

# A PILGRIM'S GUIDE

**ROTORUA**

BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL LAST

# BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL LAST: THOMAS CHAPMAN WITH ANNE & MARY JANE, IHĀIA TE AHU AND RANGIRAUAKA, SEYMOUR MILLS SPENCER & ELLEN STANLEY SPENCER

Thomas was born on June 20 1792 in Oxfordshire England. He married Anne Maria Maynard in 1822, and they both eventually arrived in Paihia as a missionary in 1830. Thomas was experienced in farming, medicine and seamanship. He is described as literate, good humoured and resolute, and later went on to found three Church Missionary Society mission stations at Rotorua and one at Maketū. When Thomas was at Kerikeri he was the mission store keeper while Anne was in charge of the girls' school there.

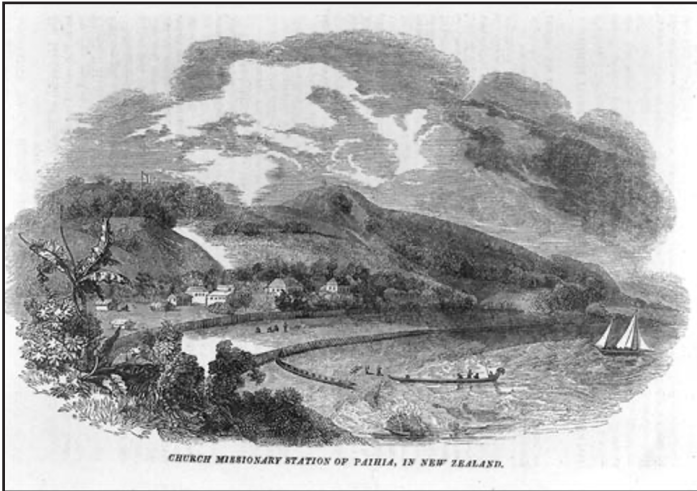
In 1833 they returned to Paihia, where most of the then Pākehā missionary activity was based, and then moved to begin work in Rotorua at Te Koutu in the Te Arawa tribal area. One of the most fruitful associations of Thomas' ministry began in 1835, when he and Anne were



joined by Ihāia Te Ahu, of the Te Uri Taniwha hapu of Ngāpuhi in the Okaihau area. He had also lived and worked with them in Kerikeri and Paihia. Ihāia was to work in the Rotorua area for 50 years after this in what became one of the most respected missions of the century. He married Rangirauaka of Ngāti Riripō and was baptised by Archdeacon Alfred Nesbitt Brown in 1841. By 1845 he became Chapman's leading teacher and according to Thomas was *"fully acknowledged around by all"*. As a Ngāpuhi person from the north he was able to move

around freely during the tribal conflicts in the Rotorua area.

After some time out in Tauranga owing to tribal conflicts, Thomas, Anne, Ihāia and Rangirauaka began work again amongst Te Arawa communities on Mokoia island in the middle of Lake Rotorua.



In mid 1840 they moved to Te Ngae amongst the Ngāti Rangiteaorere people on the eastern shore. In 1843 they were joined by Seymour Mills Spencer and Ellen Spencer of the Church Missionary Society, who were originally from Connecticut.

