

Merritt Kellogg and the Pacific Dilemma

by David E. Hay

If the Bering Strait date line was correct, the missionaries in both Tonga and Samoa were observing Sabbath on the wrong day!

In 1897 the new Seventh-day Adventist medical clinic in the Kingdom of Tonga's administrative centre of Nuku'alofa added another link to the church's lengthening chain of medical institutions. Dr Merritt Kellogg, the supervisor, reached out confidently to the Polynesian people of Tonga, and success attended his efforts.

However, all was not well. He and his fellow workers, Edwin Butz and E. Hilliard, were concerned about what they believed to be an inconsistency between teaching and practice concerning one of the church's major doctrines.

Discussion often became animated between those holding the different viewpoints. Letters seeking advice went to church leaders in Tahiti, Australia and the United States. Ellen White received one too!

Merritt Kellogg's career began in the Battle Creek Sabbath school. In 1859 he set off westward for California, where, it appears, he was the first Adventist in the state. In 1861 he conducted a series of Bible lectures in San Francisco, and 14 people became Seventh-day Adventists.

Six years later he returned to the eastern United States to take a short medical course at Trall's Hygieo-Therapeutic College in New Jersey. The course lasted 12 months. He returned to California to join John Loughborough and Daniel Bordeau in their evangelistic campaigns. He spoke mainly on health topics. In 1887 he helped establish the Rural Health Retreat, later known as the St Helena Sanitarium.

One question had plagued Merritt Kellogg in the early 1870s. As Adventism reached beyond the shores of America, he wondered how believers could really observe God's seventh-day Sabbath on a round world.

John N. Andrews, the church's fore-

most apologist for the Sabbath, came to his rescue. In order to avoid confusion in round-the-world and Pacific travel, he pointed out the necessity for a day change line. He argued the advantages of implementing the Bering Strait's Line in the Pacific and urged Merritt Kellogg to accept the providence of God in granting humans the privilege of organising time. John Andrews's explanations proved persuasive.

Merritt Kellogg sailed into the South Pacific as a missionary doctor on the second voyage of the *Pitcairn* in 1893. The group included Benjamin Cady, E. Chapman, John Cole and Hattie Andre.

He spent some time in Australia and remarried, to a Broken Hill woman. They set off for the Pacific, eventually ar-

iving in the Western Samoan capital of Apia in 1896. He assisted Dr Frederick Braucht and volunteer Dudley Owen in erecting the South Pacific's first major medical institution—an impressive two-storey sanitarium, inland from the town's beach front.

On completion of this fine building he sailed for Tonga, arriving in Nuku'alofa during the latter half of 1897. Before long he had built a house and clinic facilities for health care.

Tonga's first Adventist missionaries, the E. Hilliards, had arrived from the United States on the *Pitcairn* two years earlier. Aware of the practice of those on the *Pitcairn*—of changing days at the 180° meridian—and recognising that the islands of Tonga, like those of Samoa, lay well to the east of this line, they established Sabbath observance according to western-hemisphere day sequence.

But the islands of Tonga followed the same days as Australia and New Zealand. The missionaries observed the seventh-day Sabbath on Sundays.

A year later, on the return of the *Pitcairn*, the Edwin Butzes arrived from service on Pitcairn Island. Another year later, the Merritt Kelloggs joined the two missionary families already there. The propriety of seventh-day Sabbath observance on Sundays became a topic of lively interest as they worried about the inconsistency existing between teaching and practice. But it wasn't that the establishment of Sabbath worship on Sundays was wrong!

John Andrews published a tract offering a solution to the growing problem of locating a day-change line in the Pacific. Published in 1871 and entitled "The Definitive Seventh Day," it enjoyed the support of church leaders. In essence, it advocated a Bering Strait date line.



Time and circumstances solved Merritt Kellogg's problem.

How's Your CPI?

by Ken Long

John Andrews's line proceeded through the Bering Strait and right on to Antarctica along the meridian of 168°36". The line passed to the east of the islands of Samoa, Niue and Tonga and only over water. Day change would occur at sea on crossing the meridian.

John Andrews's solution had commendable features, but subsequent events overruled even the remotest possibility of its serious acceptance.

From the 1850s travel across the Pacific increased significantly. As more ships plied the sea lanes it became necessary and urgent to have a permanently anchored day line. In 1884, representatives of 26 nations gathered in Washington, DC, to better organise world time.

