

Booklet

22

LOTU ASO FITU
EARLY ADVENTISM IN SAMOA

By Milton Hook



Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

LOTU ASO FITU

Early Adventism in Samoa

Milton Hook



Produced by the South Pacific Division Department of Education
148 Fox Valley Road, Wahroonga, NSW 2076
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.

The Navigator Islands, or Samoa, are divided into two groups. Tutuila, Manua, and a few smaller islands in the eastern section known as American Samoa. The main centre is at Pago Pago. Upolu and Savai'i Islands are called Western Samoa with Apia as their capital. The Seventh-day Adventist Church (Lotu Aso Fitu) first entered Upolu Island.

German traders settled in Western Samoa in 1855. Later, Saluafata, east of Apia, became a coaling port for the German navy. On the other hand the sheltered harbour of Pago Pago became a coaling port for the American navy. British warships also used the area for refuelling.

After the Berlin Treaty was annulled in 1899 Britain withdrew its presence from the area in exchange for Tonga, Niue, and the Solomon Islands. German administration prevailed in Western Samoa until the First World War, while the American influence continued in the eastern islands. It was an unusual circumstance that American Adventists should gain ready acceptance in German Samoa rather than in the eastern sector where American influence was strong. German surnames among the early missionary doctors may have been of some benefit.

Like any other culture in isolation the early Samoans developed unique customs. It was, for example, a very serious breach of etiquette to talk of dogs or pigs while in the presence of a chief. To do so was interpreted as a disguised slur about the chief himself. Another custom was faatoa or self-punishment. A person guilty of a

crime was often forced to bang his head with a large stone until the blood flowed or throw spiny fish into the air and catch them with bare hands. The poisonous spines caused intense pain. Sometimes culprits were even forced to bite a poisonous root called tevi. The person's mouth would swell and they would experience terrible agony for a considerable time.

Early Samoan religion taught that the spirits of the dead lived at the western tip of Savai'i Island. Samoans venerated their ancestors and imagined the departed ones spoke to them through the actions of animals and birds. Each family group had their particular species which they watched closely for signs and then they interpreted the omens.

Christianity was first brought to Samoa by Methodist Tongans from the south-west in 1828. Other groups followed - first, John Williams and the London Missionary Society, then the Roman Catholic mission in Savai'i, and finally the Mormons in 1888.

Some Seventh-day Adventist missionaries called in at Apia harbour on their way to Australasia. The boats exchanged mail bags but passengers did not disembark. The first real contact was the visit of the PITCAIRN in 1891.

All Adventist visitors commented about Samoan Christians worshipping on Saturday believing it to be Sunday. This was caused by the earliest Christian missionaries, who came from the western side of the International Date Line, continuing their weekly sequence when crossing to Samoa. Twelve months after the visit of the PITCAIRN the calendar confusion was corrected. King Malietoa decreed that Tuesday, July 5, 1892, would be Tuesday, July 4.

The PITCAIRN'S stopover in Apia in 1891 lasted three weeks. The missionaries hired a house near the post office and canvassed books. Their Saturday services were attended by a handful of English and American acquaintances, including Captain Turner, a

visiting businessman and nephew of the man who built the PITCAIRN.

Four years later the PITCAIRN called again. Dr. Frederick Braucht, after failing to gain acceptance in Fiji with his American qualifications, had continued with the boat to Samoa. With him was his wife, Mina. The five months voyage was undoubtedly a real trial for her. She was about two months pregnant when leaving America. Furthermore, the happy anticipation of a family reunion in Rarotonga was dashed on arrival. Just a month before coming to Rarotonga, Mina's missionary mother, Sarah Owen, had passed away. Mina's father, Dudley, together with his two youngest children, had therefore joined the Braucht's to assist in Samoa. James McCoy's daughter, Emily, had already embarked at Pitcairn to be a nursing assistant for Dr. Braucht.

The missionaries arrived in Apia on October 22, 1895. They discovered there was only one doctor living in Apia. He was an old German army surgeon whose methods were antiquated and his abrupt manner didn't endear him to the Samoans. A dentist from another island group would call only once a year. There appeared, therefore, to be a real need for a man like Braucht. Upon application he was accepted by the German administration. He paid a \$12 annual licence fee and was then allowed to work as both a doctor and dentist.

At Matautu - tai, on the eastern end of Apia harbour, the missionaries found an old three-storey building to rent at \$6 per month. It was formerly a cooper's shop and storage for copra. Their first task was a major clean-up. The building reeked of rancid copra and the rooms were draped with cobwebs. The roof leaked so badly they did not use the upper storey. Ground level was restored for use as a medical centre and the second floor served as their home quarters.

Patients were first treated on November 15 and continued to flock to the centre, even from faraway islands. Natives hovered around

observing the morning devotions at the start of each day. All communications had to be through interpreters and the rush of patients forced Braucht to use a numbered ticket system at the clinic. Braucht was dubbed "The Jewish Doctor" because of his Saturday Sabbath-keeping. After the first six weeks his report was as follows

620	consultations
77	patients treated at their
475	homes patients treated at the
1072	centre treatments given
7	surgical operations
45	teeth filled
32	teeth extracted
8	artificial dentures made

One patient had a 22 kilogram tumour removed. Another patient was Mina Braucht herself with the safe delivery of little Marjorie Braucht in December. Emily McCoy wrote, "We have had no time to do anything outside of the medical line." The enterprise mushroomed and the landlord kept on increasing his monthly rent. These factors forced Braucht to consider moving quickly to build his own premises.

