Shilliam, Robbie. "R#tana, Baxter, RasTafari." *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. 149–168. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474218788.ch-008>>.

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Rātana, Baxter, RasTafari

Introduction

At the start of this book I presented the key task of decolonial science as the repair of relations hacked by colonial practices of segregation. For this task, binding skills are required that can reach deep into the spiritual domain, all the way to its uncolonized hinterlands. Grounding seeks to recover this depth of relation. It is contentious and comprised of many moments – comparison, identification, inhabitation and enfolding – that are not organized along sequential lines but along degrees of intensity. The moment of enfolding requires a journey into the hinterlands to be made, there to retrieve seminal relations, in our case between the children of Tāne/Māui and Legba in their biblical manifestations as Shem and Ham. Relationality in the spiritual hinterlands is governed neither by existential (colonial) ‘encounters’ between discretely and pre-defined self and other, nor by an imperial desire to destroy relation for the sake of homogeneity (genocide). What we recover is rather a relation that is seminal, i.e. already part of oneself – *tātou tātou*, I and I. This has been the latent relation present in all the groundings that we have witnessed, but it is now manifest.

Before we walked with the prophets we examined how the RasTafari faith has been inhabited on indigenous grounds. We shall now consider how RasTafari has been enfolded into the prophetic traditions of Aotearoa NZ. To this end we shall walk with two prophets and prophetic traditions: one, an indigenous Māori faith – Rātana

– and the other an endogenous Pākehā poet – Baxter. (I have already suggested that between theology and the liberated spirit there stands art, the quotidian theology of the sufferers. Hence, it is not impossible to consider that some poets might also be prophets.) We shall witness how, in different ways, the Rātana faith and Baxter poetic enfold RasTafari into their prophetic matter, so as to redeem the *mana motuhake* (self-determination) of contemporary sufferers, and to provide restitution for the crimes of Cook and Columbus.

Te Māngai, Te Mōrehu and RasTafari

The coming of Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana was spoken of as far back as the 1820s.¹ Rātana's personal *whakapapa* connected him to the Kīngitanga (King Movement) as well as to other prophet movements. Tāwhiao, the second Māori king, baptized by Te Ua, even prophesied the day of Rātana's passing, 18 September 1939, as 'a time of godly presence and he it is, who will be a sacrificial lamb to the lord Jehovah.'² Rātana's aunt, Atareta Kāwana Roiha Mere Rikiriki, was well thought of by King Tāwhiao, who gifted to her a flag with the words *E te iwi kia ora* (blessings to the people).³ Rikiriki emphasized the New Testament dispensation of the *Wairua Tapu* (Holy Spirit) but was also well versed in faith-healing techniques and traditional herbal healing.⁴ Rikiriki prophesied that her nephew would become a redeemer of Māori, and counselled Rātana to follow 'the god of his ancestors' – the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁵

When two whales beached themselves near his home, Rātana took this as a sign that he was called to be a fisher of men. In 1918 Rātana was visited by the *Wairua Tapu* (Holy Spirit) who, he recalls, revealed the following: 'I have visited the scene of the war which has recently waged in Europe. In my travels I have found that the whole world has forgotten me. I have looked all over for some place to establish myself.'⁶ Rātana's wife, Te Urumanao, was also visited by the Spirit,

who declared to her, ‘you shall be known as Te Whaea o te katoa’ (the mother of all).⁷ The Holy Spirit had therefore decided to abide with Māori, in a context marked by the end of the First World War and the onset of the depression that deeply affected the Western world. Rātana’s mission appealed to many Māori whose families and communities were still recovering from the effects of war and the influenza epidemic, and were then hit by significant job losses in the freezing works and forestry industry.⁸ A certain militancy grew with this suffering, and Rātana catalysed these feelings as he travelled widely across the country collecting stories of hardship and dispossession.⁹ His congregation flocked to Rātana Pa, also called Hiruhārama Hou – New Jerusalem.

