

O LE TOFA LILIU A SAMOA:
A HERMENEUTICAL CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
CULTURAL-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS OF THE SAMOAN
CONTEXT

by
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ABSTRACT

The central question of this study is: 'How can we understand the Samoan church as an indigenous church of the twenty-first century?'

In the eyes of the adherents of the *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS)* – also known as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) – the Samoan life-world as it is now has been vigorously shaped and reshaped by the assimilation and integration of Samoan culture and Christianity since the arrival of the latter in 1830. The whole Samoan existential system, the *fa'asamoa*, which encompasses moral, ethical, cultural, political, economic and social factors, and indeed the spiritual values of Samoan society, has been conditioned by the interface between the two institutions – the EFKS, and Samoan culture. Reciprocally, the Christian faith and practice of the EFKS has been reshaped by the Samoan cultural context. The concrete actions and activities that constitute good Samoan life are what the term *praxis* denotes in this study. The sum total of actions and activities that derive out of the fine synthesis between Samoan culture and Christianity is described here as the '*cultural-theological praxis*'.

This study is an attempt to interpret and understand the dynamics of the integration, interaction, and inter-relationship processes existing between Christianity and Samoan culture within the Samoan context. Thus, the overarching aim of this study is to critically analyse the cultural theological praxis of the EFKS setting; and to explore and establish a philosophical hermeneutic to both appraise and understand such praxis of the indigenous Samoan church context of the twenty-first century. I have developed this contextual philosophical hermeneutical approach from the indigenous notion of '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*' – 'objective self-reflective wisdom of Samoa'.

From the critical evaluation and analysis of the EFKS some suggestions are made as to further significant elements of possible contextualisation from the *fa'asamoa*, through which the EFKS may be made more relevant and participatory for its contemporary adherents, especially the younger generation. The hermeneutical approach *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* could establish a solid foundation for a more extensive review of the EFKS.

MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled:

"O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context"

Submitted for the degree of

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Is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that this thesis in whole or in part has not been submitted for an award, including a higher degree, to any other university or institution.

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Date:

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May God bless you all.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
CWM	Council for World Missions
EFKS	<i>Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa</i>
FES	<i>Fono a Ekalesia i Samoa</i>
MEKS	<i>Mafutaga Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa</i>
NCC	National Council of Churches
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PCC	Pacific Conference of Churches
PTC	Pacific Theological College
SCC	Samoaan Council of Churches
SPATS	South Pacific Association of Theological Schools
WARC	World Alliance Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches

PART ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. 0 THESIS PROBLEM

Christianity as a religion came to Samoa in 1830 when John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived with his missionary colleagues at the village of Sapapali'i, on Savai'i, the largest island of the Samoan archipelago.¹ Despite somewhat intensive cultural rivalries between important families and titles of Samoa at the time, the people, through their chiefs and traditional leaders, eventually received and accepted it with sincerity and hope. Since then, Christianity has grown relatively fast, covering the whole of the Samoa islands. From the mid-twentieth century, large numbers of Samoans have emigrated, particularly to New Zealand, the United States and Australia, and a huge diasporic population now exists. Overseas Samoans have taken their Christian faith and practice with them, and for the many who are of the EFKS tradition, often their Church structure and government as well. The fast growth of Christianity was a miracle in the eyes of the first missionaries to Samoa. By 1838, the number of chapels and schools under construction was estimated as 23,000 altogether² - an indication of the keenness and enthusiasm of Samoans about learning Christianity, despite obvious language constraints. From then on, Christianity as such has been closely knitted with Samoan culture and customs at almost all facets of Samoan life. To a great extent Christianity

¹ Peter Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", *The Journal of Pacific History* 39, no. 2 (2004), 244.

² John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1982), 125.

gradually became a definitive aspect of the Samoan culture, and was progressively and resolutely integrated into their traditional life-worlds. Thus, it has always been accepted by Samoans that the two are inseparable and they always work hand in hand. There have been great ‘fruits’ of this integration of Christianity and Samoan culture since 1830, which have been experienced and recognised by the Samoans as having both positive and negative impact on their lives.

Like any other nation, Samoa has undergone many changes in its social, cultural, political, economic, and religious life since the arrival of the first missionaries in the early nineteenth century. Samoan culture and philosophies have contributed significantly to the form, content, and emphasis of these changes, thus inadvertently conditioning the shape of Christianity as it has been and is currently practised in Samoa. Simultaneously Christianity has over time, reciprocally, transformed Samoan culture and its social realities to what it is now. Previous critical reflections on and the evaluations of the Samoan context from outside, especially with regard to the type of Christianity practised therein, have been seriously misinterpreted, misunderstood, misrepresented and sometimes offensive in the eyes of Samoans.³ Indeed earlier academic studies from the perspectives of anthropology,⁴ ethnography, sociology, and political science have actually triggered some of these misinterpretations and misconceptions. It is such misinterpretations and misunderstandings about Samoa as a context and its interaction with Christianity that have stimulated the urgent need for this research.