The local land agent, Harry Moors, offered to donate almost a hectare of his own farm three kilometres up in the mountains. Braucht considered it too isolated for a sanitarium. About April 1896 they leased, instead, less than half a hectare containing a wooden house and orchard on Tupuiopa Road behind the Apia township. Dudley Owen renovated the house for living quarters and looked longingly at another section of orchard on the opposite side of the road which was offering for US\$650. He appealed to fellow farmers in America to make a sacrificial offering so that the property could be bought and a sanitarium built. He himself promised US\$200 as well as a year's free labour to build it.

In the homeland some people did respond to Owen's plea. As donations came in the land was purchased in Braucht's name and building materials were accumulated. Owen burned lime, bought up old sun-dried timber locally, and ordered other supplies from America. Except for one shipment of timber given by the Foreign Mission Board all was financed either by donations or money accumulated from the medical fees. It was to be essentially a self-supporting enterprise.

In mid-1896 nurse Louise Burkhardt arrived from Battle Creek to ease the frantic work pace for Braucht and McCoy. Nurse Sybil Read also came from Australia. William Floding, another nurse, came with the PITCAIRN in August. Sixty-four-year-old Dr Merritt Kellogg and his new wife, Eleanor (an Australian), arrived about a month earlier- not primarily to relieve the medical work but rather to use his carpentry skills. He and Dudley Owen laboured for the next twelve months constructing the Sanitarium.

The two-storey wooden building was a modest one, twelve-by-ten metres, with wide verandahs on all sides and at both levels. The verandahs served to keep the rooms cool in the tropical heat. Elevated water-storage tanks, a cook-house, and bathrooms were also erected near the main building.

At the end of 1896 the missionaries moved in even though the doors were not hung and all that divided the rooms were canvas drapes. A temporary operating room was fitted up on the verandah. As increasing finance came in from the medical practice itself and from American donations the building was gradually completed. The Kelloggs transferred to Tonga in September 1897 leaving Owen to do the finishing touches. Total costs amounted to approximately US\$14,000.

The Sanitarium itself served as home for the Brauchts, nurses living quarters, office, pharmacy, and hospital rooms for European patients. Samoan in-patients were accommodated opposite in the renovated home that had served as a temporary centre.

During the first days of 1899 fighting broke out among Samoan factions. Near the Sanitarium they faced each other with guns and axes. When the first shots were fired they all ran in opposite directions like startled deer, leaping fences and leaving remnants of their cotton lava lavas on the barbed-wire. The only damage suffered at the Sanitarium was a splintering bullet in the arm of Owen's rocking-chair on the verandah.

More fighting erupted later. During the lull Delos Lake and his wife arrived from America to try and start a school for Samoans. They first settled into a native thatch home on Mulinu'u Point, just west of Apia township and not far from the Sanitarium. Their coming was an attempt to capitalize on the medical spearhead so effective in Dr Braucht's hands. But at first they found themselves becoming increasingly involved in work with the Sanitarium.

The unrest between Samoan factions flared dramatically in March. Apia became a fortified town. One group entered the Sanitarium property intent on capturing the Samoan washerwoman but Braucht talked them out of it. He and Lake, under cover of darkness, then sought out the chief of the group and explained their neutrality in the war. The chief respected their wishes and there was no further interference at the Sanitarium.

In the early hours of the morning news came of an impending barrage from the warships anchored in the harbour. Most of the missionaries scurried off into the darkness and boarded the American man-o-war, PHI LADELPHIA, as a haven. Braucht had to stay in the American consulate in case his medical expertise was needed. Owen ventured to stay behind as caretaker during the explosions. The bombs, however, were directed at Samoan village targets to convince both factions they should respect the peace-keeping forces of the colonialists. With some loss of life this lesson was learned, a truce made, and over 3,400 rifles were surrendered.

During the entire fracas very little Sanitarium work was accomplished. It was the beginning of demise.

The American Medical Missionary Board decided to transfer the Brauchts to New Zealand. Dudley Owen went too. Their place was filled by Archelaus and Mina Stuttaford. Dr Stuttaford had been a printer at Pacific Press but at the age of forty obtained a Californian medical degree in 1898, married, and came to Samoa late the following year.

Samuelu, a Solomon Islander working in Apia, was an early patient of Stuttaford's. A boil on his wrist grew so critical the arm needed amputation by the time he was brought to the Sanitarium. Samuelu was a lay-preacher. To have only one arm would make him an object of ridicule so he pled not to have it amputated.

Later, with his life slipping away, Samuelu finally agreed to the amputation. The operation was performed but he died a week later. In Samoan eyes Stuttaford's reputation suffered irreparably because of this incident and he left a few months later. Nurse Read returned to Australia about the same time. William Floding had left earlier in the year. Emily McCoy stayed on and took a vacation on the south coast, treating patients while there.

The Sanitarium was virtually idle until Dr George Gibson and his wife, Minnie, arrived from America in October 1900. Nurse John Stevenson transferred from the Summer Hill Sanitarium in Sydney to help Gibson. Samoan confidence in their work gradually grew, especially after success with one patient from Savaii who had a badly fractured skull. However, Gibson only stayed a year before swapping places with Braucht at the Christchurch Sanitarium.

The return of Braucht in late 1901 promised further confidence in the medical work. William Floding, who had married and also studied at Emmanuel Missionary College after leaving Samoa, returned in late 1902. They assisted in the Sanitarium. Later he helped to circulate "Christ Our Saviour" which Delos Lake had translated into Samoan and had printed at the Avondale Press.

