

Booklet

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TUATUA MOU
EARLY ADVENTISM IN THE COOK ISLANDS

By Milton Hook



Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series



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By Milton Hook

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Early Adventism in the Cook Islands

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Milton Hook is the author of "Flames Over Battle Creek", a brief history of the early days at the Review and Herald Publishing Association as seen through the eyes of George Amadon, printer's foreman at the institution. Dr Hook's doctoral dissertation researched the pioneering years of the Avondale School, 1894 to 1900, and he has published some of these findings.

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He would welcome any information which may enhance the content of this series.

Captain James Cook chanced upon the little islands of Aitutaki, Manuae, Takutea, and Atiu in 1773, naming them the Hervey Islands. Mauke, Mitiaro, and Rarotonga were not encountered until later. It was members of the London Missionary Society who introduced Christianity to the group and translated the Bible into the Rarotongan language. Since discovery these far flung dots were renamed the Cook Islands, now including the largest and most southerly, Mangaia, and extending as far north as Pukapuka and Penryn.

Some of the Cook Islands are simply strings of coral a few metres above the ocean waves, with strips of dazzling white sand, groves of coconuts, and patches of atoll ferns. Others are old volcanic cones rising over six hundred metres and ringed with coral reefs. They are inhabited by an attractive and intelligent race of Polynesians with ancestral links between the Samoans, Tahitians, and Maoris. The British first assumed control of the group. Later, in 1901, the islands became part of the Dominion of New Zealand but now are self-governing.

The American John Tay was the first Seventh-day Adventist to visit the Cook Islands. It was by chance rather than design. The British man-of-war, PELICAN, on which he embarked for Pitcairn Island in 1886, travelled via Aitutaki and Rarotonga, so Tay seized the opportunity to sell some Adventist literature in both places.

During the course of the PITCAIRN voyages in the 1890s the Cook Islands were visited on each of the six trips.¹ Rarotonga was the usual port of call but Mangaia and Aitutaki were sometimes included in the itinerary, and on one occasion remote Palmerston Island was called on also. The early visits, 1891 and 1893, introduced more literature and also provided some passing medical treatments by Dr Merritt Kellogg.

The third voyage of the PITCAIRN brought five Adventist missionaries who chose to stay on Rarotonga. They were Americans Dr Joseph Caldwell and his wife, Julia, together with Dudley and Sarah Owen, as well as Maude Young, a Pitcairner who came as a student nurse.

The Owens had sold their farm and canvassed Adventist books for ten years before sailing as self-supporting missionaries to the South Seas. Caldwell had earned two doctorates, one in philosophy and another in medicine. He and his wife, a trained teacher, became Adventists soon after their marriage. Caldwell taught at Healdsburg College prior to their first overseas mission appointment at Claremont Sanitarium, South Africa. After their return home they worked briefly among black Americans and then were re-appointed overseas to the Pacific Islands. His diary entry for Wednesday, September 26, 1894, reads, "Daylight found us off the island of Rarotonga with a fair wind ". They remained for over six years in what proved to be a bitter-sweet experience.

Caldwell first went ashore with the intention of doing some urgent medical work and then travelling on further with the PITCAIRN. But the European families and some leading islanders, who had already made some plans to secure a physician from New Zealand, asked Caldwell to remain as their island doctor. When they learned that his wife was a teacher they doubled their plea and asked her to open an English-language school. The Caldwells accepted these opportunities as a door opened by God and agreed

¹ For more details of this period see the booklet "Dame of the Deep".

to base their work at the main centre, Avarua, on the north side of the island.

Some temporary accommodation was found for the Adventist newcomers. Almost immediately Julia Caldwell began to teach a small group of children, using their front verandah as a school room. Each child paid a fee of twenty cents per month. Her husband treated the sick and in his spare time built a house at Arorangi, using some timber brought with him on the PITCAIRN. He employed islanders to burn coral in order to manufacture lime. They moved in when it was just a shell and two years after arrival the finishing touches were completed.

