

Chapter 19

Heaven and Hell in the Eyes of Cook Islands Maori: A Comparative Review of Three Time Periods

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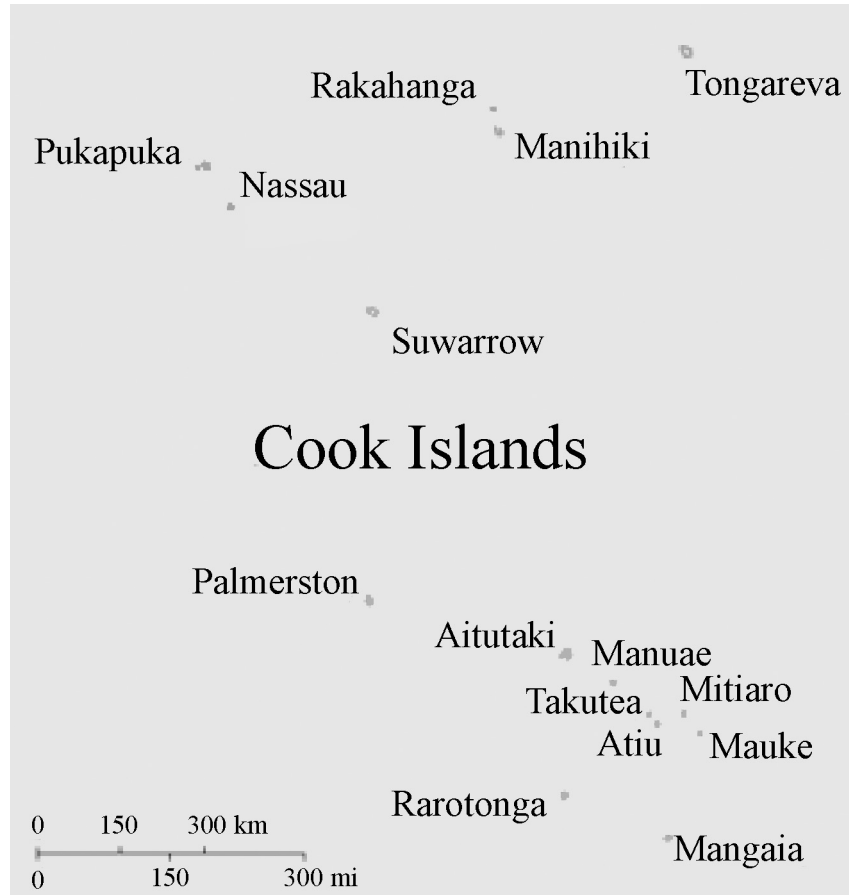
*Ka tama tiki, tama tiki, tama ranga, tama ranga.
Ka apai nuku, ka apai rangi, Ka apaipai te
rangi e—*

*Ka rutakina, Ka nua aii, Ka nua aiio.
Ana mai koia ko Ru takinuku,
Koia i tokotokoa te rangi, lirangakina, rangakina
te rangi.
Koia i tokotokoa te rangi.*

Oh son, oh son, raise my son, raise my son.
Lift the universe! Lift the heavens.
The heavens are lifted. It is moving. It moves. It
moves.
Come, O Ru taki nuku, Who has propped up the
heavens.
The heavens were fast but were lifted. Our work
is complete.
(Traditional chant from Aitutaki Island)¹

Missionaries who enter the Cook Islands come face-to-face with the traditions of the indigenous Maori people in the form of chants, oratory, and drum rhythms. The above *amu*, or melodious chant, of Ru-taki-nuku would be one such dirge that has survived the

dynamic and changing religious environment of the islanders. Such chants preserve Cook Islanders' traditional views about the world beyond. This chapter explores the concepts of heaven and hell through the eyes of the Maori in three time periods: *Tuatau Poiri*: "Age of Darkness" (pre-European contact), *Tuatau Marama*: "Age of Enlightenment" (arrival of the London Missionary Society), and *Tuatau 'Anga'anga*: "Age of Works" (arrival of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).² The work of Latter-day Saint pioneers in the Cook Islands is discussed along with the Cook Islanders' powerful traditions of religious dedication and commitment that preceded their arrival. In this study, heaven refers to a pleasant final place for some spirits of the dead, and hell denotes a final place of torment for other spirits. The definitions of these places expand in each of the three periods discussed. Although this chapter focuses on the islands of Rarotonga and Aitutaki, the general historical background of their social and cultural environment reflects most if not all the Cook Islands.³



The Cook Islands are a group of fifteen islands totaling only 237 square kilometers in land area but covering 1,830,000 square kilometers of the Pacific Ocean. Since 1965, they have enjoyed a special postcolonial political status known as “self-government in free association with” New Zealand.⁴ In this arrangement, the Cook Islands government controls its own internal and external affairs, enjoys international personality, and maintains special access to New Zealand for its citizens.⁵ The association between the two countries dates to the early migration of Maori double-hulled canoes from the Cook Islands to New Zealand prior to AD 1300. During the nineteenth century, the influence of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in both countries created another link, as did the shared colonial experience spanning from 1888 to 1964.