Braucht, who had often lamented the lack of ministerial assistance at the Sanitarium, was glad of the limited help which Lake and Floding provided. Lake eventually established a school of sixty students on forty hectares just three kilometres east of Apia. Nevertheless, in the busy schedule they found time to explore possibilities for mission expansion on the island. Early in 1902 Braucht and Lake crossed the mountains to Siumu on the south coast. They followed the stony path to the eastern tip of the island and hired a boat back to Apia. Former patients and relatives of the school children assured hospitality all the way. Braucht returned with visions of establishing nurses in central villages to pioneer mission work.

Once again the fabric of the work began to unravel in the early months of 1903. Both nurses were compelled to leave their duties because of declining health, Mina Braucht was also in poor health so the doctor and his family returned to America. Lake fell a victim to elephantiasis and hurried back to his homeland, leaving his furniture and house to the termites. His departure brought the schoolwork to an end. Only the Flodings remained.

William Floding did what he could at the Sanitarium. At the same time he obtained a small printing press and taught himself to print some Samoan tracts. Of his witness to the Samoans he expressed frustration saying, "They think a great deal of their customs ... The Bible has to be secondary (in their minds) when Samoan customs stand in question."

Another fresh start was made at the Sanitarium when Doctors Alfred and Maude Vollmer arrived from America in October 1903. They had been in private practice only a year since graduating from the American Medical Missionary College. Early in 1904 James Southon came from Australia as a trainee nurse. A Pitcairner, Sarah Mareta Young, who had served on Rurutu and Tonga before graduating at the Sydney Sanitarium in 1903, sailed for Samoa the following May.

The new staff worked well. In 1904 the Australian blacksmith in Apia, Bill Landells, had an accident which necessitated a term in the Apia Sanitarium. As a result he decided to become a Seventh-day Adventist. His was the first Adventist baptism in Samoa, performed by Gates about April 1905. The Flodings, unfortunately, had returned to America late in 1904 because of her poor health and therefore missed witnessing the historic event.

The Vollmers continued at the Sanitarium until October 1905 when Alfred became gravely ill with tuberculosis. He endured the voyage back home but died several months later. He was only thirty years of age. Southon and Sarah Young battled on at Apia as best they could manage. Tragedy struck again in July 1906 when Sarah developed pneumonia and passed away within a week despite the kind nursing of some London Missionary Society women.

Southon remained for a few months at the Sanitarium but patronage naturally dwindled in the absence of a doctor. He married a Samoan and left the Sanitarium for plantation work. After a decade of sacrifice there were only minimal results. John Fulton visited Apia and reported.

Our fine Sanitarium building is unused, our literature is lying musty and unscattered.. Our missionaries are gone, and the field is desolate. I never felt sadder in my life when I beheld the thousands of people in Samoa, and the condition of our work. We ought speedily to do something for this field.

At the 1906 Australian Union Conference Session Samoa had been incorporated with Tonga and Fiji into the Central Polynesian Mission. It was, however, like adopting a lame duck.

Fulton's plea, "do something for this field [Samoa]", at the 1907 Australasian Union Conference Session triggered an immediate resolve. Joseph and Julia Steed were appointed to go to Samoa.

Steed himself was one of the earlier converts to Adventism in Adelaide. He had since worked as a colporteur and tent-evangelist in South Australia.

The Steed family arrived in Apia on Sabbath, December 21, 1907. They obtained the keys of the Sanitarium from Southon and made the institution their home. The German Governor, Dr Wilhelm Solf, during an interview with Steed made it clear he wanted the Adventist mission to confine itself to Savaii. There were, he said, already too many mission groups on Upolu and for that reason he was trying to rid the island of Mormon missionaries too. Steed explained to Solf that the Adventist Mission was both medical and evangelistic. The medical reference eased Solf's attitude. He then gave permission for Adventists to work anywhere in Western Samoa.

The first Adventist church in Samoa was probably organized on the first Sabbath of 1908. It comprised a handful of Europeans including the Steed family, Landells, Southon, and Charlie Dexter - an American merchant reared in Tahiti.

Before the year was out arrangements were finalized with Braucht to transfer ownership of the Sanitarium to the Australasian Union Conference. The Europeans in Samoa kept enquiring, "When are you going to reopen the Sanitarium?" However, difficulties were experienced in finding a doctor prepared to come and risk the health hazards. It was never reopened.

The government forbade the teaching of English, insisting schools use German. They also prohibited the Samoans from going overseas for their education. A revival of Lake's school was therefore out of the question.

Steed plied his energies at what he could do best - making friends, selling a few books, giving away tracts, and learning the Samoan language. They took into their spacious Sanitarium two youths who showed an interest in spiritual things. The young man, Fred Hunt, was a Tongan-Samoan of Wesleyan training. The young woman

was Vaiola or "Vai" Kerisome, a Niuean-Samoan who later took a leading role on Niue Island. These youths were instrumental in translating various tracts and "Bible Readings" into Samoan, some being printed later at the Buresala School Press, Fiji.

In 1909 Steed conducted an evangelistic series in the Sanitarium. Sybil Read returned once again to Samoa, transferring from Fiji to assist Steed as a Bible-worker until the following year. Steed, with his youngest son, Harry, and two Samoan boys, also trekked the same stoney path Braucht and Lake had trod on the south-east coast to distribute tracts.

