

Booklet

21

TALAFEKAU MO'ONI
EARLY ADVENTISM IN TONGA AND NIUE

By Milton Hook



Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

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A Heritage Series: Debut - Adventism Down Under before 1885
By Milton Hook

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.

He spent three years as a mission director in Papua New Guinea. His teaching years include primary, secondary and college level experience, especially in Bible subjects, in Australia, New Zealand and America. He is an ordained minister, married and the father of two sons.

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

Tonga consists of three main groups of islands. Tongatabu, meaning "sacred Tonga", is the large flat island in the south on which is located the capital, Nuku'alofa - a township meaning "a place of love". The central islands are called the Ha'apai group, a series of low-lying coral formations surrounded by blue lagoons and reefs. The northern islands or the Vava'u group are, by contrast, quite hilly, but there are no running streams. Rainwater supplies, at times, can become critically low.

When Captain Cook wintered in the Tongan group for three months during his third and last voyage (1777) he was given a very hospitable reception. This led him to name them the Friendly Islands. Unbeknown to him the chiefs were plotting to kill him and his entire crew and take over his two ships. Only disagreement among the chiefs concerning the timing of their attack saved Cook's party.

Three years beforehand (1774) Cook had discovered the coral island of Niue to the east of Tonga. There he had received an openly hostile reception and named that speck in the ocean Savage Island. However, the nineteenth century found the Polynesians of both Niue and Tonga to be both generous and peace-loving.

These islands were first introduced to Christianity by the London Missionary Society, but not without the loss of life. Three young missionaries were murdered on Tongatabu in 1799 and the remainder of their band hid in caves until they could escape to

Australia on a passing ship. Almost thirty years later the Wesleyan Mission Society assumed responsibility for Tonga, eventually converting first Ha'apai, then Vava'u, and finally Tongatabu to Christianity. Niue remained within the London Missionary Society domain and those once fierce inhabitants became staunch church adherents.

Seventh-day Adventist missionaries first called at Tonga in June 1891 when the PITCAIRN sailed south through the three main groups.¹ Adventist literature was sold to the few Europeans and several religious meetings were held in a disused school house in the Ha'apai group.

During the 1893 voyage of the PITCAIRN Doctor Merritt Kellogg did some passing medical work on Niue but no landing was made in Tonga because of a measles epidemic sweeping the group at the time. Neither did the PITCAIRN call during its third voyage. The fourth voyage of the PITCAIRN brought the first resident Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to Tonga. After calling briefly at Niue again, the boat arrived at Nuku'alofa on August 30, 1895. Pastor Edward Hilliard, his wife Ida, and two-year-old daughter, Alta, disembarked and found temporary quarters for a few months while he built a four-roomed cottage for themselves.

Ida Hilliard was a school-teacher. As soon as they were settled on the island, about November 1895, she began to conduct school in their temporary home and later in their own cottage. She began with just one pupil but numbers grew to twenty-eight at one time. To accommodate the increase Hilliard built a separate school room, little more than four-by-seven metres, near his cottage. Parents paid \$3 each quarter for a child to attend. Except for 1898, this school operated continuously until mid-1899 when the Hilliards soon after sailed to Australia.

The Hilliards had also taken two Tongan boys into their home in an endeavour to train them as future missionaries. Hilliard himself

¹ For more details of this and later voyages see the booklet "Dame of the Deep"

did part-time carpentry work on the island to bring in a little extra cash and at the same time gradually learned the local language. He later translated a few tracts into Tongan.

In August 1896 when the PITCAIRN called during its fifth voyage, Edwin and Florence Butz, with their little daughter Alma, arrived to assist the Hilliards. The Butz family had been located on Pitcairn Island and brought with them Pitcairners Sarah and Maria Young, sisters trained as nursing and household aides. Sarah assisted in the Hilliard home and eventually accompanied them to Australia to do her full nursing training. Maria lived with the Butz family who were occupied in nursing work. Kellogg, who had married a South Australian, Eleanor Nolan, in 1895, brought his new wife to Tonga in September 1897 to join forces with the Butz family and Young sisters in medical work. At times their patients were charged a fee but many treatments were given free. Kellogg built a wooden European-style timber home for himself which was later used for many years as the mission superintendent's home. It was located on less than a hectare of rented government land at Magaia on the outskirts of Nuku'alofa.

