

Review of Pā Henare Tate's "He Puna Iti i te Ao Mārama"

E te amorangi, e te tuakana, e Henare, tukua rā aku mihi aroha ki ā koe, otirā ki tēnei tākohā nui kua tukuna ki ngā tai e whā.

Pā Tate's aim is ultimately pastoral: Māori people are crying out for a form of Christianity that is 'theirs' (13, 227). He is right. Evangelisation falls short of its own goal if what it offers leaves people feeling like guests at someone else's place. The issue here is inculturation, and it is disappointing that in spite of the Second Vatican Council, official recognition of this urgent need has been grudging and lame.

The author's method involves research into key concepts of Māori tradition, then creating from them a coherent world-view, and only after that introducing the Gospel. The need, he says, is for Māori to "make sense" of what is already theirs so as to dialogue more fruitfully with what comes from elsewhere, namely the Gospel.

He researches the key concepts of Māori thinking as they are evidenced in traditional rhetoric, song, stories and custom, and as he has learned them over the course of his own life, and across the spectrum of different hapū and iwi. His work was a doctoral thesis and so it has the hallmarks of academe about it. But it is genuine scholarship, and I suspect it will come to be regarded as an authoritative reference work.

The concepts themselves, as Pā Tate explains them, bear a gratifying resemblance to ethical requirements of Judeo Christian faith. Likewise, the profound unity, even communion of life, that binds individuals, the community, the ancestors and future generations together, and that unites God, the people and the land, seems a remarkable foreshadowing of the Gospel. After all, "in Christ" the whole of creation, human and cosmic is united.

It is fundamental to Pā Tate's thesis that a Māori Christian theology must be "sourced" in Māori religious and cultural experience (23). For this reason, some readers might have welcomed a fuller explanation of the part to be played by what has to be "imported" for Māori theology to become Māori *Christian* theology. The need for a clearer indication of this is heightened by some references that give rise to further questions. For example, Pā Tate queries the "presumption that something needs to be introduced *into* an indigenous situation, rather than the indigenous theologian finding the meanings that will be integrative and liberating for them *in* their own culture" (27). Let's remember that even Hebrew religious and cultural experience could not adequately "source" or articulate what the Christian community would need to say after Jesus' resurrection. The bottom line for all of us (Māori and Pakeha) is that Christian faith is rooted in events that took place elsewhere and in a different culture, and we come to it "through hearing".

Pā Tate's presentation is intense, but very clearly set out, and is accompanied by extensive footnotes, a Glossary and a significant Bibliography. An index of subjects would have been helpful, all the more because this will be an important reference work. It is rewarding reading for those who find joy in the discovery of all that is true, right, noble and good.