

Pentecostal Leadership and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand: Exploring the Impact of a Bicultural Deficit in Pentecostal Christianity

Introduction

New Zealand pentecostal engagement with Māori has a complicated history. At times pentecostal spirituality seems to have held a distinct appeal to Māori and achieved significant success, yet in other ways the relationship has been characterised by colonial attitudes and by cultural dislocation for numbers of Māori within pentecostal churches. This focus of this paper is to explore the response of pentecostalism to New Zealand biculturalism, as well as the resultant impact on pentecostal leadership among Māori. In order to achieve this we will briefly summarise the concept of biculturalism as it uniquely takes shape within the New Zealand context. We will then explore pentecostal engagement with Māori and discuss how pentecostals have, or have not, responded to the context of a bicultural New Zealand society. Following this we will examine the impact of this response on pentecostal Māori, and Māori pentecostal leadership in particular.

Biculturalism

In order to discuss biculturalism as it relates to pentecostalism and Māori, it is necessary to briefly describe the notion of biculturalism as it functions within contemporary New Zealand society. New Zealand biculturalism is grounded in the Treaty of Waitangi; an agreement signed between Māori and the Crown in 1840. While the original intent and ongoing meaning of the Treaty continues to be debated, it has nevertheless contributed towards the idea of a nation founded on a partnership between two peoples, Māori and Pākehā. Although the ideals of the Treaty were subsequently overshadowed by the impact of colonisation and the illegal activities

of the Crown in securing land and power, in recent decades the importance of the Treaty and bicultural partnership has returned to the forefront of New Zealand's social and political identity.¹ While New Zealand can be conceived of as a multicultural nation in terms of its ethnic composition, it is considered bicultural with regards to social policy.

New Zealand biculturalism itself can be conceived of on at least two different levels. In what Andrew Sharp calls 'bicultural reformism', the focus is on ensuring Māori representation and participation in various aspects of the social and political features of New Zealand life.² The practical manifestations of bicultural reformism can be observed in a number of examples: preservation of a small number of Māori seats in the national parliament, consultation with Māori at the level of local governance, education and health and so on. 'Bicultural distributivism', however, relates to self-determination rather than simply to representation and consultation (and is generally less well accepted than bicultural reformism, especially among Pākehā).³ Bicultural distributivism arose in opposition to the suggestion of multicultural distributivism, which had argued for a distribution of resources to different groups based on their proportion of the total population. Instead, bicultural distributivism argues that as one of two partners in the Treaty agreement, Māori should have equal representation and the right to self-determination, however that might be understood.⁴

¹ See Andrew Sharp, *Justice and the Māori: the Philosophy and Practice of Māori Claims in New Zealand Since the 1970's*, 2nd edition ed. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999).

² This is discussed specifically in relation to New Zealand pentecostalism in Philip D Carew, "Māori, Biculturalism and the Assemblies of God in New Zealand, 1970 - 2008" (Victoria University of Wellington, 2009), 113.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dominic O'Sullivan, *Faith, Politics and Reconciliation: Catholicism and the Politics of Indigeneity* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2005), 211-212.

New Zealand churches, for their part, have responded in a range of different ways to the issue of biculturalism. Some churches, for example the Anglican Church, see the church as having played a pivotal role in the signing of the Treaty and thus being implied in the agreement, seeing it, at least partly, in spiritual terms as well as political. In light of this the Anglican Church attempts to express the bicultural implications of the Treaty in and through partnership models in their ecclesial structures.⁵ It is important to note that this approach is not primarily about strategies for mission to Māori, but rather a stance on what they believe to be the responsibilities of the church to honour the Treaty agreement. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, tends to see biculturalism as one of a number of possible political approaches through which the higher theological ideals of justice and reconciliation may, or may not be, achieved.⁶ Thus, a Catholic response to Māori is firstly grounded in a theological vision of justice and reconciliation, which is a foundation from which they might support or critique bicultural frameworks, rather than holding an inherent attachment to biculturalism in and of itself. In this way, the Catholic Church sees the Treaty agreement as a political issue for the State, rather than a prescriptive paradigm for the church. Thus for the Catholic Church, biculturalism is seen as the social and political context within which the church is located. The church can then support the place of the Treaty in New Zealand society, which it does, while simultaneously seeking to avoid grafting a particular political ideology into its ecclesiology.

In contrast to both of these responses, New Zealand pentecostalism, with the exception of some expressions of the Apostolic Church, has not adopted biculturalism of any kind, nor reflected

⁵ Carew, “Māori, Biculturalism and the Assemblies of God,” 47-49.

