

# Conclusion

The main thrust of this monograph has been to provide an outline of Maori religious belief before the advent of the European settlers. A secondary aim has been to show, by the use of descriptions of present day practices, that the pre-European values have not been lost, but in many instances have inter-penetrated a good deal of Maori Christian understanding.

It is important to recognise that there was a genuine religion among the Maori people. It enabled them to develop, in some instances, Maori Christian insights leading towards an indigenous Christianity. There is a genuine Maori spirituality and it may be that this will be recognised and taken up by the Maori sections of the Christian Churches. There is opportunity now for Maori and Pakeha theologians to sit down and listen to each other.

There remains in New Zealand much criticism of Maori people because they seem frequently to reject the mores and values of the dominant Pakeha culture. One of the chief reasons for this apparent attitude of Maori people is that Pakeha culture does not appear to them to be relevant to their life situations. Another is the assumption by many European New Zealanders that there is little in Maori culture of positive value. The Maoris, of course, are seeking to give themselves room to be themselves. There is still a strong tendency among Europeans to speak patronisingly of 'Maori culture' as though it were a hang-over from a dead past. Yet it is also true to say that there are increasing numbers of New Zealanders of European ancestry who seek to be more sensitive. They find, for example, that in the traditional *tangi* there is a view of death and grief that speaks to the human situation generally.

Maori people are gradually developing the confidence to attempt to find Maori solutions for Maori problems without divorcing themselves from the world they share with Europeans. An interesting move in this direction is the recent establishment of a Maori University, Te Wananga o Raukawa, at Otaki (see the *New Zealand Listener*, Vol. 103 (2252), April 2, 1983). The curriculum is very narrow at this stage, offering studies in administrative sciences, traditional Maori studies, and Japanese language, custom and culture. Graduates will receive the BMA (Bachelor of Maori and Administration). The institution has no standing in tertiary academic circles although some are prepared to regard the venture with benevolent gaze. A speaker for the Maori Education Fund is quoted as saying: "They're a self-proclaimed university. Who's going to

recognise a degree like that?" The speaker was reacting because he could not see the values he is familiar with, expecting, probably, that the new university would neglect true scholarship and award dubious degrees.

The curriculum, in fact, is based on a sound pedagogical principle, namely, to begin where the student is. In studying the traditions, myths and culture of their people the Maori students will be confirmed in their identity; they will be trained as in the ancient *wananga* in the holistic view of the universe with a 'religious eye'. This will enable them to assimilate their understanding of the other subjects. The assumption that the academic standard will be below an acceptable level is unfounded. Feedback from students nearing the completion of their degree programmes indicates that the effort to meet the required level is strenuous, and some of these students have studied at some of the orthodox universities. The choice of Japanese studies is well based for it is envisaged that most of the graduates will engage in manufacturing occupations where Japanese technology will be of great value. Others are being encouraged to join the Public Services (Government agencies) where Maoris are under-represented. From this it will be seen that the new university is patterned on the old sacred schools of learning (*wananga*) and will bring a step closer the integration of Maori people into the closing decades of the twentieth century. It should be noted that the *Wananga o Raukawa* caters in particular for the people of the Raukawa federation of tribes. This is a Maori solution to the need to have greater numbers of their people secure adequate tertiary education, people whom the current secular education tends to estrange from their Maoriness.

The claim has been made that some of the primal religious values have already inter-penetrated Maori Christianity. This is most clearly seen in the modern form of the *tangi* where it is common to see both indigenous Maori religious leaders and orthodox Christian clergy sharing the services. It is seen also in the rituals of encounter as parties come on to the *marae* for the funeral. All the ancient rituals of meeting are re-enacted in modified forms but with Christian meanings attached to them.

Many European observers see this as a process of syncretisation and so an adulteration of "traditional" Christian thought and practice. This illustrates the need for the beholder to "see with Maori eyes", otherwise he views with the "spectacles of incomprehension". An example of this in an African setting is to be found in J.V. Taylor's *Primal Vision* (chapter 11) where there are strong correspondences with the Maori situation. Taylor heads his chapter with an African (Twi) proverb:

Among the shades there are mighty matters.

Almost any Maori will recognise the force of the proverb, for his world is of the same nature, if not the same setting, as that of the African.