The Owens family first rented a stone cottage and a separate plot for gardening in a valley behind Avarua. At the same time they noticed the best home on the island, named Natapa, was unoccupied. Governor Moss had built it for himself on a hill away from the main settlement, but never lived in it, one reason being there was no water supply installed. He agreed for the Owen family to live there and become caretakers, paying them handsomely and allowing them to use the property for food cultivation. Sale of any produce for profit was the only restriction the Governor imposed. Owen built a water cistern and enjoyed the benefits of the estate.

The five Adventists worshipped regularly with the London Missionary Society believers in their old stone church at Avarua. These services were conducted in English but many islanders attended too.

The Adventists worshipped on Saturdays calculated according to time east of the International Date Line - a practice technically correct. When the calendar of the western world had been originally introduced to the Cook Islands no allowance was made after crossing the dateline. It meant that Christians in the Cook Islands were observing their Sabbaths on what they thought was Sunday when in reality it was Saturday in that time zone. This odd circumstance allowed Adventists and non-Adventists alike to observe the same day according to their conscience. Initially there

was therefore very little difference apparent between the Adventist missionaries and the other worshippers. This fact, together with the urgent need of a doctor and teachers on the island, meant the Adventists were readily accepted from the start. The situation changed radically within a decade as the distinctives of Adventism came to the forefront.

Sadly, the Adventist mission in the Cook Islands was barely nine months old before one of their number died. Fifty-year-old Sarah Owen suddenly passed away on July 9, 1895. What had begun with such promise at the Governor's farm on the hill was cruelly cut short. For a whole month her funeral was postponed, knowing that her daughter, Mina Braucht, was en-route aboard the PITCAIRN. Pastor Edward Hilliard arrived at the same time. Together with the London Missionary Society minister, Hilliard conducted the burial service on Sabbath, August 10, in the little cemetery alongside the stone church where the missionaries had worshipped with everyone.

Dudley Owen and his two children transferred to Samoa with the Braucht family. Before the PITCAIRN left Rarotonga the island chiefs, or arikis, asked for more school teachers. For this reason five more American missionaries disembarked to unite with Caldwell. They were Pastor Jesse Rice, and his wife Cora, together with George and "Ada" Wellman, as well as Lillian White. Jesse, George, and Lillian all had previous school-teaching experience. (Jesse Rice had naively featured in the Anna Phillips fraud just prior to coming to the South Seas. He had legally adopted the young woman when she claimed to have visions and posed as a successor to Ellen White.)

Apparently there existed some developing suspicion that Adventist missionaries would take over and use the public school system for their own advantage. The arikis were keen for Adventists to teach in the public schools but did not want them using the buildings for any religious purposes. In Council they decided only the London

Missionary Society could use the schoolhouse for religious purposes but Governor Moss vetoed this proposal.

The Wellmans only stayed for a brief period before returning to America when George's health collapsed. The Rices and White remained and taught public school until the system was closed. White then left, but the Rices decided to stay and complement Caldwell's medical work with their influence. Gradually the Adventist presence became more obvious. The government provided a small building for Caldwell to conduct a clinic. This became known as the Avarua Adventist Hospital.

An English resident, W.H. Petch, fell in love with Maude Young, was baptised an Adventist, married, and worked as a mission nurse also. Rata and his family, who had received treatments from Caldwell, became the first full-blooded Cook Islanders to be baptised as Seventh-day Adventists. Frances Nicholas, whose father was English and her mother Maori, had also accepted Adventism, left her job as a government translator, and attended the Avondale School to perfect her English so that she could work on book translations for the island people. She was baptised at Avondale in 1897, married to Alex Waugh about 1901, and continued to do translation work in the Polynesian languages.

