

METHODISM
AND
THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

Extracts focusing on the Methodist Church's involvement in the signing of the Treaty and the subsequent reflections and resolutions of the Methodist Conference concerning the Treaty.

CONTENTS

- * Introducing the material.

- * Extracts:
 - + Why the Wesleyan Missionaries supported the Treaty.

 - + The influence of the Wesleyan Missionaries on the Maori Chiefs in terms of signing the Treaty.

 - + Examples of the ineffectiveness of the Treaty to protect the basic interests of the Maori People.

 - + Methodist Conference Resolutions regarding the Treaty.

- * Sources.

INTRODUCING THE MATERIAL

The Treaty of Waitangi has become a confused symbol of the nature of the relationships between the Maori and White Peoples of New Zealand.

Some see the Treaty as a benign symbol, conjuring up positive images of the partnership between the two races.

Others see the Treaty as something malignant, a fraud, a lie, inferring a harmony and equality between the two races that doesn't exist in fact.

The National Council of Churches, through its Church and Society Commission, has expressed its dissatisfaction with the ongoing celebrations of the Treaty and proposed to all Member Churches that any Church involvement in the Treaty Celebrations should include a -

"full recognition of the Spirit of Waitangi, its achievements and the betrayal of that Spirit in much of our New Zealand History, especially in regard to the dealings with Maori Land issues."

As a Member of the NCC, the Methodist Church is, therefore, involved in questioning the very basis of the Treaty and its effectiveness in protecting and preserving the rights of the Maori People.

There is, however, another reason why the Methodist Church should be critically examining the Treaty and the annual Celebrations that fuel the mystique of partnership and equality.

Through the presence of the initial Wesleyan Missionaries, the Methodist Church was involved in promoting the Treaty as a means of protecting the interests of the Maori People.

The significant role played by several Wesleyan Missionaries raises important questions that Methodists today must not avoid -

- * *WHY were the Wesleyan Missionaries involved in encouraging the Maori Chiefs to sign the Treaty?*
- * *WITH WHOM were the Missionaries primarily identifying with - the oppressed, or the oppressor? The powerless or the powerful?*
- * *WHAT was the effect of their involvement in the Treaty events?*
- * *WHAT MORAL LEGACY has contemporary Methodism inherited from its Wesleyan Missionary Ancestors in terms of the Treaty and its promises?*

The following extracts convince me that Methodism today must not adopt a neutral or a defensive stance concerning the Treaty. Rather the material reminds us, as a denomination, of our beginnings in New Zealand - rooted in a Biblical expression of Justice for the Native Maori People.

Barry Jones
SUPERINTENDENT
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

19 January, 1983

* WHY THE WESLEYAN MISSIONARIES SUPPORTED THE TREATY

"The next major development in the country was the arrival of Captain Hobson to discuss the possibility of a Treaty with the Maori Chiefs for the ceding of the sovereignty of the country to Queen Victoria. This was a matter on which the Missionaries held widely differing views and feelings. They wished for the establishment of ordered Government to control the disorderly elements which were drifting into the country, but they feared any large-scale European immigration as a danger to the moral and social life of the Maori.

It was not an easy decision to make, but in balance, they came down on the side of the proposed Treaty, and used their influence to persuade the chiefs under their guidance to go to the Waitangi gathering and express their support."

(1)

* THE INFLUENCE OF THE WESLEYAN MISSIONARIES ON THE MAORI CHIEFS IN TERMS OF SIGNING THE TREATY

"Samuel Ironside and John Warren travelled with the Hokianga Chiefs. Hobbs held a long discussion with Tamati Waka Nene, their leader, before they left, but Hobbs remained at Hokianga. Ironside and Warren were with Nene when the discussions reached their climax. When it looked as though the decision would go against the Treaty, and Nene expressed his concern to the Wesleyan Missions at this turn of events, they encouraged him to rise and make the speech which swung the gathering in favour of the signing. Hobson later repeatedly expressed the debt he owed to such support.

As soon as the signatures of those at the Bay of Islands had been obtained, another large gathering was held on February 12 at Mangungu Mission Station where Hobbs acted as Interpreter, and the result was the obtaining of another large group of signatures. In all this, the Missionaries pledged their word to the Maoris that the Queen and the British authorities would honour their word to safeguard the Maori interest in their land.

Many of the Chiefs stated that in spite of much uneasiness of mind, the assurances of the Missionaries were the deciding factor in their decision to sign. Tamati Waka Nene and other Chiefs later travelled through many parts of the country with the official party gathering signatures, and whenever they arrived at a Wesleyan Mission Station, the Missionaries and the Chiefs under their guidance were to the fore in expressing their support."

(2)

* EXAMPLES OF THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE TREATY TO PROTECT THE BASIC INTERESTS OF THE MAORI PEOPLE

"Word reached New Zealand in the middle of 1847 that Earl Grey in England had forwarded instructions to the Colonial Governor and Government, to take over all surplus unoccupied Maori land and to offer it for sale to the prospective settlers, so as to provide funds for development and Government expenses.