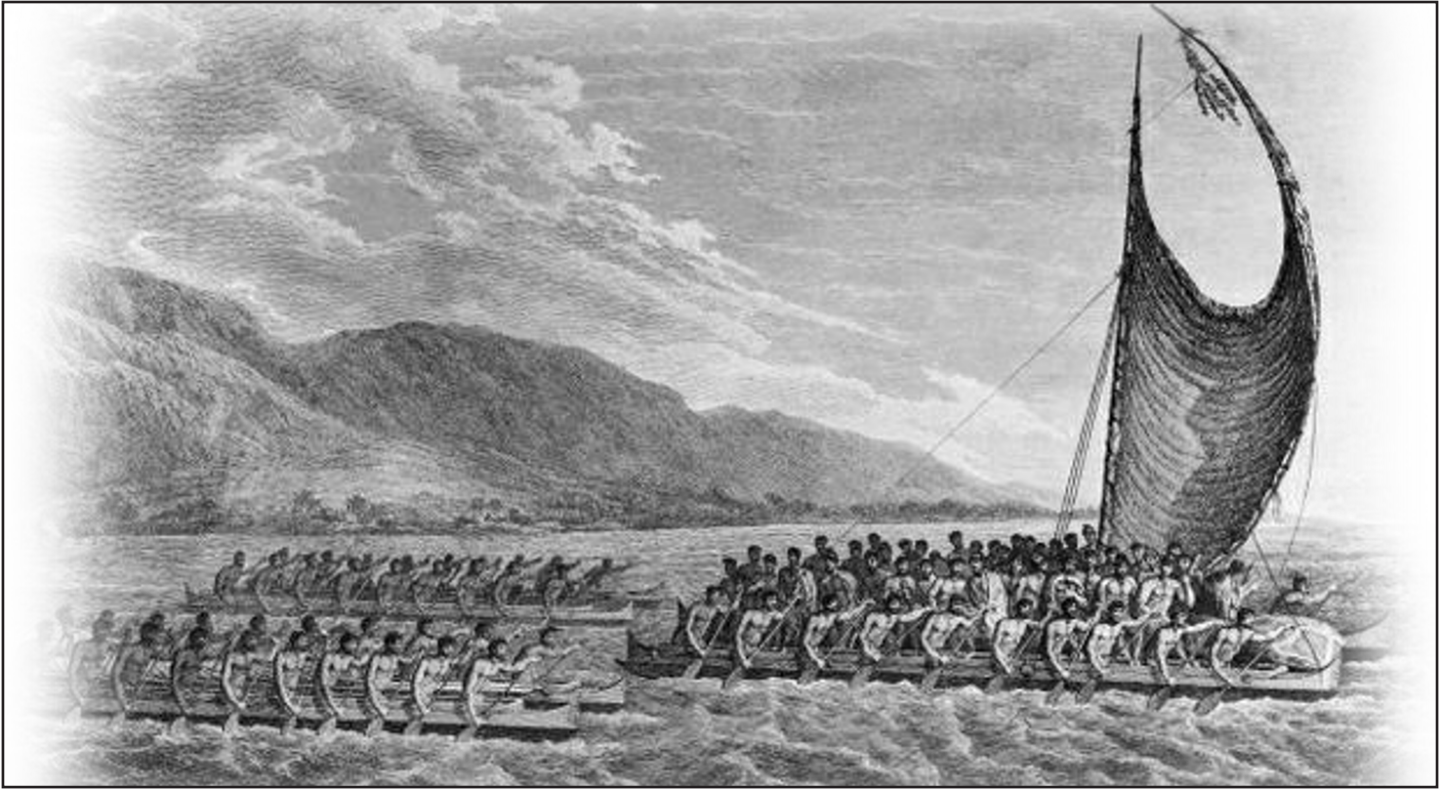


The Spencers worked at Maketū and then went on to establish the first mission at Lake Tarawera, called Te Wairoa. After an interlude due to impropriety Seymour re-joined the mission and the couple worked from 1849 until about 1855 at Opotiki.



In 1851 Thomas and Anne made a permanent mission home in Maketū near the landing site of the Te Arawa canoe there many centuries before.





**D**uring this period Anne continued to teach and to dispense medicine and food to all who applied for help. One evening in 1839 she prepared 600 doses for the traveller J.C. Bidwill to distribute in Taupo. The couple adopted a Māori boy called Alexander Gray, who was the famous guide Sophie's brother.

Anne died at Maketū in 1855, farewelled by Māori women as pallbearers, her closest companions. Philip Andrews notes:

Thomas later married Mary Jane Moxon. The couple eventually moved to Saint Stephen's School for Māori girls in Parnell where Thomas taught. He also helped establish Saint Barnabas Māori church, having been ordained priest in 1852.

Sometime after 1855 the Spensers returned to lake Tarawera and remained there until 1870. Seymour and Ellen are recognised as helping developed the Rotomahana and Te Arika districts with local Te Arawa Māori communities, as well as encouraging trade in the Rotorua and Lake Tarawera area.

*'Anne expected no worldly honours. Her attitude of unselfish concern for those who suffered probably gave her greater credibility to the missionary cause than any dogma could have, as the inscription on her tombstone, 'Ko Mata' (Mother), suggests.'*



Ellen died at Maketu in 1882 and buried on the shore of Lake Tarawera at Kariri. Spencer died in 1898 at Rongotea and was buried at Maketū. Seymour and Ellen's son Frederick later disinterred his father remains and placed them next to Ellen's at Kariri in a Spencer family mausoleum.



