

Debate:

Responses to Steve Taylor's paper on Pai Marire

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1. Des Jones

Steve Taylor's paper is quite comprehensive in its examination of the formation of the Pai Marire movement and its development until about the 1890's. The place of the movement amongst the Tainui people since then is significant and is of continuing interest. One cannot minister to the people of Waikato without a very strong awareness that Pai Marire is not just a matter of history but is firmly entrenched in the contemporary Kingitanga movement. In fact, currently the term 'Pai Marire' is used almost exclusively among the Tainui. The Pai Marire faith is also called *Tariao* (morning star), but only in Waikato. It is a living institution that has been part of the cohesive force that has enhanced the tribal bonds through the land wars the raupatu (land confiscation), the exile in the King Country, and the eventual return of the hapu to Waikato. It is active today and was heard in the prayers related to Waikato's Treaty settlement.

Tawhiao, the second Maori king, was influenced during his exile by the Taranaki prophets, Te Ua Haumene and Te Whitirongomai, when he was able to make excursions into Taranaki. The king had previously insisted that he was a Christian and many of his sayings had an Old Testament ring about them. What is difficult to discover is the strength of the influence of Pai Marire from King Tawhiao to Te Rata (4th Maori King) at the time of the First World War. Probably it was not the dynamic force that it had been and was to become. Things changed dramatically with the rise of Te Puea and the conflict over military conscription. Michael King has a most comprehensive account in his book *Te Puea*, pages 79-97.

The conscription of Maori men for war was the idea of leaders such as Pomare, Carroll, Ngata and Buck who was it an opportunity to prove the Maori male was the equal of the European. The Waikato wars were only fifty years back and the humiliation of the *raupatu* still hurt. As a result recruitment was low in Taranaki, King Country and non-existent in Waikato. The Defence minister, James Allen wrote in a patronising way to shame non-combatants: "*I understand the native chiefs in New Zealand were also anxious to stand alongside of their pakeha brothers in the defence of the country of the forefathers and in defence of the great British Empire.*"

Te Puea drew heavily on the words of Tawhiao, whom she claimed was the prophet of peace. She became the leader of the anti-conscriptionists. Her views were conveyed to other tribal representatives by song at the anniversary of Te Rata's coronation. Her stand alienated the Waikato people from the European settlers who regarded her and her people as German sympathisers. [I personally recall comments during W.W.2 that Waikato Maori would support the Nazi if they could. It was also stated Te Puea's pakeha grandfather, William Searancke, was German. In fact he was from St Albans, UK, and the family had been there at least four generations. In 1942 I heard a Morrinsville farmer condemn Te Puea as 'that German woman'.]

Dave (Tumokai) Katipa, Te Puea's husband, told me of the strengthening of the 'Maori King' religion under the influence of Te Puea. Fuller details than I can personally recall are given in Michael King's book, *Te Puea*, p93 where he describes the commencement of the pacifist stance. "Then Te Puea stood by the door and said it was time to begin (the discussions on passive resistance). 'But first' she said, 'We must karakia. Is there someone who will lead?' She expected a parson to stand up. But do you know there wasn't (one). There was absolute silence. All the Christian churches had deserted us then because they thought we were breaking the law. They didn't want to get caught with us and go to prison.

"And then this old kaumatua from Manukorihi in Taranaki stood up. He was there with some of his people who also didn't

want to fight because their land had been taken. And he reminded Te Puea of the saying of Tawhiao: *'I have taken my faith from the base of the mountain, and I have laid it back there. In time of difficulty you will find it there.'* Now Tawhiao had said the before he died. He was referring to his bringing Pai Marire from Taranaki, from Te Ua Haumene. He did it because the Pakeha churches had fought with the soldiers in the war. But once he said he'd laid it back there, that was it. The people stopped doing that karakia. They hadn't done it since. And Mahuta had allowed the Christian churches to come back in.

"But now this kaumatua was saying *'Here is your time of difficulty, now is the time to take up your faith again from the base of the mountain.'* And Te Puea said, *'Yes, you're right.'* And at that moment two Waikato elders, Honai Taurea and Te Hira, stood and started up their chant, one leading and the other answering, *'Rire rire pai marire.'* And there was a roar round the hall as the older people there from Tawhiao's time joined in. They all remembered Tawhiao and those days with him, and the tears were rolling down their cheeks as they chanted."

This suggests that Pai Marire may not have been a strong force after Tawhiao returned from beyond the Aukati line and some hapu took up some tribal land along the Waikato River but there is no doubt that it became strongly identified with the Kingitanga under Te Puea. This is why the Waikato expression of Pai Marire is also associated with what I have called the "Te Puea Cult". Trevor Donnell in his thesis for Baptist College sees it somewhat differently. He writes: "It is true that Pai Marire has never again enjoyed the widespread following it had during the wars" (Waikato land wars). After the first World War it may have been different from the movement during the Land Wars but it was certainly still most vital in Waikato life. Its focus was the recalling of sayings of Tawhiao and the words & visions of Te Puea.