I wish to situate Rātana as a prophet of the Te Ua tradition, that is, one who sought to bind the kingly pursuit of *mana motuhake* to the redemption of the dispossessed multitudes. ‘In one of my hands is the Bible; in the other is the Treaty of Waitangi’:¹⁰ with this utterance Rātana followed the prophetic vocation of channelling the forces of biblical intercession, just as Te Ua had done. Furthermore, just like Te Ua, Rātana intentionally associated himself with the Kīngitanga, modelling his relationship along Old Testament lines: ‘leave me as I am, a prophet. The work of the prophet is to show the way the king should go.’¹¹ Rātana also possessed a sense of historical Māori nationhood and announced, on more than one occasion, the name of the Māori nation set out in the 1835 Declaration of Independence – Niu Tirenī. For example, in a cablegram to the British Prime Minister in 1924 Rātana identified his mission as *te iwi Māori o Niu Tirenī* (the Māori tribe of Niu Tirenī).¹²

Rātana had to contend with a hostile political climate wherein the prophetic tradition itself had become associated with quackery. Apirana Ngata, the founder of Te Aute Old Boys, had contributed to this interpretation when he, alongside Western-trained health professionals (both Māori and Pākehā), led the move to enact a Suppression of Tohunga act in 1907.¹³ It is no doubt true that many charlatans existed who ‘practised’ under the label of *tohunga* (learned ones). However,

there was a deeper political current that carried the act. For we should not forget that prophets such as Te Ua, Te Kooti and their followers had been actively involved in anti-colonial struggles. It is telling, for example, that in the debate over the act, Ngata described as ‘bastard tohungaism’¹⁴ the mission of Rua Kenana, a successor to Te Kooti who had set up a self-determining community at Maungapohatu, soon to proclaim himself the Māori brother of Christ.¹⁵ In effect, the Act sought to disarm the prophetic tradition, to ‘Christianize Māori’,¹⁶ and finally close the colonial frontier on the spiritual hinterlands once and for all.

Rātana himself was adamant that ‘tohungaism’ had to be ‘annihilated’. However, being a child of Māui, he did not seek to destroy the Māori foundations of faith, but rather, wished to rearrange them in a manner useful for the present day. Specifically, Rātana sought to end the spiritual practices associated with some *tohunga* that caused illness and death.¹⁷ In this respect, he was in the company of Te Ua who had also sought to eradicate ‘witchcraft’ but keep the ‘worthwhile things’ of Māori customs,¹⁸ a platform that Rātana inherited through his aunt Rikiriki.

Increased government surveillance followed the Tohunga Suppression Act, focusing mainly on sanitation at the Rātana Pa. At the same time the established church, watchful of Rātana’s popularity, began to question the prophet’s credence, especially his inclusion of certain liturgical and theological elements that could be interpreted as heathen, elements that we shall engage with presently.¹⁹ In this hostile climate, Rātana protected his mission by registering as a denominated church on Pentecost, 31 May 1925. By then he had caught in his net 18 per cent of the Māori population, who declared themselves members.²⁰ For the first time the Te Ua prophetic tradition – the pursuit of kingly *mana motuhake* for the redemption of suffering multitudes – was housed in a registered, nationwide institution.

Rātana took his mission to the world. One year prior to registration Rātana had embarked on an international tour with an entourage that included 24 musicians. The purpose was to present to George V in London the petition that Rātana had gathered (with 34,000 signatures)

calling for the honouring of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty).²¹ Rātana subsequently made another tour to the USA in 1925 that was much more focused upon building funds for his movement.²² In the spiritual hinterlands Te Ua had witnessed the solidarity of Ham and Shem as they faced colonial injustices in the manifest domain. Now Rātana would retrieve this anti-colonial relationship as he travelled the colonial world.

En route to Britain in 1924, the entourage passed through South Africa. In Durban, Rātana was distressed to find out that a Zulu chief had been reduced to driving a rickshaw. He took a photo of himself with the *rangatira* (chief) to convey to his followers their fate should Te Tiriti (The Treaty) remain dishonoured: they would become slaves (*mōkai*) with no standing, a fate intimately known to Te Ua and many of his contemporaries.²³ In Cape Town, Rātana noted the ill-treatment of African dock workers by whites and laid out a mat of *kai* (food) on the wharf for them.²⁴ He did the same for Black dock workers upon arrival in England.²⁵ During the South African stop-over, Rātana prophesied:

I have seen and indeed witnessed these black-skinned people treated like dogs; I am hurt by this. Yet it shall come to pass, that in Jehovah's time and place, he shall lift these people up.

The Rātana faithful point out that 70 years later, almost to the month, Nelson Mandela became the first Black president of South Africa.²⁶

Rātana's groundings with the children of Legba is notable. But his world tours can also be placed within the *whakapapa* of *mana motuhake* that, a couple of chapters prior, I demonstrated binds together Ethiopia and Aotearoa NZ. In fact, Rātana seems to have been aware of the fabled African land of Prester John. It is said, for instance, that Rātana wished to visit a number of polities on the African continent, including sovereign Ethiopia, but was blocked by authorities in South Africa.²⁷ Had Rātana read or been informed by his elders of that report on the Battle of Adwa and the Kingdom of Ethiopia published in 1900 by the Māori Parliament newspaper?

