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Ham, Shem and the Māori Prophets

Introduction

John 5.23 commands: '[A]ll men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.' Originally part of a forensic defence by early Christians designed to address criticisms of linking Jesus to God, missionary authorities appropriated this defence in order to buttress colonial hierarchies: no native could come to God – that is, be sanctified – except through the European avatars who alone were worthy to spread the message of his Son.¹

There is no doubt that missionary Christianity has been used as a tool to uproot peoples in the expansion of the colonial frontier. It is, however, another thing entirely to presume that those among the colonized who embraced the Bible – and even Christ – were simply sacrificing themselves on the altar of cultural imperialism.² In fact colonized peoples often ignored the missionary interpretation of John 5.23. Instead, they were able and willing to acculturate the Bible into their own extant cosmologies, philosophies and cardinal values rather than be enculturated into a missionary Christianity.³ Specifically, the theological and philosophical changes that accompanied the acceptance of the Bible as the word of God tended to follow the logics of existing worldviews and not the logics of colonial science.⁴ Such was the case with the Māori tradition of prophecy.

In order for us to walk with the prophets it will be necessary to first return to some of the cosmological frameworks of Tāne/Māui and Legba that I discussed earlier in the book. In these frameworks the prophet appears as the channeller of biblical intercession between the manifest and spiritual domains. We shall then witness one prophet, Te Ua, finding Tāne/Māui and Legba walking the spiritual hinterlands together in their biblical manifestation as Shem and Ham. In Te Ua's context, the solidarity between Ham and Shem manifests as a binding together of struggles against (African) enslavement and (indigenous) dispossession. Te Ua addresses this shared fate by binding the kingly pursuit of *mana motuhake* (self-determination) to the redemption of the suffering Māori multitudes in one anti-colonial project.

Cosmology, prophecy and the Bible

To walk with the prophets we must first of all dispatch the colonial distinction between monotheistic and polytheistic religions. This distinction is part of the theological architecture that supports the missionary reading of John 5.23 in so far as monotheism is considered to be the seedbed of civilization and metaphysics (European Christianity) while polytheism is considered capable only of cultivating particular and provincial thought (native totems, fetishism, ancestor worship etc.).⁵ However, neither the cosmologies of Legba nor those of Tāne/Māui display such crude binaries. For the fact that a cosmology incorporates a range of spiritual agencies (so-called 'polytheism') does not rule out the precept that a seminal force assures unity in diversity (so called 'monotheism'). This is certainly the case in much African ancestor worship.⁶ So too in Oceania cosmologies, many of which exhibit an abiding theme of a creative epoch wherein extant matter differentiates itself without losing its seminal characteristics; hence, key differentiations – for example male and female – do not become binary opposites but retain a recursive relationship.⁷

This notion is important when it comes to understanding the deeper and ancient Oceanic meaning of the common word for god in Māori. *Atua* does not refer to a separate One who is invoked but, rather, denotes being from or of the ‘other side.’⁸ Hence, multiple entities that exist in the spiritual domain are *atua*. But *atua*, as demonstrated by Māori Marsden, all variously articulate the seminal force of creation. Crucially, these relational apprehensions of a seminal force are not the same as the European and missionary Christian notion of a begotten personality/entity that is distinct and separated from the manifest domain. Many decolonial apprehensions of Christianity question precisely this separation. For instance, within RasTafari (as in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church) there exists the notion of *theosis*, meaning that the flesh and the spirit are not categorically separate; rather, one can with thought and practice manifest divine nature.⁹

Having dispensed with the artificial distinction between monotheism and polytheism we can now consider the ‘authenticity’ of Io in Māori cosmology. Io is the suspiciously ‘monotheistic’ begotten force who has various names such as Io-matua (parent of all things), Io-mata-ngaro (the hidden face) or Io-matua-aho (seen in a flash, i.e. lightning).¹⁰ By the mid-twentieth century some scholars claimed that Io was created as an approximation of the biblical Jehovah due to the fact that the deity entered into the public record only after the arrival in force of missionaries.¹¹ Alternatively, Manuka Henare argues that, being the highest of esoteric knowledge, i.e. the most sublime articulation of the concept of *atua*, Io was known only to a relatively few seers and so would certainly not be casually mentioned to newcomers.¹² As we shall see, Jehovah was subsequently acculturated into the Io concept.

