

Section 8

KŌRERO PAPATUPU WHENUA *LAND STORIES*

Whatungarongaro te tangata,
Toitū te whenua

People disappear, but the land remains forever

Theology

In line with the 1983 Conference decision to work towards the formation of a Bicultural Methodist Church in Aotearoa, Conference 1986 appointed a Land Commission to address those matters that pertain to the Church's considerable land holdings and issues of inequity in that space. The Land Commission's Report to Conference 1989 noted the following.

"A theology of land, appropriate to life here in Aotearoa and to a response under the Treaty of Waitangi, is rooted in creation. The Hebrew concept of a Jubilee year recognises this and leads to a just approach to land issues. Christian responses can be nothing less. A strong theology of creation will enable us to develop a just theology of land." (Conference 1989, p.107).

The Old Testament tradition speaks to the Jewish story of creation, *where the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light* (Genesis 1.vs2-3).

Māori tradition speaks to **Te Orokohanga** (Creation), where there is a distinct evolution illustrated through whakapapa or genealogy from Te Kore (*the void, energy, nothingness, potential*) to Te Pō (*the night, darkness*) through to Te Ao-mārama (*the bright light of day*). (See [Section 8: Appendix 1](#))

In that evolution, Ranginui (atua of the heavens) and Papatūānuku (mother earth) cleaved together as male and female, and they had many, many offspring. Those offspring, out of the necessity to grow, to develop and evolve, conspired to force their parents apart. One of those children, Tāne Mahuta, was eventually successful in separating their parents and light flooded the world and created day. In that moment, Papatūānuku was turned over, her face hidden from Ranginui, and as the world turned, day and night became distinct.

Māori named and personified the various elements of nature pertaining to the area that they took care of. These personifications are known as atua¹, and each had a specific role to play in the evolution of life in Aotearoa. Tāne Mahuta, who separated Ranginui and Papatūānuku, was accorded several names that aligned with the tasks he was given or that he achieved, but his most well-known role is as Tāne Mahuta: guardian of the forest. The siblings of Tāne Mahuta were also given domains of authority with responsibility of care for each. Tangaroa was responsible for life

¹ Tate (2010) refers to atua as spritual beings, Makiha (2015) considers them as the elements of nature. The translation of atua as gods or goddesses (Papatūānuku) are misnomers and misleading, ideas taken from a monocultural perspective (Ngaha, 2022).

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within all bodies of water, Tāwhirimātea, the area between land and sky, winds, rain, hurricanes, tornadoes and so on and Ruauumoko, the domain of volcanoes. These are examples of the atua in our world.

Geographical features are the embodiment of elements of Papatūānuku with an identity of their own and bearing names of significance to the local hapū. Pepehā² reflect these images.

*Ko Tauiri te maunga,
Ko Waikato te awa,
Ko Waikato te iwi,
Ko Potatau te tangata.*

Taupiri is the mountain, Waikato is the river, Waikato is the tribe and Potatau is the chief.

More recently the Crown has recognised the value of elements of the whenua, of Papatūānuku, through legislation: "Te Urewera (meaning the forest) will have its own legislation and exist as a separate legal identity"³. Te Awa Tupua 2014 legislation likewise is "centred on the legal recognition of the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating its tributaries and all its physical and metaphysical elements, as an indivisible and living whole"⁴. The whakataukī 'Ko au ko te awa, Ko te awa ko au'⁵ coined in the evidence submitted to the Waitangui Tribunal in this claim, clearly illustrates the intrinsic value and theological imperative of the natural world to the people.

Indigeneity and Land

Māori are not alone in their consideration of the place of land in their worldview. Indigenous peoples throughout the world identify their beginnings as derived from their land, with many seeing the land as 'mother'. Longchar, Indigenous theologian, notes "that indigenous people hold a very high nature-centered tradition, an ethics of responsibility and respect for creation. The land is seen as an integral part of the web of life, physical and spiritual but not inert, empty and passive" (2012, p.8). For indigenous peoples, we belong to the land, we do not own the land. The notion of owning the land was a completely alien concept to tribal Māori.

