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## **Māori Latter-day Saint Faith: Some Preliminary Remarks**

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# MĀORI LATTER-DAY SAINT FAITH: SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS

*Louis Midgley*

Review of Marjorie Newton, *Tiki and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1854–1958* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012), xv + 328 pp. (including a glossary of Māori words, three appendices, bibliography, two maps, twenty-nine illustrations and a photography register, and index). \$29.95 (paperback).

*Abstract: Marjorie Newton's widely acclaimed Tiki and Temple<sup>1</sup> is a history of the first century of Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors in Aotearoa/New Zealand. She tells the remarkable story of what, beginning in 1881, rapidly became essentially a Māori version of the faith of Latter-day Saints. Her fine work sets the stage for a much closer look at the deeper reasons some Māori became faithful Latter-day Saints. It turns out that Māori seers (and hence their own prophetic tradition) was, for them, commensurate with the divine special revelations brought to them by LDS missionaries. Among other things, the arcane lore taught in special schools to an elite group among the Māori is now receiving close attention by Latter-day Saint scholars.*

I have argued elsewhere that Marjorie Newton's history of the first century of Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors in

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1 Marjorie Newton has received several awards for her book, and it has also been reviewed favorably.

New Zealand<sup>2</sup> is exemplary.<sup>3</sup> *Tiki and Temple* is a fine book—one that I highly recommend. I also agree with Elder Glen L. Rudd, who knows the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand very well, that *Tiki and Temple* is genuinely faith-affirming. One reason is that its author “gives the reader a picture of the Lord’s purposes in sending the gospel to New Zealand, a country of great natural beauty and a country blessed with spiritual giants, Maori prophets, priesthood leaders, and dedicated missionaries who diligently and constantly battled against the many problems they encountered as they fulfilled the missions assigned to them by the Lord” (Foreword, p. 46).

The story of Māori<sup>4</sup> joining the Church in large numbers has, of course, been told and retold<sup>5</sup> and sometimes embellished,

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2 Whenever I mention New Zealand, I also have in mind *Aotearoa*, which is its official Māori name.

3 See Louis Midgley, “Comments on the History of Mormon Maori Faith,” Association of Mormon Letters, posted 26 July 2013 at [http://www.forums.mormonletters.org/yaf\\_postsm2657\\_Newton-Tiki-and-Temple-The-Mormon-Mission-in-New-Zealand-18541958-reviewed-by-Louis.aspx](http://www.forums.mormonletters.org/yaf_postsm2657_Newton-Tiki-and-Temple-The-Mormon-Mission-in-New-Zealand-18541958-reviewed-by-Louis.aspx); and Midgley, Review of *Tiki and Temple* by Marjorie Newton, *Journal of Mormon History* 40/1 (2014): 253–56.

4 Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand had only tribal identities. They offered the word *māori*—which means normal, usual, or ordinary—to the Europeans looking for a name that embraced all the *iwi* (tribes), thereby for the first time creating their own single identity. The same word is found in the Cook Islands, and cognates are found in the Society Islands and elsewhere in eastern Polynesia, but the names given to those peoples most often came from that of the major island in a group or string of islands, whose names were sometimes given to those places by Europeans. Examples are the Cook Islands and the Marquesas Islands. The names for the indigenous peoples in the Pacific were sometimes thrust upon them by the first Europeans to “discover” them.

5 In two attempts to explain how the older Māori I knew in 1950–52 read the Book of Mormon, I have made a stab at doing some of this myself. See Louis Midgley, “A Singular Reading: The Māori and the Book of Mormon,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 245–76; and Midgley, “A Māori View of the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 4–11.

but it has also been discounted or explained away. Some of what has been written about these events has been excellent. For this and other reasons, Newton graciously acknowledges what she describes as the “fine work” of others on the history of the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand (p. xii).<sup>6</sup> She also modestly grants that, “as an Australian,” she might be deficient in her grasp of, among other things, “Maori culture” (p. xiv). She hopes “that one day a Maori historian will produce a scholarly history of Mormonism in New Zealand that will remedy any omissions and defects” that her accounts may have (p. xiv). I fully agree that Māori scholars are best situated to provide an explanation of the faith of Māori Saints. And there is, fortunately, increased interest in recovering and preserving the crucial memory of what made the Church of Jesus Christ essentially Māori during much of its first century in New Zealand.