Defections from the established churches no doubt caused some apprehension and a widening gap developed between the Adventists and others. Caldwell wrote in 1899, "Our medical work has given us a very wide acquaintance I do not mean to say we are popular. We are not. I do not suppose we ever shall be popular". Indeed, Rice reported at the same time, "The earnest efforts of our enemies to plant seeds of doubt in the minds of the natives makes the work move slowly. They were told that we are the devil's church."

One of the greatest hindrances for a Cook Islander to become a Seventh-day Adventist was the power wielded by the arikis. These chiefs were the real owners of all land and operated a feudal

system. Tenants who displeased them could lose the right to farm and support their families, apart from being subjected to ridicule. Only on Aitutaki had this system been remedied with small family ownership. Caldwell therefore regarded Aitutaki as a more promising mission field.

Another avenue Caldwell and Rice wished to pursue was the establishment of an industrial school. They had observed with some discouragement that youngsters were receptive in the school room but then reverted to custom in the homes. As a temporary measure after the closing of the public school system the Adventist missionaries adopted a few children into their own homes. They hoped to convert and train these children as future missionaries. All went well until the Rices attempted in 1899 to take some to the Avondale School for further training. Prejudice persuaded the youngsters' relatives to object. The government then stepped in to forbid their departure from the island. Two children being cared for by the Caldwells were also forcibly taken away from them. This was only one aspect of a deteriorating scenario.

There had been a growing debate on Rarotonga over the advisability of calendary reform. This generated a head of steam in 1899. The chiefs finally voted to bring their calendar into line with everyone else on December 25, 1899. To do this they added an extra Christmas Day for that year. This was commendable, but they also decreed that Sunday would be the island's Sabbath. Any islander found working on Sunday, or not attending church, or even voicing the non-sacredness of Sunday was liable to a fine or hard labour on the roads.

The heavy-handedness with respect to moral and ethical behaviour was a sad spin-off from the introduction of Christianity. It became a characteristic of the island group for many years to come. Fifty years later a visiting journalist wrote,

...missionaries, with the best intentions in the world, carried things decidedly too far in the

way of grandmotherly laws. Even white men were forbidden to be out of doors after eight o'clock at night, on pain of a heavy fine....A native who walked at dusk along the road with his sweetheart...was obliged to carry a burning torch in his hand, and he was fined if he let ff go out.

Adventists did not object to the calendar reform which highlighted their Sabbath as different to others. Their concern was the annihilation of religious liberty, so basic to the teachings of Christ. Caldwell and Rice had canvassed the chiefs, leaving with them some literature on the subject prior to the vote, but it was all to no avail. Pressure for the extreme measures came largely from the non-Adventist clergy, both Protestant and Catholic.

The general population had been quite happy with the status quo. But even some non-Adventists objected to the change, insisting they should retain what the first missionaries had introduced. For years some in the remote northern islands clung to the old calendar. Most, however, complied with Sunday observance under threat of losing their land and inherited titles, and having their houses burned down. Isolated cases resisted on Rarotonga. One national minister was defrocked and fined \$10 because he refused to change. Several deacons were fined \$8 each. A sixteen-year-old boy was fined \$3 because he was overheard by a chief's wife to say the old calendar was correct.

The largest pocket of resistance was on the southern edge of Rarotonga at Titikaveka. A group of about forty Sunday keepers broke away from their fellow church members and built their own native materials church. They continued worshipping according to the old calendar. The high chief had the local policemen nail up the building in an effort to stop their dissent. He was unsuccessful in dampening their zeal. All were charged with profaning their chief, their real crime being that they had ignored the new calendar and observed Saturday in their homes instead of Sunday. Only a few

found cash to pay their fines. A small coral-stone bridge still stands today at nearby Ngatangia, built by the men and women who worked off their fines.