Whenua

The world views of Māori and Pākehā differ. Our whenua is not seen as a commodity to be used or traded for our use for as long as it serves our purpose, but it has significant value both spiritual and material⁶. Stories about our whenua then are important for our local iwi and hapū and for our own Methodist people and our church history.

Whenua has a spiritual dimension, is a source of spiritual nourishment, as a part of our identity, both as people of God and people of Aotearoa⁷. For Māori Papatūānuku is 'mother earth', it is from the earth that we are created (Gen. 2:7). It is from Papatūānuku that we are fed, sheltered, protected, and sustained.

² Pepehā – proverbial sayings that illustrate elements of one's identity.

³ <https://www.govt.nz/assets/Documents/OTS/Ngai-Tuhoe/Ngai-Tuhoe-Deed-of-Settlement-Summary-4-Jun-2013.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.govt.nz/browse/history-culture-and-heritage/treaty-settlements/find-a-treaty-settlement/whanganui-iwi/whanganui-iwi-whanganui-river-deed-of-settlement-summary>

⁵ Ko au ko te awa, Ko te awa, Ko au – *I am the river and the river is me.*

⁶ Marsden, M. *The woven Universe*, 2003, Walker, R. *Ka whawhai tonu mātou*, 2004, Tate, H. *He Puna iti i te Ao Mārama*. 2013.

⁷ Ibid

Whenua is also the term used for the child's afterbirth or umbilical cord and illustrates the intimate nature of land to people and their Tūrangawaewae, their place to call home. Whenua ūkaipō speaks to the place of one's birth, land where one was suckled as a child, and where one is finally laid to rest.

The Waitangi Tribunal

In 1983 the church agreed to embark upon a Bicultural Journey, one that would seek a more just society, one that would more truly reflect that bicultural society espoused in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The Waitangi Tribunal has a myriad of reports that illustrate instances of unjust land taking, through various guises, by the Crown. They also record the Māori view of their obligations and responsibilities to the land. Hapū boundaries are clearly delineated, and the narratives outlined show how hapū cared for and protected their lands, their waterways, and all the life contained there within those hapū boundaries. Māori were the earliest conservationists in Aotearoa, knowing when to leave areas of whenua fallow, allowing for regeneration of plant and bird life⁸, restocking of shellfish beds and fish life⁹ and ensuring that the signs of nature were observed and taken note of to ensure the sustainability of nature's resources. Land was how hapū and whānau were sustained, and so it was incumbent on them to care for all life within their hapū land and seascape, caring for the resources wisely and exercising responsible stewardship.

A Just record

24 Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.
Leviticus 25.24 NRSV

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is "the foundation document for this land", as expressed in our Methodist Church's Mission Statement. As responsible members of this bicultural church, we must ensure that stories about our history are complete, beginning with the stories of Māori. In the early days of the Native Land Court, land titles were vested in individuals, and many of the Māori inhabitants were not recorded as owners. It is this kind of treatment that rendered Māori invisible, that denied Māori their existence. It is imperative that Māori and their own stories are made visible, are brought to life and that the earliest inhabitants of each piece of whenua are not only recognised but acknowledged appropriately.

The church may have benefited from the use of this property for a very long time. It is thus our duty to record the full and complete history of our property and to do so with due diligence. Where improper dealings regarding land acquisitions in the past are discovered in the research, so be it. The Kōrero Papatupu Whenua, in its entirety, must be told to honour and respect the memory and the stories of the original inhabitants, and a just and accurate record offers some redemption.

⁸ Tai Tokerau Papatupu Committee Minute Book No.44 Vol.2.pp 335 - 381 (pp 362-363) Rāhui was a particular form of conservation employed to allow for regrowth, regeneration.

⁹ Motunui Report of the Waitangi Tribunal 1983 speaks directly to the despoiling of the foreshore, decimating their shellfish stocks and Māori efforts to restore balance in these areas.

Guidelines for Kōrero Papatupu Whenua research

Underlying Considerations

A basic aim is to restore relationships severed by injustice. The initiative to restore that relationship needs to be taken by the parish or other body holding the land recognising that there is no one “right” response to take.

The process will take time. Take whatever time is necessary to be thorough. The process will involve wide research and listening to hear the stories of the original inhabitants. One injustice must not be replaced by another.