Mary Jane Chapman died in 1873 and Thomas died in 1876, in a hot pool on Mokoia island while visiting his old mission station there and was taken to Maketū for burial.

Philip Andrews says of Thomas in summary:

***'Chapmans's concern for Māori extended to their physical welfare. He supported his wife's medical work and encouraged vaccination. He introduced sheep, horses and fruit trees to the Rotorua district.'***

Ihāia Te Ahu had begun preparing for ordination in 1857, studying with Archdeacon A.N. Brown in Tauranga and then at Saint Stephen's School Auckland. At Saint Stephen's he came first in his class. He had poor health for a time which meant he had to return to Maketū, but eventually took over when Thomas went to Auckland. In 1861 Ihāia was ordained deacon by Bishop William Williams and opened Saint Thomas' church at Maketū in 1869.

In 1882 Ihāia became the first vicar of the Ohinemutu pastorate in Rotorua.



This presented a huge challenge owing to the effect of the New Zealand wars, the Hauhau movement and the Te Kooti campaign. This meant Ihāia had to effectively re-plant what Thomas and Anne had planted in 1835. It is said that the people of Te Arawa had seen something of ‘the hollowness of the

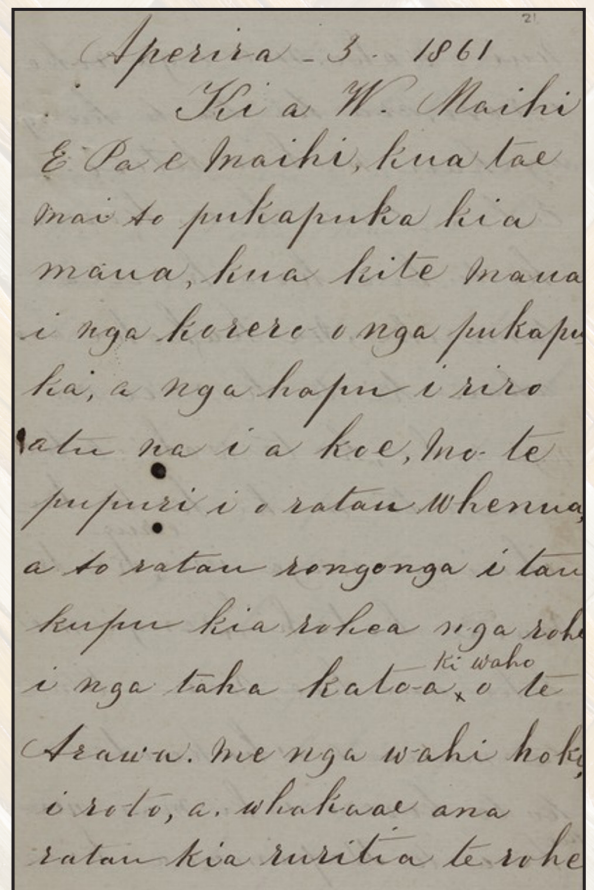
Christianity of civilized men’. This story of replanting, re grafting and regeneration was extraordinary, later giving him the affirmation “The hero of the missionary effort” in Rotorua. Saint Faith’s church was opened in 1885 by Bishop E.C. Stuart of Waiapu. See below Māori chant tribute to Ihāia.

***‘Kāore te aroha ki a te korōria tapu  
E waewae ake ana i te ara kūiti!  
Nau mai, e tama, ka haere taua i  
Ki a Ihāia kia monitatia i,  
Kia huihui tātou ko he nohoanga nui ei,  
Kia hopukia iho te kupu a te Atua i,  
Kia awahi taua ki a Ihu Karaiti ē,  
Kia murua te hara i taku tinana nei!***

*How much I love the holy glory  
That clears the narrow path!  
Come my son and we will go  
To be ministered to by Ihāia!*

*We will meet together and long remain,  
We will grasp the world of the Lord  
And embrace Jesus Christ.  
And my sins will be forgiven!”*

See a sample of his handwriting to the right:



Ihāia left Rotorua in 1889, serving for short time at Saint Stephens College and then on to Kaikohe where he retired in 1892. He is buried near Kaikohe. Because of the remarkable faithfulness and fruitfulness of his mission over so many years in the area, he was given an annual commemoration in the Anglican lectionary cycle of prayer for Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia for May 13. Every year he is now remembered with prayerful thanksgiving. The commentary text for him ends:

***“This date marks the beginning of a series of commemorations of Māori Christians from May 13 to May 18. These Māori were chosen from many Māori Christians of their time as representative of the outstanding Māori witness that caused the Gospel to be sown and take root in many parts of the whole country.”***

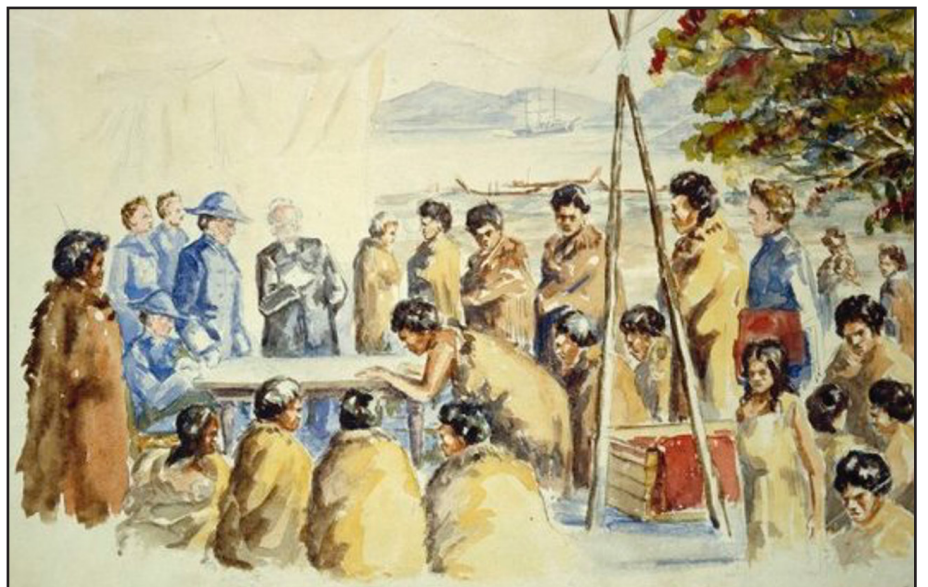
Because of the close relationship that Thomas had with Ihāia, Rangirauaka and many other Māori families, and because he became more and more immersed in Māori communities, he had begun to change his views about the widely held colonial position of the time. Western European interests and culture were thought to be paramount while the missions progressed. This view is sometimes referred to as ‘the great chain of being’: western culture should offer the ideal way forward for everyone and should ultimately predominate. This probably also

involved a kind of benign condescension. However, Thomas gradually reassessed his opinions in the face of increasing Māori land loss and due to his deeper commitment to Māori associates like Ihāia, Rangorauaka, and others. In the end he wrote:

***“My very fingers itch when I see such manifest deadness to the best interests of the greater owners of the soil”***

Thomas kept no land for himself when he purchased land for the mission. His time in Aotearoa covers the years from 1830 to 1876, before during and after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. That year he was asked to seek signatures to Te Tiriti o Waitangi the Treaty of Waitangi, in the Rotorua and Taupo districts.

For Thomas as for a number of the early missionaries, Te Tiriti was akin to a covenant which needed to be offered and signed in good faith, quite literally. It was the mission educated chiefs who could see the covenantal potential. As Claudia Orange has written:



*“Another significant element in persuading chiefs was the tradition of a personalised, caring Crown, an image long cultivated by the British among northern Maori. Williams, for example, played on this idea by presenting the Treaty as the Queen’s act of love towards the Maori people.*

*He perceived, too, that for Maori converted to or associated with Christianity there was an additional spiritual dimension – under one Sovereign, Maori and British could be linked as one people with the same law, spiritual and temporal. Hobson prompted perhaps by Williams, also promoted this concept, with his greeting ‘He iwi tahi tatou’ .We are now one people.*

*Chiefs had indicated already that they were disposed to think of the Treaty in spiritual terms; Heke and Patuone had both likened the agreement to the new covenant.*

*The role of the English missionaries in determining Maori understanding, therefore, was crucial through the way explanations were given. It determined that Ngāpuhi, in particular, would understand the Treaty as a special kind of covenant with the Queen, a bond with all the spiritual connotations of the Biblical covenants; there would be many tribes, including the British, but all would be equal under God.”*

Thomas’s greater awareness of the justice issues around colonisation derive in part from the collapse of the good faith in which Te Tiriti was signed. This was the view of The Revd. Henry Williams CMS as well, who had translated and commended the Treaty, particularly with mission educated chiefs. The Revd. William Colenso CMS in Heretaunga also expressed grave concerns about land alienation through colonisation post treaty as did some others. Massive, illegal land loss and dispossession was not on the mission agenda at the signing for these people.