Before Hilliard had left he reported that a Sabbath School of thirty-one members met regularly. This was composed mainly of the school children and the missionaries themselves. Parents of the children attended only spasmodically.

When the PITCAIRN called in June 1899 on its sixth and final voyage a small prefabricated building was off-loaded and put together piece by piece. First it served both as a mission home and a chapel for religious services. Eighteen months later it was dismantled and rebuilt as the Nuku'alofa church. It measured barely five metres wide and about ten metres long. The PITCAIRN also transported the Butz family to Vava'u because it was felt that the concentration of missionaries at Nuku'alofa was too great. But this proved to be an abortive step for it wasn't long before the Butz' returned to Nuku'alofa to fill the gap made by the Hilliards' departure.

Just before Hilliard left Tonga he gathered a small band of missionaries into his home on Sunday, September 10, 1899, and organised the group into a church. The following Sabbath, September 16, the names of the four charter members were officially accepted. They were the Butz and Kellogg families. This hasty action seemed not only pretentious but was also irregular because at least the Kelloggs had no letters of transfer from their home churches. It was done, nevertheless, with the conviction that some in Nuku'alofa would soon be baptised and join their group.

Ironically, the first baptism of a Tongan appears to have taken place in Sydney. In an 1899 letter from Sydney Pastor Stephen Haskell reported that Pastor George Starr had recently baptised a Tongan man who had first accepted the Saturday Sabbath in Tonga. His name and history remain a mystery.

The first to be baptised in Tongan waters was Charles ("Ned") Edwards, a European resident who had been a heavy drinker. He mended his ways and assisted Kellogg in medical work. Butz baptised him on Sunday, December 10, 1899. Soon after his baptism he married fellow nurse, Maria Young. Charles, in addition to his nursing, served as treasurer and clerk of the Nuku'alofa church for almost twenty years. Maria, too, continued her nursing and became a household name as the mid-wife in the community. She attended the birth of Queen Salote and other members of the royal family.

Another person closely associated with Kellogg was a young part-Tongan named David or Horace Holland. He worked as Kellogg's house servant and then accompanied the Hilliard family to Australia where he attended the Avondale School in 1900 and 1901. There he was baptised but later broke school rules and faded from the scene.

The Kelloggs, together with little Merritt, Jr., who had been born the previous year in Nuku'alofa, transferred back to Australia in May 1900. That left the Butz family to continue their medical work and lead out in the mission enterprise. Before leaving, the Kelloggs were delighted to witness another baptism in the lagoon. Butz baptised William Palmer, a resident Englishman, on Sunday afternoon, March 17, 1900. His wife, Alice, was baptised six months later. Edwards was largely instrumental in persuading Palmer to become a Seventh-day Adventist. During the PITCAIRN visits Palmer had fled from his home rather than meet the new missionaries. At that time he wanted nothing to do with them.

Butz was due furlough at the beginning of 1901, but before he went he held one further baptism for five on Sabbath, December 22, 1900. On that occasion the candidates were a business man, Arthur Tyndale; a European trader and his Tongan wife, Mr and Mrs Stevens; a Mr Charles and a Mr Wright. The latter requested baptism but not membership in the church. The fact that Butz was then absent for over twelve months and therefore could not fortify the Christian experience of these people may have contributed to their apostasy soon after.

During the absence of Butz the Palmer and Edwards families worshipped together. No major breakthrough had been experienced among the Tongan population.

The Butz family returned in 1902. During this second term of mission work he baptised Martin and Hans Walde, Norwegian traders, in two separate services during 1903. Hans married a Norwegian woman with whom he had corresponded but had never seen prior to her arrival in Tonga. A few days after she arrived they married. She was baptised by Butz the following year.