Many Samoans rose up in revolt against colonial rule in 1909. German warships steamed from China all primed to crush the rebellion but the Samoans surrendered. During the stay of the German fleet many servicemen attended meetings in the Sanitarium. One in particular was Petty-Officer Gustav Backhaus. He said to Steed, "After what you have told me, I shall leave the navy and come back here and join you, if you will let me." He returned to Germany, relinquished his commission, was baptised and returned to Avondale College. On Christmas Day 1912 he and Steed's only daughter, Dora, were married. It was a romance which no doubt dawned in Apia. By this time the Steed family had returned to Australia, having stayed less than two years. The debilitating tropics had once more taken toll on the health of the missionaries.

Having graduated from the Missionary Course at Avondale College in 1909, Tom Howse and his wife, Edith, arrived in Samoa in January 1910 to learn the language and continue Steed's pioneering evangelism. The New Zealand Adventist youth had generously agreed to pay their wages. At the time church membership in Apia was composed of three Europeans and the newly arrived missionaries.

The Howses employed two Samoan girls, Eliza and Geneva, in their home. These formed the nucleus of a morning school which grew to about seven pupils. When a measles epidemic struck Samoa in

1911 Tom and Edith did what they could to nurse many of the sufferers. Their kindness precipitated an influx of students. But then the growing school was brought to the attention of the German authorities who objected to English being taught, so the school was closed. The door to reopen educational work would not be opened until Germany lost control of Western Samoa during the First World War.

Early in his stay Howse felt the need of a Samoan language magazine. His dream came true when the Island Book Committee voted to issue a four-page monthly beginning early in 1911. Mrs Francis (Nicholas) Waugh served as editor and 'Vai" Kerisome, who was then a student at the Avondale School, did the translation work. Thus it was both produced and printed at the Avondale Press and despatched under the title, "O Le Tala Moni" (The True Story).

The magazine was an instant boon. Howse as well as Allan Butler, who had come as a youthful teacher, distributed it freely in the villages and on the streets of Apia. Before Butler returned to his teaching in Fiji towards the end of 1911 he journeyed twice to Savai'i. Previously, Lake had sold some books there. Braucht and Sarah Young had also visited to explore avenues for medical work. However, Butler's two trips were the first telling thrusts on Savai'i. On the first trip to Savai'i Butler walked almost halfway round the island giving out Samoan tracts and the new magazine. Leaving his box of books and personal belongings on the island he returned to Apia for a fresh supply of literature. Armed with a thousand tracts and a hundred of the "Tala Moni" he embarked on his second trip. This time he landed far from where he had left his belongings so he walked around the island to finish at that spot.

The path Butler took led across four vast lava fields. Projecting through the surface could still be seen the pointed roof of a trader's house caught years before in the boiling tentacles of molten rock. His feet suffered on the rocky surface and there was no shelter from the sweltering sun. Later, continuous rain saturated him for days.

Butler came to a flooded river and called out to a Samoan on the opposite bank, "How deep is it?" "Up to the waist", shouted the man in reply. Butler took off his boots, held his tracts above his head and waded into the torrent. Part-way across, with the level already up to his armpits and the force of the current nearly sweeping him off his feet, he was forced to let go of boots and tracts and swim for his life. He reached the other shore after a desperate struggle. It was small comfort when the Samoan told him nonchalantly that many a man had drowned trying to cross the river at flood-time.

Barefooted, Butler trod the path of jagged lava stones to reach his box of belongings. The next morning he couldn't pull another pair of boots on because his feet were so swollen. He rested for a few days then hobbled to a boat sailing for Apia. Such expeditions acquainted Samoans with the Adventist Mission. Results materialized in future years.

With the closure of the Howse home school it was thought best for Butler to leave because there were no prospects for teaching. He left early in 1912. Edith Howse devoted her energies to personal evangelism, thus assisting her husband directly. Lydia Parker, an English-American woman raised in Tahiti, had graduated from the Sydney Sanitarium in 1911 and sailed for Samoa to do medical missionary work. She and Charlie Dexter were married soon after. She continued her profession and established a small nursing home in Apia. This was a private self-supporting venture but for years she retained her credentials as a missionary.

The Sanitarium property was finally sold to a German company in 1913. With the money in hand church leaders sought for a suitable property away from the Apia township where they would have greater contact with the Samoan people.

Howse, together with Edwin Butz and Andrew Stewart (Director of the Fiji Mission), made a thorough search for new property. They walked four hundred kilometres around Upolu and Savai'i. In the closing days of 1913 their choice settled on thirteen hectares

overlooking the safe anchorage of Saluafatua Bay, twenty-two kilometres east of Apia. It had six hundred coconut trees on it, two single-roomed shacks, a delightful view across the bay, and a constant spring of soft water. For that reason the property was named Vailoa, meaning "long water" or "water flowing all the time". It was purchased for \$600.

Butz conducted a baptism on the last Sabbath of 1913. Widower Landells, who had ministerial help in finding an Adventist wife, married Mrs Robertson, a widow from Melbourne with three boys - Ted, Rex, and Keith. Ted and Rex on this occasion were baptised by Butz. Recently widowed Mrs Grace Niebuhr, a sister of Lydia (Parker) Dexter, who was attending the Apia church, was also baptised with one of her children, Wanda. Two years later, Wanda and her older sister, Grace, furthered their education in Australia. Wanda graduated from Avondale in 1919 as a primary school-teacher. Grace completed her nurses training in 1920 at the Sydney Sanitarium.

The 1913 baptism by Butz almost doubled the membership of the Apia church, making a total of ten. Adventist John Neilson had come to Apia from New Zealand to conduct a cake and bakery business. A Sanitarium Health Food cafe worker, May Pontey, went to Samoa in 1914 and later married Neilson. It is evident therefore, that church growth to 1915 was due to close family ties. All were immigrants to Apia.