Even the practice of baptism – the quintessential act of accepting the missionary interpretation of John 5.23 and being reborn into a new family of Christ – was acculturated by the children of Tāne/Māui and Legba into their existing cosmological frameworks. Water often holds significance as a medium of transmission between the manifest and spiritual domains. It is common across African cosmologies for water sites to function as ‘aquatic temples’, residencies of ancestral deities and

spiritual agencies including the famous 'water mamma' known also in the Caribbean.¹³ In Māori cosmology, Wainui is the female personification of water.¹⁴ An early European visitor to Aotearoa NZ was so astonished at witnessing the Māori 'custom of sprinkling their children with water at the time they name them' that he believed that they must have been 'familiar with the Mosaic account of the creation'.¹⁵ In truth this sojourner was probably witnessing the Tohi rite wherein the child is prepared for dedication to a spiritual agency.¹⁶

As with Io, Jehovah, Tohi and baptism, so too with the Bible itself, which was acculturated by Māori as a story of ancestral redemption. It might be remembered that in Bob Scott's anti-racism workshops Hone Kaa challenged the missionary fantasies of John 5.23 by narrating his own *whakapapa* back to creation. It was precisely this acculturation that allowed Kaa to do so.

The Māori concept of *mana* denotes 'lawful permission delegated by the gods to their human agents and accompanied by the endowment of spiritual power to act on their behalf and in accordance with their revealed will'.¹⁷ In the manifest domain, *mana* is pursued by reciprocating and balancing relations with others over the long run (*utu*), whether peacefully or forcefully.¹⁸ In this way *mana* is heavily implicated in the moral legacies of the actions of ancestors. Similarly, in many West African cosmologies, while the Most High is omnipotent, sin, forgiveness, love and punishment emanate from the human experience, which is why ancestors take on unique importance as channels to the higher realms.¹⁹ In short, the ancestors act as – and affect – the moral compass. And this is why enslaved Africans and early nineteenth-century Māori seers often qualified the central significance of Jesus Christ the Son via retrieval of his Old Testament ancestors and, indeed, his father – Jehovah.²⁰ These ancestral stories were morally instructive, detailing a people's captivity, their exodus and liberation, while the New Testament revealed the means of spiritual redemption in a world of incarnate suffering.²¹

It is the prophet who interprets and envisages the material as material-and-spiritual. In so doing, the prophet channels the *atua* (the

spiritual agencies) of intercession on behalf of suffering communities in the manifest domain. In this respect, the prophet is less a charismatic agent and more an elected agent of a 'history-shaping power'.²² While certain prophets can be co-opted by the political and hierocratic power bases, I am concerned with those who stand apart to pursue a Jeremiad vocation – i.e. the witnessing of injustice and testifying to the consequences.²³ To undertake such a vocation, the prophet stands at the crossroads of the manifest and spiritual domains. There, she/he channels the agents of intercession (Legba, Tāne/Māui and Arcadian Hermes too) in order to redeem a beloved community. In this respect, the prophet facilitates binding activities and can therefore be an important practitioner of decolonial science.

As a channeller of intercession the prophet exists in many African cosmologies. For instance, among the Zande there are diviners who deliver messages from the spiritual domain and diviners who 'judge and appreciate the conjunction of signifiers and signified in a divinatory theme'.²⁴ This agent also appears in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world). Before any engagement with the biblical prophets, Māori relied upon *tohunga*, imperfectly translated as 'priest' but more accurately denoting those with expertise in a multiplicity of pursuits, skills or social organizations.²⁵ *Tohu* can be glossed as 'sign', hence, the expertise of *tohunga* emanated from their ability to interpret signs, including signs of change related to sustaining life or avoiding illness.²⁶

Prophetic interpretations of signs implicate particular notions of temporality. In Chapter two I demonstrated that for Tāne/Māui and Legba the past is not dead but rather the prime site of agency composed of ancestors and attendant relationships that are contentiously bound up in issues of reciprocity, balance and justice, which resonate in the present. The prophet inhabits this temporality. Standing at the crossroads, the prophet senses the motile energies of the past through manifest signs that demand intervention in the present. The prophet therefore channels the binding skills of Tāne/Māui and Legba so that colonized History can give way to decolonial pasts. And key among these skills is the use of voice.