Those who know me well will testify that I am fond of the peoples of the South Pacific and obsessed with the Māori and New Zealand. But in important ways, I remain an interested outsider. I will, however, set out some of what seem to me to be the grounds, dynamics, and deeper dimensions of the faith of Māori Saints. I will sketch some of what I believe are the reasons for the truly remarkable faith and faithfulness of Māori Saints that supplement (or go beyond) what one can find in *Tiki and Temple*.

First, there are good reasons to see the old Māori prophetic tradition (mentioned by Elder Rudd in the passage I quoted at the beginning of this essay) as both roughly commensurate with what they embraced when they became Latter-day Saints

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6 Newton specifically mentions R. Lanier Britsch’s *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 253–345 and Brian W. Hunt’s *Zion in New Zealand: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, 1854-1977* (Temple View: Church College of New Zealand, 1977).

and also as part what led them to become Latter-day Saints. Put another way, those first Māori to become Latter-day Saints were engaged in what I consider a providential joining of two prophetic traditions.

### Something Long Anticipated

Although focused primarily on the events beginning in December 1882 that led to an essentially Māori version of LDS faith, Newton's account begins in 1854, when the initial missionary efforts were somewhat ephemeral and focused only on the *Pākehā* (a person of European descent).<sup>7</sup> Those first LDS missionary endeavors in New Zealand followed the method used successfully in England of renting halls and holding public meetings. In New Zealand, doing this was mostly ineffective in converting the independent, mostly indifferent, and sometimes hostile *Pākehā*. These intermittent endeavors also included gathering a few Saints who had been converted elsewhere, baptizing a few among their families or friends, and then occasionally sending them to Zion in Utah.

Newton sets the stage for the story she tells by skillfully identifying an interest in the Māori among some of the Saints long before efforts were made to convert them (see pp. 1–6). For example, in 1832—long before 6 February 1840, when the famous (or infamous) Treaty of Waitangi<sup>8</sup> brought New Zealand under the Crown—W. W. Phelps, impressed by a description of the Māori he happened to notice, proclaimed that “the Lord will not forget them” (p. 1). In 1854, a few LDS

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7 I have defined key Māori words parenthetically.

8 For those puzzled by some details in *Tiki and Temple*, an Internet search will supply the needed information. For example, one can easily access detailed accounts of the Treaty of Waitangi and its contentious subsequent history. Or, if one wonders how the Saints living in Maromaku—a tiny, entirely LDS community in the Northland—could have fashioned a chapel from one large log, a search for the word *kauri* will provide information about this kingly tree of the diverse hardwood forests of New Zealand.

missionaries began to labor in New Zealand. But a genuine effort to take the gospel to the Māori began only in 1881. This fact has annoyed me. Why did those first LDS missionaries not go immediately to the Māori? Had not Joseph Smith sent Addison Pratt (and his three associates, one of whom passed away on the long voyage) in 1843 to preach the gospel to the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific?<sup>9</sup> Did they not have immediate and lasting success? This was the first real non-English-speaking LDS missionary endeavor. Newton mentions that, when passing between Australia and New Zealand, for a brief moment Addison Pratt had a hankering to stop in New Zealand and later wrote to Joseph Smith recommending that missionaries be sent there (see pp. 2–3 for details).

Newton deftly explains the difficulties those first LDS missionaries faced in New Zealand as well as some of the circumstances among the Māori that seem to have impeded (and even prevented) the long-hoped-for effort to bring the restored gospel to them (see pp. 22–24). In addition, I believe that LDS missionary endeavors with the Māori benefitted from the remarkable growth in literacy among a people who, prior to the arrival of the *Pākehā*, had no written language, hence their subsequent familiarity with and love of biblical narratives made available in their own language. LDS efforts to proselytize among the Māori, especially given the few LDS missionaries called to New Zealand for short assignments, depended upon earlier efforts by Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Anglican missionaries to establish their versions of Christianity among the Māori. These Christian missionaries were among the first British to settle in areas in which the Māori

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9 This heroic adventure took Pratt and his companions from Nauvoo to New Bedford, Massachusetts, then by ship across the south Atlantic, around Africa, east through the Indian Ocean, then between Australia and New Zealand and northeast to Tubuai in the Australs, Tahiti in the Society Islands, and elsewhere in French Polynesia.