For ten weeks in the last half of 1903 Butz toured outlying islands distributing tracts and trying to arouse some interest in his message. An old translator called Uga had helped him with the production of these tracts. One tract was on the dangers of tobacco smoking. There existed in Tonga, he wrote, a "trinity of filth" - tobacco smoking, kava drinking, and pork eating. His abhorrence was sharpened in an incident during his 1903 trip. Having suffered sea sickness on one leg of the journey he retired early, lying down on a mat in a corner of a native house as the rain poured down outside. A native minister who had been his fellow traveller sat at the fire in the centre of the hut. Locals welcomed their minister with a kava drinking party until a late hour. Their smoking filled the hut with fumes and Butz endured a throbbing headache. These social habits, he observed, were the main obstacles preventing acceptance of the Seventh-day Adventist message.

Butz returned from his trip and baptised two more in January 1904. One was Timothy Marl, a Tongan young man. The other was Stanley Briggs, a European married to a Tongan woman. Briggs did not wish to be placed on the church membership roll but remained a friend of the mission for years. His little daughter, Millie, was fostered by the Butz family and accompanied them to Australia when they left Tonga.

Throughout 1904 Butz made improvements to the church furniture and mission home. Florence Butz painted most of the home, inside and out. The whole family, including daughter Alma and three part-Tongan foster children, also built a small school behind the church. It measured little more than eight-by-three metres. This was completed in time for the arrival of Ella Boyd, an American who had trained at the Avondale School and taught in Australian church schools.

Boyd opened the school at Nuku'alofa with twelve pupils on November 28, 1904, and the following year it reached its maximum capacity of twenty-eight (they owned only fourteen double desks).

The parents were charged a fee of twenty cents per week. Even in the classroom the health emphasis was maintained by using Vesta Farnsworth's book, "The House We Live In", as a reader. The title page stated it was "a book for home reading, intending to assist mothers in teaching their children how to care for their bodies, and the evil effects of narcotics and stimulants".

Prior to the departure of the Butz family on December 27, 1905, one further attempt was made to reach out beyond Tongatabu. Accompanied by Timothy they all went to the nearby island of Eua on a working holiday. Living in tents as a home base they visited all the villages and gave away tracts. Butz conducted a few public meetings in a coconut-leaf school house and came away feeling some seed was sown.

Replacements for the Butz family arrived in the persons of Bert and Lily Thorpe, both nursing graduates of the Sydney Sanitarium and on their first overseas mission appointment. Their arrival overlapped the departure of Butz enabling the outgoing missionaries to introduce the Thorpes to the local people and customs. The change in culture shocked the Thorpes. During their tour with Butz they witnessed a native breakfast of jellyfish and green bananas. Thorpe said the sight, was "so revolting that we could not remain very long". He was also bemused by the old women in mourning who powdered their hair with lime, making it stand upright as if they had taken fright.

On the day of his departure Butz hurriedly baptised Thor Jensen. During his ten year stay Butz had baptised twelve Europeans and two Tongans. Only "Ned" Edwards, the Palmers, and Timothy remained attached to the church. After the Butz era (1896-1905), there followed a period of seven lean years at Nuku'alofa in which one person was baptised- Joni Latu in 1910. He later married Edward's daughter, Myrtle, and was ordained as a Seventh-day Adventist minister.

Conversions to Adventism in Tonga were rare. One reason was the apparent lack of separate church identity. In those days the International Date Line was officially drawn to the west of Tonga. As in the Cook Islands, all Christians in Tonga worshipped on the same day. The Adventists worshipped on Saturday according to proper overseas reckoning. The other Christians also worshipped on that day, believing it to be Sunday, for their earliest Christian missionaries had not made allowances for the dateline. The proper day of worship was therefore not a distinguishing issue. The dangers of unclean meats, tobacco and kava were the main rallying points for Tongan minds. On the other hand prophetic interpretations with the related issues of latter-day events and the Saturday Sabbath all appealed to the European mind. For this reason some success was achieved initially among the small population of whites while the Tongans were happy to remain worshipping in their established churches.

