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Syncretism in Māori Theology

Theology is God talk
A human attempt to
Theorise the Divine

Theology ‘from here’ and
Theology ‘from elsewhere’ (Darragh, 2003)
Theology is shaped by context (Tate, 2012)

Through indigenous eyes
Theology can be a platform
From which to rediscover, reclaim...

...reconcile and redefine our spirituality
In a neo-colonial context
As indigenous Māori Christians

Marsden and Ruatara preached
Jesus’ blood mixed with whenua
And a new faith grew in the people

Māori prophets, as responses
To land lost, syncretised
Theologies, Māori and Christian

Innovative frameworks of faith
Developed in the face of devastation
Instilled in our people, a sense of hope

The plea of Māori messiahs all
Was to hold on to the land
To look courageously to the future

Byron Rangiwai holds a PhD in Māori and Indigenous Development from Auckland University of Technology.
Syncretism: a phenomenon where Indigenisation and Christianisation Occur simultaneously (Jørgensen, 2013)

One where the power of those who control Religion is disturbed and disrupted (Goosen, 2000)
Our prophets unsettled Pākehā power!

A deep-seated uncertainty of syncretism Exists throughout Christian history (Jørgensen, 2013)
And yet the Church has always...

...been infused with local culture (Vilaça & Wright, 2009)
Gods, spirits, rituals and ceremonies
Melt into one another

Akin to Christ’s Mass and Solstice
Our traditions merged, like wearing black
Ringing bells, and blessing headstones

We embraced Christianity
Through the templates
Of our own knowledge (Cooper, 2017)

We ‘did’ Christianity our way
And we never fully abandoned
Our former spirituality (Lewis, Willing & Mullan, 1995)

atua or Atua?
The Christians took our word
And offered it on the altar of the new God

A capitalised ‘A’ to signify
That ‘the one true God’ is superior
And a small ‘a’ to denote the ‘lesser’ (Tate, 2012).

“Māori indigenous theology is
Māori faith seeking Māori understanding.
It is theology developed by Māori for Māori” (Tate, 2012, p. 21)

“Māori theology is
Ranginui e tū nei,
Papatūānuku e takoto nei” (W. Te Haara, personal communication)
Māori theology determines
The parameters of our spiritual reality
Where Hinenuitepō and Jesus embrace

Māori theology is atuatanga
Atuatanga is Māori spirituality
Atuatanga is all things atua
References