The words that the prophet enunciates are a passionate summons, an 'act formed with intention, depending on free will, the result of decision and determination'.²⁷ Unlike vision, sound is a sensibility that is constantly in movement; always fading from the moment of its reception, sound has to be consistently re-created and thus cannot exist without the use of power.²⁸ In Te Ao Māori this power is represented in the skill of chanting that Tāne recovered from the realm of *atua* in the third of his baskets of knowledge and that Māui utilizes to manipulate manifest arrangements into a more restitutive configuration. In a cognate register, some African cosmologies posit that the begotten force manifests order out of chaos by uttering the name of all things.²⁹ Humanity is then gifted this creative propensity. Furthermore, it is a commonplace assumption in many African cosmologies – including Diaspora variants – that to know the name of an entity is to have some degree of control over it. And as John 1.1 declares, 'In the beginning was the Word'.

The notion of 'wordsoundpower' in RasTafari encapsulates these cosmological propositions. In the RasTafari language certain words have to be changed either to expunge their negative vibration or because their sound masquerades their deeper meaning.³⁰ This language is also called I-yaric, which has the same relationship to Jamaican ('patois') as Ge'ez – the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church – has to the dominant Ethiopian vernacular, Amharic.³¹ I-yaric seeks to heal the racial dehumanization that accompanied enslavement. To this end RasTafari use 'I' as an expansive pronoun that signifies a sanctified connectedness, i.e. 'I and I' (*tātou tātou*).³² Therefore wordsounds do not just represent or signify power; their enactment and vibration *is* power.³³ Māori cosmologies share the concept of wordsoundpower. Indeed, *tohu* are not only nonverbal signs but must be enunciated as *kupu tohutohu* (words of import). Traditionally, these words are connected to discussion of *whakapapa* within *whare wānanga* (houses of learning).³⁴ Hone Kaa explains why wordsoundpower is crucial for the political vocation of the prophet: 'I believe that the reign of God is here now. The prophetic voice must be heard now. And the only way these things are realised is when you see justice being meted out.'³⁵

And so the missionaries arrived in Oceania and the Caribbean. At the shores and borders of homelands, at the gates of plantations, or in the Baptist- and Quaker-sponsored free-villages that spotted the countryside post-emancipation, the recipients of this new knowledge acculturated biblical narratives and cosmology into their prophetic traditions. The diasporic children of Legba mapped the Christian cross of suffering onto the crossroads of healing that had travelled the Atlantic;³⁶ while in Aotearoa NZ, certain *tohunga* became *poropiti* (prophets), i.e. those who channelled the most sublime articulation of the concept of *atua*, Jehovah.³⁷

As seers became prophets, their wordsoundpower was now required to proactively address the living consequences of enslavement, dehumanization, and/or war and dispossession of land. In this respect, anti-colonial prophets had to be redemptive agents of the Most High, invoking injustice, reparation, compassion, dread but also hope.³⁸ Redemption refers to both deliverance from (evil) and the recovery of what has been lost.³⁹ The voice of the prophet must open pathways to the uncolonized spiritual hinterlands that facilitate restitutive relationships between past and present, *tātou tātou* (I and I). Let us now witness these openings.

Israel and the Māori prophets

In 1807 Samuel Marsden persuaded the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to spread the word of God to Māori, and in 1814 he performed the first Christian service in Aotearoa NZ at the Bay of Islands. The CMS made clear to its missionaries that they were only to administer to Māori. Thus, for the first 40 years, Te Hāhi Mihinare (the Missionary Church) was effectively a Māori church.⁴⁰ In the early 1820s the CMS increased its promulgation activities; yet at the same time the number of Māori communities requesting a missionary in residence also grew.⁴¹ In fact, the spread of Christianity outpaced the supply of missionaries.⁴²

It is fair to say, then, that Māori – at least initially – proselytized themselves.

Māori became increasingly interested in the Christian faith, in part due to the debilitating effects of the Musket Wars, a multitude of battles spanning the first part of the nineteenth century fought largely between Māori tribes over existing fault-lines but with Pākehā weapons. But while war raged among Māori, the healing powers of *tohunga* could not seem to address the several diseases that accompanied the arrival of Pākehā. How could it be, then, that Māori were dying through war and disease, yet Pākehā remained relatively healthy and alive? (One influential explanation contended that the Pākehā god had sent the *ngārara* (lizard) to eat the entrails of its opponents.⁴³) For all these reasons, the Pākehā god could not be ignored by Māori, but had to be interceded with.