The course of events changed dramatically, as the missionaries hoped, when they transferred to Vailoa. Howse began reporting stories of Samoan conversions there. For example, Misa, the foreman who organized a team to build a road and help Howse erect the new mission home, gave up smoking and began Sabbath-keeping and tithe-paying.

Steed returned to Samoa in November 1914 to direct the mission. Before long the combined efforts of the missionaries over many years brought some first fruits. A small number of Samoans began

keeping the Sabbath. The European members in Apia decided they must quickly build a church, not having the Sanitarium building in which all could congregate. They generously donated money to buy a small plot in Lalovaea, suburban Apia, and money was loaned to purchase building materials. When American, John Cole, President of the New Zealand Conference, visited in 1915 he dedicated the new church. Until 1926 the walls were open and only vines served as protection from wind or driving rain. Small birds and rodents in the creepers often diverted the attention of the congregation.

On this same visit Cole also conducted the first baptism of Samoans. At full moon one clear tropical night he baptised two Samoan men and three Samoan women in the calm waters of the Vaisigago River, Apia. One of the women was a sister of the high chief at Falefa, east of Saluafata. The chief, with his wife and three others, were also baptised before the end of the year.

Among the first group of baptismal candidates was a young man called Lene (or Lenni), of Savai'i. Typically, his interest was first aroused by reading the "Tala Moni" handed him one day on the streets of Apia. He attended services at Vailoa, rapidly absorbing and living the Advent message. His father was a retired minister of the London Missionary Society who angrily disowned Lene when he heard of the baptism. He was later reconciled when he saw how ardent his son was in personal evangelism. Unfortunately, Lene's widespread distribution of literature on Upolu and Savai'i was cut short when he was stricken and died of tuberculosis two years later.

Fresh from his Avondale graduation, teacher Harold Larwood and his wife, Annie, arrived at the Vailoa property in January 1917. Construction work began on the training school in March and it opened on May 19. It was a simple native materials structure, eighteen-by-seven metres, costing about \$80. The floor was constructed of large stones with earth packed between them and fine ground coral spread on top. The roof was made of sugar-cane thatch. Most of the students lived in the surrounding area but a few

boys from further a field made their dormitory in the two original shanties that were there when the property was purchased.

Enrolment started at sixty-two and mushroomed the following year. However, for some unaccountable reason Larwood toyed with spirits, whistling marine life up out of the ocean in the manner of local devil priests. One night a spirit attacked and nearly strangled him. Larwood fled Samoa in a terrified state of mind. Tragically, the school was not reopened until 1930.

This initial failure of the Vailoa school was offset somewhat by successes elsewhere. Edith Howse was once again operating a prospering little school in Apia. Furthermore, their long friendship with the Reye family was instrumental in the baptism of Ernst and Margaretta Reye. At the time Howse could hardly have realised the significance of this event on subsequent developments in Samoa over the next three decades.

Margaretta Reye had an interesting lineage of one-part Samoan and three-parts English aristocracy. Her husband, Ernst, belonged to a German family of many public figures and distinguished scientists. Ernst himself was an agricultural scientist whose expertise gained in Venezuela was used by a German company to establish the cocoa plantations in Samoa. He had arrived in Apia in 1901 and there met Margaretta Betham. In broken English he wrote to her,

Your kind and prudent looking eyes are since long time ago the disturbers of my peace. I hardly venture to believe, that I should have the unmerited superb luck to may close you in my arms, if! then it would always my highest heartfelt wish, to make you glad and happy, and only the fulfil of this promise could make me merry too ...

Reye's moving proposal won the heart of Margaretta and they were married soon after. In 1903 Governor Solf had appointed Reye as

Treasurer of the German Government in Samoa - a post he held until the First World War. During the war Margareta was baptised. Ernst and their eldest son, Raimund, were baptised in 1919.

As a teenager Raimund had made two trips with Howse to the Aleipata District at the eastern end of Upolu. Adventists were always welcomed in that area and the pioneer missionaries continually fostered the interest. Howse and his wife even lived there throughout 1923, in an old trading store at Saleaumua, giving simple medical treatments, distributing literature and building friendships.

The years after the War were characterized by a slowly declining membership and more comings and goings of missionaries with indifferent health. The devastating influenza epidemic of 1919 also took the lives of fourteen thousand Western Samoans. Howse transferred to Fiji at the end of 1919, leaving Steed to carry on the evangelism until his health failed and he returned home in 1921. In the meantime Oscar and Ella Hellestrand had come and gone in the space of a few months. William and Jessica Litster came in 1920 and each operated a small school in Apia until his health drove them home in less than a year.

Howse returned from Fiji early in 1922 to try and salvage the dwindling membership. Less than three years later he too had to return to a cooler climate because he contracted elephantiasis. For fifteen months the mission was without a missionary. Instead, Charlie Dexter and Ernst Reye led out in the services for little more than a score of worshippers.

Brighter days dawned in 1925. Raimund Reye, who had graduated from the Missionary Course at Avondale in 1922, was asked to return. Since his graduation he had been in the South Australian Conference as a Bible-worker among German settlers. Church administrators were anxious for him to transfer quickly but at the same time believed it desirable for him to go as a married man. An acquaintance, Reubena Thompson, who was only partway through her training at the Sydney Sanitarium, agreed to forego graduation

and marry Raimund instead. Nuptials were celebrated in the Wahroonga church on November 4, 1925, and within twenty days they disembarked at Apia. A son of German Samoa had returned. It was a promising omen for the struggling mission.