Take it seriously. These land stories are important for your congregation or group and for the Church. Check that you have enough information and understand the key issues. Don't be afraid of the history and what it might mean. Think of the situation as an opportunity. It is important, and unravelling the history can be exciting.

Land acquisition

There are several ways that the Methodist Church acquired land, and some of that we now know was originally confiscated or obtained illegally by the Crown through their own processes. Identifying these facts early in the research is necessary.

- **Confiscated Land:** Land taken from Māori by force or by legal decree as a punishment. Lands in the Waikato may fall into this category.
- **Gifted Land:** Land intended for a particular purpose. This includes Crown grants. This land, while still held by the church, is often no longer being used for the purpose for which it was originally intended.
- **Irregularly Purchased Land:** Land, for example, from individualised Māori title, under duress, through broken agreements. Crown grants can also be found in this category.
- **Land Acquired under Act of Parliament:** such as under the Wastelands Act, Land Claims Act, Public Works Act, etc.

Not all land acquired in these ways will require further action, but if these turn up, then you need to pause and take a closer look.

The main concern is about the way land was moved out of Māori oversight. Often this was transferred to the Crown and subsequently granted to another owner. Sometimes land was gifted by the Crown to reward Pākehā troops for their service. But the question remains, how did the Crown acquire it?

How to do the mahi

1. Set up a team to work with this task, two or three people to plan the strategy on how to undertake this work.
2. Engage in Biblical and theological reflection as part of that process. Remember, an important aspect of this work is to reclaim the integrity of the gospel in Aotearoa.
3. Consider what is known, and do your research.
 - Use local resources such as museums, libraries and the Methodist Church Archives in Christchurch and Auckland, as they have a wealth of information about Methodist land.
 - The reports and decisions of the Waitangi Tribunal provide significant resource material to help both in background information on land and in deciding appropriate action.
 - Check out the history of the land transfers; the titles to properties can be sourced from the various Councils and LINZ online sites.

4. What is the Māori history of this area where the land is situated?
 - Touch base with Te Taha Māori Rohe members to find contacts for the local hapū historians who may help with your research.
 - Hui with hapū people, on their terms e.g, on marae, in homes etc.. Listen with open hands and hearts, hear their stories and be prepared to hear narratives that have their baseline grounded in whakapapa.
 - Record their stories and then once transcribed, return to the participants with the account of their stories to ensure you have portrayed these accurately.
 - Do not add your views into the narratives. The hapū stories belong to the hapū. Consider yourself privileged to be the recipient of these treasures, the history of a people.
5. Consider what other sources may be useful to this work.
 - Other church researchers
 - Elders within your church
 - Parish records
6. Recognise that there will be different perspectives. Treat them all seriously, and with respect. Note again that there is no single historical view, but there are several perspectives. It is important to hear the different voices.
7. Draft up your Kōrero Papatupu Whenua and share it initially with those who have been involved in the work, have offered kōrero or resources. Share it more widely then and get feedback. Don't be afraid to take time over this part of the process. It is important to get people "on board" and to feel you are doing the most appropriate thing for your setting.
8. Where there may be a case of injustice recognised, take further steps to learn more and engage in discussion with Te Taha Māori as primary Treaty partner in the church, and MCPC.

Taking Action

There have been several ways that the Church has acted in the past in the manner of restoration of right relationships from land transactions that have been detrimental to Māori. Illustrated here are a few examples of the Church's actions.

- **Returning the land.** This is the most publicised, but it is simply one of a number of possible options, remembering that it is not always possible to return particular pieces of land. In 1992, land gifted for a parsonage was handed back to Ngā Hau e Whā Marae, Tuakau. Similarly, land gifted for a parsonage in Waima was returned to the two whānau involved, the Hohepa and Noho whānau 1998.
- **Compensation.** This may take the form of a cash grant, perhaps from the sale of land. Rangiora Parish sold a redundant property and made a gift of a proportion of the proceeds to the Tuahiwi Marae. In the Franklin District, a portion of the proceeds from a land sale has been gifted to Ngāti Tamaoho, who are dedicating these funds to education scholarships.
- **Return from rental.** This provides an ongoing sum that maintains the relationship and recognises the situation. The Hamilton Methodist Trust has, in the past, given a percentage of its rental income to Te Taha Māori.
- **A ritual act.** This might happen in your worship or with the local Māori people, expressing regret for the past and commitment to the future in partnership.
- **Public acknowledgement of past injustice.** This could be like the previous example but is intentionally public and with a focus on the acknowledgement of the injustice. (For example, this is what took place in relation to Te Aro Park in Wellington, 2007)