were concentrated. They had to learn Māori. Words had to be found or fashioned in Māori to convey their message and to make available portions of the Bible. The impressive immediate result of those early sectarian missionary endeavors was that for a while (and until the surge of *Pākehā* settlers swamped the Māori), most Christians in New Zealand were Māori. In addition, with the arrival of the *Pākehā*, for reasons that I will not go into, the Māori population began to decline. The faith of Māori Christians was not focused on dogmatic theology, but on biblical stories which seemed to them to describe their own situation and to convey hope in the face of the enormous changes and challenges resulting from both the arrival of the *Pākehā* and the dynamic of tribal hostilities.

After the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the *Pākehā* began to gobble up Māori land—that is, often stealing it. The result was a series of wars between some Māori and the Crown<sup>10</sup> over what were considered insults and the theft of their lands. The Māori witnessed those who had brought them the biblical message become apologists for *Pākehā* greed. Only when these wars eventually subsided was the door opened for LDS missionaries. Where previous LDS missionaries, including mission presidents, had depended almost entirely upon the largess of the few generous *Pākehā* Saints, beginning in 1882 most LDS missionaries in New Zealand lived among Māori and depended primarily upon them for their sustenance. This took place only when armed hostilities had ceased, the Māori had lost confidence in the *Pākehā* preachers, and after they had become somewhat familiar with the Bible.

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10 And their Māori allies, who sided with the Crown in an effort to avoid having their own lands confiscated or to settle old rivalries within and between tribes.



## The Beginnings

When LDS missionaries eventually adopted a mode of teaching that entailed major cultural accommodations to Māori ways, they had remarkable success. The result has been described as an intercultural exchange, which I believe involved, among other things, the subtle melding of two commensurate prophetic traditions. The initial breakthrough began on 5 April 1881, when William J. McDonnel was called by William M. Bromley, the New Zealand mission president, to serve as a missionary to the Māori. McDonnel had joined the Church in New Zealand and served as branch president in Auckland, where he operated the dry dock at the bottom of Hobson Street. When called as a missionary, he went to work learning the Māori language. On 18 October 1881, McDonnel baptized Ngataki, a Māori he had met while working at the graver dock in Auckland. Ngataki was the first Māori baptized in New Zealand. Other than this one baptism, all efforts to proselytize the Māori proved fruitless until 24 December 1882, when McDonnel and two companions met one prepared by an encounter with the apostle Peter to hear his message. McDonnel had journeyed to Cambridge, a provincial town southeast of Hamilton, to visit Thomas Cox, who had recently moved there from Auckland. Cox had previously despised McDonnel, even mounting a petition to have him removed as branch president. Despite this, McDonnel and President Bromley decided to spend Christmas with Cox.

Bromley's fine diary<sup>11</sup> provides a nicely written, contemporary account of a remarkable encounter that he, Cox, and McDonnel had on 24 December 1882 with Hari Teimana, who indicated that he recognized Bromley and his

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11 For details, see Bromley's diary, now available as *None Shall Excel Thee: The Life and Journals of William Michael Bromley*, ed. Fred Bromley Hodson (n.p.: privately printed, 1990). I rely entirely upon Bromley's account and not on the later reporting reminiscences of William McDonnel and Thomas Cox.

associates. Teimana told McDonnel in Māori that the apostle Peter had recently visited him. Dressed in distinctive white clothing, Peter had shown him the three Latter-day Saints. Upon recognizing them, Teimana accepted their authority and then their message.<sup>12</sup> On Christmas Day, the first of a series of baptisms took place, as well as the healing of the relationship between McDonnel and Cox.

As this account illustrates, it was often not an agonizing, difficult decision for Māori to accept Joseph Smith as a seer and to recognize both the message and authority of LDS missionaries. Unlike the Christian world generally, for some Māori the heavens were not closed by either dogma or habit. In addition, some Māori were prepared by special divine revelations for the arrival and message of LDS missionaries. Even in 1950 the Māori, I soon discovered, were not influenced as I had been by powerful elements of Enlightenment skepticism about divine things; they lived in a world where wonders are possible. Hence Newton correctly reports that “many Mormon families have told of visions received by their ancestors, guiding them to accept Mormonism” (p. 43).