In any case, Rātana's extended sojourn in Britain coincided with the short visit by Crown Prince Ras Tafari of Ethiopia in the summer of 1924. Both attended the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley.²⁸ Whether or not their paths crossed, Rātana soon left for Geneva to present the case of the Māori people to the seat of world governance – the League of Nations in Geneva.²⁹ Although Rātana deposited the petition at the League, he won no formal hearing. Sitting in the chair of the president, while the League was out of session, Rātana remarked that all nations were represented there except for Māori.³⁰ Haile Selassie I would make the same journey from Britain for the same reasons 12 years later and stand in front of the chair of the president to make an appeal for international morality that fell on deaf ears. Yet nevertheless, Ruia Aperahama, historian and adherent of the Rātana faith, argues that Selassie I provides an important message for Māori: the need to pursue and preserve *mana motuhake*. For unlike the emperor, Rātana could not even speak at Geneva because Māori had lost their self-governance to the settler state of New Zealand.³¹

For every king there is a prophet. And the next year Rātana was to actually cross paths with the prophet of the Hamitic King RasTafari, Marcus Garvey. Aperahama has revealed that Rātana visited Garvey during his second world tour to the USA in August 1925, as he languished in an Atlanta prison on charges of mail fraud.³² In their brief encounter, Garvey had even provided Rātana with a guest ticket for his Black Star shipping line.³³ The shipping line was – and remains – incredibly symbolic for the African Diaspora, manifesting, especially for members of the RasTafari faith, repatriation back across the Atlantic to the African continent. It is striking that Rātana, the Shemetic prophet, is offered passage on the vessel of Ham's redemption. In October 1925 Rātana was witness to the parades of Garvey's UNIA in New York. And the Māori prophet part modelled the uniform for the Katipa – the Rātana faith's wardens – along the lines of the UNIA's police force.³⁴

Shem and Ham walk together in the uncolonized spiritual hinterlands. Sometimes they are visible. Sometimes they recede from manifest

sight. But now, the Shemetic prophet and the Hamitic king walk parallel paths in the manifest domain, on the stage of international politics, and the paths of the Shemetic and Hamitic prophets actually cross. The ground has thus been prepared on which RasTafari can be enfolded into the Māori prophetic tradition. But because this ground is material-and-spiritual we will have to witness this enfolding through a theological register. And at this point I will call upon a Rātana theology that is elaborated by Te Whakaotinga Ron Smith, who was chair of Te Omeka Marae Trust, an important institution in the Rātana world.

It will be remembered that, under pressure through the Suppression of Tohunga Act, Rātana took a strategic decision to register as a Christian denomination. Smith argues that, in fact, the faith possesses its own distinct theology and philosophy.³⁵ For Smith, the Rātana creed is eschatological (concerned with the ultimate destiny of humanity) and also steeped in the *whakataukī* (proverbs, utterances, wordsound) of the Māori prophets.³⁶ Central to Rātana theology, therefore, is a focus on acculturation, i.e. that Māori come to know the Good News (Rongo Pai) through their extant customs and ways of life, which are also gifts of Jehovah.³⁷ Against the colonial gloss of John 5.23 the Rātana faith asserts that the word of God is not solely carried by European avatars; it can also be heard in the utterances of ancestors. RasTafari follow prophet Garvey's cognate commandment that Africans must worship God through the lens of Ethiopia,³⁸ or, in the language of liberation theology, they must become Black with God. Hence they must also stop worshipping the white Christ presented in the missionary reading of John 5.23.

There are significant theological differences within the RasTafari faith over the manifestation of the Black Christ. Nevertheless, most seek to reappropriate Jesus at the level of wordsoundpower: the subservient sound of 'me' is removed so that Jesus (pronounced J-ee-sus) becomes Iyesos (I-yes-os) Kristos.³⁹ The prophet Rātana also considered the name Jesus Christ to have been desecrated and made *noa* (profane) by Pākehā.⁴⁰ Hence, while Jesus Christ was the name of the physical manifestation that suffered and died on the cross, Rātana

argued that the everlasting and living spiritual agency of that person was *tama* – the Son (of God).⁴¹ *Tama* – the Son – is the name that is uttered at the beginning of creation.⁴² By this reasoning Smith argues that the covenant of Iyesos (the word made flesh) cannot be the final dispensation of God's will, closing the drama with the death of Jesus on the cross; rather, there are subsequent dispensations because the spiritual agency of the Son (*Tama*) lives on.⁴³ As Black Israel takes back guardianship of the Black Christ, so does Indigenous Israel take back guardianship of the Māori *Tama*.