Historically, life in the Cook Islands has been based on a rich sea-voyaging tradition that became entrenched by its central location in the *Moana Nui A Kiva* (Pacific Ocean). Today, the Cook Islands’ economic activities include pearl farming, fishing, offshore international banking, exporting specialized agricultural product to New Zealand and Hawai’i, and tourism. The people of the Cook Islands have an extremely rich and dynamic traditional culture represented through their dances, chants, and drumming. Respect for the spiritual is at the heart of that tradition. When Christianity arrived, many Maori Cook Islanders converted, and some became pioneer missionaries for the London Missionary Society.⁶ That same missionary spirit was also apparent among later converts to other religious denominations, including the Latter-day Saints.

Tuatau Poiri: “Age of Darkness” (Before European Contact)

The *amu*, or melodious chant, at the beginning of this chapter focuses on Ru-taki-nuku (also known as Ru-toko-rangi), an ancestor of the Maori people of Aitutaki who, with the help of the gods, lifted and stabilized the heavens of Aitutaki.⁷ Other progenitors include Teerui (Clear Darkness) who, with his brother Matareka (Smiling Face), made three unsuccessful attempts to leave their home in the utter darkness of Avaiki, the place of origin. They eventually sought the help of a priest who changed the name for the masts of their canoes to *O-tu-i-te-rangi-marama* (Erect in the Light of Heaven). The brothers finally made it to the land of light where they raised a sunken island and appropriately called it Aitutaki, meaning “God Led.”⁸

Even if the stories of Ru-taki-nuku and Teerui are merely symbolic, it is clear that the Maori people had a profound link to God, and more specifically to heaven, during what is now referred to as *te tuatau poiri*, or “age of darkness,” the period prior to European contact. In this era, when people talked of hell or heaven, a particular image was conjured up in their minds. They believed that hell captured the spirits of the unwary, and even on the God-led island of Aitutaki, it was expected that at death human spirits descended to the domains of the goddess Miru, a deformed and frightful being who feasted on the spirits of the dead. By contrast, heaven, known as Iva and under the guardianship of Tukaitaua, was a desirable place with an abundance of good food. Fortunate spirits spent eternity there chewing sweet sugarcane or sweet *ti* leaves.⁹

According to oral tradition, Miru fed her victims a bowl of living centipedes, which caused them to writhe in agony. Eventually such tortured spirit victims, raging with thirst, would dive into a lake for relief, only to be drowned and eaten by Miru. The ancient warrior Tekauae, however, discovered her activities and outwitted her. As he neared death, Tekauae directed his friends to get a coconut, crack it during his last breath, sepa-

rate the kernel from the shell, and place the kernel in a cloth next to his stomach. When he arrived at the underworld, Tekauae secretly ate the coconut kernel while allowing the live centipedes to fall to the ground. After a long wait, Miru allowed her visitor to return to the upper world. Through the story of Tekauae, the people of Aitutaki learned how to avoid hell and would place a coconut kernel next to their stomachs in order to deceive Miru so they could instead embark on a journey to heaven.¹⁰ Such concepts of heaven and hell changed after the arrival of the London Missionary Society missionaries in 1821.

Tuatau Marama: “Age of Light” (Arrival of the London Missionary Society, or LMS)

Tika-i-te-o-pe foretold the arrival of Christian missionaries in the Cook Islands. He was an old man from the village of Rangiatea in Rarotonga, where the inhabitants worshiped the idols Tangianui and Tongaiti. On one occasion, Tika-i-te-o-pe became possessed and spurned all the idols, saying: “The gods you worship are not real gods. They are impotent gods. God is in the heavens. . . . He is the only god, he who created all things. . . . Soon the cocked hat [laden with rooster feathers] (*pare kota’a*), and the red [sacred] hat (*pare kura*) and the bible-bearing ship will come.” For several days and nights, he repeated his prophecies.¹¹ Tika-i-te-o-pe’s words came true in 1821, when Reverend John Williams, on his way to Australia, took the opportunity to drop off in Aitutaki two Raiatea LMS missionaries, Papehia and Vahapata. The pair were taken under the protection of the paramount chief, Tamatoa Ariki, and were allowed to proclaim their message. Within fifteen months, idol worship had largely been abolished on the island.¹²