In writing this monograph I have styled it "an introduction" to Maori religion. It is no more than this, and it is hoped that some readers may feel motivated to undertake further reading, for there has now been a great deal of literature produced on aspects of Maori religion. Unfortunately all this is now secondary research and it is increasingly difficult to undertake primary research. It is possible to get closer to original sources but it means that the language must be learned, the people's confidence gained, and years devoted to the effort. Yet if undertaken it will be a vastly rewarding work.

Some years ago I was struck by a remark ascribed to Thomas Kendall, an early missionary, to the effect that when he had studied Maori religion he did not know whether he could any longer describe himself as a Christian. It seemed to me then that Kendall was greatly confused, for in no way had he been prepared to meet an indigenous religion that could be considered valid in its own right. It has been impossible for me to enter adequately into Kendall's situation, for there is no record of what it was that so unsettled him (but see J. Binney, *Legacy of Guilt*, pp. 101 & 126). In addition I can only use secondary sources to try to discover original meanings. Too often recorders allowed their own pre-suppositions and prejudices to inform a great deal of their comment. Maori informants were usually Christian converts and this coloured their descriptions. Nevertheless it has been possible to see something of the plan and outline of Maori religious belief.

As we have examined various aspects of Maori religion we have seen that it was not organised in ways with which we are familiar, that is, it was not institutionalised and formalised into religious groups. Rather does it represent basic attitudes and go to the deepest levels of self-understanding. The primal Maori religion certainly had an organised system of understanding man and his environment; it had its experts in the sacred and its sacred places; but it was not organised in the way that Christianity is with its denominations, creedal statements, and public regular meetings for religious observances. It is important that we should not idealise pre-European Maori religion for, as we have seen, it had its darker side. Nevertheless, it is possible to say of Maori people even today that they are a deeply religious people in their orientation to life, regardless of whether they belong to a particular "religion" or to none.

Emphasis has been placed on the Maori holistic view of existence and this expressed itself in the structure of a society which did not value individualism above all else but valued the individual in

his/her relation to the community. The various religious rites, even when carried out by an individual, related to the society as a whole. This same approach to existence has not vanished in a world of complex technology but is present in the thought and actions of modern Maori people. It was suggested that the establishment of a Maori university reflects this, and an article in the *New Zealand Herald* for 9 April 1983, further supports this. The article headlines read "Cultural awareness aids in rehabilitation" and details the efforts of a Maori warrant officer in the NZ Navy to alter the attitude where Maori sailors were expected to put on 'Maori entertainment' for the officers. He explained that the participants themselves had to be taught the spiritual, intellectual and political understanding of their culture; "They now understand why they pray before and after a performance and why alcohol is not mixed with the performance ...". He was working to prevent the trivialising of Maori culture and to reserve it for important functions. It is in ways such as this that we see the survival of Maori religious values expressing the holistic view of the cosmos.

The only "rites of passage" dealt with above have been the rituals of birth and death. This is because Maori society did not observe rites of initiation, for the child was considered a full member of the tribe from birth. The normal education of a Maori child was carried out by the grandparents and senior uncles and aunts. It was these older people who told the children of the basic myths and legends and guided them in what was considered proper behaviour. Only selected young men were permitted to enter the *wananga* after being carefully observed to see whether they possessed the necessary capacity to absorb the more esoteric knowledge of the people.

# End Notes

1. T.W. Jennings, *Introduction to Theology*, p. 43.
2. P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 28.
3. See my "Mana-tapu-noa" in *Religious Studies in the Pacific*, pp. 17f.
4. The lexical meaning of "toko" is pole, and Johansen is correct when he so translates. However, having frequently heard this passage quoted in numerous ceremonies, it is clear to me that it is used as an introduction to the recital. R. Taylor (*Te Ika a Maui*, p. 103) describes the chant as a "pihi", i.e., a lament. He describes how a stake was driven into the bed of a stream followed by a recital, which then becomes a lament for the dead, balanced by the recital "Toko kai mo te ao". Po represents death while Ao represents life. My translation is given when considering the use of the formula at other than death rituals.
5. Different tribes sometimes give variant names for the children of Rangi and Papa. In my account the generally accepted names are used.
6. Personal communication from the Rev. T. Tioke, 1979.
7. A. Ngata. Unpublished lecture (restricted access) but see also Ngata, "The Io Cult" in *JPS* 59: 335-346.