Immediately the Missionaries, especially Buddle and Whiteley, sprang to the support of the Maori people, and there began a long correspondence with the British Wesleyan Missionary Society seeking their help in bringing the true facts to the notice of the Imperial authorities. Whiteley and Chief Justice Martin in New Zealand conducted a very significant correspondence, and as a result the Wesleyan Mission

Authorities presented a historic letter of protest. They pointed out that the integrity of the Missionaries was at stake as they had urged the Maoris to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, with their personal assurances of the trustworthiness of the promises of the representatives of the Queen. A further point made most strongly by a long-established code of procedures, there was no part of a country that did not belong to one or other tribe, and the fact that forest land was not cultivated did not mean that it was not vital to the economy of the people as a source of their traditional food supplies. Moreover, their system of cropping the land, and the moving to new areas to rest the worked out soil, meant that large areas were left to lie fallow to recover. There was no such thing as surplus or unoccupied waste land.

This correspondence drew a defensive reassuring reply to the Mission Authorities in London from Earl Grey. Without checking with the Missionaries in New Zealand, the Mission Secretaries in London replied expressing their satisfaction with the reply. Whiteley in particular was very uneasy when he read the text of the answer of Earl Grey, and with Chief Justice Martin strongly supporting his contentions in a confidential letter, he maintained a long-sustained effort to have the matter clarified.

All his brethren did not share his uneasiness, and there was some restiveness among some of them against his dogged persistence. Later events were to give only too tragic proof of the real grounds of his fears, and it was a sad irony that his own life was to be forfeited a few years later.

In addition, the Anglican authorities in New Zealand, especially Selwyn, found that when they submitted protests against the Imperial instructions, they were put off by the British Government authorities with the statement that the Wesleyans were completely satisfied with the attitude of the British Government."

(3)

"The Treaty of Waitangi was again to the forefront among the Missionaries when the reply of Earl Grey to the Wesleyan Missionary Society reached New Zealand. Whiteley was at once up in arms, as his fears had been justified. It was apparent to him that the intention of the Authorities was to take over as Crown Land for sale to the settlers, all the seemingly unoccupied Maori land.

Reading this as a betrayal of the Treaty, and already the cause of much uneasiness among the Maoris, Whiteley led in the correspondence back to England. He was not averse to the proper purchase of any land that the Maories were willing to dispose of, but he opposed vehemently any suggestion of confiscation. His word was -

'All the land needed for the thousands of colonists might be obtained peaceably for the comparatively reasonable amount - and that such steps, fair purchase and early colonisation would be for the good of Britain and for the Maori race'.

Whiteley exchanged several long and significant letters with Chief Justice Martin who was in a difficult position owing to his official status, and who requested that some of his communications with Whiteley should be confidential. In one of his earlier letters at the time that the Secretaries sent their first submissions to Earl Grey, Martin stated to Whiteley -

'The memorial of your Committee is an admirable production in the highest degree creditable to its authors. I confess I was surprised to find the case of New Zealand so thoroughly understood at home.'

He also expressed his concern at the interpretations being placed on the Treaty in public controversy."

(4)

* METHODIST CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS REGARDING THE TREATY - 1940

* "The Conference congratulates the Government upon the measure of success achieved in the Waitangi Centennial Celebrations, but regrets the circumstances which prevented the Waikato, King Country and Taranaki Tribes from being officially represented, and suggest that this is a suitable subject for a full enquiry. The Conference notes with satisfaction the admission made by members of the Crown that the Treaty is still binding upon the conscience of the Crown and consequently upon our Parliament and Courts. As however this fact was not explicitly and clearly stated and there is much unrest amongst our Maori people on that account, the Conference endorses their request that a suitable summary of the principles and provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi be placed upon the Statute Book.

* The Conference respectfully claims the right to express itself on this question as it is an indisputable historical fact that our Missionaries, in association with those of the Church Missionary Society, advised the acceptance and signing of the Treaty and assured the Maori Chiefs that the Treaty would stand for all time and would be honourably observed. The Conference cannot forget that it was the great Methodist Chief, Tamati Te Waka Nene, who sprang from his place by the side of Rev Samuel Ironside with whom he had been conferring and at his instigation made the historic speech that swayed the assembly of Chiefs and decided the issue.

These facts not only give this Conference the right to speak on the question, but also place upon it a responsibility that cannot be lightly regarded.

* That the President of Conference, the Chairman of the Wellington District, General Superintendent of Home Missions, and the Senior Maori Superintendent present the matter to the Government."

(5)

"Following the Conference of 1940, a strong petition was presented to the Government to have a summary of the main provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi on the Statute Book.

Strength was added this year to this request, by the finding of the New Zealand Court of Appeal, endorsed by the Privy Council in London, on a recent case referred to it in which this statement appeared inter alia:

"That a treaty became enforceable as part of the 'municipal' law of a country - i.e. the domestic law governing the rights of persons under that country's jurisdiction - only if and when it was made so. In the case of the Treaty of Waitangi, that had not been done, although the treaty in some ways had received legislative sanction."

As no official reply had been received from the Government with respect to this petition, and in view of this strong endorsement of the request of the Conference, a further letter was sent during the year embodying the above finding and urging that further action be taken along the lines of our petition.