The non-conformists at Titikaveka appealed to Caldwell and said they wanted to join the Seventh-day Adventists. Throughout 1900 he held regular meetings with them. At least eighteen were baptised before the end of the year after discarding tobacco and jewellery. With this core a church was organised. They met for over a year in deacon Tonga's home for Sabbath services. Their elder was Timi Terei, a lesser chief who, together with Vaia, had their titles stripped from them when they became Seventh-day Adventists. The high chief eventually realised it was futile to continue his battle, but persecution continued in the form of snubs and derision.

Albert and Hettie Piper sailed from Australia and arrived in Rarotonga on October 31, 1900. Caldwell's medical work petered out but he lingered until after the Pipers arrived even though his wife's health was wavering. Before he left Caldwell began giving Bible studies to a small group of nationals up in the mountains every Sunday. Queen Makea learned of this and despatched a policeman to put a stop to it. Caldwell's son, Arthur, was also actively engaged in trying to minister to the people. He habitually went to Titikaveka every weekend to conduct Sabbath School for the children and then stayed overnight to teach a little elementary education on Sundays. Early in 1901 the Caldwells transferred from Rarotonga to New Zealand for the sake of Julia's health. The Rice family left the Cook Islands about the same time, leaving the Pipers in sole charge. Rice had become increasingly involved in trading merchandise instead of doing missionary work. Piper, therefore, had the added task of polishing the mission's public image.

As time went on the Sunday laws were not policed as strictly as when they were first introduced. It was alleged one reason for this relaxation was that the government secretary, a bitter opponent of

Saturday-keeping, was killed in early 1901. Another reason was that the Governor gradually educated the arikis in religious liberty principles. The Sunday Laws were only invoked by family members using pressure on another when lesser means failed.

Later, as the scattered northern islands one by one adopted the new calendar, or Adventists moved into the area, litigation cases began. For example, on Aitutaki in 1916 an Adventist who picked four breadfruit on a Sunday was convicted of Sabbath-breaking and punished with ten days hard labour. There were other instances when fines were imposed on Adventists because they weeded their gardens on Sundays. The calendar reform was adopted on Pukapuka in 1915 and some non-conformists were fined soon after for gathering food from their gardens on Sunday. Before Caldwell left Rarotonga he had expressed a sense of responsibility to teach the children of the Titikaveka members. Hettie Piper taught a few pupils at mission headquarters in 1901 but this did not serve the need at Titikaveka. The dilemma was solved when Evelyn Gooding arrived from Australia in February 1902. She began by teaching fifteen students in the largest room of the mission home at Arorangi. These classes were held in the mornings. Four days a week she would also travel to and from Titikaveka to hold an afternoon school.

Piper worked towards combining the two schools into a boarding institution at Arorangi. Dormitories of native materials were erected. A separate school-room to accommodate up to fifty students was also constructed. This building had a concrete slab floor. The walls were built of coral-stone topped with a palisade of sticks to allow some ventilation. These reached to the iron roof. When the day schools were amalgamated in mid-1902 some of the children from Titikaveka ceased to attend, preferring to stay in their own village. This was an unfortunate development. For supervision reasons Piper had preferred Arorangi as the site for the boarding school but Titikaveka was where most of the Adventist children lived. Furthermore, Piper's aim was to draw the youngsters away from the customary influences at home and subject them to a regular

programme of work, study and worship. By the end of the year (1902), Piper reported two young men had been baptised.

Attendance at the school fell in 1903 but then Griffiths and Marion Jones arrived to help in the mission work. During 1904, while the Pipers were on sick leave, Marion taught at Arorangi. This enabled Evelyn Gooding to live at Titikaveka where she taught about twenty pupils. When the Jones family left towards the end of the year then the boarding school at Arorangi ceased to function for a time. Gooding continued at Titikaveka until she returned to Australia in late 1905. She was replaced by Mark Carey, a recent graduate from the Avondale School.

Carey, with the help of Hettie Piper, reactivated the boarding school at Arorangi early in 1906. He taught there until he was transferred to Pitcairn eighteen months later. About twenty students attended. The intermittent operation of these schools weakened their influence. Every year seemed to bring a new arrangement governed by changing staff and other circumstances.