Gradually, local concepts of heaven and hell also changed. Heaven was now where the spirits of faithful Christians dwelled. Hell was where the spirits of non-Christians and evil folk generally would go to be burned and destroyed. No longer

did the Maori pursue the practice of placing a coconut kernel close to the stomach at death; however, curiously, a non-LMS practice developed involving the placing of coins on the navel and the eyes. The LMS missionaries stressed hellfire as a deterrent to sin, which they also linked to natural disasters and mysterious diseases. Enterprising missionaries seized upon the impressive try-pots of whalers, which bubbled for several days on beaches with fires flaring into the night, as a symbol of Satan's domain. In the words of one popular song, *Naai te pani auai?* (Who has the smokey pot?) *Na Tatane te reira* (Satan has).¹³

In addition to teaching new concepts of heaven and hell, the LMS missionaries tried to quash much of the traditional Maori culture. For example, women were given the opportunity to hold chiefly titles, while men were encouraged to take on the role of priest and missionary, resulting in the access to land rights subtly changing because titleholder patterns shifted. Still, the LMS preachers' powerful influence on the lives of the people could not prevent the dawning of a new era with the arrival of the Latter-day Saint, Seventh-day Adventist, and Catholic missionaries to the Cook Islands.

Tuatau 'Anga'anga: "Age of Works" (Arrival of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began its missionary efforts in the Cook Islands in 1899 when Daniel T. Miller, mission president in French Polynesia, saw an opportunity to extend the work to the people of the Cook Islands.¹⁴ Close family connections between the Southern Cook Islands and Austral Islands existed, as well as between the Tuamotu Islands and the Northern Cook Islands; moreover, regular shipping trade had been established between Tahiti and Rarotonga.¹⁵ President Miller assigned Elder Osbourne J. P. Widtsoe, and Elder Mervin W. Davis to study the Rarotongan language for sev-

eral months and then sail to Rarotonga.¹⁶ On May 23, 1899, after a journey of three nights at sea, Widtsoe and Davis arrived in Avarua, the capital of what was then referred to as the Hervey Islands. Once in Rarotonga, they dedicated the island for the preaching of the restored gospel.

The two missionaries found Rarotonga friendly, but the LMS form of Protestantism had been in existence in the islands since the 1820s, and seventy years of religious change had created a society entrenched in LMS practices. These included *uapou*, popular social exchanges of biblical verses; *imene tuki*, traditional songs presented with religious themes; and *apare* and *kave eua*, powerful adapted forms of funeral rituals. "Blue laws" based on strict moral behavior were also in practice, and under this law, the paramount chiefs and LMS pastors controlled the social behavior of most Maori. Even the LMS churches and the LMS Pacific-wide missionary training center stood on land donated by the Cook Islands' most powerful chiefs, and the early LMS missionaries had established a firm hold on those chiefs by marrying their daughters. Missionaries were generally held in great respect for their courage and ability to communicate and accept cultural differences. Notably, the Raiatean LMS missionary Papehia was held in such great esteem that he is buried in the cemetery grounds reserved for royalty. Thus, there was considerable pressure for the Maori people to remain with the LMS church.

Not surprisingly, when Elders Widtsoe and Davis initiated their meetings, they ran into direct opposition from Queen Makea Takau. "After our first meeting," wrote Elder Davis, "the edict of the powerful Queen backed by the Protestant prejudice went forth prohibiting the people from attending other meetings than those held in the Protestant Church." Though they soldiered on in Rarotonga, improving their language skills and teaching whenever they could, the Latter-day Saint missionaries found that the queen's opposition effectively "put an end to our meetings."¹⁷

The next year, Elders Widtsoe and Davis extended proselytizing to Aitutaki, the previously mentioned island about 140 miles from Rarotonga. After dedicating the island and its people for the reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ, they published two tracts in the Rarotongan Maori dialect. Although the people were friendly, there was much hesitancy to attend Latter-day Saint meetings. LMS ministerial pressure, the use of the Rarotongan rather than Aitutakian dialect, and the opposition of all three paramount chiefs on Aitutaki were the key factors.¹⁸ As a result, Widtsoe and Davis had no baptisms on Aitutaki.

In mid-1901 two new Latter-day Saint missionaries arrived in the Cook Islands—Elder Benjamin A. Johnson and Elder Thomas Loveland. Although two years had passed, the restored gospel still had no visible foothold in the Cook Islands, and the missionaries had recorded no

baptisms. About this time, the First Presidency of the Church issued a directive to Tahitian Mission president Edward S. Hall to close all parts of the mission where elders had been for a year or more without making any converts. As a result, the missionaries were withdrawn from the Cook Islands in November 1903.