The Reyes first lived in the mission home alongside the Apia church. It was a roomy wooden building set high off the ground with lattice-work enclosing the underneath section. Their first task was to eradicate the black mildew which had grown on the interior walls since the previous occupants left.

During his earlier walkabouts with Howse to the Aleipata District Reye had observed the interest in the Advent message. He was also aware that some youths in that area who had wanted to become Adventists were persuaded by family and custom to renege. Reye saw the need of a boarding school where the youth could be properly influenced. He determined to reactivate the work which Lake, and later Larwood had started. Reye wrote,

While it may be correctly argued, Build up a constituency and then establish a training school, the slogan for Samoa is; Establish a centre of attraction to build up the constituency.

For this purpose New Zealanders John and Mildred Strange arrived in Samoa in January 1928. They set to work renovating the Vailoa Training School buildings left by Larwood a decade before. Strange also cleared more of the property and planted crops in readiness for the school opening.

Quite unexpectedly in mid-1928, Reye received a request from the Australasian Union Conference to transfer and superintend the Vanuatu Mission. He had just begun to lay the foundation for strong church growth in Samoa and was naturally upset by the urgent call. The Samoan Mission, he pined, "Can least afford another set-back".

At the time there were almost seventy members in Vanuatu - more than double Samoa's membership. Conference President, Charles Watson, wrote again to Reye insisting,

Your services are needed there. There it is not so much the case of building up a work from the ground as it is in Samoa, but of taking the leadership of a work that has been built up to a very promising outlook, and giving it such leadership as shall keep it from perishing from our hands.

Conference Secretary, Albert Piper, also wrote to Reye, consoling him with the words, "The Lord has something for Samoa we hope."

Neither of the administrators offered replacement missionaries for the Reyes. It looked as if the Samoan Mission was to be sacrificed. Some pointed to its poor fruitage and recommended it be discontinued. However, Reye interceded and by December the Conference not only agreed to his stay in Samoa but also gave nearly \$2000 towards additional buildings for Vailoa Training School.

The old house on the Vailoa property was divided into two flats. The Stranges lived in one unit and the Reyes, with baby Ramona, moved from Apia to occupy the other. The scenery was idyllic with coconut palms craning their heads out over the beach sand at the water's edge. But living conditions were spartan.

On the hill overlooking the bay a simple European-style chapel was erected. Then classrooms were built and, even though these were unfinished until 1932, school opened on March 3, 1930, with eighteen students. The finished building was a T-shaped structure with iron roof and concrete floor. Reye himself taught many of the classes. He was assisted by Afele Atoa who transferred from teaching in a government school and was baptised the following year (1931). All the classes were conducted in Samoan except for the English class period.

Before Strange had to leave in October 1930 because of his wife's poor health, he constructed student dormitories from demolished houses donated by Charlie Dexter and Ernst Reye. Additional funds for operating expenses were also provided by the European membership in Apia.

Reye and Atoa continued teaching together until mid- 1932 when Stan and Zena Leeder arrived to lead at Vailoa. Only days after their arrival the completed school buildings were dedicated and the campus church organized.

With the school firmly established Reye moved back into Apia to concentrate on evangelism. In the same year he and Dexter visited remote Pukapuka atoll to the north-east. Ships from the Cook Islands had ceased to operate the run so it was difficult for the Cook Island Mission to make contact. Dexter did dental work. Reye baptised five people during their eight-day stay. He returned with the Adventist leader, Metua and his wife, Mele, who attended Vailoa school for two years. More visits were made to Pukapuka periodically. On occasion Nassau Island was visited because there were a few Adventists living there too.

Under Reye's superintendancy in the 1930's the first generation of Samoan Adventists was largely formed. It was to multiply tenfold in the second generation. Some notable personalities among the earlier Samoan Adventists were Afele, Sanika, Afaese, Chief Mulitalo, Siaso Neru, lay-preacher Matale, Sepelini Loline, Tini Inu, and the Kuresa family.

Afele (anglicised as Alfred) was an elderly blind man who proved to be an enthusiastic canvasser of small books and tracts.

Sanika Afaese was a government primary school inspector when he decided to be baptised on New Years Day 1931. His wife, Nikunau, was senior nurse in charge of the government hospital operating theatre. Sanika spent his childhood in Papua while his parents were working with the London Missionary Society. After he became an

Adventist he joined the staff of Vailoa Training School, receiving half the pay he was accustomed to. Later he conducted evangelistic meetings at the school and in Apia. He was ordained in 1938 and became the spiritual father figure among Samoan Adventists. His baptism was a major breakthrough among the titled Samoans. His brother, Chief Fepuleai, became an Adventist. So also did his sister and brother-in-law, Chief Puni and Vau, whose three sons, Sioli, Ualesi, and Fereti, all became missionaries. Pastor Fereti became the first Samoan elected as President of the Samoan Mission.

Siaosi Neru was a London Missionary Society adherent before being baptised an Adventist in 1932. At that time he left his work in the Apia observatory to train at Vailoa for five years. On completion of his course he married Kesila Vaiea, a daughter of a London Missionary Society pioneer missionary who died of fever at his post in New Guinea. Siaosi and Kesila ministered in Western Samoa before going to the Tuvalu Islands to establish a mission there.

Another prominent early figure was Sepelini Loline, the daughter of a high chief. When a junior class of forty pupils was added at Vailoa Training School as a feeder to the senior grades she ably taught the group.

Tini Inu, aptly named because he was a tiny thin boy, was educated at a Roman Catholic school and then transferred to Vailoa at the suggestion of some Adventist friends. He learned to teach in the shadow of Edith Howse as an assistant in her Apia school. Later, he helped to pioneer American Samoa and was ordained in 1947.