The church at Titikaveka continued to be the strongest group but experienced no significant increase in numbers above the original total. Sabbath School membership in 1903 was reported to be thirty. At the same time there were twelve at Arorangi. Branches were conducted with six people at Kiikii, five at Ngatangia, and three at Avarua.

Land for a church at Titikaveka had been granted in 1902 and Caldwell sent his own money to pay for it. Throughout 1903 the members, with some carpentry help from Piper, slowly built a coral-rock structure, approximately twelve-by-seven metres, with a small entrance porch and an iron roof. Its total cost was \$190. This trim little chapel was dedicated by Jones in the absence of Piper on Monday, May 23, 1904. Gooding conducted her little school in the back end of this building. During the course of construction the members had secreted a bottle in the coral walls. The bottle contained two pages of handwriting detailing the names of the

members and mention of their persecutions suffered. This account was recovered during demolition over seventy years later when a new church was erected.

During the Piper era (1900-1906) a few more initiatives were taken in addition to the school work and the building of the first church in the Cook Islands. In 1903 Americans Luke and Mabel Roth came over from Tahiti for some months to begin a bakery. It was a short-lived attempt to duplicate the self-supporting enterprise in the Tahitian Mission. With respect to Adventist literature in the Rarotongan language, 300 hymn books were printed in 1904 and the following year an abridged translation of "Thoughts on Daniel" ("Daniela") was produced at the Avondale Press. The book "Christ Our Saviour" ("Iesu Akaora") was also available. Frances (Nicholas) Waugh, of course, was instrumental in this work. Several times the whole island was canvassed with both English and Rarotongan tracts and magazines. Very little was attempted beyond the shores of Rarotonga, except that in 1903 Piper and Gates distributed tracts at Aitutaki while en route from an annual council meeting in Tahiti. Purposeful outreach to the northern islands did not begin until a few years later.

William and Olive Pascoe were appointed to replace the Pipers, but Olive's poor health kept her in Auckland for a time while her husband went on ahead. Olive's sister, Lucy Bree, accompanied William instead, and Piper remained behind in Rarotonga for a little while to teach them something of the local language. When Olive finally arrived her health remained indifferent. Lucy stayed on to help her sister in the home and also assist her with the school until it finally closed. Pascoe himself cared for the Titikaveka church and on one occasion distributed literature on the islands of Aitutaki and Mangaia. Unfortunately, the health of these new missionaries deteriorated. First Olive and Lucy returned to New Zealand, and then in mid-1908 William himself left.

The greatest advance made during the brief Pascoe era was the introduction of a monthly magazine in the Rarotongan language.

This had been conceived by Piper and was first produced as a four-page magazine in early 1907. It was called "Tuatua Mou" ("Truth") and proved to be the means of reaching many in the far-flung island group. Once again, Waugh did the translation work and it was first printed at the Avondale Press. Tonga, the deacon at Titikaveka, canvassed for subscriptions during the next few years. He distributed the "Tuatua Mou" and other Adventist publications on a number of islands, including Aitutaki and Mangaia.

Frank and Almeda Lyndon replaced the Pascoes in mid-1908. It was the beginning of a lengthy span of service in the Pacific Islands for this family. Lyndon's first reports indicated his acute awareness of the privations. The legs of their kitchen furniture, he said, stood in tins of water to prevent armies of ants carrying away their food. Rats romped through their house at night, wasps made nests in their clothing while it hung in the cupboards, and only protective nets at night shielded them from the hordes of mosquitos and cockroaches. He observed that the numerous lizards which also invaded their home were a mixed blessing - they did, at least, eat some of the mosquitos, flies, and wasps.

The Lyndon family's relatively brief stay in the Cook Islands came to an end when they transferred to the Society Islands early in 1910. It was, in effect, a swap with George and Maybeile Sterling.