Almost forty years passed before another sustained attempt was made to establish The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Cook Islands. During World War II, shipping and missionary work were both generally restricted, so New Zealand Mission president Matthew Cowley asked a local baker in Avarua, Rarotonga, by the name of Fritz Bunge Kruger to work toward establishing the Church in Rarotonga (fig. 1). Kruger had come to New Zealand in the fall of 1941. By May 1942, he had married a New Zealand Maori girl, Maudina Ngawiki from Paeroa



Fig. 1. Fritz Bunge Kruger's bakery in Avarua, Rarotonga
Courtesy of Church Archives

(New Zealand), had been ordained by President Cowley, and had returned to Rarotonga anxious to spread the gospel.¹⁹ He and his bride soon made their first converts—the Samuel Glassie family.²⁰ They were baptized on May 12, 1942.²¹ Brother Glassie actively joined in the missionary work, both as a translator and a teacher. Three months later, the Tuakana Vahua family joined the Church.²² Meanwhile, the other churches began circulating anti-Mormon literature.

In 1943 Latter-day Saint church meetings were being held at Tuoro on the northeastern end of an area in the Puaikura District. Initially, the meeting venue was successful in attracting new members that now included the Pikika'a and Aratangi Benioni family. Soon, however, anti-Mormon rumors of polygamy surfaced, claiming that Tuakana Vahua had "two wives." This necessitated a change in meeting location, and the weekly gatherings were moved temporarily to the Benionis' rental home, which was closer to the village center and the more heavily residential area of Ruaau. After a short period, Sunday meetings were again relocated, this time to Muri (Takitumu), on the other side of Rarotonga. At first the Saints met in the home of Brother and Sister Harry Strickland. Then the first coconut-thatched Latter-day Saint chapel in the Cook Islands was constructed nearby. Aratangi Benioni recalled that at first, branch members were picked up for Sunday meetings in "a Mormon truck."²³

Church membership continued to increase slowly. While the chapel in Muri remained, members on the Puaikura side of the island moved their Sunday meetings back to Ruaau, to the home of John and Ara Mateara. John himself was not a member of the Church, but his wife,



Fig. 2. Adorned with leis, women in the Cook Islands offer a typical welcome. *Courtesy of Jon Jonassen*

"Mama" Ara, was fully committed to the work of the restored gospel. Touched by his wife's faith, John allowed a church to be built on his family's old residence grounds. A coconut-thatched chapel with a coral base was built in 1943. The new structure afforded much visibility for the Church since it was in a heavily populated area on the main road and within the confines of the *taura oire*, or village center. The building was also very close to the residence of the district paramount chief, Tinomana Ariki, and the limestone LMS church of the main village. Its presence signaled an increased local acceptance of the Latter-day Saints.²⁴ By 1945 active members of the Church in Arorangi included Matia and Ruta Dean and the families of James Vahua, Pikika'a Benioni, and Samuel Glassie. In June 1946 the thirty members on record also included Uu Tipoki, Sister Teha and her daughter, Ngapoko Dean and his son, and the families of Torea Strickland, Pai Goodwin, Poko Cummings, and Manu Cummings.²⁵

The story of Manu Cummings is a good example of the great faith and commitment of Latter-day Saints in the Cook Islands. Born

February 9, 1910, under the name of Manua Aereau Cummings, which can be interpreted as “battleship traveling in peace,” Manu later met and married Josephine Teakapeka on June 18, 1938. Ironically, prior to marrying this Catholic woman, Manu had trained as a pastor in the London Missionary Society. The couple was introduced to the Church in September 1944. Nine months later, on May 12, 1945, Manu and Josephine Cummings were baptized by Fritz Bunge Kruger. Fourteen Latter-day Saint converts were baptized in the Avana stream on that memorable day. Manu went on to become a strong pillar in the Church. He assisted with the translation of various Church publications, especially the scriptures, into Cook Islands Maori. In spite of much ridicule from members of their extended family, Manu and Josephine remained active Latter-day Saints throughout their lives.²⁶

In 1944, Elder Fritz Bunge Kruger sold his bakery business, settled all financial accounts, and devoted himself to full-time missionary work. He was assisted in his labors by his wife or either Tuakana Vahua or Pikika’a Benioni, who both helped translate the Book of Mormon into Cook Islands Maori.²⁷ Eventually faced with a depletion of funds, Elder Kruger prayed for help. “The next day, six American servicemen bought a large collection of island souvenirs Kruger had amassed, allowing the Krugers to continue as missionaries.” This money also paid their airfare back to New Zealand at the end of their mission.²⁸

The Krugers’ return to New Zealand in 1946, however, left the Rarotongan Latter-day Saints without priesthood leadership. Shortly after the Kruger family left Rarotonga, two expatriate brethren on assignment to survey the need for chapels in the Pacific Islands met with the members in Rarotonga. While there, they conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Samuel Glassie and Harry Torea Strickland and ordained them to the office of elder. In September 1946, Trevor Clarke and Mildred Patricia Hamon arrived in Rarotonga from the United States with the knowledge that the construction of a more per-

manent chapel was imminent.²⁹ By October, a chapel made of stick walls and coconut-frond roofing was available for use in Avarua, and the first official branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Cook Islands was organized. Trevor Clarke Hamon became the branch president, Harry Torea Strickland was ordained as first counselor, Manu Cummings became clerk, and Samuel Glassie was ordained as Sunday School supervisor. The construction of a chapel in Avarua, the country’s center, stimulated even more interest in the Church.