Concluding Points

There are three things to keep uppermost in your mind:

- Land and its history are significant, so we need to take these issues seriously. We will be helped in this if we search for ways of incorporating land awareness in our theology, as, for example, in reflecting on our understanding of creation.
- Consultation is key. This does not mean telling people what you are doing but going to them with open hands and minds. It means a genuine meeting, without prejudged results, and recognising that it will take more than just one contact.
- The whole process takes time. This is necessary if there is to be adequate information, good consultation and consensus decision-making. Do not wait until you want to sell before beginning. Start now.

Please send a copy of your land story to:

**Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives
PO Box 931
Christchurch 8140**

Email: archives@methodist.org.nz

References

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Internet Sources

- Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives Collection
While few documents have yet been digitised, our catalogue lists of the Archives Collection are available: <https://www.methodist.org.nz/whakapapa/archives/archives-collection/>
- New Zealand Methodist Newspapers 1870/1948
Digital copies of these can be word searched: <http://kinderlibrary.outofprint.co.nz/>
- New Zealand Newspapers
Newspapers can also include information about the New Zealand Methodist Church. These can be searched on the National Library's Papers Past site: <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast>
- William Morley's A History of Methodism in New Zealand:
<http://www.archive.org/details/historymethodis00morlgoog>
- The Wesley Historical Society of New Zealand:
<https://www.methodist.org.nz/whakapapa/archives/wesley-historical-society/>
- Repositories holding New Zealand Methodist Archives and Manuscripts:
- Alexander Turnbull Library
Holds records of joint or union parishes in the Wellington region, ministers' papers, Wesleyan missionary records, photographs and artworks.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/>
- Auckland City Library Sir George Grey Collection
Holds records for Pitt Street Methodist Church, Hokianga Mission Station.
<http://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/>

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- Hocken Heritage Collections
Holds records of Methodist Parish archives for Otago and Southland.
<http://hakena.otago.ac.nz/>
- John Kinder Theological Library
Holds publications, manuscripts and archives, photographs relating to The Methodist Church.
<http://www.kinderlibrary.ac.nz/>
- National Library of New Zealand
Holds publications relating to the history of The Methodist Church of New Zealand.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/>
- Archives New Zealand
Holds the records of New Zealand Government departments including Lands and Survey Department and Land Information New Zealand. <http://archives.govt.nz/>
- Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)
- Waitangi Tribunal
<https://www.govt.nz/assets/Documents/OTS/Ngai-Tuhoe/Ngai-Tuhoe-Deed-of-Settlement-Summary-4-Jun-2013.pdf>
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Section 8: Appendix 1

TE OROKOHANGA

Ko Te Kore

Te Kore-te-whiwhia

Te Kore-te-rawea

Te Kore-i-ai

Te Kore-te-wiwiā

(the void, energy, nothingness, potential)

(the void in which nothing is possessed)

(the void in which nothing is felt)

(the void with nothing in union)

(the space without boundaries)

Nā Te Kore Te Pō

Te Pō-nui

Te Pō-roa

Te Pō-uriuri

Te Pō-kerekere

Te Pō-tiwhatiwha

Te Pō-te-kitea

Te Pō-tangotango

Te Pō-whawha

Te Pō-namunamu-ki-taiao

Te Pō-tahuri-atu

Te Pō-tahuri-mai-ki-taiao

Ki te Whai-ao

Ki te Ao-marama

Tihei mauri-ora

(from the void the night)

(the great night)

(the long night)

(the deep night)

(the intense night)

(the dark night)

(the night in which nothing is seen)

(the intensely dark night)

(the night of feeling)

(the night of seeking the passage to the world)

(the night of restless turning)

(the night of turning towards the revealed world)

(to the glimmer of dawn)

(to the bright light of day)

(there is life)