This study also emerges as a challenge for the author from some of the suggestions that have been raised by the previous studies alluded to on the Samoan context. John Barker in particular, in his article “Introduction: Ethnographic Perspectives on Christianity in

³ Fay Ala'ilima, "Review of Margaret Mead and Samoa: the Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth, by Derek Freeman", *Pacific Studies* 7 (1984), 91; Felix S Wendt, "Book Review", *Pacific Studies* 7 (1984), 94-95.

⁴ Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies* (Ringwood Victoria: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973). Mead's anthropological research narrative on Samoa's life world, especially her reflection on the life of the young Samoan women, gave rise to considerable criticism from some other anthropologists, particularly Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: the making and unmaking of an anthropological myth* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), Bradd Shore, Lowell D Holmes, et al. Some of the significant contributors who expressed their views on this controversy are published in Hiram Caton, *The Samoa Reader: Anthropologists Take Stock*, ed. Hiram Caton (Lanham, London, New York: University Press of America, Inc, 1990).

Oceanic Societies”⁵ poses the critique that previous research on Pacific Christianity tends to focus on the Western/indigenous encounters rather than people’s experiences and understandings of Christianity.⁶ I believe this perception, though it focuses on the Pacific region in general, is valid and deemed relevant and necessary for Samoa in particular, and thus needs to be followed up through a thorough piece of research such as this. Barker also notes the lack of any attempt by some notable commentators on Pacific Christianity to come to a consensus on how to interpret various aspects of Christianity in the Pacific⁷, which is quite relevant to the Samoan situation. This study addresses this need by way of proposing a hermeneutical tool to interpret the Samoan context and in particular, the *Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS). For this study in particular, I believe that the need for hermeneutics and interpretation of the Samoan context will shed more light on Samoan Christianity, thus creating an appreciation of the internal dynamics of the interactions and interrelationships between the Gospel and culture in the Samoan milieu. In doing so, it forms a critical aspect of understanding the nature of Samoan Christianity today. Without any clear understanding of such aspects of the Samoan context, Barker’s perception that “Christianity often seems epiphenomenal, a superficial form lying above continuing cultural structures”⁸ would remain a reality in Samoan Christianity.

1.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

The central question, of this study is: *‘How can we understand the Samoan Church as a contextual indigenous Church of the twenty-first century?’* This is the overarching focal point of the research, and the answers to this primary question are explored in this study with reference to answering further the following pertinent questions: *how can we make sense of the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context?; how can we understand the Samoan context with regard to its religious mindset and practices?; how peculiar is Christianity in the Samoan context?; what are the important aspects of the relationship between the Gospel and culture that have contributed to the contemporary cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan*

⁵ John Barker, "Introduction: Ethnographic Perspectives on Christianity in Oceanic Societies", in *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives*, ed. John Barker, *ASAO Monograph No. 12* (Lanham/ New York/London: University Press of America, 1990).

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁸ Ibid., 9.

context?; how can we describe the relationship between the Gospel and Samoan culture in the Samoan context? To unravel a number of significant issues that lie at the heart of the interpretation and understanding of the Samoan Church and context, these questions are investigated thoroughly in relevant chapters throughout the thesis. In doing so, the central question of this study is unfolded and addressed in more detail. Furthermore, these relevant questions also provide an opportunity to examine in depth the undergirding dynamics of Samoan milieu and lifeways.

In this study, I aim to interpret and understand the dynamics of the integration, interaction, and inter-relationship processes existing between the Gospel and Samoan culture within the Samoan context. In the eyes of Samoans, the Samoan life-world as it is now has been vigorously shaped and reshaped by the assimilation and integration of Samoan culture and Christianity since the arrival of the latter in 1830. In other words, the whole Samoan existential system, which encompasses moral, ethical, cultural, political, economic and social factors, and indeed the spiritual values of Samoan society, has been conditioned by the interface between the two institutions – Christianity and Samoan culture. Having said that, it is also vital to recognise the fact that such an interface between the two works both ways in that it also reshapes the kind of Christianity practiced by the Samoans. This process is identified in this study as the ‘contextualisation of Christianity in Samoa’ where Samoans express their faith responses to God in ways and manners which are much more meaningful and understandable to them. In that effort, Samoans do not relegate the essence of Christian principles and ethics *per se* to a lesser level but rather rearticulate both the Samoan and Christian principles as one unit with its own entity. According to Samoans, the two are deeply interwoven in such a way that would maintain the integrity of both institutions, and reflects the essence of ‘good life’.