The coming of the Sterlings occurred when a new phenomenon was shaping the mission. The "Tuatua Mou" was being scattered and read throughout the region. This prompted requests from the outlying islands, urging the missionaries to visit and establish outposts. Activities on Rarotonga itself were going through the doldrums. Lyndon and the elder at Titikaveka had clashed. Only about twenty people were attending Titikaveka church and the total baptised membership for the whole island officially stood at fourteen after sixteen years of concentrated mission effort. In that time only three nationals had developed some leadership qualities - Frances Waugh, Tonga, and Tuaine Solomona. The latter was

the son of the elder at Titikaveka and had left as a missionary to Papua just before the Sterlings arrived in the Cook Islands.

A New Zealand canvasser, Reg Piper, and his wife, Emily, came to assist Sterling early in 1912. He was a younger brother of Albert Piper. In addition, Ephraim and Agnes Giblett arrived in October. First Sterling, followed by Piper, and then Giblett briefly, tried to revive the Titikaveka church but all had to admit defeat in the end. All except three of the members were found to be disregarding church standards so the church was officially disbanded, although the folk continued to meet for services.

In the meantime the Sterlings had responded to one of the faraway requests made by readers of the "Tuatua Mou". Leaving the Titikaveka group in Tonga's care, they established themselves on Aitutaki in July 1912. Over the years Adventist literature had been distributed on this island by passing missionaries. More recently, in 1909, both Tonga and Lyndon had canvassed books and subscriptions there. Sterling himself had canvassed it in 1910. Iti Strickland, an American-Cook Islander, had invited Sterling to settle at Aitutaki. He provided temporary accommodation for them in two rooms of his daughter's home at Reureu, the port village.

Sterling soon built a rough mission home for himself and set about preaching in the villages, using stereopticon pictures to explain the prophecies. These, he explained apologetically to church members in the homeland, were not for entertainment but rather for evangelism. A small group of about twelve islanders responded and met regularly in Sterling's home for worship.

Sterling was not an ordained minister at the time but he received special permission from headquarters to go ahead with a baptism. He held it at the end of the jetty where the water was deeper than inshore. Among the candidates were Howard and Iti Strickland and Iti's daughter, Tereapii, a stout woman whom Sterling believed he may not be able to lift to her feet again. Howard stood close by for an emergency but all went well. On Sabbath, October 25, 1913,

Sterling organised them into a church and they began accumulating funds and building materials to construct their own chapel. Howard Strickland was elected their church elder. The three faithful members at Titikaveka on Rarotonga were included on the Aitutaki membership roll. A second baptism was held during a New Year picnic (1914) at a little uninhabited island out on the reef.

The Giblets transferred to Aitutaki to assist the Sterlings temporarily. Sterling made a quick canvassing trip to Mangaia at this stage and then returned before the end of 1913. Together with the Giblets they experienced the worst hurricane in living memory on Aitutaki. It swept through on the night of January 9/ 10, 1914, destroying all food crops above the ground and flattening homes. People crawled under the floors of their homes to escape the flying debris. A kapok tree fell on the rooms in which the Giblets were living and the verandah where the Sterlings usually slept was blown away. The branches of the fallen kapok tree kept the remainder of the house from disintegrating. All through the night the two missionary families huddled in the two remaining rooms of their home. Outside, materials collected for the church building remained unharmed. Some of these were used to repair their house and then work started on the church itself. This European-style chapel with corrugated iron roof and glass panels in the windows and doors was dedicated on Sabbath, June 6, 1914, followed by a celebration feast. In his report Sterling stressed that the menu included fish and fowl instead of the traditional pork. The new church included a baptistry under the rostrum. Down-pipes from the roof channelled rainwater into the font but no rain came in time for their first baptism in the church so a tedious bucket brigade filled it from a nearby water-hole. One early church member was Bebe More, a forty-year-old, crippled in both legs, whose two sons would wheel him in a crude cart while he gave out tracts in the villages nearby.