⁶ See O’Sullivan, *Faith, Politics and Reconciliation*.

theologically and critically on a response to the bicultural context within which it is located. It is the impact of this deficit that we will explore presently and in order to do so we will make a few preliminary observations regarding pentecostal engagement with Māori.

Pentecostalism, Māori and Biculturalism

New Zealand Pentecostalism has had a mixed relationship with Māori. Despite the hopes for widespread revival that emerged out of the Smith Wigglesworth campaigns of the early 1920s, the early years of the movement were largely focused on a spiritual renewal for existing churches and were mostly limited to small numbers of, primarily urban, European members.⁷ Mission to the predominantly rural Māori was not a priority for the pentecostal movement, a movement that would remain small and largely sectarian for the three decades following the Wigglesworth campaigns.⁸ Additionally, New Zealand pentecostalism, significantly influenced by British (and North American) leaders, carried threads of colonial attitudes towards some Māori cultural and spiritual practices.⁹ Our concern in this paper, however, is not with pentecostal engagement with Māori per se, but rather to explore how pentecostal church and denominational approaches to leadership have responded to the notion of biculturalism and to discuss the resultant impact on Māori pentecostals and Māori pentecostal leadership in particular. At this point we should also note that in exploring leadership in this context we are primarily focusing on positional leadership within the Classical Pentecostal denominations.

⁷ Philip D Carew and Geoff Troughton, “Māori Participation in the Assemblies of God,” in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison and others, (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2012), 94.

⁸ For a discussion on the small and sectarian nature of early New Zealand pentecostalism, see Brett Knowles, *Transforming Pentecostalism: the Changing Face of New Zealand Pentecostalism, 1920-2010* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2014), especially 41-85.

⁹ Carew, “Māori, Biculturalism and the Assemblies of God,” 21.

Differing pentecostal approaches to Māori and Māori leadership can be observed by comparing early pentecostal revivals among Māori led by evangelists from the Apostolic Church and the Assemblies of God (A/G) in New Zealand. In Waiomio, a small valley in the northern region of New Zealand, A/G pastors Ray Bloomfield and Frank Houston were invited to preach among a Māori community in the late 1950s, three members of whom had been praying for a revival.¹⁰ While the Māori community did not enthusiastically receive Bloomfield and Houston at first, the impact of an elderly Māori person claiming healing after Bloomfield's prayer would drastically change Māori attitudes towards them. In the following weeks a pentecostal revival broke out in Waiomio, in a region referred to at that time as 'Drunkards Valley', that had a profound affect on most Māori in the valley. Unfortunately for the A/G however, the long-term impact of the Waiomio revival among Māori appears to be limited. Carew and Troughton argue that this is due to the neglect of Bloomfield and Houston to train and empower potential Māori leaders from within the revival movement, along with a lack of any intentional or significant connections with local marae leaders and kaumatua.¹¹ It seems that the focus on Māori in Waiomio was more incidental to the larger goals of evangelism and revival sought by Bloomfield and Houston, rather than being a concerted effort to engage, empower and release Māori expressions of pentecostalism. While certain aspects of their pentecostal approach clearly appeared to resonate with Māori in the valley, the lack of intentionality with regards to ongoing Māori leadership or the navigating of Māori culture and spirituality with newfound Christian faith would prove problematic in the longer term.

¹⁰ Ibid., 64.

¹¹ Carew and Troughton, "Māori Participation in the Assemblies of God," 94-95.

This type of approach among the A/G can also be seen in the attitudes towards biculturalism after the Māori renaissance of the 1970s. The re-emergence of the Treaty of Waitangi into the national consciousness, along with the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal and the application of a bicultural framework into social and political policy, has largely been seen as a political issue by the A/G. Any implications for church and denominational structures were not seriously contemplated by the A/G, which at times had also been impacted by the anti-Māori rhetoric espoused by leaders like Neville Johnson and George Anderson.¹² As attitudes towards non-Western cultures softened, the New Zealand A/G embraced a multicultural ethos, especially as the movement continued to diversify ethnically as a result of the increase in Pacific Island and Asian immigration. Indeed while the A/G has never had a specific Māori representative on the National Executive, there is a Samoan representative and in 2012 the movement elected its first Samoan General Superintendent. Within this multicultural context biculturalism may be viewed as problematic and is sometimes rejected as a potentially divisive approach. It is also important to note that is not an attitude unique to the A/G, but indicative of many pentecostal church responses to the notion of biculturalism.