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# Glossary

<i>ana</i>	a cave
<i>ao</i>	world
<i>apa</i>	a spirit inspiring a medium
<i>apakura</i>	a lament
<i>ahi</i>	fire
<i>ahurewa</i>	a sacred place
<i>aitua</i>	fate, tragedy
<i>ara</i>	pathway, road
<i>aria</i>	visible sign or manifestation of an <i>atua</i>
<i>ariki</i>	high chief, lord (mod.)
<i>atua</i>	a god, a power
<i>awatea</i>	broad daylight
<i>ea</i>	paid for, requited
<i>ha</i>	breath
<i>haehae</i>	lacerate
<i>hahunga</i>	ceremony for lifting the bones of an ancestor
<i>haka</i>	posture dance
<i>hangi</i>	earth steam oven
<i>hapu</i>	n. sub-tribe, v. pregnant
<i>harakeke</i>	native flax ( <i>phormium tenax</i> )
<i>hau</i>	wind
<i>Haumiatikitiki</i>	the god of uncultivated foods
<i>hauora</i>	life-giving force
<i>Hawaiki</i>	original homeland of the Maori
<i>hemo</i>	wrong, mistake
<i>he</i>	to die
<i>hinga</i>	to fall
<i>hongiri</i>	ceremonial greeting by pressing noses
<i>ika</i>	fish
<i>Io</i>	Supreme Being
<i>ira</i>	element, freckle
<i>iwi</i>	tribe, people
<i>kai</i>	food, to eat, consume, bite
<i>kainga</i>	home
<i>kaitiaki</i>	guardian
<i>kakariki</i>	green



<i>karanga</i>	call, summons
<i>karakia</i>	ritual incantation (arch.) prayer, worship (mod.)
<i>kawa</i>	protocol
<i>kaumatua</i>	village elder
<i>kehua</i>	ghost
<i>kete</i>	woven flax basket
<i>kioe</i>	bush rat
<i>kite</i>	to see
<i>Kiwa</i>	guardian of the oceans
<i>koe</i>	pronoun you
<i>kore</i>	nothing
<i>korekore</i>	nothingness
<i>korero</i>	to speak
<i>koro, koroua</i>	elderly man (honorific)
<i>kui, kuia</i>	elderly lady (honorific)
<i>kumara</i>	sweet potato
<i>makutu</i>	ill-wish, evil spell
<i>mana</i>	supernatural power
<i>mangai</i>	mouthpiece (speak on behalf of)
<i>manuhiri</i>	visitor
<i>mara</i>	cultivated ground
<i>marae</i>	grassed area fronting a meeting house
<i>marama</i>	light, month, moon
<i>maratautane</i>	<i>tapu</i> cultivation
<i>mariekura</i>	female spirits
<i>Maru</i>	tribal war god
<i>mata</i>	face
<i>matakite</i>	seer, one who foretells the future by divination
<i>matau</i>	right hand
<i>mate</i>	sickness, death
<i>Maui</i>	legendary hero
<i>mauii</i>	left hand
<i>mauri</i>	life principle
<i>mere</i>	flat war club made from greenstone (N.Z. jade)
<i>mo</i>	prep. for
<i>moko</i>	gecko, tree lizard facial tattoo
<i>moremore</i>	ritual suicide
<i>motuhake</i>	separated
<i>mua</i>	front
<i>nga</i>	definite article (pl.)
<i>ngahere</i>	forest

ngaro	lost, hidden
noa	common, ordinary, free from <i>tapu</i>
nui	great, large
okiokinga	rest
ope	a group travelling together
ora	life, health
pae	throw down, demolished
pai	good, favourable
<i>Pai Marire</i>	Indigenous post-European cult
pakanga	battle
<i>Papatuanuku</i>	primeval Earth Mother
patu	strike, slay, kill
pipi	shellfish
po	night, dark, place of departed spirits
poroporoaki	farewell speech
pou	post
poutiriao	guardian spirits
pu	gun (mod.)
puhi	pre-pubertal girl, virgin
pure	<i>tapu</i> removal ceremony
ra	sun, day
rangatira	aristocracy, sub-chief
rangi	sky, day, the heavens
<i>Ranginui</i>	primeval Sky Father
rahui	warning against trespass
raro	below
<i>Rarohenga</i>	the Underworld
reo	voice, language
riu	bilge of a canoe
roimata	tears
<i>Rongomatane</i>	god of cultivated foods
<i>Rongoamareroa</i>	the same but also the god of peace
roa	long
ruahine	past the age of childbearing
<i>Ruamoko</i>	originator of earthquakes
runanga	council
runga	above
takahia	trample, tread, stamp
<i>Takitimu</i>	ancestral canoe, East Coast tribe
tane	male
<i>Tane</i>	god of forests, creator of man
<i>Tangaroa</i>	god of the seas