I first heard accounts of these visions in 1950 in the area around the Bay of Islands north of Auckland. I assumed that they had all been recorded by earlier LDS missionaries, if not by the Māori Saints themselves. I was wrong on both counts. The Māori Saints were still accustomed to the habits of the older oral culture and usually did not record events.<sup>13</sup> I am not aware of a collection of these stories. I now regret that I did not make it my business to record the stories I heard. My attention was

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12 Bromley’s version of the encounter with the apostle Peter depended upon what Teimana told McDonnel, the only one of the three who could communicate with Teimana in Māori.

13 The habits of the old oral culture lingered in 1950. In 1985 when, with my wife, I started returning to New Zealand, I found that those I knew in 1950 could remember my stories better than I could. In their much detailed, more accurate versions, I was not a heroic figure but more of a brash and bookish comic figure.

primarily focused on what now seem to be rather trivial, but pressing, mundane things: the weather, food, transportation, and other similar matters. Even though I loved the stories I heard, unfortunately I followed in the footsteps of previous LDS missionaries and did not record them.

As that initial encounter of McDonnel, Bromley, and Cox with Hari Teimana illustrates, the Māori who became Latter-day Saints often lived in an enchanted, and—for me and some other LDS missionaries—an enchanting world. From the moment I knew that there was such a thing as an LDS mission, I expected to serve in New Zealand, and I did so in 1950–52. This was almost seven decades after the Māori began to join the Church. Over six decades later, I am still taken with those people and that place. Much like others who have served missions in New Zealand, my faith is anchored in part in the work of the Holy Spirit I have witnessed among the peoples in that land. I found in 1950 that the Māori were often strikingly open to the divine. Their test, they would point out to me, was moral or practical: it was not whether the restored gospel is true, which even non-LDS Māori would tell me was for them obvious, but whether they were really determined to remain genuinely faithful to the covenants with God required by the message LDS missionaries brought to them.

When I first arrived in New Zealand in 1950, I lived in the area in and around the wonderful Bay of Islands, where, at Waitangi, what the Māori tend to see as a compact between two peoples had been set in place. The Māori enjoyed pointing out that the Christian missionaries, whom at first they had trusted, had taught them to close their eyes and pray, but when they opened their eyes, the land was gone. Beginning in 1882, when such grievances were fresh in the minds of the Māori, LDS missionaries seem to have sided with them over the deeds flowing from *Pākehā* greed. Unlike the *Pākehā*, they saw the missionaries as equals who lived with them, loved them, and

made no claim on their lands. In addition, much like the Māori, the missionaries were the object of oppression, legal restrictions, and sectarian derision.

The Māori Saints I met at that time were, in their own way, at least as “Mormon” as I was, and their conversion stories were often far more dramatic than those of my English ancestors. For these and other reasons, if there was cultural imperialism, it was not due to missionaries from the Wasatch Front imposing something foreign on the Māori. They clearly owned their faith. LDS missionaries (including mission presidents) have often been enthralled by the best in the Māori world. In addition, my experience has been that Māori Saints often feel that their faith enhances and deepens their Māori identity, which otherwise is transformed, eroded, and degraded under the sometimes demonic influences of the now-dominant sensual and increasingly highly secularized host culture.

Despite efforts to proselytize *Pākehā* and increasingly rapid changes in the situation of the Māori—some of which have clearly not been good—the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand in 1950 consisted primarily of Māori Saints, who most often worshiped in tiny rural branches. Māori were just beginning to surge into Auckland and Wellington, soon followed by Tongans and Samoans. In 1950, there was one LDS branch in Auckland. There are now ten stakes. In 1950, there were two Māori Saints who had university training. Now university training is common. The changes clearly have been enormous.

When my wife and I began to return to New Zealand in 1985, I was at first a bit disappointed at some of the changes that had taken place in the Church. My attachment to the Saints in New Zealand was partly frozen in memories of what amounted to a community of mostly Māori Saints. Much (but not all) of that, of course, has now changed, as my Māori friends explained, “for the better.” One of the changes has been in the

variety within LDS congregations. Virtually every Sunday in 1999 and 2000, my wife and I, while directing the Lorne Street Institute in Auckland for the Seminary and Institute System, heard favorable comments about the diverse ethnic makeup of LDS congregations. My first mission president had sought to overcome the stereotype that the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand was Māori. This soon happened but not by its becoming *Pākehā*. LDS congregations in New Zealand are now packed with Pacific Islanders and other nationalities and ethnic groups in addition to Māori. But this is not the story Newton tells, as her account covers the first century, when the Church in New Zealand was essentially Māori, not the story of the subsequent six decades.

