

## **Views from the Pews: Thoughts for Waitangi Day**

Luke's Gospel was the first to be written and shared in Māori communities in the 1830's. Within it there are several key ideas that became crucial to the political developments that followed the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

In the Māori version of Luke 3:1, Pontius Pilate is described as a Governor 'Te Kawana'. Throughout this Gospel, the images of the Kingdom of Heaven used the term 'Rangatiratanga', as in 'Te Rangatiratanga o Te Rangi'. In Luke 11:2, "Kia tai mai Tou Rangatiratanga" is a translation of the words, "Your Kingdom come". When the Treaty document in Māori referred to 'Kawanatanga', meaning governance, and 'Rangatiratanga', meaning chiefly rule, Māori listeners would have referred to the biblical context. Furthermore, several mission-educated chiefs asked Henry Williams, who translated and commended the wording, to add the word 'tino;' in front of Rangatiratanga, to strengthen its meaning. The concept of tino meant absolute, or true chieftainship.

Te Tiriti in Māori therefore appeared to be offering a kind of balance between Kawanatanga and Tino Rangatiratanga, where Queen Victoria would offer national governance structures for everyone, while the chiefs would retain their rule within their tribal territories, particularly over land, fisheries, forests and many other treasures. Each party had a responsibility to honour the good faith of the other party in Treaty terms.

Here is a further indication that the Māori at Waitangi were not thinking of ceding their tribal sovereignty as such, but agreeing to exercise a form of mutual sovereignty with the Crown throughout Aotearoa. Each party appeared to have their particular kind of jurisdiction, and each party could understand the nature of the common ground.

The United Nations have since ruled that the wording of any Treaty between an indigenous community and another party who wishes to treat with them, has to be determined on the basis of the indigenous community's own language and understanding. It is the Māori wording of Te Tiriti that determines its meaning as defined above.

In 1986 the Anglican Church here concluded that the Treaty vision of bi-cultural development and the principle of partnership were consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; together they comprised a form of mutual inter-dependence established in good faith. The Report recommended that the Church rearrange its own Constitution as a way of honouring the Treaty again, and as a way of witnessing to the nation about a founding document that the church had translated, preached and enabled..

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