Meanwhile, European missionaries claimed that providence had directed them to discover the peoples of Oceania through a colonial reading of Isaiah 11.11:⁴⁴

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

But this verse can also be attributed an anti-colonial gloss because any interpretation hinges upon which people providence is said to be working for and through. Therefore, in order to properly acculturate the Bible, Māori would have to re-identify themselves as the elect of the apparently Pākehā god. Such a spiritual realignment required binding the children of the ‘islands of the sea’ into a redemptive *whakapapa* that preceded Christ and hence could be more venerable than the established European church in Christ’s name. In this re-creation, Māori would become the true Israel.

One of the first Māori prophets to undertake this task was Papahurihia, who emerged into prominence around 1833, a time of

large-scale baptisms of Māori converts.⁴⁵ (In fact, there might have been more than one figure who took on the titles associated with Papahurihia.⁴⁶) Taught to read at mission school, Papahurihia sought to appropriate the power of the Bible by acculturating its narrative into extant Māori cosmologies.⁴⁷ To this end he wove a spiritual universe out of stories of Te Rēinga (the departure place for souls), Tāwhaki (he who climbed to the highest heavens) and the Christian heaven and hell.⁴⁸ Visiting Papahurihia on behalf of the CMS, Charles Baker reported that his followers believed that ‘the Bible was true, but that we gave a wrong interpretation to it’.⁴⁹

Similarly, for enslaved Africans and their descendants, the Bible was often interpreted as their own story – the story of the Black Israelites.⁵⁰ Even today it is not uncommon for biblical faith systems of the African Diaspora to invoke spiritual Israel,⁵¹ as is the case with the RasTafari organization, the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Likewise, Papahurihia’s followers called themselves Hūrai (Jewish) and practised the Sabbath on the Saturday and not Sunday.⁵² By the late 1830s, Henry Williams of the CMS found that half of the Māori he engaged with professed Christianity, but the other half considered themselves Jews.⁵³ Two years later, William Williams found that some of those who formerly professed Christianity had now decided to also call themselves Jews. By 1846 another CMS missionary, Richard Taylor, reported that Māori had taken on the idea that they were the lost tribe of Israel.⁵⁴

As was the case with enslaved Africans, Papahurihia’s intimate identification with Israel was also tied to the notion of redemption and a return to ancestral land. Indeed, Papahurihia seems to have imbibed the notion of Māori nationhood grounded in authority of the land (*mana whenua*), a notion communicated to the world by the 1835 Declaration of Independence of Nu Tirenī (He Wakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga) and entered into by many of the chiefs who would sign Te Tiriti five years later. Papahurihia hoisted a flag on a pole at his encampment: a claim to national independence.⁵⁵ What is more, the anti-colonial nationhood that he envisioned had its seedbed in the spiritual hinterlands and evangelical missionaries were specifically

excluded entrance to heaven.⁵⁶ In the manifest domain, Papahurihia was intimately involved in armed struggle over land. In fact, he acted as a seer and spiritual influence for Hone Heke, a lay preacher as well as celebrated warrior who began the Flagstaff War over the first colonial settlement at Kororāreka. Writing in 1845, during the battles between Heke and British soldiers, Rev. Robert Burrows reported in his diary that '[o]ur native teacher was out holding service with Heke's people. On his return he reported to me that Heke had been addressing the people, comparing themselves to the persecuted children of Israel.'⁵⁷

