A WORLD OF CONFUSION – by Anahera Herbert-Graves

Whāia te mātāuranga hei oranga mō koutou; seek after wisdom for the sake of your wellbeing. This whakatauki (saying) teaches that in a world full of noise and confusion, wisdom and wellbeing will come when we ask questions with a genuine desire to understand the answers.

However, another whakatauki says, hanga te oko tahanga te haruru nui; the empty vessel makes the most noise. This teaches that if we don’t really want to understand or even hear the answers, our questions will only add to the sense of noisy confusion and contention already in the world.

All cultures and religions advance wisdom and understanding as virtues, while confusion and contention are universally seen as vices.

For example, the Bible teaches, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” And in the Koran we read, “God grants Wisdom to whom He pleases ... But none remember except men of understanding.”

On the other hand the great Chinese philosophers taught, “Settle a small conflict quickly, and you will keep a hundred others at bay,” while the Bible teaches, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”

Whenever our status quo is disturbed, our natural impulse is to ask questions about it. Whether those questions contribute to wisdom and wellbeing in ourselves and our world, or generate more confusion and contention, depends a lot on our inner state of being and on our motives for asking the questions in the first place.

To illustrate on the large scale; faced with the refugee crisis in Europe, some have asked, “Whose fault is this?” or, “What about our own homeless people?” with the intent of justifying why they choose not to help.

On the other hand others have asked, “What caused this?” with the intent of working out how they can best help both here at home and in the world at large.

On a smaller scale, faced with the direct action of Ngāi Tohunga and Patu Kōraha hapū at Kaitaia airport, a few have asked, “Why can’t those blankety-blanks just be New Zealanders?” with the intent of dismissing them and their cause out of hand.

But many others have asked “What is behind this action?” without fear that the answer may discomfort them.

While we all have the potential to be vessels of confusion or seekers of wisdom from time to time, it is always better to be wise than confused.

So instead of imagining what might go wrong in the future while ignoring past wrongs, the wise acknowledge past wrongs while working to build a better future. And rather than attacking the personalities and downplaying the principles involved, they address both with respect.

But most importantly, the wise mahia nga mahi ki runga i te tika, pono me te aroha, (they work in the spirit of truth, faith and love) to live in and at the same time transcend a world of confusion.