Sickness took its toll again among the missionaries. The Pipers had to leave in 1913 because Reg was suffering from chronic

dysentery. The Giblets, while under appointment to transfer to Niue Island, returned to the homeland in 1914 because their child was ill. Henry and May Hill came over from the Society Islands to care temporarily for the mission home on Rarotonga. Henry or "Harry" Streeter and his wife, Olive, arrived in 1914. He had graduated from the Teachers Course (1910) and the Biblical-Academic Course (1912) at the Avondale School. After teaching in Queensland he and his wife did a short course at the Sydney Sanitarium before sailing for the Cook Islands, Mangaia specifically.

Mangaia had its terrors for visitors because no passage was possible through the encircling coral reef. To land on the island one must ride the king wave over the reef into the lagoon. On one occasion when Sterling visited his suitcases became waterlogged and litres poured out of them when they were lifted out of the canoe.

The Streeters settled in the little village of Oneroa, shared a home with some islanders, distributed tracts, and began an English-language class for fifteen pupils. One Seventh-day Adventist was already living on the island - an old man called Keraiti who was baptised on Rarotonga about 1911. Another man, after giving up his tobacco, was baptised during Streeter's stay. After eighteen months on the island they had to return to the homeland because Olive became so weakened with malaria.

Newly-wed nurses, Harold and Madeleine Wicks, sailed for the Cook Islands in February 1915 and later that year took over from the Sterlings on Aitutaki. In January 1916 he baptised three lepers forced to live in isolation on a speck of land called Motulukau across the lagoon from the main island. Wicks wrote, "I was not allowed to touch them nor to go near them, so each one, as I finished speaking, sank down himself into the watery grave, to arise a moment later in the newness of life by faith". One of the lepers was called Kaimoumou. The reading of the "Tuatua Mou" and earlier visits by Sterling had convicted them.

The coming of Wicks to Aitutaki enabled Sterling to answer yet another persistent call from one of the unentered islands. This time he chose Mauke, a rocky and inhospitable outcrop whose name literally meant "land of the goats". He had visited on at least two previous occasions and befriended one family in particular who kept asking him to return. Once again a handful of believers were gathered and Sterling organised and built a church there before moving back to Rarotonga about eighteen months later. Wicks then transferred to Mauke and the Aitutaki Church was left to their own leadership.

Some among the Aitutaki members were capable people. The previous year (1916) Howard Strickland and his wife, Caroline, had sailed north to Manihiki Island and there began to witness among relatives for some months. They also visited Rakahanga Island and found the people receptive to Adventism.

In October 1917 Iti Strickland went to Pukapuka Island in response to an urgent call from a resident called Noa. Sterling had previously befriended a group from Pukapuka who were living on Rarotonga. There he had held regular services for them. Relatives to the far north heard of these meetings, so, when the calendar reform was introduced to Pukapuka about twenty-five refused to change and called for Sterling to help them. Sterling dispatched Iti Strickland in response to that call.

Iti Strickland instructed the group on Pukapuka for over a year. Then in May 1919 Wicks left his wife on Aitutaki and sailed north to Pukapuka with a generous supply of medicines from the government store. He stayed with Iti for eight months. The opposition on the island dubbed Wicks "the false prophet". Undaunted, he would hang up his lantern on a friend's verandah in the evenings and preach to whoever would listen, some standing in the light and others lurking on the perimeter. Threats were made that the preacher would be trampled to death. Iti was roughed up at one time but rescued by three friendly islanders. Nevertheless, Wicks baptised twenty-two, including their king, Pilato, and his wife.

He also built a native materials church and dedicated it on Friday, July 18, 1919.

One who responded on Pukapukawas a London Missionary Society minister, Koteka. Aftersome initial studieswith Iti, Koteka and his wife sailed to Rarotonga for some in-depth instruction from Sterling. They were baptised at Titikaveka and in 1919 were appointed to Manihiki, Koteka's home island. Two years later he pioneered nearby Rakahanga Island, in both cases capitalising on the few seeds sown by the Howard Strickland family five years beforehand.