With guardianship retrieved, new covenants can be made with the Shemetic and Hamitic sufferers. For RasTafari, the dispensation of Haile Selassie I exceeds the end of the Bible, and his 'new name' opens the 'seven seals' of Revelation 5.5 to usher in African redemption through the covenant of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). In Rātana's covenant of the 'New Heaven and New Earth'⁴⁴ the prophet takes the name of *Te Māngai*. *Mā* can be glossed as 'by means of', and *Ngai* is an ancient word for breath.⁴⁵ This name therefore references the prophetic tradition of channelling energies between the spiritual and manifest domains through means of wordsoundpower as, for example, undertaken by the followers of Te Ua as they rapidly uttered 'hau' (wind, breath). In this sense, although Rātana was flesh and blood as was Jesus, Te Māngai manifests the ever-living spiritual agency of *tama*.⁴⁶

The new covenants of Rātana and RasTafari radically upset the narratives of missionary Christianity, which place the beginning and the end firmly within colonial history. Alluding to Revelation 1.8 both Aperahama and Ron Smith make a cognate distinction between Jesus as the 'beginning and the end' of the book, and 'Alpha and Omega' (first and last) that precedes and succeeds the book.⁴⁷ Likewise, for RasTafari, Selassie I, with Empress Menen, represent not the beginning and the end of the book, but the Alpha and Omega. Smith puts it this way: the beginning and the end – i.e. the story of the Bible – belongs to all humanity, but Alpha/Omega is the spiritual seedbed of creation and belongs to 'us' who in this time are the *mōrehu*.⁴⁸ This word can

be glossed as 'remnants', those who have been disregarded and dispossessed,⁴⁹ not victims nor dying but living survivors,⁵⁰ or, as RasTafari would say, the Black Survivors or 'sufferers'.

Both Rātana and RasTafari extend the dispensations of the Bible before and after colonial rule so as to place *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) of the Bible with the (post)colonized suffering multitudes. These are the indigenous liberation theologies sought by Spivey, Borrie, Gnanasundaram and Reeves. In this decolonial temporality, no (post)colonized people would consider themselves to be subaltern but they would apprehend themselves rather as sanctified sufferers who relate to each other through the spiritual hinterlands and across the manifest domain by means of wordsoundpower: 'Shem, Ham, Father Glory, verily, Haul' Take, for instance, Miriama Rauhihi-Ness, the first Sister Dinah of the Twelve Tribes of Israel in Aotearoa NZ. Rauhihi-Ness grew up in a Rātana household and so the image of a white Jesus was absent. For this reason, her 'sighting up' of Haile Selassie I as Kristos did not have to traverse any colonially induced racial segregation between the saviours and the damned, the avatars and the unsanctified.⁵¹

Rauhihi-Ness's experience signals the intimate theological connections between RasTafari and Rātana. And one of the Rātana faithful has creatively reconstituted this connection through a 'Shemetic *whakapapa*'.

It is no surprise that roots reggae received an early prominence among Rātana musicians who were already attuned to the relationship between songs, music and spirit.⁵² One such musician is Carl Perkins, one-time member of the famous reggae band Herbs, and current member of the House of Shem.⁵³ Perkins' family is steeped in the Rātana faith. His father and aunt were baptized and named by Rātana himself as Pa-o-te-omeka (Peter Perkins) and Te Wai-o-turi (Turi Kui). Even Perkins' English grandfather, who had settled from England, was baptized into the Rātana faith. Perkins is a RastaFari follower of the prophet Gad of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but he has also been rebaptized in the Rātana faith; Rātana and RasTafari iconography both adorn his workplace. In Perkins' estimation, Rātana opened a space for RasTafari. The purpose

of Rātana's mission, argues Perkins, is to seek justice and redemption, and Selassie I 'reminds us of that', as does Gadman (the prophet of the Twelve Tribes of Israel), as did Jesus, as did Noah.