### Māori Seers

Perhaps the incidents best known about the history of the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand are the accounts of LDS missionaries finding Māori who had been readied by their own prophets to accept them and their message. When we refer to Māori prophets, which Elder Rudd did in the passage I quoted at the beginning of this essay, we tend to reduce the strangeness of a people originally with no written language who, with the arrival of the *Pākehā*, still depended upon subtle mnemonic devices and a cast of experts to keep the memory of both human and divine things alive and who believed that knowledge of divine things could be revealed directly to human beings.

Drawing upon the work of Lanier Britsch and Brian Hunt (see p. 42 n. 5), Newton briefly mentions several Māori prophets—Paora Potangaroa, Tawhiao, Toaro Pakahia, Apiata Kuikainga, and Arama Toiroa (p. 42)—who, Māori Saints both then and now believe, prepared them for LDS missionaries and their message. The Māori themselves presented these stories to me as brute fact, and I have known them for over six decades. I am now more astonished and puzzled by what I began to

learn in 1950 than when I first encountered it. Though these stories have been told and retold, there is more to be learned about Māori prophets. For several reasons, Latter-day Saint Māori scholars are in the best position to recover valuable information and set out new insights on this and other closely related topics.<sup>14</sup> As passionate as I am about the world of Māori Saints, I operate only on its surface like an interested tourist struggling to take it all in.

There are, I believe, important bits of information that help open for us the world of Māori prophets. For instance, the Māori word *poropiti* (prophet) is actually a loan word—the English word “prophet” spelled in the Māori alphabet. The genuine Māori word is *matakite*—that is, seer.<sup>15</sup> *Kite* means to see and perceive, to find or discover, and to recognize. It also means a prophetic utterance or prophecy. And *mata* is a medium of communication with a spirit, also a spell or charm. Hence, a *matakite* is a seer—one who foresees an event—but also the vision itself. In addition, the word *matatuhi* also means seer or augur. The word *tuhi* has come to mean both the action of writing and something that is written, but its primitive

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14 For an example of a Māori scholar adding what is known about Māori prophets, see Robert Joseph, “Intercultural Exchange, Matakite Māori and the Mormon Church,” in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison, Lachy Paterson, Brett Knowles, and Murray Rae (Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers, 2012), 43–72. I am hoping that a version of this essay will be made available by the Interpreter Foundation because it is difficult to access outside New Zealand. See Dr. Joseph’s contribution to Professor Daniel C. Peterson’s *Mormon Scholars Testify*, at <http://mormonscholarstestify.org/955/robert-joseph>, for his academic credentials and his Māori style.

15 In this essay, unless otherwise noted, I rely upon Herbert W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, 7th ed. (Wellington, New Zealand: A. R. Shearer, Government Printer, 1975), for my understanding of crucial Māori words (though I will not cite individual entries in this dictionary). This remarkable dictionary was first published in 1844 in Paihia in the Bay of Islands, near where the Waitangi Treaty was signed. The definitions are both drawn from and illustrated by very early Māori usage. Hence they tend to predate the changes that have taken place in Māori since the arrival of English.

meaning is to delineate or draw, to point at, and to glow or shine.

Latter-day Saints should keep in mind that Joseph Smith was a seer before (and then in addition to) becoming a prophet authorized to speak for God. He also used the two stones known in the Book of Mormon as interpreters (see Mosiah 8:13; 28:13–16, 20)<sup>16</sup> as well as his own seer stone, to see the text of the Book of Mormon, which he dictated to scribes. He also used his seer stone to receive further instruction from God, including many early sections of the Book of Covenants and Commandments, which we know as the Doctrine and Covenants.

There is also a place in Māori lore for *whatu kura* (seer stones), two of which have names.<sup>17</sup> Seer stones had an important place in the initiation into the arcane Māori mysteries. This is not, however, the place to go into detail other than to assert that, from within the horizon of Māori tradition, both seers and seer stones are not problematic.