We should, therefore, approach Papahurihia less as an isolated individual and more as the concentrated expression of a broad movement that politicized the biblical hermeneutic as part of the defence and pursuit of *mana motuhake*. Indeed, the construction of Māori nationhood pronounced in the 1835 Declaration of Independence had, to some extent, a biblical provenance itself. James Busby, the original CMS missionary who at the time supported the preservation of Māori authority against sinfully living settlers, suggested the idea of invoking a new law. In and of itself, this is not an alien concept to Māori understandings of social order. For example, *tikanga* (the correct way) can refer to not just what is right to do, but what is right *for the time*.⁵⁸ Busby spoke of the new laws of Moses in this way – as precedents for the formation of a redeemed nation. Hence, the Old Testament law (Torah) was transliterated as *ture*, and manifested in the Declaration.⁵⁹ The Māori text of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty) that followed in 1840 deployed a word also transliterated from the Bible to express the form of political authority that the British Crown would exercise over Māori. *Kawanatanga*, as many Māori *rangatira* (chiefs) would have been aware, referred to a specific kind of 'governorship' exercised by Pontius Pilate over Israel – one that was not based on sovereign ownership.⁶⁰

If we envisage the 1835 Declaration and 1840 Treaty as one coherent project to announce and defend Pan-Māori *mana motuhake*, then it could be said that the construction by Māori of a mode of politically relating to Pākehā at least partly rested upon the Māori assertion that

they were the Jews of the Bible. And so too did the response to the Treaty's abrogation.

One of the most influential responses was a movement that sought to put in place a Māori king who could bring *hāpu* and *iwi* (familial and political groupings) together in a way that would match the unity of the British imperial state under Queen Victoria. Wiremu Tamihana Tarapipi Te Waharoa, known as the 'king maker', played a key role in adjudicating genealogical lines of *rangatira* (chiefs) in order to find such a personality who might bind the peoples together in unity (*kotahitanga*). The king maker was himself baptized, heavily versed in the Bible, and took 1 Samuel 8.5 as his instruction: 'give us a king to judge us'.⁶¹ Tamihana found his king in the person of Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, who had signed the Declaration of Independence sometime between 1835 and 1839.⁶²

The Kingitanga (Māori King Movement) also affirmed a shift in the meaning and practice of *mana* ('lawful authority delegated by the gods'). After the constant warfare of the past decades, a new spiritual law was required to bind Māori together in unity and the Christian focus on forgiveness and *agape* (beloved community) was mobilized for this purpose.⁶³ However, once more, *mana* pursued through *aroha* (love, sympathy) was no alien idea. In some Māori cosmologies the valedictory address given to those who were departing mythical Hawaiki for islands anew was to 'go, then, and live in peace with all men, and leave war and strife behind you'.⁶⁴ In the service that conferred kingship on Pōtatau, Tamihana the king maker, after invoking the name Aotearoa, rehearsed a hymn sung at that time in the Māori churches, *Ka Mahue a Ihipa*, which testified that 'forsaken now is Egypt, the land of sin and shame. A new home (we) now seek'.⁶⁵ But Pōtatau was at pains to embed the new *atuatanga* (practice of worship) within a *whakapapa* of Māori indigenization: 'in the time when our ancestors travelled from Hawaiki to Aotearoa, it was Uenuku – the consumer of mankind. Today, and forever more, it shall be Jehovah of the multitudes'.⁶⁶ Here, then, was a dread love, a redemptive love of community that sought to manifest Zion on earth.

In all these ways the God of the Bible was acculturated as the Māori God who would usher in a new dispensation of *mana motuhake* for the Israelites of the 'islands of the sea'. Announced in 1835, this dispensation was to be pursued subsequently by the Kīngitanga with the help of the prophets.

Ham and Shem's redemption

As a site of anti-colonial struggle the Bible became implicated in two distinct but intimately related projects of reparation. The first focused upon the defence and reconsolidation of claims to political autonomy among *rangatira* (chiefs), as enunciated in the 1835 Declaration and 1840 Treaty. The second focused upon the multitudes that were suffering from the wider effects of war, enslavement and dispossession. Prophets mobilized the authority of the Bible to conjointly redeem chiefly autonomy *and* the suffering multitude. This pursuit led one prophet to cultivate an anti-colonial relationship between the biblical Tāne/Māui and Legba – Shem and Ham.