Perkins catalogues this relationship of Rātana to RasTafari through what he calls a 'shemetic *whakapapa*'. He starts by situating Ham within the African Garden of Eden from whence Adam and Eve came. The vocation of Shem – the peoples of Oceania – is consonant with the archetypal journeyman Māui: to undertake significant migrations. Leaving the garden and the corrupted old world far behind him, Shem travels far into the sea of islands. In this Oceanic environment, morally unpolluted by the ancient world, Shem safeguards 'zeal' and 'faith' in order to one day return it to the rest of humanity. Perkins likens this purpose to the lot of Shem that in *John Gill's Expositions of the Entire Bible* (1746–8) is documented as the duty to return Adam's body to Eden in order to ensure proper burial.⁵⁴

Perkins' *whakapapa* creatively re-constitutes a deep, global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity. If we consider, as RasTafari do, that the first human (Adam/Eve) is African, then in this story of creation, indigenous Shem has a special part to play in the repatriation of Ham. As the archetypal sojourner, Shem is tasked with bringing Ham home. In this respect, the birthright from which Shem has been recently dispossessed – *mana whenua* (authority of the land) – is once again intimately related to the liberation of Ham from unjust bondage, as had been the case in Te Ua's gospel. This is a Shemetic *whakapapa* wherein Alpha and Omega precedes and succeeds the beginning and the end of the white man's Bible. RasTafari has been enfolded into the Māori prophetic tradition.

Hemi, Ngā Mōkai and an African tribesman

In Aotearoa NZ, Catholicism was a minor denomination of European Christianity compared to the Protestant-led Church Missionary

Society (CMS) and was ambiguously and tenuously related to colonial rule. Catholicism was influential in the Māramatanga movement that Rātana's aunt, Rikiriki, was a member of.⁵⁵ In fact, not too far from Rātana Pa, up the Whanganui River, the Catholic Society of Mary (Marists) had, in the later nineteenth century, set up mission stations. Marists such as Mother Suzanne Aubert took a vow of poverty and so did not, as was often the case with the CMS, engage in land buying and speculation. Mother Aubert even argued that Māori should not be made 'second-rate Europeans' and that the job of the missionary should be to help to preserve and encourage the good qualities of Māori culture.⁵⁶ Like Ngā Tamatoa, Mother Aubert disliked the concept of 'brown skinned Pākehā'.

By the 1970s a number of Pākehā who had received Catholic instruction of various kinds (including training in the Marist order) became involved in experiments to rekindle and refashion an *agape* (beloved community) specific to Aotearoa NZ. Many were influenced by Vatican II, some by Paolo Friere,⁵⁷ but the closest figure that they responded to was James K. Baxter. Baxter's life is marked by a rebaptizing from 'Jim the Catholic family man' to 'Hemi the prophet' (Hemi being the Māori transliteration of Jim). His internationally renowned poetic work is marked by a concomitant shift from classical Greek to Māori myth structures and the *tēina/tuākana* (younger and elder sibling) relationship.⁵⁸ In Baxter we might identify a poet of Arcadian Hermes.

Hemi's visit to India in the late 1950s on a UNESCO fellowship seems to have prompted his efforts to ground with Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) as he became exposed to not just extreme poverty but also the dignity of the poor.⁵⁹ Consequently Hemi set about re-examining the morality of the apparently more advanced society that Pākehā settlers had built in Aotearoa NZ. He found it absent of an 'ethical code'.⁶⁰ In fact, the depersonalization and de-sacralization of social relations encouraged by modern urban culture had produced instrumental creatures who related to others as things rather than as beings.⁶¹ Meanwhile, schooling operated along the lines of authoritarian rule,

treating students as if they were 'Israelites in Egypt'.⁶² Love, proposed Hemi, 'has to share, directly or indirectly, the pain of the beloved'.⁶³ But settler society had destroyed the social bases of *agape* except for in the stifled air of the nuclear patriarchal family.⁶⁴

Hemi's proposed resolution to this crisis was in many ways unprecedented: the younger siblings (*tēina*), the Pākehā, could only redeem themselves by appealing to their elder siblings (*tuākana*), the Māori, for guidance. Instead of a colonial science of segregation, Hemi opted for a decolonial science on the terms of those who already inhabited the ground for relating. He approached this science through the language of liberation theology.⁶⁵ And to this end Hemi decided to take on the prophetic role of Jeremiah, redirecting the people away from the disenchanted Pākehā church towards the streets and their inhabitant poor, where God dwelled.⁶⁶ There, outside of Pākehā institutions, they would find Jesus walking – a Māori Jesus.