The missionaries persisted educating the youngsters. Their long range goal was to convert and train them as mission workers. Boyd's school operated a morning session for children of Europeans. An afternoon session was held for Tongan children in which the pace of learning was naturally slower because their grasp of English was minimal. Most of the afternoon lessons therefore revolved around learning to write, spell, and read English. Bible and drawing lessons were added.

Boyd returned to Australia at the end of 1906 and was replaced by a cousin, Nellie Sisley, a nursing graduate of the Sydney Sanitarium who had taken up teaching instead. That year (1907) brought a flood of enrolments. Lily Thorpe assisted by teaching some on her back verandah. Bert Thorpe added a room onto the side of the school, almost doubling its size. Half-way through the year Myra Ford, a fresh graduate from the Avondale School, arrived to help Sisley cope with about sixty pupils.

Thorpe had distributed tracts throughout the island groups of the north, meeting with good success especially in Ha'apai. One of

the leading men in that group sent two of his children to Sisley's school in 1907. It was these favourable contacts which led soon after to mission extension into Ha'apai.

When the Thorpe family and Sisley left at the end of 1907 Palmer was appointed to direct the Tongan mission. He had taken an active role ever since his baptism, conducting Tongan-language services regularly. He served as director for four years. During that time he translated "Bible Readings for the Home Circle" into the Tongan language and secured two hectares for a mission school at Faleloa on Poa Island, Ha'apai. For decades it remained a major centre for Adventism in Tonga.

Ella Boyd returned to Tonga to teach for the year 1908, pioneering at Faleloa while Ford continued teaching at Nuku'alofa. One of the brighter boys at Nuku'alofa, Finau Va'imolo, otherwise known as "Willie", accompanied Palmer to Australia to help with the production of "Bible Readings for the Home Circle" and gain some nursing training. Two other students transferred with Boyd to Faleloa in May. She taught approximately thirty students in a windowless native hut which was rented from a local family. Her only equipment was a small blackboard and easel, a folding stool, a broken chair, and a few books. The pupils first sat on floor mats but by the end of the year some rough desks had been built.

Towards the end of 1908 Harold and Lily Piper arrived to replace Boyd at Faleloa. The Pipers were both graduates of the Avondale School Teaching Course. Enrolment increased to over forty in 1909 and one local family vacated their large home to make room for a bigger school. Officially the established Faleloa School was opened on July 2, 1909, with much feasting, singing and speech making. Sisley, who had returned to teach at the beginning of the year, and replaced Ford, came with the Nuku'alofa students to exchange gifts with those at Faleloa. It was a happy meeting of all those connected with the Adventist mission.

It was Piper and Palmer who had built the proper school building and mission house at Faleloa in 1909. Before the school year concluded two young men were baptised at the beach by Palmer. Pipers found the workload at Faleloa very taxing. From 5.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. they were occupied in the school and mission station schedule. Lily, whose health was not robust even before they landed in Tonga, grew weak with chronic dysentery. They quickly returned to New Zealand after less than eighteen months at Faleloa.

Boyd returned to teach for a third term but this time she came as a married woman. She had married a New Zealander, Leonard Paap, just before they sailed for Tonga. They brought with them Bofaiva Va'imolo, otherwise known as "Vai", "Willie's" sister who had been staying at the Avondale School throughout 1909. Paap had completed ministerial and teaching courses in America. "Vai" would help them in the Faleloa school while Sisley, assisted by a Tongan girl named Tuna, continued at Nuku'alofa with forty pupils until mid-1910. Sisley then returned to America. Eva Edwards transferred from the Avondale School to replace her for the last half of the year.

By 1911 the education work was rapidly fading. Very few were attending at Faleloa and there were only about eighteen pupils at Nuku'alofa. Apparently Palmer found it increasingly difficult to justify the long term strategy for winning converts and training mission workers. Church administration always tended to view the short term baptismal statistics as all important. The schools were only generating baptisms in ones and twos.