The scene had been set by the Musket Wars of the 1820s, which resulted in significant numbers of Māori being captured by various northern tribes and taken away to become *mōkai* – slaves. Enslaved, the captives would usually be taught the Christian *rongopai* (Good News) at missionary schools, especially around the Bay of Islands.⁶⁷ However, when *rangatira* (chiefs) accepted the new faith, they would often free *ngā mōkai* (the slaves) because Christians could not own other Christians as slaves. The freed would then return to their homelands taking their teachings of Christian deliverance with them.⁶⁸

These teachings were of great value to the Māori sufferers affirming as they did the radical equality of all souls in the presence of Jehovah, thus redeeming their own standing that had been stripped when they had become *mōkai*.⁶⁹ A subsidiary effect of this movement was to democratize knowledge of Io – the begotten – as Jehovah, who then

began to appear in historical records.⁷⁰ In this respect, and similar, we might remember, to the cosmologies of enslaved Africans in the Americas, emergency conditions impelled a more direct intercession with the Most High. Yet this did not mean that other spiritual agents and agencies were to be ignored. As we shall now see, Tāne/Māui and Legba would still be engaged with by the Māori prophetic tradition, but in their biblical personalities of Shem and Ham.

One prophet emerged who bound the redemption of the multitude of sufferers to the kingly pursuit of self-determination. Te Ua Haumene was born in Taranaki and raised as a slave of the Waikato in Kawhia. Baptized, Te Ua returned to his birthplace and worked in the local Wesleyan mission school.⁷¹ Te Ua's first recorded political act occurred fairly late in his life: in 1861, he refused Bishop Selwyn passage through the boundaries that delineated the authority of the Kingitanga (King Movement). Following the missionary reading of John 5.23, Selwyn had sought to convince Māori that their new faith was born 'half-caste' (he transliterated the English racial term as *hawhekaihe*) with English 'fathers in God'.⁷² Te Ua begged to differ. One year later, he had formed his own church; he had no need of a European avatar in order to find intercession with Jahovah.

Te Ua's church continued many of the practices instigated by the prophet Papahurihia. Communion and prophecy took place around flagpoles, called *niu*, a term that denotes the traditional divination sticks used by *tohunga*, and which is also a transliteration of 'news'.⁷³ Additionally, Te Ua continued the prophetic identification of Māori as Jews. He considered Aotearoa NZ to be the 'new Canaan', the books of Moses to be the law (*ture*), and Saturday the Sabbath.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Te Ua's mission was closely related to the Kingitanga and the political struggle for *mana motuhake*.⁷⁵ Te Ua himself baptized the second Māori king as Tāwhiao, after the movement's military defeat in the Waikato wars of the early 1860s. Following Te Ua, Tāwhiao subsequently rejected the European Christian missions.⁷⁶

Wordsoundpower was an important weapon for Paimārire, the name that Te Ua gave his mission and which meant ineffable or perfect

goodness. But the settlers called it *hauhau*. And in their minds, this term marked Te Ua's liberation theology as savage fanaticism, far from God. However, *hau* can be glossed as 'breath' and is a term that is fundamental to Māori cosmology. Hauora, along with Tāne, a child of Ranginui (sky father) and Papatūānuku (earth mother), personifies the spiritual impulse of *hau* that 'urges reciprocity in human relations with nature and in relations with other people.'⁷⁷ Te Ua's followers practised the rapid uttering of this word so as to channel such divine force.⁷⁸ Thus, far from barbaric fanaticism, *hauhau* was the wordsound of divine restitution on earth.

In a cognate strategy to the I-yaric tongue of RasTafari, Te Ua transliterated English words and combined them with original Te Reo (Māori language). Some of these words would even be taken from the sounds made by European soldiers marching. With these wordsounds Paimārire members could gain access to the power held by these soldiers. The wordsound itself was provided by *hau* (the sacred breath), not by Europeans, and none but members of Paimārire could speak it.⁷⁹ Such practices were, of course, in line with Pentecost and the practice of 'speaking in tongues' that also regularly accompanied prophesying around the *niu* (flagpole).⁸⁰ In fact, one Pākehā reverend reported that Paimārire members called this practice 'talking English.'⁸¹ So Te Ua's Israelites were not mute subalterns; but they did choose to be unintelligible to Britannica.