Hemi's 1966 poem, *Māori Jesus*, can be read as a Pākehā articulation of the RasTafari and Rātana practice of refiguring the key avatar of God on earth as the (post)colonized sufferer.⁶⁷ The Māori Jesus, in Hemi's poem, is poor, even uncouth, and the light of the world. He is lobotomized for uttering 'I am who I am' – a wordsound that is offensive to settler colonialism in so far as it manifests a personal relation to the seedbed of creation. This was a relation that, as Hone Kaa had demonstrated in the Programme to Combat Racism workshops, not even the European avatars of Christ could claim. That is why the wordsound of 'Māori Jesus' must be violently blocked.

But through this violent act, darkness descends upon settler society. Hemi is at pains to point out that Pākehā youth are especially affected by these ramifications. Caught between the promise of counter-cultural values and the lack of directive resources in their settler heritage, some would become urban outcasts, homeless, junkies, at least partially sharing the fate of young Māori who, of course, received the truly hard end of the law. Bill Maung, a political refugee from Burma, an acquaintance of Baxter and subsequent advisor to the Black Power gang, summarizes Hemi's suspicion that no one colonizes without cost:

‘Perhaps the range of the colonized now extends beyond the *tāngata whenua*.’⁶⁸

It is interesting to note that, just as the Kīngitanga (King Movement) had done, Hemi also mused on the fate of the settler state by reference to Haiti:

Baron Saturday ... whose altar is always a grave at the crossroads

You have shifted, man, out of thin Haiti. Now you grow fat on the fears of five thousand junkies in Auckland ... The servants of the Zombie king.⁶⁹

Certainly, Hemi’s use of Haitian spirituality evinces a fair degree of missionary sensationalism with little cultivated appreciation of Papa Legba. And Hemi’s negative indictment of Haiti is far removed from the Kīngitanga’s positive identification with the first postcolonial post-slaveholding state in the Americas. Nonetheless, it is striking that Hemi expressed the colonial fates of both Pākehā and Māori through the trope of the Zombie, which in Haitian Vodou embodies the condition of living death that was suffered under enslavement, a condition that one must never ever return to.⁷⁰ To avoid the zombie fate visited upon Ham, Hemi hoped for resurrection through an honouring of Te Tiriti (The Treaty): ‘Brother, when will your Māori church be built? When will you hoist us all out of the graveyard?’⁷¹

Against the colonial gloss of John 5.23, Hemi, as his poem would suggest, was adamant that ‘the European face of Christ should not be allowed to obscure or annihilate his Polynesian face.’⁷² Indeed, he argued that the Māori prophets had come to do the work that Pākehā Christians were incapable of performing. For instance, speaking of the Rātana faith, Hemi asserted that ‘they drew from *te atua* [god] and from the hearts of *te mōrehu* [the remnants] a Māori Christianity, hidden, abused, fragmented, but still viable.’⁷³ Moreover, Hemi argued that in the face of the colonized Christ could be gleaned ‘a spectrum of all races and all cultures,’⁷⁴ and that ‘the deepest traditions of the church do not contradict the communal life of Māori people. It is only our Western cultural emphasis that makes it seem so.’ To this end, Hemi

sought to *whakapapa* the saints and prophets of Pākehā Christianity to the Māori prophets: 'Bernard and Francis can live at peace with Te Kooti and Te Whiti and Rātana.'⁷⁵ As part of Pākehā redemption, settler society had to give way to a 'Māori Zion' on earth.⁷⁶

In 1968 God came to Hemi in a vision and directed him towards the old Marist settlement, Hiruhārama (Jerusalem), on the Whanganui River. He left his family behind (Hemi seems not to have learnt the cardinal Māori value of *whanaungatanga*, i.e. family relations), and took with him just a few possessions including a Te Reo (Māori language) Bible. The area surrounding Hiruhārama had been heavily depopulated by the urban migrations that followed the Second World War.⁷⁷ Hemi nonetheless recognized the *mana whenua* (authority over the land) of Ngāti Hau, the local people of the land,⁷⁸ and even hoped that there he would find his spiritual *tuākana* (elder brother) as he proceeded to draw in predominantly Pākehā outcasts from the urban areas. Hemi's commune relied upon the goodwill of the Marist Sisters of Compassion convent and, especially, that afforded by the local *pā* (Māori settlement).⁷⁹ Contrasting the 'pā's love' to the 'church's law', Hemi hoped that Te Wairua Tapu (the Holy Spirit) would facilitate, for Pākehā, a decolonial communion.⁸⁰