### An Esoteric Māori Cult

What I learned in 1950 from some older Māori Saints was that when LDS missionaries arrived with their message, the Māori were already aware of a premortal life and a council in heaven where the sons of Io te Matua—the Māori name for their high god—considered the peopling of the earth, at which time a war broke out that goes on even now here below, also a way back to the glory of Io's heaven and so forth. They attributed this knowledge to their own seers, whose teachings fit securely within the world view of specially trained *tohunga* (experts) whose task it was to keep alive the memory of an esoteric cult fully known only to an elite group of initiates.

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16 These passages state that a king thought that a seer was greater than a prophet (see Mosiah 8:15) and was instructed that a seer is also a revelator and a prophet (see Mosiah 8:16).

17 *Hukatai*, which means sea spray, and *Rehutai*, which means sea foam.

When the *Pākehā* arrived in New Zealand, the Māori relied upon, among other things, rigorous memorization of vast amounts of genealogy and other closely related lore to keep alive their knowledge of divine things as well as a host of more mundane information and skills. Even though they rapidly became literate, the oral transmission of information was still very much in place in 1950. Of course, attention had to be given, even—or especially—within the community of Saints, to mastering English and the ways of the *Pākehā*. Inevitably, this has tended to supplant, if not erode, the authority and the knowledge of the old oral traditions. Some of the old lore was recorded. Neither the old lore nor its impact on the faith of Māori Saints has disappeared. And, as I will demonstrate, serious efforts are being made to recover and teach it.

For me, the very best portion of Newton's fine book is the new and important information she provides (see pp. 171–73) on Hoani Te Whatahoro Jury (1841–1921). He assisted in the translation of the Book of Mormon into Māori and then joined the Church (pp. 52–53). Church leaders in Salt Lake City were aware of Te Whatahoro and even commissioned his portrait, which was first hung in the Salt Lake Temple, then in the Manti Temple, and eventually in the library at BYU–Hawaii (p. 171, including n. 62).

There is, however, more to Te Whatahoro's story. Beginning at age twenty-two (between 1863 and 1865), long before any Latter-day Saint had influenced any Māori, he was the scribe for Moihi Te Motorohunga (c.1800–1884) and Nepia Pohuhu (d. 1882), who dictated to him the esoteric teachings of Ngati Kahunganu (p. 171).<sup>18</sup> Newton sees the Te Whatahoro manuscripts as “sacred genealogy,” which in part they are, but they also contain the understanding of divine and human things—what might be called the esoteric religion—taught in

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18 A Māori *iwi* (tribe) located on the east coast of the North Island.



a *whare wānanga* (house of learning or college, also known as *wharekura*) to an elite group of Māori. Te Whatahoro enhanced these manuscripts and eventually donated them to the Church. Clearly recognizing their importance, Church leaders made an effort to send them to the Church Archive in Salt Lake City (pp. 171–72). The New Zealand government blocked this effort, and they were instead preserved in a fireproof vault in the little LDS meetinghouse at Scotia Place on Queen Street in Auckland. These manuscripts were loaned to Maui Pomare, a famous Māori scholar, and were never returned. Presumably they were lost or deliberately destroyed. However, a copy was retained by Te Whatahoro, and they were published in both Māori and English under the title *The Lore of the Whare Wananga* by S. Percy Smith, an important early amateur ethnologist.<sup>19</sup> The story Newton tells of the Te Whatahoro manuscripts includes much new and valuable information. But she does not give attention to the actual contents of those manuscripts, nor does she sense why the Church's general leaders wished to honor Te Whatahoro and even pay his way to Salt Lake City so that he could receive his LDS temple endowment. (Unfortunately, he was too frail to make the trip.)

I believe that Te Whatahoro's manuscripts, along with other similar and related materials, are part of the larger matrix of elements that may help to explain why those early LDS missionaries saw whole Māori villages join the Church. To sort out this matter, however, must be the work of Māori

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19 For the English translation of the most important of these manuscripts, see H. T. Whatahoro, *The Lore or the Whare-Wananga, or Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History*, trans. S. Percy Smith (San Bernardino, CA: Forgotten Books, 2008). This is an exact reprint of the 1913 original issued by the Polynesian Cultural Society. It is also available in electronic form at [ForgottenBooks.org](http://ForgottenBooks.org).

scholars.<sup>20</sup> It seems that the higher celestial elements of what was taught in various *wānanga* were known to an initiated elite group, but not in detail by most Māori.