<i>tangata</i>	man, mankind
<i>tangi</i>	to weep
<i>tangihanga</i>	funerary rites
<i>taniwha</i>	mythical monsters
<i>taonga</i>	goods, belongings
<i>tapu</i>	prohibition, restrictions, sacred
<i>taua</i>	hostile expedition, army
<i>tauirā</i>	pupil of a <i>tohunga</i> , pattern
<i>tauparapara</i>	a chant
<i>Tawhirimatea</i>	god of winds and hurricanes
<i>te</i>	the, definite article (sing.)
<i>Te Ua Haumene</i>	founder of Pai Marire cult
<i>tika</i>	right, correct, straight
<i>Tiki</i>	god of creation according to variant traditions
<i>tipu</i>	to grow, new shoots
<i>tipua</i>	a demon
<i>tipuna, tupuna</i>	ancestor
<i>tira</i>	mourning party
<i>tohi</i>	ritual for new born child
<i>tohunga</i>	expert in any art (commonly used for priest)
<i>toi</i>	tip, summit
<i>totara</i>	indigenous tree ( <i>podocarpus totara</i> )
<i>tu</i>	to stand
<i>tuahu</i>	sacred place
<i>tukutuku</i>	ornamental lattice worked panels in a meeting house
<i>Tumatauenga</i>	chief god of war
<i>Uenuku</i>	a war god
<i>uha</i>	female element
<i>umu</i>	sacred oven
<i>Urutengangara</i>	originator of the stars
<i>utu</i>	return for anything, satisfaction, reward, price, reply
<i>wa</i>	time
<i>wahi</i>	place
<i>waewae</i>	feet
<i>waewaetapu</i>	lit. sacred feet, one attending a <i>marae</i> for the first time
<i>waerea</i>	protective incantation when entering a strange <i>marae</i>
<i>wai</i>	water
<i>waiora</i>	living water, life and welfare
<i>wairua</i>	spirit

<i>waka</i>	canoe, receptacle
<i>wananga</i>	sacred lore
<i>weriweri</i>	fearsome, disgusting
<i>wero</i>	to challenge, to spear
<i>whaikorero</i>	to make a formal speech
<i>whakaepa</i>	to reserve, set apart
<i>whakaha</i>	ceremony to impart <i>mana</i>
<i>whakairo</i>	to carve, a carving
<i>whakanoa</i>	to make clean, remove a <i>tapu</i>
<i>whakapapa</i>	genealogy
<i>whakataunga</i>	a formal speech making a proposition
<i>whakautu</i>	to respond, requite, avenge
<i>whanau</i>	family, to give birth
<i>whatakura</i>	male spirits
<i>whatu</i>	stone, rock, that which holds a <i>mauri</i>
<i>whare</i>	house
<i>wharekura</i>	schoolhouse
<i>whenua</i>	earth, land
<i>whetu</i>	star
<i>Whiro</i>	god of evil, disease and death

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At the beginning of his work (c. 1941), Jim Irwin had as his guides into the *kawa* (protocol) of the Maori people a number of Maori elders who were born shortly after the 1860's. One was 104 years old in 1950. Another had been an adopted son of the great Te Kooti. These elderly Maori people Jim was honoured to call his *karawa* and *kuni* (equivalent to grandparents). They were for him a source of information not always open to Europeans. In this work, Jim Irwin has used this source, though always careful not to reveal any privileged information.

For 22 years James Irwin served the Maori section of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand as a minister. Called to be Moderator of the Maori Synod, he demitted that office to become Principal of Te Wānanga a Rangi (the Maori Theological College). In 1971, when the college amalgamated with the Theological Hall in Dunedin, Rev. Irwin was given oversight of the courses of Maori, Samoan, Niuean and Cook Island students.

### **INTRODUCTION TO MAORI RELIGION**

is an important exploration of the character of Maori Religion before European contact and of its survival in contemporary Maori and New Zealand culture.