Hemi labelled the outcasts that arrived from Auckland and other urban areas as *ngā mōkai*. *Mōkai*, in the particular sense that Hemi gave the word, denotes the fatherless, the undirected or unprepared, those convinced of their own uselessness, a 'tribe ... who can do nothing well'.⁸¹ But Hemi did not believe them to be powerless. In one poem he goes so far as to call his tribe 'the *tama toa*' (young warriors), thereby invoking the inter-generational rebirth of *mana motuhake* that coincided with his commune project.⁸² Hemi supported the young Pākehā non-conformists who in the late 1960s protested against a number of social and political issues, especially the Vietnam War. He believed these confrontations to be a way in which Pākehā youth might exorcise the 'guilt of history' buried by their own 'elders' that now manifested in the drab contemporary notion of New Zealand exceptionalism.⁸³

Hemi personally supported Ngā Tamatoa's protest at Waitangi in 1971 while spending the weekend catching the 'new mood' among Māori.⁸⁴ And Hemi himself was well respected by many of the new generation of Māori radicals. On the night of Hemi's passing in October 1972 members of Ngā Tamatoa undertook a vigil at the morgue and provided the van and driver that delivered the prophet back to Hiruhārama for burial.⁸⁵ Hemi's influence survived his passing and even reached Māori gangs. The Mongrel Mob, for example, presented Prime Minister Robert Muldoon with Hemi's *Collected Works* on the occasion of his retirement from parliament.⁸⁶ Additionally, Eugene Ryder, a Black Power spokesperson, counts Hemi and the Hiruhārama (Jerusalem) project as one of the key influences upon the politicization of his group alongside key Māori advocates of *mana motuhake* such as Matiu Rata and Eva Rickard.⁸⁷

Certainly, Hemi's prophetic message was contentiously and critically interrogated by Pākehā.⁸⁸ Nevertheless his decolonial mission became a strong undercurrent that moved many Pākehā in the 1970s to cultivate principled and committed relationships to *tāngata whenua* (peoples of the land) as partners in the long-maligned Treaty. This undercurrent affected many of the Pākehā members of Keskidee Aroha, or at least pushed them into collaborations with each other through community-development initiatives (e.g. Community Volunteers), work cooperatives (e.g. Ponsonby Labour Cooperative) and detached youth worker schemes (e.g. Te Kaha Trust).⁸⁹ Most of these projects engaged with Hemi's imperatives to make work meaningful again as *mahi* (collective, purposeful activity)⁹⁰ and to redress the colonial wounds suffered by *ngā mōkai* which, as urbanization proceeded, increasingly encompassed a multi-racial constituency.

We know, however, that the nineteenth-century meaning of *mōkai* denoted not simply the fatherless but more acutely the enslaved. And by mobilizing this term, Hemi, intentionally or otherwise, bound his Pākehā mission to that of Te Ua's: a kingly *mana motuhake* that sought the redemption of the enslaved and dispossessed – Ham and Shem. Hemi argued that his *mōkai* (young outcast Pākehā) could not be

redeemed by 'Pākehā books' but only by some of the cardinal values of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world). We might say, then, that Hemi sought to redeem the relationship between Japheth and Shem so that the former would dwell not with dominion but with peace, love and justice in the latter's tent (Gen. 9.27). However, unlike Te Ua and Rātana, Hemi did not intentionally include Ham in his decolonial mission. In fact, in Hemi's wordsound, the land of Black liberation, Haiti, represented only the zombie, an enslaved condition that was to be avoided at all cost.

Nonetheless, the most audacious attempt to put into action Hemi's mission, Keskidee Aroha, sought to redress the relationship between Japheth and Shem precisely through the intervention of Ham, wherein Keskidee and the Ras Messengers would provide the catalyst for sufferers to walk out of Egypt, the settler wasteland. Denis O'Reilly's vision of the Keskidee Aroha project proposed the cultivation of a decolonial Pākehā/Māori relationship that was directly influenced and explicitly modelled on Hemi's mission – 'a loving and respectful relationship between *tēina* (younger sibling) and *tuākana* (older sibling)'.⁹¹ O'Reilly sought out a *kaumātua* (respected elder) who could sanction and guide the project. And he found this person in Hiruhārama.⁹² There, Hemi had considered Wehe Wallace to be the 'Māori mother of the community'.⁹³ She was also a relative of Taape O'Reilly, a member of the Keskidee Aroha national collective. Wallace agreed and led the troupe onto their first *marae* at Te Hāpua where the ancestors of Ham and Shem met, once more.⁹⁴

Therefore, Keskidee Aroha can also be apprehended as a project that sought to enfold RasTafari into a Pākehā prophetic tradition endogenous (but not indigenous) to Aotearoa NZ. And I would like to finish this section by recalling parts of a recent workshop presentation wherein, 30 years later, O'Reilly enunciates this process of enfolding.⁹⁵