Māori Saints are often aware of the Māori high god known as Io, and of related accounts of the creation of the world, a premortal existence, a great council in the highest heaven, a war that began there in the deep past and continues on earth to this day, an ascent back to the glory of the tenth (or twelfth) heaven and to the presence of Io, and so forth.<sup>21</sup> These and similar and related teachings were once transmitted to some select Māori in *wānanga*. It was from within this world of esoteric knowledge that Māori seers tended to operate. How much and in what way the Io cult influenced those first Māori to become Latter-day Saints is, however, still to be determined.

What is clear is that when LDS missionaries encountered Māori, some of whom had been prepared by seers for the restored gospel, they had remarkable success. When those early missionaries were able to convert Māori who were aware of elements of the Io cult, many others soon became Latter-day Saints as well. The reason is that initiates in the Io cult had what the Māori call *mana*, understood as “the enduring, indestructible power of the gods.”<sup>22</sup> What I learned in October

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20 I suspect that the first generation of Māori Saints were prying out of credulous and unsophisticated LDS missionaries such things as the LDS belief in a war in heaven and a pathway back to a celestial world for those true and faithful, much of which was similar to their own esoteric lore. Despite the flaws and faults of LDS missionaries, and even perhaps because of their lack of sophistication, the Māori saw signs of *mana* (spiritual power) among at least some missionaries. I benefitted from such generosity.

21 When Io is designated as *te matua* (the parent), *te hunga* (the sacred), and so forth, these supplements to Io’s name seem to me to describe his attributes.

22 In this instance, for the primitive and most basic meaning of *mana*, I rely on Cleve Barlow’s *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key Concepts in Māori Culture* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61, which can be called *mana tapu*, which understanding differs from that found in Williams, *Dictionary of the Maori Language*, where that crucial word is defined merely as “authority, control,” and then as “influence, prestige,” which it clearly is.

1950 in conversations with an old Māori at Waikare in the south end of the Bay of Islands was that even before LDS missionaries arrived, the Māori were aware of a premortal life and a grand council in heaven in which the sons of Io te Matua considered the peopling of the earth, at which time a war broke out that goes on even now here below. These and other similar or related teachings were known to an elite group of specially trained *tohunga*.

In addition, since there were disagreements both between and within *iwi* about the details of the Io cult, I believe there was also a longing or perhaps even an expectation that messengers would turn up to help sort things out. It is in this larger context that the words of Arama Toiroa (whom I see as the leading figure) and other Māori seers were understood by the Māori who first encountered LDS missionaries. It is from a passion for recovery of the genuine ancient lore that a Māori version of their encounter with Mormon things is even now beginning to take shape.

That there were Māori *matakite* is not challenged, nor is it denied that there were *wānanga* in which arcane lore was transmitted to future generations. However, some have insisted that, despite the solid evidence that the Io cult was taught in various *wānanga* in at least three *iwi*, Io was unknown prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries. In addition, some Māori—especially those who have been recolonized by *Pākehā* ways of understanding the world, who are hostile to any version of Christian faith and/or who have come to see Māori things through an essentially secular lens—now insist that the Io cult was a post-European invention by Māori seeking to fashion a past that would rival what is found in the Bible. What can be said with confidence is that the Māori did not borrow from sectarian Christian missionaries what was taught in *wānanga*. It is, instead, Latter-day Saints who see parallels and similarities between their own faith and hidden Māori lore. What I have

yet to see is the argument that somehow in the 1860s, LDS missionaries had managed to introduce the substance of the Io cult to some Māori, who then cast those teachings in the Māori language and thereby made it their own.

### Some Steps Forward

There is an increasing interest in traditional Māori lore and learning among Latter-day Saints which I see as salutary. This began late in the 1990s, when Herewini Jones, a truly gifted teacher, began holding *wānanga* for Māori with an interest in understanding the original links between Māori *matakite* and the restored gospel. The remarkable instruction given by Herewini Jones was fully endorsed and encouraged by Richard Hunter, President of the Auckland Mission from 1998 through 1999. It was also frequently utilized by Paul Mendenhall, who is fluent in Māori and who replaced President Hunter in 1999.