Sterling's initiative in 1912 to break from the doldrums in Rarotonga and enter the outlying islands proved to be a wise move. During the Sterling and Wicks era extending to 1 919/20, when both transferred to other mission fields, five new areas were entered in the space of a decade - Aitutaki (1912), Mangaia (1914), Mauke (1915), Pukapuka (1917), and Manihiki (1919). Rakahanga was a subsequent outreach in 1921. And later in the 1920s the islands of Atiu, Mitiaro, and Palmerston, were entered.

Significantly, national missionaries began to play an increasingly indispensable role. The work of translating was continued for years by Frances (Nicholas) Waugh. Tonga, the Titikavekan deacon, quietly canvassed literature until 1924 when he was diagnosed and isolated as leprous. He passed away the following year. The pioneering efforts of the Stricktand and Koteka families were but the beginning of a long list of national workers, including Joseph Vati, Viriaere Ti, and Tauraki. The seeding influence of the "Tuatua Mou" was also a significant factor in mission growth.

Fluctuating membership statistics have been a characteristic of the Seventh-day Adventist mission in the Cook Islands. However, generally speaking they show an upward trend. The mission's early history includes distressing instances of Sunday laws and persecution but these provided the catalyst for small groups to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The history illustrates that

coercion or a lack of religious liberty never annihilates non-conformity, indeed, it can even generate it. Ironically, what could not be accomplished because of peer pressure and the carefree nature of the Cook Islands society was really brought about by the very people who desperately wanted religious conformity and tried to engineer it by government decree.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times", the "Home Missionary", the "Australasian Record", the "Missionary Leader", the Cook Islands mission correspondence, the George Sterling papers, and the author's personal collection of pioneer data.

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- 9 **Church in a Convict Gaol** - Early Adventism on Norfolk Island
- 10 **On the Rim of a Volcano** - Early Adventism on Lord Howe Island
- 11 **A Temporary Training School** - The Australian Bible School in Melbourne
- 12 **An Experiment at Cooranbong** - Pioneering Avondale College
- 13 **Little Schools for Little People** - Early Adventist Primary Schools in Australasia
- 14 **People of Ao-Te-Aroa** - The Adventist Mission to Maoris
- 15 **Rescue Homes and Remedies with Water** - Adventist Benevolent work in Australia
- 16 **Hospital on a Hilltop** - Pioneering the Sydney Sanitarium
- 17 **Cultivating Vegetarianism** - Pioneering the Sanitarium Health Food Company
- 18 **Lotu Savasava** - Early Adventism in Fiji
- 19 **Te Maramarama** - Early Adventism in French Polynesia
- 20 **Tuatua Mou** - Early Adventism in the Cook Islands
- 21 **Talafekau Mo'oni** - Early Adventism in Tonga and Niue
- 22 **Lotu Aso Fitu** - Early Adventism in Samoa
- 23 **An Oriental Foster Child** - Adventism in South-east Asia before 1912
- 24 **Beyond the Zig-Zag** - Pioneering Carmel College in Western Australia
- 25 **Pukekura and Oroua** - Pioneering Longburn College in New Zealand
- 26 **Descendants of the Dreamtime** - The Adventist Mission to the Australian Aborigines
- 27 **Lotu Bilong Sevenday** - Early Adventism in Papua New Guinea
- 28 **A Mission Among Murderers** - Early Adventism in Vanuatu
- 29 **Vina Juapa Rane** - Early-Adventism in the Solomon Islands
- 30 **Pioneering in Paradise** - Early Adventism in New Caledonia
- 31 **War Zone Scramble** - Stories of Escape During World War
- 32 **A Late Expansion** - Early Adventism in Kiribati and Tuvalu