Te Ua wrote a gospel. It begins by bringing together God's covenant with Abraham and the eschatological revelations of John.⁸² With these elements, Te Ua addresses the fundamentals of liberation theology by claiming the genealogical authority for Māori as the elect of God, as well as prophesying the redemption of righteous Māori. Identifying Māori as God's people, Te Ua affirms that they 'will be restored, even to that which was given unto Abraham, for this is Israel.'⁸³ But then Te Ua makes a moral argument for the restitution of indigenous *mana whenua* (authority of the land) by binding the fate of Māori with that of the Africans under European colonialism. Te Ua claims that it was wrong that Esau as well as 'the black race of old were excluded, because

he [God] made both black and white. Thus are they one body in the god of peace.⁸⁴ Esau was firstborn of Isaac whose birthright was robbed by Jacob. And the Black race that Te Ua refers to are, of course, the descendants of Ham, whose son Canaan was bound by Noah to be a servant to his uncles Shem (ancestor of the Jewish peoples) and Japheth (commonly considered as ancestor to European peoples).

Te Ua's gospel is remarkably decolonial if we compare it to the interpretations of Ham's fate prevalent in contemporaneous missionary theologies. At this point, existing colour descriptors in Te Reo had started to articulate with the categories and valuations of racial and racist settler-colonial discourse. *Kiri mā / kiri mangu* now marked the archetypal Manichean distinction between 'white skin' and 'black skin' that formed the fundamental grammar of Atlantic slavery.⁸⁵ And the missionaries in Aotearoa NZ by and large perpetuated the messages formed by this grammar, even after the proclamation of formal emancipation in the British Caribbean colonies. For instance, in 1847 the CMS wrote in Te Reo (the Māori language) that 'this passage about all the descendants of Ham, the people of Africa, is true: they are the people who are enslaved and degraded by each other and by other nations of Europe and Africa.'⁸⁶ A conversation in 1828 between Henry Williams and a Māori, who confirmed to Williams that the tempter of Adam and Eve had been a black man, demonstrates that the dissemination of CMS ideology was at least partially successful.⁸⁷

Yet Te Ua's gospel marks a radical departure from the colonial segregation of Ham's children from humanity at large. In his gospel, Africans and Māori, enslavement and dispossession, all bind together as elements in the same global colonial injustice. It is a distinct moment. In Te Ua's early life, land dispossession and enslavement have, for a time, conjoined as part of the same Babylon forces that conspire to destroy Te Ao Māori (the Māori world). He himself has grown up as a *mōkai* (slave) – those sufferers whom missionaries have already coloured black and African. Using the Bible as a compass Te Ua opens himself to the intercessory energies of Ham and Shem who he witnesses walking together in the spiritual hinterlands, facing the colonial frontier in solidarity.

The relationship between Africa and Oceania that Te Ua channels from the spiritual hinterlands into the manifest domain is a very different one from that proselytized by the Pākehā avatars of Christ. Te Ua's gospel expunges the racist missionary ideology that offers salvation for Shem on the condition that he affirms damnation for Ham. Rather, Te Ua channels the decolonial solidarity between Ham and Shem into a project that seeks to bind the kingly pursuit of *mana motuhake* to the redemption of the suffering multitudes. For Ham is the agent of the enslaved, those stripped of rank and status – the sufferers; and Shem is the agent of rightful rulers who have been dispossessed of their *mana* (authority delegated by the gods). Te Ua announces that the restitution of *mana motuhake* requires the redemption of both the sufferers and the kingly. He has found a balm to the categorical segregations that colonial science seeks to visit upon black and brown, the enslaved and dispossessed, the kingly and the sufferers.

Might this specific conjuncture, wherein Ham and Shem intercede in the same struggle against colonial injustice, have also influenced the Kīngitanga to think along the same lines? There is, indeed, evidence that some who associated with the Kīngitanga identified with the Blackness of Ham. Hora Ngātai-rākaunui, for example, implored Māori to separate from Pākehā, reasoning that 'my skin is black skin, my canoe is a Māori canoe.'⁸⁸ Tāwhiao, the second Māori King, baptized by Te Ua, proclaimed: 'in the past we were noble people. Now, although the skin is black, let the business of those who organize things be clear, to cleave to the law, love and faith ...'⁸⁹ Against the imperial army, Tāwhiao also called for Māori support by invoking the unity of race: 'all black skinned people, whether on the side of the Queen [Victoria] or [Māori] King.'⁹⁰

