

# Pākehā Theology

## *Is this for us?*

BY ELIZABETH DUKE

**I have recently signed on to a new Facebook group, Pākehā Theology, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1250620136604950/>. The group includes various people I know, and others I don't, from a range of Christian bodies, who are seeking to understand living in this land of Aotearoa in harmony with their faith commitment. Numbers of Friends over the years have taken up this concern which, I believe, continues to make fresh challenges as society and cultures change. One way to sum it up is to ask, "How are we to be a good Treaty partner?"**

Quakers are in a different position from several larger church bodies. Our existence here is not related to mission endeavours but arose from personal faith commitment. Sydney Parkinson visited in his role as a botanical artist on Cook's Endeavour, and other Friends became involved through their profession of surveying. How far was this activity complicit in land theft, and how far was it a genuine attempt to make honourable agreements with Māori for Treaty-related coexistence? Each instance needs to be explored with care. Worship groups grew from the longing of Friends who settled here to practise their faith, and to offer it to others for whom it could ring true.

There are some things I need to take into consideration as I try to deepen my understanding. One is that Christianity had become established among Māori in several places, well before Marsden preached his first sermon in 1814. A recent treatment of this, which I recommend, is Jay Ruka's book *Huia Come Home* (2017), written from a dual Māori and Pākehā identity. A second is that, while Pākehā are responsible for their own authentic practice of being a faithful Treaty partner, without imposing burdens on Māori, this is not achievable in isolation. Jen Margaret expresses this in the title of the book she edited, *Working as Allies: Supporters of Indigenous Justice Reflect* (2013). Her work received support from the QPSANZ Loxley Fellowship in 2012.

A precious guide for Friends is the 2014 Quaker Lecture by David James, Jillian Wychel, Murray Short and Linda Wilson, 'Standing in this Place'.

My understanding of the Pākehā Theology group is that its considerations are undertaken in love and humility. I hope to gain strength and understanding by taking part.