

New Zealand's Christian Heritage ?

Some questions stimulated by the document reproduced on the right :

- 1 : Do we have one ?
- 2 : What is it ?
- 3 : What does it do ?
- 4 : Is it "in jeopardy" ?
- 5 : What do we do about it ?

Do we have a "majority Christian population" in any effective sense ? How full are the churches ?

Can we be not neutral without implying that some religions are better than others ? (– and that, therefore, some are worse ? Which ?)

If we can, do we want to ?

What *should* the PM be saying ?

Or, perhaps, New Zealand has a significant Christian history, but has declined to inherit it. What is "heritage" ? What does (should) it do ?

Three examples, all now widely regarded as devoid of any real religious significance ?

If our "Christian heritage" is reduced to "family values, benefits and freedoms", do we want it ?

FROM :

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO0705/S00270.htm>

**New Zealand's Christian Heritage in Jeopardy
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Press Release: Bishop Brian Tamaki

16 March 2007

New Zealand's Christian Heritage in Jeopardy

Asia Pacific Interfaith Forum, Tues 29 May, Waitangi

Bishop Brian Tamaki says the Prime Minister's intention to declare New Zealand a secular nation at an Asia Pacific Inter-Religious Forum at Waitangi should be of major concern to New Zealand's majority Christian population.

The declaration comes in the form of a National Statement on Religious Diversity that says New Zealand has no established or official religion.

"Many of the countries attending the inter-religious forum have majority Muslim or Buddhist populations. I endorse freedom of religious choice. But I am very concerned at the message our Prime Minister is sending abroad when she says New Zealand is religiously neutral," says Tamaki.

Countries being hosted by the Prime Minister at Waitangi's forum include:

- Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation
- Malaysia, of which 60.4% of the population practice Islam
- Brunei, of which 66% of the population practice Islam
- Thailand, 94% Buddhist
- Myanmar, almost 90% Buddhist
- Vietnam, 70% Buddhist
- Cambodia, 90% Buddhist
- Laos, majority Buddhist

"New Zealand has a significant Christian heritage that has played a major role in shaping our national identity. From the bible in our courts, prayer in parliament to our National Anthem, Christian elements are laced throughout our judicial, political and social arrangements. In fact, Christianity affirms the freedoms our Prime Minister is attempting to espouse in terms of religious diversity. However, she should be secure enough to make it very clear to foreign delegates that New Zealand has an established Christian religion," says Tamaki.

To that end, a peaceful rally is being organised to coincide with the Prime Minister's Asia Pacific Inter-religious Forum on Tuesday 29th May at Waitangi to uphold New Zealand's Christian heritage. Event details can be viewed on www.christiannation.org.nz

"This is not about imposing Christianity on society but I believe it is very important that we protect our Christian heritage so future generations can enjoy the family values, benefits and freedoms Christianity affords," Tamaki added.

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