We are repeatedly assured by the Government that the Treaty is binding on the conscience of the Crown, but Courts of Law as repeatedly state that it has no standing in a court of law and is only a gentlemen's agreement. We fail to see why there should be objection to the proper recognition of the Treaty as authoritative by having it in some degree entered on the Statute Book. The matter will remain a perennial source of concern to the Maori people until it is properly clarified."

(6)

NOTE: A commentary on the 1940 Resolution and the deputation to the Government.

The Treaty of Waitangi was still a source of concern among Maori people everywhere. After repeated representations from Maori leaders in the Church, the Conference in 1940, when considering the report of the Maori Mission for the previous year, passed a resolution calling on the Government of the day to place a suitable summary of the principles and provisions of the Treaty on the Statute Book. An official deputation of Church Leaders and Maori Elders waited on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Maori Affairs to submit this resolution. However, in Polynesian thought, to meet an appeal based on some question of Mana or prestige by referring to matters of food or material advantage, is one of the worst forms of rebuff.

Possibly not understanding this, the Minister of Maori Affairs met this request - placed with dignity and keen anticipation by the Maori Leaders - with a long dissertation on what had been granted to the Maori people in Social Security benefits, and certain real steps that had been taken by the Government to compensate the Maoris for earlier injustices in land matters in different tribal areas. These were offered as justification for not taking any further steps over the difficult question of the Treaty.

Apparently, on entering on the responsibilities of Government, the new leaders had found that the question of giving statutory recognition to the Treaty was more difficult than they had realised. As one of those who travelled to Wellington with the Deputation, this writer will not readily forget the wounded spirit of the Maori Elders as they retired, feeling that their submissions on a matter of great principle had been brushed off by references to food and cash. They went home feeling humiliated."

(7)

SOURCES:

1. TE HAHI WETERIANA: George Launson, Wesley Historical Society. p.59.
2. Ibid p.59-60.
3. Ibid p.126-127.
4. Ibid p.135.
5. MINUTES OF CONFERENCE, Methodist Church of NZ 1940, p.150-151.
6. MINUTES OF CONFERENCE, Methodist Church of NZ 1942, p.138-139.
7. George Launson, Ibid, p.234-235.



TOWARDS A BICULTURAL CHURCH

At its Conference in November 1983, the Methodist Church of New Zealand committed itself to working towards becoming a bi-cultural church, as the first step on the journey to full multi-culturalism.

That's a big commitment.

And the concept of a bi-cultural - or multi-cultural - church is a big one, and too easily open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. We've all got a lot of learning to do about what it means for us and for our church life. This booklet aims to feed some background, some information, and some possibilities into our discussion and our learning.

A kitset will also be available to help congregations work through the material and the issue of bi-culturalism in more detail.

CONFERENCE 1983 - RESOLUTIONS

1. *In response to what the Gospel says about the sharing of power, Conference declares its intention to work toward the formation of a bi-cultural Methodist Church in Aotearoa as the essential first step on the journey toward multi-culturalism.*
2. *That the Development Division facilitate the holding of Power-Sharing Seminars in 1984 involving key Connexional, District and Local Leaders.*
- 3.a) *The whole report be referred to all Leaders' Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, Parish Councils, Tongan, Fijian and Samoan Parishes or Fellowships and responses be forwarded to the General Secretary for report to Church Council in October, 1984.*
- b) *That the Development Division and Synods prepare, and have available, a list of people able to help local churches to work their way through and come to understand the report by such means as camps, seminars, retreats and marae visits.*

1983 MINUTES p.665.

WHERE DID THE DECISION COME FROM



One of the groups looking at evangelism during the 1982 Conference at Napier focused on 'Evangelism and Racism'. They saw the effect of racism as depriving people a place of power in New Zealand society because of their race and culture. So the gospel could only be 'good news' for powerless people if it generated a sharing of power in which everyone could benefit.

The Napier Conference agreed to follow-up with a Power-Sharing Seminar in 1983. That was held at Whakatuora, the Mangere Methodist Maori Centre, in June 1983. Eight Pakeha church members and eight from the Maori Division met with four facilitators for five days.

Participants in the Seminar faced the effects of Methodist history in New Zealand, grappled with the implications of who has power and how it is exercised, and glimpsed a vision for the church. They brought a report and recommendations from the Seminar to Church Council and to Conference.

Those recommendations and the report were widely debated. Conference took time in smaller groups to raise questions. Careful listening resulted in re-shaped resolutions being put before Conference, and being passed.

CONFERENCE 1982 - RESOLUTIONS

That, in response to the Gospel and evangelistic imperative to liberate both the 'powerful' and the 'powerless' in Church and Society, Conference

- a) approve the establishing and appropriate funding of a national Methodist Church seminar on 'power' sharing; the proposed seminar to involve approximately 25 Methodists, half of whom to be nominations of the Maori Division and the balance to comprise participants drawn from the leadership of other Divisions and sections of the Church: and that*
- b) the Rev'ds Ruawai Rakena, Peter Glensor, Brian and Mrs Rua Turner be an initial Planning Committee, with power to co-opt.*

1982 MINUTES p.652 No 7.