Ngā Tamatoa were therefore right to claim that Black Power was not a foreign invention and had an indigenous provenance. Yet they were wrong to think that this provenance was not already bound up with the fate of the diasporic children of Legba. In fact, there is evidence that the identification with Blackness at this point was cultivated by explicit reference to the struggles of the African Diaspora against enslavement

and colonial rule. For instance, Tamihana the king maker looked to the Black empire of Haiti as an instructive example of *kotahitanga* (unity) and *mana motuhake*,⁹¹ that is, as a successful post-slave-holding, postcolonial independent polity. And Lachlan Paterson has drawn attention to the publication in the Kīngitanga propaganda newspaper of a series of reports on the Haitian Revolution wherein Wiremu Pātara Te Tuhi draws favourable comparisons between the contemporaneous Māori resistance of 1863 and the Black resistance of 1791–1804. Utilizing information probably provided by a French Catholic priest, the Haitian revolutionaries are described in the text as both *taua iwi Māori* – ‘that native race’ – and *tau[a] iwi kiri mangu* – ‘that black skinned race’, while the Spanish are described as *te iwi kiri ma* – ‘the white skinned race’.⁹² Taking Haitians rather than French or Americans to be the revolutionary people to emulate, the newspaper suggests: ‘Wait a little and perhaps the Rangatiratanga [chieftainship] of this island will be like that of Haiti; possessing goods, authority, law ... Perhaps God will protect his black skinned children who are living in Aotearoa.’⁹³

Conclusion

On behalf of Israel, Te Ua stands at the crossroads and there channels an intercession between the manifest and spiritual domains. In the spiritual hinterlands he witnesses Ham and Shem facing in solidarity the manifest struggle against enslavement and dispossession. One of the chants of Paimārire members, which sought to disarm colonial soldiers, finishes with ‘Shem, Ham, Father Glory, verily, Hau.’⁹⁴ This wordsound manifests the anti-colonial connectivity that has been retrieved from the spiritual hinterlands. Hauora, it will be remembered, is the spiritual agent of reciprocity. Hence the chant can be apprehended as a divine mandate: Shem and Ham will together redeem the sufferers from the segregations and de-sanctifications of colonial science. Let us at this point also recall Tigilau Ness’s visual depiction

of the grounding sought by Keskidēe Aroha between the children of Tāne/Māui and Legba: *kowhaiwhai* rooting with/as dreadlocks. This is art as prescience, reaching deep to retrieve a relation across time and space already sighted by a Māori prophet of the nineteenth century.

Te Ua's gospel is concluded with a fragment added later at the hand of an unknown scribe of the Kingitanga. It commands: 'Do not return to the house of Japheth, but return to the house of Shem ... The heavy yoke has been cast off ... I have returned to my birthright.'⁹⁵ In this text dispossessed Shem no longer stands with enslaved Ham. The topography of the spiritual hinterlands which Te Ua gleaned has shifted, and Ham has receded from prophetic sight. Perhaps the context that marked Te Ua's life, wherein enslavement coexisted with dispossession, had drawn to a close. Indeed, while the idea of an enslaved people was to be deployed a number of times subsequently, especially by the prophet Te Kooti,⁹⁶ most movements that followed Te Ua tended to focus solely upon the redemption of the house of Shem – the Māori Israelites, elect of God. By the turn of the twentieth century, Walter Edward Gudgeon, land court judge, colonial administrator and soldier, would write that *atua* was also called *Hema*, 'who the Māori delight to identify with Shem, the son of Noah.'⁹⁷

But regardless, Shem and Ham still walk together in the uncolonized spiritual hinterlands. They are busy giving energy and direction to the *whakapapa* of *mana motuhake* that is binding Aotearoa NZ to South Africa and Ethiopia. Approximately 70 years after the end of Te Ua's mission, the invasion in 1935 of Ethiopia by Italy gives rise to mass movements of the African Diaspora whose Ethiopianism, similar to Paimārire, seeks both the liberation of the destitute sufferers and the preservation of kingly *mana motuhake* in the person of Haile Selassie I.⁹⁸ Both the RasTafari faith and the Māori prophetic tradition bind kingship and the suffering multitudes together in the pursuit of anti-colonial self-determination and restitutive justice. Forty years after Italy's invasion, no time at all really, a new generation of sufferers start to slowly enfold RasTafari into the living prophetic traditions of Aotearoa NZ. Shem and Ham will be reunited in prophetic wordsound.⁹⁹