By establishing the prime meridian of 0° at Greenwich in England, they logically caused day change to occur halfway around the world at 180°. In time this meridian became known as the International Date Line (IDL). It was where day change took place in the Pacific. To ensure that all islands of one country had the same day, the British Admiralty authorised the IDL to deviate around the islands on Pacific maps. This practical adjustment cared for the needs of Fiji, New Zealand, New Caledonia and Alaska.

On the *Pitcairn's* South Pacific voyages day change occurred at the 180° meridian. The missionaries on board, such as Edward Gates, knew that the line passed between the islands of Tonga and Fiji. German maps of the time also portrayed the same path for the IDL (see map elsewhere). Merritt Kellogg, E. Hilliard and Edwin Butz were indeed worried. While agreeing that John Andrews's Bering Strait line separated day sequence for the continents, they found real difficulty accepting the line's authority for the islands of the South Pacific. The church seemed to be advocating an IDL of 168°36"—but the missionaries observed an IDL of 180°. The difference was highly significant. If the Bering Strait line was correct, the missionaries in both Tonga and Samoa were observing Sabbath on the wrong day!

Counsel had been sought overseas. Benjamin Cady of Tahiti wasn't able to provide enlightenment. George Tenney wrote from Battle Creek advising the observance of days in harmony with the nearest continent—a proposition that would have meant fitting in with Australia and abandoning the growing practice of the nations in recognising the

180° meridian as the IDL.

Stephen Haskell, then teaching Bible at Avondale School for Christian Workers, offered an incredulous proposal—the observance of both Saturday and Sunday as holy until the issue could be sorted out! Merritt Kellogg replied by stating that God didn't ask for such a practice. He asked Stephen whether even he would follow his own advice!

The 19th century slipped into history without any resolution of the day-line problem. Merritt Kellogg transferred to Sydney, Australia, where he drew up plans for the new Wairoa Sanitarium. In 1901 he supervised its construction. During this time he received Ellen White's reply to his letter of concern about the church's position on the day line.

She urged undeviating commitment to the principles and practice of present truth. The message, as symbolised by the three angels of Revelation, she said, was to be brought before the people. This was the most important work at hand. And trying to solve the unessential problem of the day line really wasn't his task.

Ellen White had crossed the IDL at 180° twice and knew from personal experience that there need be no confusion about its impact on Sabbath observance. And she wouldn't advocate the Bering Strait's line, or another popular theory known as the Eden Day Line, in view of the growing acceptance in theory and practice of the 180° meridian as the IDL.

Time and circumstances solved Merritt Kellogg's problem. The Adventist Church recognised the IDL at 180°. Countries to the west of the line observe eastern (or Asiatic) days, while countries to the east follow western (or American) days.

With time, Tahiti, the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa changed to the western day sequence. The islands of Tonga, lying well to the east of 180°, didn't change.

Although Tonga observed the eastern day sequence, the Adventist Church in the last decade of the 19th century correctly established Sabbath observance on Sunday. Sunday is the right seventh day Sabbath for Tonga in relation to the 180° meridian—a meridian that became firmly established as the IDL for the nations of the world. **LB**

David E. Hay is the president of the Tonga and Niue Mission.

It was three minutes past five, Tuesday afternoon, October 17. Some 60,000 people were seated at Candlestick Park Stadium in San Francisco. In 17 minutes the third game of the 1989 World Series would begin.

Having beaten the San Francisco Giants in the first two games of the best-of-seven series, it looked promising for the Oakland Athletics. But San Francisco Giants catcher Terry Kennedy intended for his team to put an end to their dream.

Just 17 minutes before the first pitch, the stadium rumbled from movement deep within the earth—and all thoughts of baseball vanished.

"We heard Giant's batting coach Dusty Baker yell, 'Earthquake!'" Kennedy recalled.

"I knew something was wrong when I saw the first base dugout moving. I first thought to look for my wife in the stand."

"We found out where the priorities of life are. The World Series doesn't mean anything compared to what happened in the city tonight."

One minute winning the World Series was an all-consuming passion; the next it meant nothing. But it took a devastating earthquake to make the difference.

Sometimes our priorities need a shake. We become absorbed in our careers, our homes, our whatever. These things may be positive in themselves. But as their importance grows, our spiritual commitment can dim. Our priorities can blur.

We need to pause and evaluate our priorities—establish our own Christian Priority Index—CPI. Is the pursuit of the "good life" dominating our lives? Are we worrying needlessly about making ends meet? Have work commitments crowded out spiritual life?

Jesus says, "Make your spiritual life your number-one priority, and I'll ensure that your basic needs will be met."

Perhaps our CPI, our Christian Priority Index, needs a shake? **LB**

Ken Long, a solicitor, writes from Sydney, NSW.