As Church membership grew, anti-Mormon sentiment increased.³⁰ But this did not stop the work. One particularly significant baptism occurred three years after the first branch was organized in Rarotonga. Emily Williams joined the Church at age sixty-three. Her maturity and devotion proved to be a tremendous example of faith and commitment to the other Saints. In time, she became the first Cook Islander to go through the temple, and she remained active until her death at the age of ninety-one.³¹

Toward the latter part of 1949, it was decided that missionaries should revisit the island of Aitutaki. At that time, the missionaries in Rarotonga were William and Una Thompson of New Zealand, Duane Chadwick from the United States, and Melvin Tagg of Canada. Elder Chadwick was assigned to travel to Aitutaki accompanied by local orator Tangaroa Kainuku.³² Although the visit was full of uncertainty, it was warmly received in Aitutaki by Norman and Lily Mitchell. The Mitchells accepted the gospel, and the first sacrament meeting in Aitutaki was held in their home on January 8, 1950. Lily also offered land for the first chapel. She gave an account of the chapel construction: “Practically the whole village of Tautu helped gather poles and *kikau* leaves to build our chapel. One person asked the very logical question of the others, ‘Why are we doing this stupid thing of building a church for the Mormons?’ Someone else spoke up saying, ‘Do you know that the *orometua* (elder) understands every word of Maori you are

saying?’ Silence ensued, and the chapel was built in record time.”³³

In January 1950, Elder Matthew Cowley, on his way to Tahiti, made a surprise visit to the island of Aitutaki. Cowley, and his traveling companion, Alma Burton, stayed in the home of Lily and Norman Mitchell. Although the visit was short, it left a lasting impression on the struggling Saints. In the years that followed, a number of Aitutakians became stalwart members of the Church, including Tutai Arama, Nga Manapori, Manarangi of Vaipae, Mere Arona and Tuara, Nane and Geoffrey Henry, and the families of Sadaraka and Mitchell.³⁴

The Church also extended to the islands of Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, and to the northern Cook Islands. However, the shortage of missionaries, the animosity from other churches, and the occasional pressure from government officials, inhibited Church growth. Yet in areas around the Cook Islands, Latter-day Saints continued to work, and a number of memorable events occurred after 1950. One love story concerning a doctor and the queen could have changed the Cook Islands’ history. This story is not recorded in the official annals of the Church, which merely note that “on 28 June 1947 an Apostle of the Lord visited the Cook Islands. Elder Matthew Cowley arrived by plane. He met with the missionaries and gave counsel and direction. On 2 July 1947 Elder Cowley departed the Cook

Islands.”³⁵ What is left out is that Elder Cowley’s visit involved a special request from Dr. “Nahi” Paewai for marriage to the young Rarotongan queen Pa Terito Ariki. While attending school in New Zealand, Queen Pa Terito Ariki stayed in the home of Matthew Cowley, where she met and fell in love with Dr. Paewai. It was a mutual attraction. As a special emissary, Cowley hoped to seek the agreement of the paramount chief Makea Ariki for the wedding union. Unfortunately, Paewai’s proposal was acceptable to the local paramount chief only on the condition that the doctor would return to live in Rarotonga. However, this was a commitment that Dr. Paewai could not make because of his own ties to his people in New Zealand. Therefore, the wedding never took place, and Paewai and Queen Pa Terito Ariki went their separate ways.³⁶

A second story involved Elder Henry William Kanahele, a popular Hawaiian missionary who made much progress in the Cook Islands because of his familiarity with the local customs and Maori language. Still, he almost lost that influence after an incident on the island of Atiu. Not long after his arrival, the island experienced some bad weather. Unaware of the increased dryness of the vegetation, Elder Kanahele made a small fire that got out of control and engulfed the local church and spread into the hills. Kanahele quickly exited the island, but he left a legacy for local historians to add to their tales about the unruly powers of the Latter-day Saint missionaries. The episode, humorous in the aftermath, became a positive foundation for introducing the Church to successive generations of potential members. Ironically, Elder Kanahele’s daughter was assigned to the same island many years later as part of an educational exchange program between the Cook Islands and the Kamehameha Schools of Hawai‘i.³⁷

Another amusing incident that opened the door for missionary work involved a Church station wagon and a group of building missionaries. Ropiha “Boydie” Campbell recalled that in 1969 he, Ra Puriri, and Teina Ngatikaura from New



Fig. 3. Missionaries in the Cook Islands in the 1960s
Courtesy of Jon Jonassen

Zealand, together with a brother from Rarotonga, were working together as Church labor missionaries. Among other structures, they were to build the first public flush toilets on the island of Rarotonga. One day the men drove to Avarua to purchase some supplies. They left their vehicle parked in the central marketplace. When they returned, they found that the vehicle's handbrake had slipped, and the car had gone over a six-foot sea retaining wall and was now floating in the ocean. A large amused crowd had gathered to view the spectacle that was further dramatized by a rising tide.