In contrast, early revivals led by Apostolic Church pastors in rural areas such as Blenheim and Te Puke appear to have included significant recognition of Māori cultural realities. Apostolic workers formed close connections with kaumatua and there was a concerted effort to explore Māori expressions of pentecostal spirituality.¹³ It seems likely that these responses to Maori were

¹² Carew highlights, for example, that George Anderson was “so concerned about Māoritanga that he felt it necessary to rip up lino to see if there were any newspapers with Māori images on them. Māori designs on 10 cent pieces meant they could not be used.” Carew, “Māori, Biculturalism and the Assemblies of God,” 68.

¹³ Ibid., 92.

indicative of an overall approach to Māori that would prove much more successful for the Apostolic Church than the A/G. By way of contrast, we can observe that by 1992 the proportion of the Apostolic denomination that identified as Māori was more than 23%, whereas the corresponding Māori membership among the A/G has never risen above 10%.¹⁴

Furthermore, in the early years of the Apostolic Church in New Zealand, and in contrast to the A/G and other pentecostal denominations, early in the movement a Māori Home Mission Committee was established and in 1965 a Māori Advisory Committee (later to be known as the Māori Board) would be formed; a group who would carry a leadership role for Māori within the denomination and be answerable directly to the National Executive.¹⁵ Throughout the 1990s the Apostolic Church magazine adopted a Māori language subtitle, included a column written in Te Reo Māori, and was the only pentecostal denomination to join with other churches in making statements with regards to the 150-year anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the need for social justice for Māori.¹⁶ Thus the Apostolic Church has been the closest any pentecostal denomination has come to institutionally embracing a bicultural framework and correlates with their relatively high proportion of Māori constituents.

It should also be noted, however, that within the Apostolic Church some challenges began to emerge in this regard. The Māori Board began to express a desire for more responsibility and independence in leadership over Māori affairs, while at the same time the wider Apostolic

¹⁴ Simon Moetara, “Māori and Pentecostal Christianity in Aotearoa New Zealand,” in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison and others, (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2012), 80-82.

¹⁵ W. Luke Worsfold, “Subsequence, Prophecy and Church Order in the Apostolic Church, New Zealand” (PhD, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004), 252.

¹⁶ Carew, “Māori, Biculturalism and the Assemblies of God,” 98.

leadership began to express concerns over what they saw as a problematic integration of Maoritanga (or Māori culture and spirituality) into the spirituality of the Māori leadership group.¹⁷ Thus the challenge for the Apostolic Church was to consider how far their bicultural structures could be allowed to progress. Could they truly empower and release Māori to explore their own expression of Māori pentecostal spirituality, and how much leadership and independence could the Māori Board truly exercise whilst still remaining within the Apostolic denomination? Following a number of disagreements, in 1997 the Māori board was reorganised to become the Māori Pacific Island Council (a change made to include Pasifika representation), and in 2002, after debates about the degree of authority this Council desired to have, it was disestablished entirely.¹⁸ Many Māori within the movement became disillusioned by the process, and, in concert with a prominent Māori pastor, Brian Tamaki, leaving the denomination in the 1990s to start his own church and movement, the emphasis on Māori within the Apostolic Church has diminished greatly in recent years. While in 1992 nearly 24% of its membership was Māori, by 2009 that number had dropped to 13.3%.¹⁹

In speaking of pentecostalism in more general terms, it should be noted that the stance of the Apostolic Church, prior to the twenty-first century at least, was significantly different from not only the A/G but also most of the pentecostal denominations. While there are accounts of impact among Māori from a variety of pentecostal movements, most have followed a similar trajectory to that of the A/G and the Apostolic Church was the only pentecostal movement to attempt the adoption of a bicultural framework along with a significant and intentional empowerment of

¹⁷ Worsfold, “Subsequence, Prophecy and Church Order,” 252.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 255-257.

¹⁹ Moetara, “Māori and Pentecostal Christianity,” 82.

Māori leadership. Indeed, the Apostolic Church itself has now moved in a similar direction to that of the other pentecostal denominations, emphasising multiculturalism and leaving issues related to the Treaty and indigenous issues to the political arena.

The Impact of a Bicultural Deficit on Pentecostal Māori

Our concern in this paper is not only to ask how pentecostals might engage ideas of biculturalism, but also to explore the impact of the bicultural deficit on Māori pentecostal engagement, and in particular, Māori pentecostal leadership. While we can acknowledge that at certain times, since the emergence of pentecostalism in New Zealand, pentecostal spirituality has clearly held significant appeal for some Māori, there remains an underlying deficit in engaging with notions of biculturalism and this deficit has had a significant impact, two features of which I want to emphasise here.

