

BYRON RANGIWAI

## “God is...”: A personal theology based on stories from my grandmother

My grandmother was born in 1940. She was 40 years old when I was born in 1980. My mother became quite ill when I was born. My grandmother, Nan, had to care for me. She surrounded me with love and prayer. Nan was a spiritual conduit; she blessed my life through her karakia. Nan passed away on 1 December 2017, the day of her wedding anniversary. She was 77 years old. I spent the last 37 years listening to stories from my Nan. Stories about her upbringing, about her life growing up in Waiōhau, living next to the marae. My emerging theology comes out of the stories that Nan shared with me throughout my life. Her faith in God - as a practicing Ringatū - was immovable. She prayed for God's guidance and protection in her life and in the lives of all of her family members, especially her mokopuna. The following description of God represents my theological explorations, influenced by Nan.

God is the pulse of the universe  
God is the sunlight piercing the kawakawa leaves  
God is the first breath of a pēpi born on a dirt floor  
God is the belly of a kererū heavy with miro berries  
God is the crackling of wood in the kāuta  
God is rēwena bread - te taro o te ora - cooked in the embers  
God is mīti tahu reconstituted with pūhā  
God is collecting rongoā in the bush to heal the whānau  
God is white bread with jam dipped in cream  
God is a chipped enamel mug burning my bottom lip  
God is the 'fragrance' of kānga wai bubbling in the pot  
God is the eel squirming in the hīnaki  
God is a full puku after the hākari  
God is the taniwha lurking in the river

God is the potato we touch when exiting the urupā  
God is the branch the tohunga uses to sprinkle us  
with water  
God is the marae bell calling us to prayer  
God is the tokotoko pointing to Papatūānuku and  
Ranginui  
God is ngā atua Māori in the environment around us  
God is the mauri that animates life  
God is the wai that negates tapu  
God is Koro’s grave in Casino  
God is the log floating up-stream  
God is the faded poppy wreath in the wharenuī  
God is the sorrow of a broken heart  
God is the strains of wailing and tangi  
God is the warps and wefts of a whāriki  
God is the medals sent home after the war  
God is the green lizard scurrying under a rock  
God is the aroha of a Nanny for her mokopuna