About June 1911 the Paaps left Palmer himself to maintain the station at Faleloa. Edward's school in Nuku'alofa closed soon after and she returned to Australia. At the end of the year Palmer took employment at the store in Nuku'alofa which he had sold earlier. He also worked as a government interpreter and translator but continued to support the mission as best he could.

The 1904-11 period in which mission activity centred almost entirely around the Nuku'alofa and Faleloa schools was characterised by frequent staff changes. The nine different teachers spent no more than two years of continuous service in any one location. Even though baptisms were few, in later years many converts traced their links to the Adventist mission back to those school days. It only took a few years before administration returned to the philosophy of using schools as their evangelistic tool.

A significant advance during this era was the monthly publication of a Tongan-language missionary paper, "Talafekau Mo'oni" (Faithful Messenger). First issued in 1909, its production was largely dependent on the translator at Avondale Press, Frances (Nicholas) Waugh, assisted by various Tongan students in attendance at the Avondale School. The paper does not appear to have been canvassed as vigorously as some other island-language missionary magazines.

A new era began with the coming of Pastor George Stewart and his wife, Evelyn, to direct the Tongan mission. It was their first experience among Pacific islanders and they started by learning the language. He reported, "On our arrival early in 1912 we found things practically at a standstill, except for the meetings which were conducted in the Nuku'alofa church by Brother Palmer". Stewart first rebuilt the school at Faleloa after a hurricane had virtually destroyed it. He also ran revival meetings because he found all except four folk had compromised church standards. Stewart was joined by the Thorpe family returning for their second term of service in Tonga. They had retreated south from Java, suffering badly with malaria. Palmer was left to hold the fort at Nuku'alofa and Stewart instructed the Thorpes to enter the Vava'u group.

Leaving his wife and little daughter, Elva, in Nuku'alofa, Bert took passage on an inter-island steamer to explore accommodation in Vava'u. The trip was a stormy ordeal. He became so sea-sick he

began vomiting blood. On arriving he fell to a dose of dysentery. Despite his woes he arranged for temporary accommodation at Neiafu, the main town and harbour in the group. The rest of his family joined him a week later.

Thorpe generated some interest in Bible studies both among the local Europeans and Tongans. In May the following year (1913) he was joined by Henele (Henry) and Laitipa Ma'afu and children. Ma'afu originated from the neighbouring Lau group, Fiji. He was a proven soul winner and sometime teacher. Sadly, their eldest daughter, ten-year-old Vetenia (Virginia), died of tuberculosis later that same year. The family were then transferred to Faleloa to take charge of that mission station. He was ordained and stayed on until mid-1915 when he too became weakened with tuberculosis. They returned to his home village and he passed away in December.

Butz paid a visit in 1914 and baptised eight-year-old Elva Thorpe in addition to the Va'imolo duo, "Willie" and "Vai". "Vai" had just returned from her second spell of work and study at the Avondale School and Press. Joni Latu, who had begun at the same time at Avondale, stayed on to continue his studies.

At that time some definite plans began to emerge for pioneering Niue Island to the east of the Tongan group. A young girl from that island, Vaiola ("Vai") Malama Kerisome, who had been trained in Samoa and furthered her education at the Avondale School (1910-12) had been relaying requests for a missionary teacher as early as 1911. These requests were generated by Tonga, the deacon of the Titikaveka church, Rarotonga, who paid his own fare to Niue, his homeland, so that he could pioneer there with the Adventist message. A missionary family was appointed to sail from New Zealand but sickness prevented them reaching Niue. Finally, in mid-1915, "Vai" Kerisome herself returned home to witness among her own people.

Kerisome started Bible studies in her home at Alofi, opened a school with classes three times each week, and conducted three Sabbath School classes. Her enthusiastic work prompted the appointment of Septimus and Edith Carr who arrived in May 1916. They visited all of the eleven villages and began to learn the language. Bitter opposition was received from the London Missionary Society parson. Nevertheless, Carr's meetings were well attended.