However, dispossession soon became the agenda of the New Zealand Land Company based in London, beginning the widespread and often unjust alienation of Māori land which led directly to the New Zealand Land Wars of the 1860s.

There is a great need for resilience, endurance, and patience as restorative justice is struggled for, as we renew our respect for the validity and efficacy of the Treaty today. The good faith of 1840 was like a seed that was first sown, but then uncultivated, neglected and trampled. Those who seek the full recovery and fruitfulness of the Treaty now, despite overwhelming odds, can take encouragement from one rather homespun and extraordinary aspect of the Chapman story about what can happen when seeds, trees and fruit bearing branches are cultivated, re-grafted, transplanted and painstakingly cared for in different places over time, no matter what the circumstances. It was also these same skills and qualities that had seen Ihāia Te Ahu reap such harvests in the Rotorua mission field.



The below is a true story that can say something to any one whatever their circumstances as they face overwhelming odds. Its' also a parable for Christian witness and Christian mission in the long run. Thomas, in a remarkable record of pear tree cultivation and transplantation through these years, offers us a lesson in patience and hope. In his journal of 1847 he writes:

*"This year has closed, and still finds us working, amid many discouragements and some well-grounded cause for hope, in our Masters vineyard. Looking at the promises, I trust that the New Zealand Missionary Society may labour on, and what thirty years have not fully accomplished, fifty may.*

*Twelve years ago, I planted three young pear trees, sent by the late Samuel Marsden, from Sydney, in my garden at Kerikeri. On their passage they had been carelessly thrown into the boat astern of the vessel, and exposed, during a winter voyage, to everything likely to destroy them.*



*So utterly miserable was their condition on reaching Kerikeri that my fellow labourer refused to plant them, considering them quite dead. I however perceived them, steeped them for two days and nights in the Kerikeri river, and then planted them in a moist place by its side. They grew-they are still growing!*

*The year after I had planted them, I exchanged houses with my fellow-labourer there, and on removing, removed my trees also. The next year I was ordered to Paihia, and my pear trees accompanied me thither. I remained there twelve months at the expiration of which period I commenced Missionary labours at Rotorua, and, embarking on board the "Colombine" again my trees became my travelling companions.*

*On arriving at the station, I planted them in a beautiful aspect and soon their shoots and leaves appeared. Here they rested another year, when the southern war drove us from our home, our premises, and the whole settlement, being burnt to the ground.*

*Some of my trees were destroyed, some stolen, but my pear trees escaped; and for safety, I removed them, with ourselves, to the island in the middle of the lake. There they permitted to rest quietly here for another year at the close of which, a new site having been purchased for our station, they were again transplanted.*

*This year one of them has a few pears on it- the first. The second tree bore a few blossoms, which soon perished, and the third has shown me nothing but leaves. Yet the fruit upon the first give me hope concerning the future bloom of the second, and the bloom of the second gives me hope concerning the leaves of the third. The first bloomed for two successive years without fruit. The third year's bloom produced fruit.*



*See the vicissitudes of these trees. Were they once as dead? Have they five times been transplanted? Did they escape the ravages of war? And, after a lapse of twelve years, has only one of them borne fruit? The same wisdom which gave them such preserving qualities, and the human instrument to tend and watch over them, may yet produce the same result in each; the reward of patient perseverance and hope. Yes, my pear trees have read a me a great lesson...*

*...Not infrequently, when my mind has been exercised... to its utmost stretch, I have silently retired to my orchard, and communed with my inoffensive trees; traced them through all their dates and stages, rejoiced in their growth, however slow, and returned to my difficulties, fully impressed with the conviction, that my paramount duty was to still to labour in faith and patience in the vineyard in which it has pleased the Master to place me."*

There are traditionally four cardinal virtues in Christian witness: prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. In the parable of Thomas and his pear trees we see something of them all as they bore fruit against all the odds in different places, as they did in Rotorua with Ihāia. As the catholic author J.R.R Tolkien wrote in a novel, *“despair is only for those who see the end beyond all doubts.”*

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. These fruits are a gift from the goodness of God, whose life-giving grace courses up through us in good soil. In all our hardships and storms this gift goes on giving.