The Kuresa family also became Adventists in the 1930's. Iga Kuresa and his wife had ministered in the London Missionary Society for over forty years. Some of that time was spent overseas in Papua and Fiji. In his retirement he accepted Adventism despite ridicule from his former co-labourers. He served as preceptor and Bible teacher at Vailoa and was ordained as an Adventist minister just a few months before his death in April 1938.

liga Kuresa's eldest son, Ielu, trained as a medical doctor in Fiji. It was there he first learned of Adventists. Returning to Samoa he served the government with distinction as superintendent of various district hospitals. His home in Apia was used for evangelistic meetings at times. Barely recovering from an illness, he set out on a medical walkabout in 1936 but collapsed and died. He was under forty years of age. His brother, Sauni, would play the organ at mission meetings and became famous as the man who could play two cornets at once.

The fono was one innovation Reye introduced to Samoa which had an enormous influence on mission growth and membership cohesion. The fono was an annual council, first held in 1933 at Vailoa, and was an adaptation of the homeland camp meetings. These were times for assessment and planning, community baptisms, and fellowship which bonded the isolated members. Hundreds attended over the five-day periods, Thursday to Monday, in the cooler months of the year, June or July. Audiences included many non-Adventists. In 1936 Reye also introduced regular conventions for his mission staff.

By 1935 further mission outposts were established at Vaialele, eight kilometres east of Apia, and at Satomai. A primary school was opened at the latter, sixteen kilometres west of Apia. Two unpaid Samoan missionaries who had trained at Vailoa, Uta and Lautu, went to Savai'i to establish a mission base there in 1936. Sanika Afaese's brother, Chief Fepuleai, hosted them at Fogapoa village, west of Tuasivi. Lautu returned to Upolu and was replaced by Tua. They developed the interest which Dr Ielu Kuresa had generated while stationed on Savai'i.

When Leeder had to return to the homeland in July 1935 because of his poor health, the Howses, who had returned for a final term of service in Samoa, cared for Vailoa Training School until William and Irralee Petrie arrived in April 1936. Soon after, the Howses transferred to Savai'i and worked with the national pioneers. They

first lived and held meetings in an old trading store after demolishing the shop-counters and converting it into a home.

By 1938 the mission had bought a small plot at Siufaga on the coast near Tuasivi, and the Howses had moved there into a new two-roomed timber cottage. The attractive waterfront became headquarters for the mission on Savai'i.

Scorn soon fell on Chief Fepuleai and his wife, Tagisia, because of their friendship with the Adventists. Harassment became so intense that a police guard was placed on their home for their own protection. Ignoring the guard, fellow chiefs strode into their home, verbally abused them, and then carried out the furniture and personal belongings, dumping it all by the roadside. This was a customary form of Samoan punishment. Not content, the chiefs fabricated a law-suit against Fepuleai. However, in court he made a masterful defense, as only a Samoan orator can do. He was acquitted when the judge realised it was a difference of religion at the core of the dispute.

On Sabbath, December 11, 1937, Fepuleai and his wife, together with a young woman called Ana, were baptised - the first on Savai'i.

Just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War the Howses returned to their homeland. They had given three terms of service in Samoa totalling nearly nineteen years.

Western Samoa, being a mandated territory of New Zealand at the time, was allied to Britain during the Second World War years. Germans living in the area therefore had to be registered as aliens. Reye lodged his application at the Apia Police Station and was registered as Alien No 7. At first no restrictions were placed on his activities, but he anticipated trouble and asked church administrators in Australia to appoint his replacement. Church leaders, however, did not seem to be in any hurry. As the perimeter of war surged across the Pacific stringent conditions were placed on aliens and Reye's movements were curtailed. His distress increased when the

Petrie family had to leave Vailoa in October 1941 because of the worsening health of their two children. Two groups of aliens were interned in New Zealand and Reye's own internment in the near future appeared obvious to him, but still no replacement was sent.

The more the war increased in intensity the greater pressure was brought to bear on the aliens. Thousands of American marines swarmed throughout Samoa and grew suspicious of any remaining German. They finally insisted even the German Roman Catholic priests be interned in New Zealand. The Bishop objected, saying, "If my priests have to go then why shouldn't the Adventist pastor have to go too?" The Americans then decided Reye must also be interned. Church members were outraged. Chief Fepuleai was so incensed he sought an audience with the acting Governor and offered to be interned instead of Reye. That, of course, was not possible.

Reye's house was searched by police and he was told he had but a few hours to put his affairs in order before he would be detained. It was planned for Afaese to continue in charge of Vailoa Training School, which he had been doing since Petrie left. Reye ordained Neru, placing him in charge of pastoral work, and wrote asking church administrators to confirm his unauthorised action in view of the dire emergency.

A committee of five Samoan nationals was hastily appointed to take care of the mission. Reubena Reye would stay to handle financial matters until a replacement was sent. After a tearful farewell to his wife and three children, Ramona, Arnold and Ernest, Reye was escorted to the internment building at Mulinuu Point, Apia, to await transfer.

Sabbath morning, May 2, 1942, Reubena Reye was sitting with the members in the Apia church. Half-way through the service they heard the ship's siren blow, signalling its departure for Somes Island in Wellington Harbour, New Zealand. Knowing that Reye was

aboard, everyone broke down and wept, ending the service prematurely.