While these advance moves were being made on Niue some changes in missionary personnel were taking place in Tonga. Hubert Tolhurst and Pearl Philips had both graduated from the Missionary Course at Avondale in 1914, married in January 1915, and the following month embarked for Tonga. They located at Faleloa to revive the school although neither were trained teachers. On March 29 they began with thirty pupils and before long had reached capacity with ten more. Classes were conducted in the mornings only, and the few boys who lived in grass huts on the mission property tilled the gardens in the afternoon.

Ma'afu, because of worsening tuberculosis, had left Faleloa just a few months after Tolhursts' arrival. His departure coincided with the Stewarts' return to New Zealand because of health problems. The day before Stewart left Nuku'alofa he had baptised three young men - Viii Alo, Lanivia, and Taniala Aisea, the latter being a boy from Niue Island. Heavy rain marred the service so most of the proceedings were held on Stanley Briggs' front verandah just metres from the beach.

When Stewart left for New Zealand the services for the handful at Nuku'alofa were once again left in the care of Palmer and the separate Sabbath School for Tongans was eventually discontinued. Alice Palmer taught a school for European children for a time. Tolhursts continued at Faleloa, and the Thorpes at Neiafu. Thorpe reported the first baptisms in the Vava'u group took place in 1915. This small group included young men such as

the government school-teacher Famatau, as well as Lasitani, and Mate - a 135 kilogram head man at the local government hospital. "Willie" Va'imolo worked at the same hospital and exerted a good influence among the staff.

Four months after Tolhurst arrived at Faleloa he tried an evangelistic series at the neighbouring village of Lotofoa. Hundreds of Tongan young men had gone to the war arena in Europe. Interest in world news was at high pitch and Tolhurst capitalised on the military events, preaching by hurricane lamplight on the "Fate of Turkey" and "Armageddon". However, the minister of the established church whipped up opposition and persuaded the locals not to attend. The meetings folded and Tolhurst conducted a Bible doctrines class for a dozen young men on his mission station instead. Relatives of these students later invited Tolhurst to hold meetings at Fotua near Faleloa, and also at Fakakakai on Ha'ano Island to the north. Returning from Ha'ano on one occasion Tolhurst was wrecked on the reef and would have perished if someone ashore hadn't spotted his predicament and taken a canoe out to rescue him.

Poa Island, where Tolhurst was located, was almost joined at the southern tip to Lifuka Island by a coral reef and sand-bars. At low tide he would cross on horseback without danger to get supplies at the port, Pangai. At other times the junction became a lethal channel known to take man and beast to a watery grave. On one occasion Tolhurst nearly lost his life while dashing to get medical help for his badly cut hand. His horse was twice swept off its feet but managed to swim to safety while Tolhurst clung grimly to its neck.

To the north at Vava'u the Adventist mission was strengthening under Thorpe's leadership. Over two-hectares of land were leased about half a kilometre from the Neiafu township. A mission home and a school-cum-church was built on the property. They called this centre, "Mizpah". It was dedicated on March 28, 1917, in the presence of various government dignitaries and about two

hundred others, including the Tolhursts. School enrolment at the time had risen to approximately fifty. Deva Thorpe, Bert's niece, had come to relieve the heavy teaching schedule.

The Tolhurst's return journey from the dedication to their own mission station was not a pleasant one. They were forbidden passage on a large boat operated by another denomination. The same church group did, however, finally relent and allow them to travel on one of their smaller boats. It was overcrowded. They attempted to sail out of indented Neiafu harbour but the open sea was too rough so they put to shore at the point and slept the night on mats in a Tongan house. All the following day they lay on the cutter's deck, horribly sea-sick and soaked with salt water. By the second night they managed to reach the most northerly island of the Ha'apai group and there they slept again on mats ashore. On the final leg neither the sea nor their stomachs were any calmer.

At Tolhurst's expense a large room was added in 1917 to the mission home at Faleloa in order to accommodate girls attending the school. The boys were housed in grass huts on the mission station. In all, there were about forty students attending. Year-end exercises included the singing of a cantata by the school children, prize-giving for good behaviour, and prizes for the boy and girl who had located the most birds nests during the school term. Tolhurst had taken the novel step of forming a branch of the Gould League of Bird Lovers and sixteen students had signed the pledge to protect birds and their nests.