With community assistance, use of two long planks, a tractor, and a prayer, the station wagon was retrieved. Despite public declarations that the vehicle would never run again, the labor missionaries created a stir on the island when the car was running within twenty-four hours. Indeed, both the locally based national radio station and a large crowd turned up the next morning to witness the engine's first spark back to life. Prayers and an overnight flushing of the engine paid off for the missionaries, and they became instant heroes on the island. The car became a center of local news, and the missionaries were welcomed into many new homes for the duration of their six-month mission.³⁸

If these human-interest stories have impacted Church life in the Cook Islands, so have a variety of institutional decisions. For instance, the Cook Islands have been passed back and forth between nearby missions over the years: they have been attached to the Tahitian Mission at least twice, to the New Zealand Mission twice, and to Sāmoa, Tonga, and Fiji.³⁹ For a few years in the early 1960s, the Cook Islands was its own mission, headquartered in Avarua.⁴⁰ Current Cook



Fig. 4. Siblings Josephine Sadaraka, Michael Jonassen, and Anne George have passed on a pioneering legacy to their many descendants. *Courtesy of Jon Jonassen*

Islands Saints hope for the return to a separate Cook Islands Mission. In spite of administrative, economic, physical, and spiritual challenges, thousands of Cook Islanders have accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ, and many have since served missions throughout the world.⁴¹

The Church in the Cook Islands continues to face many challenges: a transient population on a migratory path to New Zealand and Australia,⁴² a perceived lack of regular visits from top Church leaders,⁴³ and exclusion from representation at the Church's high-profile Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawai'i.⁴⁴ The Church also continues to face opposition from outsiders. "Where were you when our ancestors were heathens?" some ask. "Why are you here when we are now civilized and are already Christians?" others question. Latter-day Saints give an action-oriented response: "Seek ye the truth. If you want to know the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ, ponder the scriptures thoughtfully, repent, and be baptized. We are among you to extend the love of Christ, to spread his gospel, and because you have yet to be baptized by proper authority."⁴⁵ Queries by nonmembers pave the way for useful discussion about being a follower of

Jesus Christ who demonstrates faith by works. And slowly, the work in the Cook Islands continues to move forward.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Through it all, how heaven and hell are conceived continues to be an underlying issue of great interest to the Maori. For those who accept the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, the notions of heaven and hell become clearer. As explained in the Bible Dictionary, the term *heaven* refers to the place where God lives and the future home of the righteous Saints (see Genesis 28:12; Psalm 11:4; Matthew 6:9). Latter-day Saints also clearly distinguish between “paradise” and “heaven.” Jesus visited paradise after His death on the cross, but on the third day thereafter He informed Mary that He had not yet ascended to His Father in Heaven (see Luke 23:39–44; John 20:17). Moreover, certain expressions about heaven made by Church leaders in the twentieth century have come to be cherished by modern Cook Islands Maori. These include the declarations that “the only road to heaven is the road of service,” and heaven is “a continuation of the ideal home.”⁴⁷

In terms of hell, Latter-day Saints in the Cook Islands believe some will be “thrust down to hell” until the last Resurrection but then will be redeemed and given celestial glory (see D&C 76:81–85). Hell, as well as paradise, must deliver up its captive spirits so that they can be rejoined with a renewed physical body (see 2 Nephi 9:10–16). David’s statement “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell” reflects this view (see Psalm 16:9–11).

As Maori Cook Islanders in recent centuries have moved through the three time periods discussed in this chapter, they have ever been in search of securing a pleasant afterlife. Those who have lived during the third stage and have become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints testify that they have gained a much clearer view of the plan of salvation. They now understand, more than ever before, the importance of personal sacrifice, individual commitment, and service to others.⁴⁸

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Notes

1. William Wyatt Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (New York: Arno Press, 1828–96; reprinted 1977).

2. I wish to acknowledge the information and insights shared by the following Cook Islanders and Latter-day Saint missionaries of the Cook Islands: Mimou Tom, Angaroa Williams, Duane Chadwick, Colin and Raewyn Shelford, Tania Mahoney (nee Sadaraka), Tia Roos (nee Murray), John Taylor, Glassie Leilani, Matapo Teava, Ropiha Campbell, MacCormic Cummings, John Cummings, Nooroa Taea, Wesley Duke, and Henry Kanahele.