John Howse, who was born and reared in Samoa- being the only son of Tom and Edith Howse - was sent scurrying to Samoa in September as the new superintendant. His wife, Merle, and three children came about six months later. Reubena Reye and her three children left for New Zealand on the same boat in which John Howse arrived.

Howse supervised the mission throughout the remainder of the war years. Royand Lorna Harrison came to assist, especially at Vailoa, in mid-1944. By Christmas that year additional help had arrived in the persons of Carl and Mavis Raphael who located on Savai'i.

The war years did little to deter evangelism. In fact, the American presence opened opportunities to extend the Adventist mission into Tutuila Island, and later Manua Island. Literature had periodically been sent to American Samoa. In 1941 a teenage girl from Tutuila, staying with relatives at Vailoa, had asked for missionaries to be sent to her homeland.

Howse dispatched a small team comprising Sanika Afaese, Tini Inu, and Sauni Kuresa, to conduct public meetings there in 1943. These met with some success and permission was obtained from the Americans to establish continuing mission work based in Pago Pago.

In August 1944 Inu transferred from Vailoa to care for the blossoming company at Pago Pago. The following year a site for headquarters was rented at Satala on the opposite side of the harbour. It was there that land was bought in 1950 for a permanent base. Under the care of Inu and helpers the membership multiplied from the start with baptisms held each year.

Reye spent eight months in the bleak camp on Somes Island before a relative secured his parole. For a little more than two years he

worked as a clerk in the Christchurch office of the Sanitarium Health Food Company. In the meantime twenty-seven prominent Samoan members had signed a letter asking for Reye to return and at least do some translation work. The tides of war had turned, opening the way for authorities to grant permission for Reye to return. He and his family arrived back in Samoa in March 1945. Howse then was called to do some pioneering in Kiribati and Tuvalu. Reye became acting-superintendent of the Samoan Mission.

At this time the book "Steps to Christ" was translated into Samoan by Reye whenever he found time amid his other duties. Early in 1946 Mavis Raphael, who had been in precarious health, unfortunately contracted rheumatic fever and she and her husband returned to the homeland in March. Reye then transferred from Apia to the mission home on the seashore at Siufaga, Savaii. Disruptions there were minimized, enabling him to write and compile two Samoan volumes on Adventist doctrines before his health, too, declined. They returned to New Zealand in December 1947.

The following year saw the Adventist membership in Samoa reach three hundred. With a strong first generation established the membership doubled in the next six years despite the migration of some to New Zealand. Figures then fluctuated until the 1960's when membership mushroomed in the second and third generations.

The years following the Second World War have seen many new missionaries come and go. The educational and evangelistic work has continued on apace. Scores of Samoans have joined forces as missionaries themselves. New headquarters and mission stations have been established. But the names of Braucht, McCoy, Young, Steed, Howse, Reye, and Afaese remain in early Samoan Adventist history as the most illustrious ones, without detracting from the contribution made by many others.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times", the "Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald", the "Home Missionary", the "Missionary Leader", the "Australasian Record", the Raimund Reye letter collection, and the author's personal collection of pioneer data.

Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

- 1 **Debut** - Adventism Down Under before 1885
- 2 **Entry into the Australian Colonies** – Beginning of Adventism in Australia
- 3 **Letters to Aussie Colonials** - Case studies from the E G White letters
- 4 **Land of the Long White Cloud** - Beginning of Adventism in New Zealand
- 5 **Letters to Kiwi Colonials** - Case studies from the E G White letters
- 6 **Printing and Selling** - Early Adventist Publishing Work in Australia
- 7 **Dame of the Deep** - The Six Voyages of the Pitcairn
- 8 **Sequel to a Mutiny** - Early on Pitcairn Island
- 9 **Church in a Convict Gaol** - Early Adventism on Norfolk Island
- 10 **On the Rim of a Volcano** - Early Adventism on Lord Howe Island
- 11 **A Temporary Training School** - The Australian Bible School in Melbourne
- 12 **An Experiment at Cooranbong** - Pioneering Avondale College
- 13 **Little Schools for Little People** - Early Adventist Primary Schools in Australasia
- 14 **People of Ao-Te-Aroa** - The Adventist Mission to Maoris
- 15 **Rescue Homes and Remedies with Water** - Adventist Benevolent work in Australia
- 16 **Hospital on a Hilltop** - Pioneering the Sydney Sanitarium
- 17 **Cultivating Vegetarianism** - Pioneering the Sanitarium Health Food Company
- 18 **Lotu Savasava** - Early Adventism in Fiji
- 19 **Te Maramarama** - Early Adventism in French Polynesia
- 20 **Tuatua Mou** - Early Adventism in the Cook Islands
- 21 **Talafekau Mo'oni** - Early Adventism in Tonga and Niue
- 22 **Lotu Aso Fitu** - Early Adventism in Samoa
- 23 **An Oriental Foster Child** - Adventism in South-east Asia before 1912
- 24 **Beyond the Zig-Zag** - Pioneering Carmel College in Western Australia
- 25 **Pukekura and Oroua** - Pioneering Longburn College in New Zealand
- 26 **Descendants of the Dreamtime** - The Adventist Mission to the Australian Aborigines
- 27 **Lotu Bilong Sevenday** - Early Adventism in Papua New Guinea
- 28 **A Mission Among Murderers** - Early Adventism in Vanuatu
- 29 **Vina Juapa Rane** - Early-Adventism in the Solomon Islands
- 30 **Pioneering in Paradise** - Early Adventism in New Caledonia
- 31 **War Zone Scramble** - Stories of Escape During World War
- 32 **A Late Expansion** - Early Adventism in Kiribati and Tuvalu