Firstly, there appears to have been a trend among Māori pentecostal ministers away from structural leadership positions within Classical pentecostal churches and denominations, and towards itinerant ministry. As Simon Moetara notes, “Due to the conflict between being true to their cultural values and being faithful to responsibilities to the church, many became itinerant evangelists because it took them out of the formal church structure and away from politics...”²⁰ In concert with this emphasis on the itinerant evangelist we should also note the tendency towards prophetic ministry among many Māori, something that resonates with the historical Māori prophetic tradition. Perhaps this explains some of the appeal of the Apostolic Church in the twentieth century in that they specifically endorsed the role of a “Prophet” within the

²⁰ Ibid., 78-79.

movement.²¹ Thus, a number of prominent pentecostal and charismatic Māori ministers in New Zealand have not been confined to a particular church or denomination but have instead developed their own national ministry independent of the structures of the institutional pentecostal church.

Secondly, it is interesting to observe the fact that where Māori leaders have stayed within the leadership structure of a local church, the largest pentecostal churches with a significant Māori membership and ethos have moved towards independence from the Classical denominations. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the Destiny Church led by Brian Tamaki.²² Tamaki was a Māori Apostolic Church pastor who, although not starting out with the intention of building a Māori church, attracted many Māori under his ministry. In the mid-1990s tensions arose between Tamaki and the Apostolic denominational leadership and Tamaki ultimately exited the denomination along with his church. He later moved to Auckland, starting the Destiny Church which became the only mega church in New Zealand to have a predominantly Māori membership. Furthermore, numbers of Māori from within the Apostolic denomination would also leave and become part of the many Destiny Churches that began to emerge around the country. Destiny spirituality is an intriguing fusion of Māori culture, African-American pentecostalism, the prosperity gospel, and political aspiration. As Tamaki's ministry has grown, his embracing of his own Māori heritage has also developed. He believes the Treaty of Waitangi to be a spiritual covenant that lies at the heart of New Zealand identity, and that it must be

²¹ Carew, "Māori, Biculturalism and the Assemblies of God," 92.

²² For an examination of the Destiny Church, see Peter Lineham, *Destiny: the Life and Times of a Self-Made Apostle* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2013).

honoured and he also encourages the integration of aspects of Māori culture into the church's spirituality.

Another perhaps less well-known example is the House of Breakthrough (HOB) church in Gisborne led by Norm McLeod. From its inception in 1991 HOB was an Elim church, but in 2007 separated from their denomination and argued that, "the distinct identity and culture of HOB meant that it would eventually come into conflict with the Elim philosophy."²³ HOB, as a relatively large and predominantly Māori pentecostal church, has increasingly expressed its vision and identity in ways that embrace Māori cultural and spiritual values, and included a focus on transforming social conditions for Māori. In this way there are some genuine similarities with what can be seen in the Destiny Churches, and the priority for ministry to Māori can be seen in McLeod's prophecy: "As Maori are awakened to their spiritual inheritance in Christ there will be a sequential awakening of the body of Christ throughout New Zealand."²⁴ It also appears, however, that there are significant differences between HOB and Destiny Churches. HOB acknowledges that throughout the past decade they had attempted to embrace the style and approach of Destiny, which includes typical mega church emphases on church growth strategies and a culture of "excellence". Yet in recent years they have recognised that this approach does not resonate with their own constituency, located in a much smaller city and with ministry into rural areas on the East Coast.²⁵

²³ House of Breakthrough, "Strategic Plan: 2013-2023,"

http://www.houseofbreakthrough.com/Portals/0/Documents/Strategic_Plan.pdf (accessed Friday 12 June, 2015), 9.

²⁴ Norm McLeod, "Awakening Aotearoa," <http://normmcleod.com/manfest-presence-2013-a-rising-tide/> (accessed Friday 12th June, 2015).

²⁵ House of Breakthrough, 8.

What we have suggested then, is that the impact of a lack of attention to bicultural realities within New Zealand pentecostalism can be observed in the tendencies towards independent itinerant ministry among Māori pentecostal leaders and in the tension between Māori pastors and denominational structures, sometimes resulting in a move towards independence. In light of these observations, there are two comments we will make here.

Firstly, a considered pentecostal response to New Zealand's bicultural context is not only related to increasing Māori participation but it is also a theological issue as well as an identity issue. In other words, regardless of whether attempts to express a pentecostal understanding of the Treaty and its implications for New Zealand society result in increased Māori participation in the movement, it remains imperative that pentecostals think through these issues as an expression of justice and reconciliation. One would hope that an additional impact of this consideration might be the retaining and empowering of Māori leadership within churches and denominations to a greater degree, and a higher level of Māori participation in the longer term.