3. Aitutaki, “God-led,” is a name viewed by its people as referring to the body of their island. The spiritual name is Araura, which means “fragrant wreaths for dancing.” For the main island, Rarotonga, meaning “down south,” the spiritual name is Tumu-Te-Varovaro, “the foundation” (Alfons Kloosterman, *Discoverers of the Cook Islands and the Names They Gave* [Rarotonga: Cook Islands Library and Museum, 1976], 10, 45).

4. Implemented under the United Nations’ supervision, this unique political status has since been adopted by various other governments including Niue, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau.

5. International personality refers to the country’s ability to be a signatory to multilateral or bilateral treaties with other independent countries and international intergovernment organizations.

6. Cook Islanders served in Sāmoa, French Polynesia, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Hawai‘i (John Herrmann, *Akangateiteianga* [Rarotonga: USP, 1987], 19–23).

7. The chant implies that Ru-toko-rangi is also Ru-taki-nuku. Ru-taki-nuku arrived from Avaiki, “place of origin,” on his *katea*, or double-hulled canoe, named *Ngapuariki* (Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*, 139–42).

8. Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*, 139–42.

9. Carved slabs, images, and objects of *sennit* (plaited coconut fiber) covered with highly-valued red feathers of the *tavake*, or bosun bird, represented gods (Te Rangi Hiroa, *The Material Culture of the Cook Islands* [Aitutaki] [New Zealand: The Board of Ethnological Research, 1927], 21–25).

10. Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*, 172–77.

11. Maretu, *Cannibals and Converts*, trans. Marjorie Crocombe (Suva: USP, 1983), 55.

12. Aitutaki islanders were the first Maori Cook Islanders to accept Christianity. Two years later it was introduced successfully to the people of Rarotonga (Taira Rere, *The Gospel Comes to Rarotonga* [Rarotonga: Taira Rere, 1980], 10).

13. Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah* (Rarotonga: CITC, 1991), 19.

14. There have been suggestions that an earlier Latter-day Saint missionary effort was made by Elder Sidney Hanks, who, on his way to Tahiti, preached the gospel on Tongareva in 1857 (see Mere Fiore, unpublished research papers; see also Christopher Cooper, “Cook Islands: A Legacy of Faith,” *Church News*, September 6, 2003).

15. Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah*, 13–28. At that time, there were also notable numbers of Cook Islanders migrating to French Polynesia to work in the guano and phosphate mines, and the connection between the LMS church in Tahiti and that in Rarotonga was almost inseparable because their followers and missionaries made regular visits.

16. What follows relies on R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 34–35.

17. French Polynesia Mission, Historical Records 1900–30, CR 3039 Series 11 (7432), September 7, 1901, as cited in Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 34.

18. Aitutaki Maori had always displayed a strong sense of pride in their individual dialect. Tamatoa Ariki, Vaeruarangi Ariki, and Teurukura Ariki had previously committed themselves to the LMS efforts in the Pacific. Many of their sons served missions among the heathens. Tamatoa Ariki, in particular, assisted in the spread of the LMS throughout the Cook Islands (see Maretu, *Cannibals and Converts*, 36).

19. “Fritz and Carol Kruger: Keeping the Commandments Brings Blessings,” *Australia-New Zealand*

Newsletter [n.p., n.d.]. Fritz Bunge Kruger was born in Sāmoa in 1913 and joined the Church at age twelve before moving to New Zealand in 1937. In 1939 he set up the first bakery business in Avarua, Rarotonga.

20. Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 332; Mere Fiore, unpublished research papers.

21. *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2002), 318.

22. Aratangi Benioni, interview in Tokoroa, March 24, 2000.

23. Benioni, interview in Tokoroa, March 24, 2000; Lily M. Jonassen, interview in Auckland, March 24, 2000.

24. Lily M. Jonassen, interview in Auckland, March 24, 2000.

25. Mere Fiore, unpublished research papers.

26. Papongi Manea talks about his parents as early converts to the Church, Avarua Branch Conference, Rarotonga, 1997.

27. Pikika’a Benioni continued his translation work until his migration to New Zealand around 1960. His daughter, Mata, did much of the early typing of the Maori transcripts that required particular care (Aratangi Benioni, interview in Tokoroa, March 24, 2000).

28. “Fritz and Carol Kruger: Keeping the Commandments Brings Blessings,” *Australia-New Zealand Newsletter*.

29. Mere Fiore’s research indicates that the Hamons arrived a year earlier than that indicated in Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 334.

30. In her unpublished research papers, Mere Fiore says that death threats were made to Elder Hamon. However, Aratangi Benioni, who spent much time with the Hamons, could not recall any such death threats. She did remember that there was much negative resistance from members of other church denominations (Benioni, interview in Tokoroa, March 24, 2000).