Like Nuku'alofa and Neiafu, Faleloa initially produced only a few baptismal candidates. Conflicting evidence surrounds the exact number and names baptised during the first decade of operations at Faleloa. At most there were twelve candidates, with perhaps three or more being re-baptised. One member was certainly Tolhurst's eighteen-year-old interpreter, Semisi. When Pastor Calvin Parker visited the station in 1918 the Faleloa church was organised on Sabbath, April 7. There were just nine members, including the Tolhursts, who comprised the charter group.

With increased accommodation at Faleloa the school enrolment rose to sixty in 1918. The stress of teaching so many, in addition to supervising those staying at the mission station, taxed the health of the Tolhursts. Twelve months beforehand Parker made the comment, "They need our earnest prayers in their isolation. They are not as strong and robust as we would like to see them". His concern was no doubt heightened by the knowledge that Faleloa had already been the site where two missionaries had returned to their homeland desperately ill, i.e., Lily Piper and Henele Ma'afu.

On November 15, 1918, Tolhurst rode across the straits to Pangai for mail and supplies unaware of the enormity of the influenza epidemic in that region. The following day, when he returned to Faleloa, he went down with the dreaded disease. Pearl developed the same symptoms a few days later. His diary indicates they were prone to lesser chills and common colds. In fact, Pearl took ill with the common cold just prior to leaving Australia. But this epidemic was a more virulent variety leaving fatalities in its wake world-wide.

By the end of November Hubert had recovered but Pearl grew worse. At that time there was no nurse or medic at Pangai, no boats passed the island, and her condition was deteriorating so rapidly it became impossible to transport her to far away Neiafu. At times Hubert would have to sit up all night and tend her. Should he ask church members to risk their own lives in the hurricane season and sail to Neiafu? Could a suitable boat be found? Could other Protestants summon help? Apparently not. There was much agonising in prayer.

Day after day Pearl would whisper between coughing spells, "Is there any boat on the horizon?" She was finally resigned to her extreme isolation and rested her case in God's hands. Some days she rallied a little and hope would glimmer for a recovery. On other days the fever would rage and her mind

would wander. Her twenty-eighth birthday, March 10, was one of those days. Tolhurst's diary entry for Friday, March 14, bears the plaintiff record, "My darling passed to rest at 3.00 p.m. Laid my darling to rest as the sun was sinking to rest on preparation day". He never fully recovered from that devastating experience. By the sea-shore, facing the rising sun, he buried his heart at Faleloa.

This tragedy highlighted the wisdom, indeed, dire necessity for missions to have their own small boats, especially for emergencies. In such isolation, the Tolhursts were extremely vulnerable. Qualified nurses like the Thorpes may have fared better under the same circumstances. However, the irony of the situation was that during the four years when the Tolhursts were isolated at Faleloa the Thorpes were located near the government hospital at Neiafu. Furthermore, Doctor Alfred Semmens and his wife, Emma, Adventists with years of nursing experience were working at the Neiafu Hospital in 1918/19. In retrospect, wiser deployment would have located the Thorpes at Faleloa with their nursing experience, and the Tolhursts at Neiafu where their lack of medical training could be compensated by proximity to both the hospital and the Semmenses.

After Pearl Tolhurst's parents received the news of her death her father wrote, "We feel deeply burdened about the work in Ha'apai and will gladly release another of our girls if it will help, till another worker is appointed". It was not an idle promise. Pearl's sister, Elsmer, was persuaded to give up her boyfriend for the mission cause, marry Tolhurst two years later, and together work in Tonga for many years.

When Tolhurst left Faleloa, some three months after Pearl's death, local members Musia and his wife, Mary, cared for the mission station until Bernard and Violet Hadfield arrived the following year. Arthur and Amy Powell had already arrived to replace the Thorpes in Vava'u. An American couple, Pastor Robert Smith and his wife, Frances, transferred from Hawaii in 1920 to superintend the Tongan mission until early 1927.