Today the mission farm at Te Ngae still features a pear tree and some birches by the main road. The mission farm was handed back to Ngāti Rangiteaorere in 1993. It is now a Pinus Radiata nursery for the central plateau.

The parable of the Thomas Chapman pear trees has many applications, within our own life story, within our faith, and within the justice and peace of Christian mission. The purposes of God in the world grow through the barriers of sin and death, across time and disaster, but the seeds of this kingdom can be grafted, transplanted and re cultivated. This is the hope of those who strive for Treaty based justice in Aotearoa today. So it can be for each us whatever trials we may have to endure, even if they come again and again, even when despair knocks on the door with its withered hand.

From the Thomas Chapman and Ihāia Te Ahu story we are reminded that there is something deep within us called life, and it has a way of re-germinating itself and transplanting itself with the right care and attention. Even in death there is a way through for faith. A seed may die, but then something opens up in the soil because of this. In Māori thinking when a mighty totara tree falls in the forest its life is not over; it begins to nourish the very ground where it falls that other young totara may begin to grow in the rich humus, and stand tall there one day.

We sometimes think the seeds we plant in our lifetimes have died, or the fruit has perished, or that the orchard itself is doomed. But then a new shoot, bud, or young sapling sometimes surprises us while we lament. This can take time, so much time, and we say with King David in Psalm 13 verse 1, *“How long O Lord, how long?”*. When we get to this point we are challenged by the parable of the pear trees to wait, to endure and to hope.

Jesus of Nazareth also uses powerful examples from agriculture and horticulture. The parable of the mustard seed comes to mind in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew chapter 13 verse 31 to 32:



*“He rite te rangatiratanga o te rangi ki te pua nanī, i kawea e te tangata, i ruia ki tāna māra. He iti rawa ia i ngā purapura katoa, ā, ka tupu, ko ia te nui rawa o ngā otaota, ā, whakarākau ana, nō ka rere mai ngā manu o te rangi, ka noho ki ōna manga.*

*The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field, which is indeed is smaller than all seeds. But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches.”*



Similar sayings are recorded in the Gospels according to Saint Mark chapter 4 verses 30 to 32 and Saint Luke chapter 13 verses 18 to 21. Patience and hope are two of the basic ingredients of resilience, so often identified as the virtue most needed today. Perhaps Thomas would say to us now, with Nadia Colburn:

*“Giving up on hope is always wrong. Even in the place of what we can calculate to be certain destruction because it cuts us off from ourselves and our own humanity; privileging the head over the heart, the mind over the body.”*

The parable of the pear trees can be compared with a similar use of imagery from the same period, from Rangiaowhia, where one of the worst tragedies of the Land was occurred in 1864. A descendant of two of the residents of that peaceful agricultural mission village, Thomas Power and Kahutoi who had seen it burned and destroyed, wrote these words:



***“Should we first know of Rangiaowhia and its full story, we will know that the partnership between Maori and British was once very promising. The weaving of the white thread, the black thread and the red thread once created an extremely beautiful picture and in that picture was a treaty showing complete promise...The principles of that once thriving economy of Rangiaowhia can be used as an example to all New Zealand. Both parties of the treaty have a lot to offer each other and in those offerings are considerable synergies to be made with beautiful pictures.***

***We look forward to the day when we can live in harmonious, thriving partnership. All flowers encouraged to blossom as did the lanes of houses and children of Rangiaowhia. All branches of the peach trees that once lined the ridges. Branches connected to a common trunk that is partnership. And should a gust of wind approach, we stay bound, committed to growth and to tomorrow.”***

It is appropriate to end by way of summation of all the above, with the sentence chosen in For all the saints, for the annual Ihāia Te Ahu commemoration by Te Hāhi Mihinare, the Anglican Church, on 13 May, from the Epistle of Saint James chapter 3:18:

***“A, e ruia ana ngā hua o te tika i roto i te rāngimārie mā te hunga hohou rongo.***

***A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.”***





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