Dichter, Männer und Frauen, Soldaten, Krankenschwestern und Zivilisten, sahen Gott als erste und letzte Zuflucht und dadurch konnten ihren gesunden Verstand behalten. Nicht in irgendeiner pantheistischen Weise wurde Gott in der Soldatenfreundschaft und in der Landschaft von Australien gesehen. Die australischen Dichter, indem sie über Unschuld und gute Taten nachdachten, sahen im Menschen, der Abbild Gottes ist, die Verkörperung vom selben Gott. Solch ein Bild Gottes war mit der australischen Landschaft verbunden, die wiederum mit dem schöpferischen Werk der Hände Gottes zu identifizieren ist. Für die australischen Dichter des Ersten Weltkriegs war Gott ein verbindlicher Faktor des menschlichen Daseins.

BÓG W AUSTRALIJSKIEJ POEZJI Z PIERWSZEJ WOJNY ŚWIATOWEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Przez wieki poeci mówili o Bogu i do Boga w różny sposób. Wołali o pomoc, wyśpiewując chwałę, ale tony ich wierszy nie wynikały z żadnego powiązania z doświadczeniem tryumfującej chwały. Niemniej wszyscy poeci rozpoznawali Boga jako źródło dla sensu rodzaju ludzkiego, moralności i etyki, jak również umiejscowienie prawdziwej jaźni. Tymczasem poeci, którym przyszło żyć w czasie wojny, często mówili o Bogu bardziej żarliwie a nawet natarczywie. Oni widzieli Boga jako opiekuna i wspomożyciela, jako kogoś, kto jest dobry w dobrych czasach i w najgorszych chwilach. Być może wydaje się to nienadzwyczajne i może banalne, jednak australijscy poeci pierwszej wojny światowej, którzy też ujrzeni go również na wojennych drogach, ujrzeni Go również w swoich kolegach i w otaczającym świecie. Postrzegali zniszczenia wojenne jako profanację i świętokradztwo przeciw Niemu. Australijscy poeci, mężczyźni i kobiety, żołnierze, pielęgniarki i cywile, widzieli Boga jako pierwsze i ostatnie schronienie dla zachowania zdrowych zmysłów. Nie w jakikolwiek pantheistyczny sposób, Bóg był widziany w żołnierskiej przyjaźni oraz w krajobrazie Australii. W człowieku, który jest uczyniony na obraz Boży, australijscy poeci, reflektując o niewinności i dobrych uczynkach, zobaczyli obraz Boży skojarzony z australijskim krajobrazem identyfikowanym z dziełem stwórczym Bożych rąk. Dla poetów australijskich pierwszej wojny światowej Bóg był wiążącym czynnikiem ludzkiej egzystencji.

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