Time and time again I was told of instances when, after a karakia (a Pai Marire one, of course) Te Puea would make special pronouncements in the nature of 'a word of knowledge'. I recall hearing of one occasion during the building of Mahinarangi, at

Turangawaewae. As soon as prayers concluded Te Puea declared that a mistake had been made in the building of a wall and it must be rectified immediately. The builders investigated and found it to be so - the wall could have fallen. Michael King refers to her "as someone 'possessed' by Tawhiao (p 105 *ibid*).

It was customary at tangi and other such gatherings to have morning and evening prayers. We noted that the early morning karakia were generally Pai Marire and in the evening, if possible sharp at 7.00 pm Christian ministers were invited to lead. There were a number of occasions when a kaumatua would lead Pai Marire chants at the conclusions of a Christian service. I recall a Methodist home missionary conducting a Pai Marire service. My last experience of this kind was in 1990 at Waahi, Huntly where I had been asked to conduct a funeral service. After the benediction an elder immediately led off into Pai Marire incantations. The congregation who a few minutes earlier had confidently sung the Christian funeral hymn, *Piko nei te matenga*, then entered wholeheartedly into the responses of Pai Marire.

Although one was very much aware of Pai Marire when living in a Waikato Maori community it was almost impossible to discover its theology. As far as I was able to determine it had no Christology. 'Ihowa' (Jehovah) and 'Te Atua' (God) were used frequently in speech making but there was no word concerning Jesus Christ. Steve Taylor says: "*The Pai Marire movement was a response to the missionary gospel and scriptures viewed through the lens of the local Maori context. It will be argued that it is more accurate to view the Pai Marie movement as a non-European interpretation of Christianity, rather than as a rejection of Christianity.*" (p 25). "*The Pai Marire movement was a creative, contextual synthesis of Hebraic notions, the Old Testament, Maori tradition and Christianity.*" (p 31). *The Pai Marire movement is an indigenous interpretation of Christianity, a message heard from where the Maori sat.* (p 33). It is by definition incorrect to speak of a religious movement as an indigenous expression of Christianity when it is impossible to find within it even a vestige of belief in Christ.

Taylor acknowledges this on page 30. "By identifying with Judaism, Maori could maintain a religious expression, yet could reject missionary Christianity." This rejection of the person and work of Christ together with his teaching is also seen in the Ratana movement. Wiremu Ratana described himself as the *mangai*, the mouth piece of God. The popular hymns, *Koutou katoa ra, mea iti ra*, (Come to the Saviour) became "*Come to the Mangai*". My informant was Wari Ward who almost completed his training as a Catholic priest (probably the first Maori to be trained for the priesthood) but who cleared out to England before ordination. On his return in the early 1920's he became private secretary to Wiremu Ratana. There he defrauded the movement. Later he was literally picked up out of the gutter stone drunk by some people from a Brethren Assembly. A near Damascus Road conversion followed and he became in the eyes of some "a Maori Christian apostle." Ward claimed that Ratana based the dismissal of Christ and his teachings on Hebrews 6:1 as in the 1868 Maori translation. "*Na, mahure ki a mahue atu ki muri. Na timatanga o ta te Karaiti akoranga, hoake tatou ki te tino tikanga; kaua e tuaruatia te whakatakoto i te turanga, ara, e ripenatanga ki nga mahi mate i te whakapono hoki ki te Atua.*" (Leave behind – give up – the first teaching of Christ...) It must be said that the word *mahue* has connotations of *forsaking* or *giving up* but not as strong as *rejecting*. It must be said that some English speaking people have had difficulty with this verse.

This must be compared with the 1958 Bible Society translation. "*Na, kati tatou te korero i nga timatanga o ta te Karaiti ako, hoake tatou ki te tino tikanga; kaua e tuaruatia te whakatakoto i te turanga, ara i te ripenta ki nga mahi mate, i te whakapono hoki ki te Atua.*" (Now, enough about the beginning of Christ's teaching, let us go on to the essential matter ...)

The person and work of Christ is the missing theological factor in modern indigenous Maori religions. Some of the ecstatic experiences of the Corinthian Church are present - speaking in tongues and prophecy in the early Pai Marire, "word of knowledge" in the Pai Marire under Te Puea, and healings in the Ratana Church.

One is left wondering if the teaching of the missionary church gave greater emphasis to the Ten Commandments than to the uniqueness of Christ's teaching, the crucifixion and the resurrection. But there is no evidence for this.