Frances Smith reopened the mission school at Nuku'alofa with about forty boys and girls. Maggie Ferguson, a government school-teacher from Western Australia, joined the mission late in 1920 and continued to operate the school. Joni Latu assisted by teaching the Bible classes in the Tongan language.

Under Smith's leadership the Tongan mission entered a new era. With care and forethought he strengthened the Adventist cause. A small boat was bought for \$120 to be used by the folk at Faleloa. They named it the TALAFEKAU (Messenger).

The issuing of the missionary magazine, "Talafekau Mo'oni", had ceased so Smith reactivated that project in January 1922. A newly baptised member at Faleloa, Beaua, and his wife, Mafi, went to Buresala, Fiji, to set type and proof-read this publication at the print shop located there in the training school. It was thereafter issued bi-monthly. A Tongan hymnal of fifty songs was also printed at Buresala, for up to that time they had used a Wesleyan hymn-book in the Tongan language. In addition, Thorpe's daughter, Elva, translated "Steps to Christ" into Tongan.

The concept of holding a camp meeting for all members in Tonga was introduced by Smith. The first of these gatherings took place in June 1922 at Nuku'alofa. There was a representation from both the Faleloa and Neiafu churches to fellowship with the Nuku'alofa church.

Smith also determined to concentrate on educating only the older students, ones who showed promise as potential mission workers. For this purpose he established a training centre in 1923 near Houma in the south-west of Tongatabu. It was called the Alimoni School, meaning "the hidden school", because it was located in a remote corner of the island far away from the Nuku'alofa township. It proved to be too small and too difficult to access during the rainy season. A more suitable property was found at Vaini and there the training school made a fresh start in January 1926.

The 1920's was also the era of self-supporting missionaries in Tonga. The Powells worked on this basis in Vava'u from 1920 until they left in 1926. Ferguson returned in 1924 after eighteen months absence and supported herself by operating a thriving school in Vava'u. Edmund ("Tonga") and Elsie Mitchell also arrived about 1924 and supported themselves for some years while doing missionary work. It was on his property that the training school at Vaini was established.

Similar self-supporting work was done on Niue Island from 1924 onwards. The Carrs, during their stay from 1916 to 1919, had established three thatch meeting houses - one at the main town, Alofi, another in the south at Avatele, and a third in the north at Sialiuta. The Aloft church was organised in 1918 and the Carrs transferred to Fiji in November 1919. Ephraim and Agnes Giblett replaced them from 1920 to 1924. Prior to Giblett's departure, "Vai" Kerisome had married Allan Head, an English trader on the island. Without pay she continued the mission cause single-handedly at Aloft by conducting a Sabbath School for the children, translating "Patriarchs and Prophets" into the Niuean language, and keeping in touch with the other four baptised members on the island, including an old man, Nanu Pasia, at Avatele.

Combined membership totals for both Niue and Tonga never rose above one hundred until 1946. Except for New Caledonia it had the slowest growth rate of all the Pacific Island groups. One reason was the lack of distinction between Saturday and Sunday worship. Another reason, wrote Lily Thorpe, was the deep-seated drug abuse. From childhood the Tongans smoked tobacco and drank kava. These habits, she said, were ingrained and a part of their social etiquette. To refuse the pipe or kava bowl was interpreted as an insult and any reformer would become a pariah. Many Tongans agreed the Adventist message was true but they were not prepared to forego their social status and live differently to the mainstream.

The missionaries' emphasis on schools for the Tongans was, after all, a long-term strategy for conversion. Later, many converts acknowledged the influence of these schools.

Like all Pacific Island groups, except Pitcairn, Tonga has shown a rapid growth rate since the Second World War years.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times", the "Home Missionary" the "Australasian Record", the "Missionary Leader", the Nuku'alofa Church Membership Record Book, the diaries of Hubert Tolhurst, and the author's personal collection of pioneer data.

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