O'Reilly begins by noting that, when the state apparatus takes on the modern-day form of Pharaoh, and the overseers are the police, the sufferers must use asymmetric warfare, especially the weapons

of love – arts and music. These weapons are rooted in the long-standing tradition of the Māori prophets and their younger Pākehā relative, Hemi. Ngā Mōkai, O'Reilly reminds the audience, is nowadays composed disproportionately of Māori and Pasifika youth, especially those bound together through gang culture. The term *mōkai*, he notes, can also be translated as slave, a word that is 'memorable' to RasTafari. In this respect O'Reilly recalls recent comments by Shane Jones, a Māori MP, concerning gang members: 'They're not our people. In fact they are not people ... They are the slaves that would have been dispatched before Christianity without a sliver of doubt.'⁹⁶ With these words the Māori MP places himself in opposition to Te Ua's prophetic mission of redeeming the suffering multitudes through the pursuit of a kingly *mana motuhake*.

But who or what force might help to redeem Aotearoa's *mōkai* (slaves)/sufferers? O'Reilly reminisces that by the mid-1970s he had seen the Jamaican film, *The Harder They Come*, read a popular book exposing RasTafari to the world, *Babylon on Tin Wire*, and listened to the Wailers' *Burning*. Marley – *te māngai Ropata* (Robert the 'mouth-piece') as O'Reilly names him with Rātana terminology – revealed that the way to defeat Pharaoh was to burn down Babylon with wordsoundpower. Hemi, O'Reilly suggests, had prophesied just such an intervention by the children of Legba in his poem, *Complaint to a Friend*:

But an African tribesman
Smelling of mud and ochre took charge of my mind
And hoisted me like a sack on his shoulder
To teach me what I never knew.
Well brother, today I walk the town as a new stranger
and my heart is beating like an old buffalo drum.⁹⁷

Presently, argues O'Reilly, Ngā Mōkai – specifically, Māori gang members – are excluded from the full rights of citizenship by virtue of new rules that block their access to state housing, give differential penalties, reverse the burden of proof and provide no presumption of

innocence. At the same time, labour is degraded by current employment law and the benefit system so that it provides no dignity, promoting instead a contemporary slavery among the sufferers. What has been lost, claims O'Reilly, invoking Hemi's *Ballad of the Third Boobhead*, is precisely the quest for *mahi* – collective work for a communal purpose:

It will take more than talk to make this a country
Where the men who were treated like slaves will be able to work
For other things than money

By this arrangement, O'Reilly bemoans, the essence of humanity is compromised, that is, the presence of god in each human or (and he uses the RasTafari pronoun) 'I and I'.

Nevertheless, O'Reilly holds on to the power of asymmetric warfare – wordsoundpower – and the prophecy of redemption signalled and shared by Te Ua, Rātana and the RasTafari ancients, and sounded by Hemi in *Pigeon Park Song*:

Babylon, you
Who sit on the waters
In your market a man
Costs less than a dollar
I will play my guitar
The day they burn you down

RasTafari has been enfolded into a Pākehā prophetic tradition, there to feed a decolonial relationship between *tāngata whenua* – the indigenous elder siblings – and *tāngata tiriti* – the younger endogenous siblings.

Conclusion

Through the channelling skills of the prophets, the anti-colonial relationship that Ham and Shem convey in the spiritual hinterlands has become manifest once more as RasTafari is enfolded into the

indigenous and endogenous prophetic traditions of Aotearoa NZ. To arrive here we have travelled a path of many crossroads: from the public battles over Black Power to theological reasonings over Black liberation, to artistic projects and faith systems of Blackness; from comparison to identification to inhabitation to enfolding; from the present to the past; from the manifest to the spiritual. In wielding a decolonial science of deep relation we have sought to heal the wounds inflicted by colonial science upon the sanctified integrity of peoples, spirits and places – upon the very fabric of creation. And we have used the ethos of deep relation as a compass and energy store for the pursuit of restitutive justice in the present.

It remains for us to now exorcise the colonial history of Cook and Columbus through a collection of *whakapapa* that express the key contours of our journey. Long ago, we dispatched the figure of the subaltern: mute, passive, frozen, animated only by another's light and reason. So come now. Take your appropriate place around the campfire of liberation; perhaps it is at the front, at the side, or at the back. *Tātou tātou*. I and I. Let us tell some stories of Africa in Oceania.