Secondly, we should also learn from the Apostolic denomination that there is a limitation to the effectiveness of bicultural reformism, without an eventual consideration of bicultural distributivism. What we can observe in the example of the Apostolic Church is that issues of bicultural reformism inevitably lead towards issues of bicultural distributivism; especially as it relates to leadership. If bicultural reformism ensures that there is Māori representation and consultation, such as in the case of the Apostolic Māori Board, this necessarily leads towards questions of the degree to which such representation takes on genuine, rather than symbolic, leadership. Indeed beyond the church, one common criticism of bicultural reformism is that it

usually assumes that the partnership takes place on the terms of the dominant cultural paradigm. In other words, Māori representation in the political system, at the level of local government, health and the education system, is still a representation that is required to function within social and political paradigms that are Western in origin and ethos. In the example of the Apostolic Church, the bicultural framework only worked insofar as the Māori Board and Māori pastors were content to continue operating within the overall structural and leadership framework of a predominantly Western-oriented denomination. Once Māori pentecostals began to assert their voice, integrate Maoritanga with their pentecostal spirituality and seek more authority over Māori issues, such moves did not necessarily fit the structural paradigms within which they had arisen and ensuing conflict and division materialised.

Interestingly, in considering this point a little further, the emergence of independent Māori leadership within pentecostalism should not necessarily be considered a negative thing. Should we lament the emergence of Destiny Church with the corresponding decline of Māori membership in the Apostolic Church? Should we protest against the independence of HOB from the Elim movement? While the denominations from which those churches have come may see this change as unfortunate, and while the circumstances from which the tensions arose might have been more helpfully navigated, we might still view the development of independent and predominantly Māori pentecostal churches as a positive thing for Māori pentecostalism. Correspondingly, however, we might also state that even if we see independent Māori pentecostals emerging, this does not mean that the Classical denominations can justify an ignorance of the implications of biculturalism within their leadership and organisational structures.

Finally, we return to the tension between multiculturalism and biculturalism within New Zealand pentecostalism. As we have seen, there is general preference for multiculturalism within New Zealand pentecostal churches and movements, even if the notion of multiculturalism is poorly defined and at times means different things to different people. Indeed the tension between multiculturalism and biculturalism is an issue for New Zealand society as a whole, not just the church and certainly not only pentecostals. As Fleras and Spoonley note, multiculturalism has the potential to locate Māori as one of many ethnic minorities “in orbit around a Pākehā centre.”²⁶ Thus a number of Māori academics argue that biculturalism must precede multiculturalism in the New Zealand context. In other words, Māori are to be seen as one of two groups, Māori and non-Māori, rather than as one of many minorities. The implications of this for the pentecostal church are challenging to consider. What does it look like for a church that has often claimed to uphold the egalitarian empowerment of the Spirit for all, regardless of race, gender and socio-economic status, to see Māori as holding a unique space. Indeed, perhaps one way to consider this might be to take seriously the thoughts of Alistair Rees, whose recent PhD thesis suggested that we might see the Treaty not as providing a unique and special place for Māori, but rather as providing a unique and special place in New Zealand for non-Māori.²⁷ It is the manuhiri, or visitors, who are to have the room provided for them, rather than the other way around. Perhaps this might be the beginnings of re-ordering the way in which the pentecostal church considers its approach to these issues.

Conclusion

²⁶ Augie Fleras and Paul Spoonley, *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics and Ethnic Relations in New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999), 236.

²⁷ See his recent PhD thesis, Alistair Reese, “Reconciliation and the Quest for Pākehā Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand” (PhD, The University of Auckland, 2013).

Overall, we have made a number of observations and suggestions here. As a generalisation, the pentecostal movement has not responded well to the context of biculturalism in New Zealand. We have highlighted that a lack of critical reflection on these issues has resulted in a lack of empowerment and self-determination for Māori leadership within the pentecostal denominations. The impact of this has been the preference of many Māori pentecostal leaders to pursue independent and itinerant ministries, and, in some cases, to see the emerging independence of pentecostal churches that are primarily Māori in membership. For the pentecostal church these issues remain critical. As the multi-ethnic composition of New Zealand increases year-by-year, the need to determine how pentecostal churches and denominations will position themselves with regards to biculturalism will become increasingly important. Should pentecostal churches and denominations consider the implications of bicultural reformism, and even distributivism, on leadership structures? Can Māori leadership be given a unique place that honours their status as the Indigenous people of New Zealand and as a full partner in the Treaty of Waitangi. Even further, I would suggest that pentecostalism might move beyond biculturalism and instead of asking what place Māori might be given within pentecostal churches and denominations, we might ask Māori what role we might be given as manuhiri in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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