31. Her legacy of strength is found in many of her descendants. I can still recall when Angaroa Williams, granddaughter of Emily, bore testimony to the legacy of her grandmother during the pioneer sesquicentennial meetings in Rarotonga in 1997. Williams also repeated this testimony at the Pioneers in the Pacific Conference, Lā’ie, Hawai’i, October 10, 1997.

32. Tangaroa Kainuku later became talking chief for the paramount chief, Kainuku Ariki, of Takitumu in Rarotonga. He also fell away from the Church but

never lost his testimony (see Tangaroa Kainuku, interview in Wellington, March 1998).

33. Duane Chadwick recalls entries from his missionary diary at a sesquicentennial meeting of Cook Islanders and Cook Islands returned missionaries (see “Special Session on Missionaries to the Cook Islands,” *Pioneers in the Pacific Conference*, Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, October 10, 1997).

34. Mimou Tom, “Presentation on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Aitutaki,” *Pioneers in the Pacific Conference*, Lā‘ie, October 10, 1997. Josephine Sadaraka, an early member of the Church in Aitutaki, continued to be a tower of strength to others and played a pivotal role in the conversion of many new members. Her son Sadaraka “Cookie” Sadaraka was a government senior official and successful businessman, and served for many years as district president in the Cook Islands.

35. Cited in Mere Fiore, collection of notes on Church history, Rarotonga, 1999. Among her notes are some loose documents from the Avarua Branch collection in Rarotonga.

36. Rena Ariki Jonassen, interview in Rarotonga, 1999. Rena affirms that this potential marriage was one reason that Queen Pa Ariki, who later became president of the House of Ariki and a committed Bahai, maintained a warm relationship with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout her life.

37. Henry Kanahele, “Special Session on Missionaries to the Cook Islands,” *Pioneers in the Pacific Conference*, Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, October 10, 1997.

38. Ropiha Campbell, interview in Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, March 25, 2000. Unbeknownst to Ropiha, the vehicle he was referring to was sold within that year to my father, who gave it to me in New Zealand. The engine ran perfectly for years but the body was full of holes as would be expected from its salty exposure. Friends called the car “holy vehicle,” and the marvelous wonder was that it never broke down. I sold it three years later when I departed from New Zealand.

39. John Taylor, “Politics and Culture Session on Cook Islands,” *Pioneers in the Pacific Conference*, Lā‘ie, Hawai‘i, October 10, 1997. The Cook Islands was part of the Samoan Mission in 1954, the New Zealand North Mission in 1966, Fiji Mission in 1971, and the Tahiti Papeete Mission in 1975. The Cook Islands is now part of the New Zealand Auckland Mission (*Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 318).

40. The Rarotongan Mission was organized on November 20, 1960, and continued until April 1966,

when it was absorbed into the New Zealand North Mission (Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea*, 335–36).

41. Cook Islanders have served in French Polynesia, Tonga, Federated States of Micronesia, United States, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and South America. Labor missionaries such as Patoa Benioni and Teina Ngatikaura served in the building of the Church College of Hawai‘i (now BYU–Hawai‘i), the Polynesian Culture Center, and the Hawai‘i Temple.

42. Significantly, the estimated total population of Cook Islands Maori in the early twenty-first century is around twenty thousand in the Cook Islands, over sixty thousand in New Zealand, and around twenty thousand in Australia. As a result, most Cook Islands members of the Church live outside of the Cook Islands.

43. President David O. McKay had a transit stopover visit in Aitutaki in 1955, and President Spencer W. Kimball made a transit stopover in Rarotonga in February 1981. Kimball’s visit allowed for a short service with Rarotonga Latter-day Saints to be held in the airport hangar at the Rarotonga International Airport (see *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, 318).

44. Over the years, the Cook Islands government and Latter-day Saint leaders have often requested representation at the Polynesian Cultural Center without success. Representations to Polynesian Cultural Center general management have included Cook Islands prime minister Sir Albert Henry in 1968, prime minister Sir Thomas Davis and paramount chief Makea Ariki in 1969, minister of cultural development Hon Tangata Simiona in 1970, and prime minister Sir Geoffrey Arama Henry in 1993.

45. Aratangi Benioni, interview in Tokoroa, March 24, 2000.

46. This includes growth in Church facilities as well. The recent relocation of a chapel in Arorangi, for instance, could not have occurred without assistance and sacrifice from Michael and Lily Jonassen. Though nonmembers, they support their children who have joined the Latter-day Saint faith (see Jonassen, interview in Auckland, March 24, 2000).

47. Dean R. Zimmerman, *Sentence Sermons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 91–92, citing Charles A. Callis, in Conference Report, April 1939, 126, and David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1964, 5.

48. Cook Islands Latter-day Saint sacrament speakers sometimes refer to the words of Elder Sterling W. Sill, who said, “One can get to heaven on half the effort that we usually burn up in going to hell” (in Conference Report, April 1947, 90).