This public instruction in the arcane lore and related *whakapapa* (genealogy) demonstrates its links to LDS teachings. By 1998, the *wānanga* held by Herewini Jones became a primary vehicle in effecting new conversions and deepening the faith of the Saints as well as drawing lapsed Saints back into full fellowship. This endeavor made it possible for Māori to see that the very best in their esoteric lore and *tikanga* (governing rule, habit, controlling authority, the straight and right way) as essentially commensurate with the narrative upon which a solid faith in God can be grounded. From my perspective, this kind of instruction edifies and deepens faith. It has also opened the door for other LDS Māori scholars to probe the role played by the arcane teachings traditionally given in *wānanga* in the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ among the Māori as well as the place those teaching have for the faith of Māori Saints. Some of what Newton hopes will happen is actually beginning to take place.

In her bibliography (see p. 279), Newton mentions the late Cleve Barlow's *Tikanga Whakaaro*.<sup>23</sup> Dr. Barlow told me in 1999 that he was one of the last three Māori to actually receive instruction in a traditional *whare wānanga*<sup>24</sup> and that the instruction he received matched LDS teachings better than the one recorded by Te Whatahoro. Should he publish his version? If he did not, he realized, the last living link with the important instruction he had undergone, elements of which he saw as agreeable with his own LDS faith, would disappear. Phillip Lambert, an LDS Māori scholar, has recently informed me that when Dr. Barlow eventually moved from Auckland to Hamilton, he began giving instruction in his own *wānanga*, presumably in an effort to pass on his own knowledge of the ancient lore forming the core of the old Io cult.

### Some Concluding Remarks

On two occasions in October of 1950, I spent several days in Waikare, a very obscure place at the south end of the wonderful Bay of Islands. I engaged mostly in conversations with an aged tohunga with a remarkable command of the genealogy of the Ngati Hine *hapū* (subtribe) of the Nga Puhi *iwi*. He described some of the instructions he underwent in what I now believe was a *whare wānanga*, and he even wrote down some things for me. These conversations were the first time I had encountered someone with such a remarkable command of genealogy. He also introduced me to the related cosmogony and cosmology

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23 Cleve Barlow's useful *Tianga Whakaaro* was first published by Oxford University Press in 1991 and reprinted in 1992, 1993, 1994 (with corrections), 1996, and 1998.

24 Professor Barlow was initiated into a Nga Puhi version of Māori arcane lore. Recently, supplementing the Te Whatahoro lore, a version of the Tainui *wānanga* has been published. See Pei Te Hurinui Jones, *He Tuhi Mārei-kura: A Treasury of Sacred Writings: A Māori Account of the Creation, Based on the Priestly Lore of the Tainui People* (Hamilton, New Zealand: Aka and Associates, 2013), with a companion volume entirely in Māori.

that included, among other things, a belief in a war in heaven which has spilled over into this world, a stairway back to the highest heaven, and so forth. I believe he indicated that his instruction had taken place at Waiomio, a little-known place just south of Kawakawa at the approach to the Bay of Islands. Recently I have learned from Jason Hartley that there was a *wānanga* at Waiomio which ceased to function in the 1930s. It had been shifted from further north to that place to avoid detection by the government, which was then striving to stamp out such institutions.<sup>25</sup>

I now regret that I did not record the contents of those conversations that took place in Waikare in October 1950 as well as other conversations I had with other Māori Saints. I wrongly assumed that several generations of missionaries had heard and recorded these things. I was busy urging the Saints to pay close attention to the Book of Mormon, not to gamble or drink beer, and that sort of thing. Looking back, I can now see that Māori I was teaching were also instructing me on how they read the Book of Mormon<sup>26</sup> and how their own prophetic tradition grounded and buttressed their understanding and affection for both the message it contained and the community of Saints it engendered. Those who have ministered among the Māori are often captivated by them and their ways. Matters of the heart have had a truly lasting impact on LDS missionaries, as they made portions of the Māori world their own. Such has been my own experience.

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25 For those who might care to enter this charmed world, I recommend Jason Hartley's account of some encounters here and now with divine things. See his *Ngā Mahi: The Pathway of the Stars: A Story of Truth, a Message to Awaken, a Gift from the Past* (n.p.: privately printed, 2010). This book can be ordered at [www.ngamahi.com](http://www.ngamahi.com).

26 I have described the eventual fruit of these constant enlightening conversations about the Book of Mormon in two essays cited in note 5, above.

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