

The Interpreter of the Times, Australasian Division

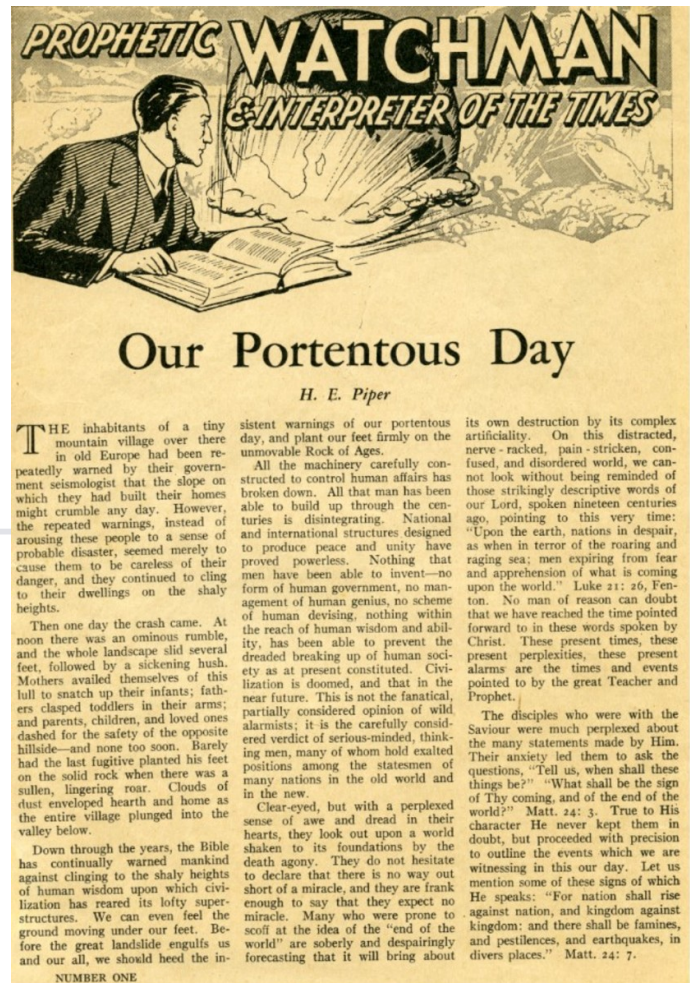
MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian, Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

In 1930 the Home Missions Department of the Australasian Division issued the first four numbers of a new paper titled *The Interpreter of the Times*. Individual titles were "The Hope of the Lost World,"

"A Book That Never Grows Old," "Was the Christ of Galilee the True Messiah?" and "The Coming Kingdom." These were similar in content to the Australasian version of the *Signs of the Times* but designed to be distributed door to door as free literature for the public.¹ No copies of the earliest issues are extant, but all indications are that the paper was a foldover sheet of four sides with minimal illustrations and without color. Albert Anderson, field secretary for the division, edited the issues with the assistance of youth leader Sydney Stratford²

There was very little promotion of the publication in the church periodicals, the Home Missions Department depending on local home mission leaders to receive and apportion quantities for their annual visitation campaigns that were generally boosted in the month of June.³ Occasional experiences with the visitation program were reported in the church magazines.⁴ Seventy-five thousand copies dealing with calendar reform were printed for the 1936 campaign.⁵ It was increased to 240,000 for the 1937 campaign.⁶



Prophetic Watchman & Interpreter of the Times title page, c. 1940.

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

By 1939 a separate editorial department was established at the division office, with Albert Piper as the chief editor.⁷ The title of the publication was changed to *Prophetic Watchman and Interpreter of the Times*. Three issues printed under this title are extant. They are undated but probably represent the 1940 campaign set of four:⁸ They were printed at the Signs Publishing Company; according to the manager, wartime conditions had made paper supplies difficult, but he had purchased a quantity from Germany just before the war had begun. He regarded its shipment to Australia as miraculous. This shipment enabled him to print what he described as “the long run” of the 1940 issues.⁹ An enduring scarcity of paper, however, meant that some publications had to be discontinued and others reduced in size. The *Prophetic Watchman and Interpreter of the Times* was not revived after the war years. It had survived for little more than a decade.

SOURCES

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“Announcing.” *Australasian Record* 40, no. 22 (June 1, 1936).

“Appointments and Transfers—Recommendations Passed by the 1939 Council.” *Australasian Record* 43, no. 40 (October 2, 1939).

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NOTES

1. R[euben] E. Hare, “Something New,” *Australasian Record* 34, no. 21 (May 26, 1930): 8.

2. “Nominations,” *Australasian Record* 34, no. 38/39 (September 29, 1930): 21.

3. “Announcing,” *Australasian Record* 40, no. 22 (June 1, 1936): 8.

4. E.g., F[rank] E. Lyndon, "Work with 'Signs' and 'Interpreter,'" *Australasian Record* 38, no. 38 (September 17, 1934): 6.
 5. A[lbert] W. Anderson, "Report of the Religious Liberty Department," *Australasian Record* 40, no. 39 (September 28, 1936): 1–5.
 6. Erwin E. Roenfelt, "Australasian Division Secretary's Report," *Australasian Record* 41, no. 36 (September 6, 1937): 1–3.
 7. "Appointments and Transfers—Recommendations Passed by the 1939 Council," *Australasian Record* 43, no. 40 (October 2, 1939): 5, 6.
 8. *Prophetic Watchman and Interpreter of the Times*, nos. 1, 2, 4, Shelf Periodicals, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW.
 9. J[ohn] J. Potter, "Signs Publishing Company," *Australasian Union Conference Bulletin*, no. 1 [September 1940], 12.
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