

The Anthem

In 1897, New Zealand's Prime Minister Richard Seddon presented Queen Victoria with the words and music to a composition called *God Defend New Zealand*. The song, based on the words of a poem by Dunedin poet Thomas Bracken soon became a popular companion to New Zealand's adopted anthem, *God Save the Queen*. Promoted by cabinet as the country's national song, *God Defend New Zealand* wasn't granted national anthem status until 1977, when, with Queen Elizabeth II consent, it officially became our second anthem.

Bracken's remarkable prose, 5 verses in total, are as poignant now as they were when first penned. For different reasons perhaps, when Bracken composed the poem, the church was walking a thin line of almost civil religion – in this sense, *God Defend New Zealand* was almost seen as a kind of wish-list for a divine benefactor (“May Thy blessings never cease, give us plenty, give us peace”) rather than a prayer to be lived, or a mandate by which a country could be steered.

The early acceptance of the anthem and subsequent translation by Maori, lended another facet to the anthem, and draws a spotlight to Bracken's steadfast tones of racial harmony in a country where harmony had not always been. The Irish-born poet was well-known for his championing of Maori causes. In his book “[Hear Our Voices, We Entreat](#)”, Max Cryer points out Bracken's line asking for protection from “shafts of strife and war” was more likely to be directed at civil disunity between Maori and Pakeha than any kind of foreign invasion.

Historically, there has been argument about what Bracken meant by his reference to guarding “Pacific's triple star” – a popular belief was that the triple star represented our three main islands (North, South and Stewart islands), but there is an alternate theory gaining swift momentum, bolstered by the discovery of an obscure Bracken poem found in his book “Musings in Maoriland”:

JUBILEE DAY
Unfurl the stainless flag and let it wave
Beside the war-torn standard of the brave,
Together let them gaily float and toss
The British Banner and the Starry Cross.
Let them kiss the cheerful breeze
That fans the islands of the sunny seas
These silken symbols of the New and Old
Have fame and honour traced on every fold.

Many can't help but find some obvious parallels from 'Jubilee Day'. Author Colin Andrews theorizes that the 'stainless flag' and 'British banner' refer to the Union Jack, while the 'war-torn standard' and 'starry cross' pay homage to the Maori flag, containing the [triple-star symbol](#) with a cross.

All interpretations aside, in the context of our faith and intercession, the anthem stands as a bold declaration of intent, a sincere prayer for this country to forever remain God's own. It's glaringly obvious that from the moment of its discovery, Aotearoa has been blessed and watched over – the blessed ends of the earth. May it forever stand as the steadfast focal point, as we pray for this nation:

- That peace, not war would be our boast
- That we would always preach truth and love
- That we would ever be reminded of God's great and glorious plan for Aotearoa.

Thank you Lord Jesus!

Cindy
Reakere

God Defend New Zealand

God of nations! at Thy feet
In the bonds of love we meet,
Hear our voices, we entreat,
God defend our Free Land.
Guard Pacific's triple star,
From the shafts of strife and war,
Make her praises heard afar,
God defend New Zealand

E Ihowā Atua,
O ngā iwi mātou rā
Āta whakarangona;
Me aroha noa
Kia hua ko te pai;
Kia tau tō atawhai;
Manaakitia mai
Aotearoa

Men of ev'ry creed and race
Gather here before Thy face
Asking Thee to bless this place
God defend our free land
From dissension, envy, hate
And corruption guard our State
Make our country good and great
God defend New Zealand

Ōna mano tāngata
Kiri whero, kiri mā,
Iwi Māori, Pākehā,
Rūpeke katoa,
Nei ka tonono ko ngā hē
Māu e whakaahu kē,
Kia ora māriri
Aotearoa

Peace, not war, shall be our boast
But should our foes assail our coast
Make us then a mighty host
God defend our free land
Lord of battles, in Thy might
Put our enemies to flight
Let our cause be just and right
God defend New Zealand

Tōna mana kia tū!
Tōna kaha kia ū;
Tōna rongongo hei pakū
Ki te ao katoa
Aua rawa ngā whawhai
Ngā tutū e tata mai;
Kia tupu nui ai
Aotearoa

Let our love for Thee increase
May Thy blessings never cease
Give us plenty, give us peace
God defend our free land
From dishonour and from shame
Guard our country's spotless name
Crown her with immortal fame
God defend New Zealand

Waiho tona takiwā
Ko te ao mārāma;
Kia whiti tōna rā
Taiāwhio noa.
Ko te hae me te ngangau
Meinga kia kore kau;
Waiho i te rongongo mau
Aotearoa

May our mountains ever be
Freedom's ramparts on the sea
Make us faithful unto Thee
God defend our free land
Guide her in the nations' van
Preaching love and truth to man
Working out Thy Glorious plan
God defend New Zealand

Tōna pai me toitū
Tika rawa, pono pū;
Tōna noho, tāna tū;
Iwi nō Ihowā.
Kaua mōna whakamā;
Kia hau te ingoa;
Kia tū hei tauira;
Aotearoa