Steve Taylor in his paper's introduction states, "The Pai Marire movement was a response to the missionary Gospel and scriptures viewed through the lens of the local Maori context. It will be argued that it is more accurate to view the Pai Marire as a non-European interpretation of Christianity, rather than a rejection of Christianity." It must be questioned that in view of the absence of any sort of Christology if was there was any understanding of the person of Jesus in the indigenous movements. There was clearly a strong identification with the trials of the people of Israel in the Pai Marire movement. Taylor acknowledges this: "'God' in the Maori Old Testament was translated as *atua*; and Jehovah as *Ihowa*, paralleling Maori words for their deities. However, Jesus Christ was translated as *ariki*, merely a high chief. Old Testament concepts of justice, righteousness, war and fear of God were more familiar to the Maori than New Testament concepts of grace and salvation."

The claim that the early missionaries emphasised an Old Testament legalism coloured by English culture at the expense of presenting the uniqueness of Christ's person, his teaching and his ministry must be seriously examined. Perhaps this appeared to be so in some instances but the radical life change of some of the early Maori Christians demonstrates the transforming power of the Gospel. War and land issues undoubtedly fogged the essential gospel message. An understanding of early Maori Christianity may perhaps be found in an examination of Wiremu Tamehana's Peria community before the outbreak of the Waikato land war rather than a post-war dissection of Pai Marire. When and why did belief in Christ disappear in the rise of the Pai Marire and the Ringatu movements? A lot more work remains to be done.

2. Harold Turner

I recently came across the above article in the *NZJBR* issue of October 1997 and read it with mounting interest. Having explored Maori movements myself some years back I was delighted to find work still going on here, and with such scholarly method and wide range of resources. In fact the references brought to light a general survey of these movements that I had completely forgotten publishing only four years ago! Thank you, Steve Taylor

One of his main themes is the need to address other cultures in terms of their own languages and worldviews. He uses this as a critique of contemporary Christian reactions to Pai Marire and similar movements, and usefully shows how some reactions were positive and so observed this principle. This point needed to be made and was well done and documented, although it is a familiar position in missiology by now.

Without depreciating the above achievement it is necessary to point out that this approach has limited, initial contact or pedagogical value, as it does in educational matters in general. Unless it is further developed by reference to the truth issue as between cultures, then it degenerates into the disastrous "constructivist" philosophy and practice our National Educational Syllabuses which start and end with the pupil. I am sure this is far from Steve Taylor's intention, and I write this note to ensure that readers do not think that transference into other languages and worldviews is fully possible, or gets the missionary very far.

Taylor illustrates this limitation himself when he points out how the borrowed word "Ihova" (for our "Jehovah", itself a mongrel to be avoided) was used in the Maori Bible, and how "ariki" or high chief for Jesus Christ in a warrior culture inevitably falsified this position of Jesus, who died ignominiously on a cross. Where other cultures and languages lack basic biblical terms such as "mercy" or "thank you" quite new concepts have to be taught. But far deeper than such specific lacks lies the biblical worldview where it simply contradicts that of another people. All human cultures are a mixture of truth and error, including error that is basic and pervasive. Only a paradigm shift, a deep conversion to

another worldview, can incorporate the Gospel message and sustain Christian truth and practice.

It so happens that I have just finished a book on this very subject, to appear in November 1998 as *The Roots of Science: An Investigative Journey Through the World's Religions*. It would be foolish not to use this in my comment on Taylor. I commence with an exposition of the cosmological dimension of world views characteristic of tribal societies (including Maori); this is every bit as positive towards them as the attitudes of Taylor's sympathetic pakeha. Then the critique of tribal cosmologies is described, first as presented in the so-called Axial religions of Asia, and then the very different critique that developed among the Hebrew people. The particular thesis is then followed up – that science as we know it could and did arise only within the biblical cosmology of Western Christian Europe. It did not come from the Greeks, as in the conventional stereotype.

This, of course, is anathema to all liberal theology (John Hick denies it), to postmodernism, and to the guilt-ridden Westerners who play down Western culture, Christian missions and all such Western tribalism, including even science, which now has to be seen as “Western” or “Maori”, etc., science.

All this is relevant to the implications of Steve Taylor's subject; but the special relevance of this book is that it, surprisingly, includes a ch.9, “Unexpected confirmation from tribal cultures”. This starts by expounding the way new religious movements in tribal societies (including especially Ratana and Ringatu, and less specifically his Pai Marire), with their modernizing effects, have arisen almost entirely through the Christian contact, and seldom by interaction with the other major faiths. It then explains this by affirming a basic affinity between tribal and biblical religions that is lacking with all other faiths. At both points there is enough here to raise a multitude of hackles, but I like to think that Steve Taylor's will not be among them.

I also hope that articles such as his will stimulate examination in New Zealand of the wider assumptions and implications that are always present in whatever we write, or think or do.