The actions and activities that constitute what Samoans called ‘good life’ are what the term ‘praxis’ denotes in this study. In addition, the sum total of actions and activities that derive from the fine synthesis between Samoan culture and Christianity is what this study describes in the phrase: ‘cultural–theological praxis’. Thus, to pursue the task of interpretation of the context, it is necessary to identify concrete situations in this context so that one can interpret them through critical analysis in such a way that he/she can decipher and understand such praxis within the framework of a continuous interrelationship and interaction between the Gospel and culture. In this study, I have chosen to observe and analyse the cultural–theological praxis of the Church with reference to the Constitution of the *Ekalesia*

Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS) or the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) and its various stipulations therein. This not only establishes the research perimeter and context, but also identifies the concrete praxis of the Samoan milieu.

The fundamental theological objective of the interactive processes between the Gospel and the Samoan context is that the Christian faith has to be mediated in such a way that, in the end, the Samoan people would enhance their belief and understanding about God within their own context. The interaction between the Gospel and the lives of the people is what I call '*the cultural-theological praxis*' of the Samoan people. It is always presumed by the Church leaders that to satisfy such an ambitious demand for the Samoan Church, Samoan people must at least have the innovation to transform the traditional Samoan context into a Christian milieu, where necessary, and into a society whereby all citizens uphold the laws of the land and support the lives of one another in peace and faith. This, in my opinion, may be an overstatement because there are significant traditional Samoan religious values today, which correspond to Christian principles, and practices thus need not be changed or transformed. These, I argue, must not be relegated as being useless or without value to Samoans. While this may appear to be a continuous process of life transformation for Samoans, it is necessary to have a contextual hermeneutical paradigm, which can be employed to make sense of and to understand the meaning of the dynamics of the Church and society in Samoa. Therefore, this study also aims to create and establish an interpretive tool, which is appropriate and relevant to the interpretation and understanding of the Samoan context. I develop this interpretive tool with reference to Samoan notion of '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*', which, I argue, is a philosophical hermeneutical tool indigenous to Samoa.

Then, the overarching aim of this project is to critically analyse the *cultural-theological praxis* of the Samoan setting; and to explore and establish philosophical hermeneutics to both appraise and understand such praxis of the Samoan context. In doing so, it will enable one to know and understand the character of the EFKS, being a contextual indigenous Church of the twenty-first century. This, indeed, entails the adoption of a Christian faith, which is indigenously oriented and expressed through concrete human actions. Such an attainment, I argue, would enable the Church in Samoa to equip people to have a strong indigenous Christian identity which would, in effect, enable them to respond responsibly in faith to the complex contemporary world ideologies brought about by the tides of religious pluralism and globalisation.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

My intention in this study is to concentrate on a ‘workable’ scope within Samoan society itself where I could draw sufficient relevant data for consideration and analysis; and from which I could deduce realistic and relevant conclusions. Since I am a Samoan Congregationalist by faith, this exercise is focusing particularly on the cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS in the Samoan context. However, I am referring in this study to other Church denominations in Samoa generally where applicable.

The cultural nature of Samoan society is investigated widely. This entails expositions of Samoan traditions, philosophies, and customs, which are significantly defined in the relationship between the Gospel and culture. Some of these cultural traditions are claimed by Samoans of today to have been exploited and/or made redundant by the early missionaries as part of their Christianisation and civilisation processes of the past. I will dwell more on this process of Christianisation and civilisation of Samoan people in Chapter Six of this study.

Moreover, since the Samoan Government and its political responsibility constitutes an integral dimension in the philosophical and the psychological construct of the Samoan people, I intend to make inroads into relevant political aspects of the Samoan Government and its relationship with the praxis of the Church. This exploration is made on the understanding that a significant number of public servants and government officials at *various* levels of the public service organisation are Christians affiliated to the EFKS.

Historically, the study covers two major time periods in the life of Samoan people namely, the ‘pre-Christian age’ and the ‘Christian era’ until today. In this strategy, it would bring to the fore the transition of ideologies and religious mindsets from the former period to the latter; and such approach could disclose the nature of the growth and development of the EFKS in terms of continuity and discontinuity of some aspects of its cultural contents.

1.3 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Being a Samoan who was born into the nation and has been raised and brought up in the land, I have experienced with gratitude the wisdom of our ancestors and people, embedded in the dynamics of our traditional social structures and value systems. Despite its relative lack of industrial and mineral resources as found in the so-called ‘developed nations’,

I have marvelled at the natural unfolding of growth and development of Samoa as a nation through her people and their religious beliefs and convictions. Undoubtedly Christianity has been the religion of Samoa since its arrival on our shores in the early nineteenth century. Therefore, as an ordained Church minister of one of the Church denominations in Samoa, the EFKS, and a theological educator who is intimately part of such a social setting, I have decided with hope to explore the theological dimension of my context in a much deeper investigation into what I term its ‘cultural-theological praxis’. Such an investigation, I argue, would contribute significantly to amend and correct the previous misperceptions and more importantly, the misunderstandings about Samoa caused by the insensitivities of some western researchers in the past.

The people of Samoa are naturally happy, friendly, talented, religious, and very respectful of each other and of people of other cultures and ethnicities. They have their own distinctive indigenous culture, which is precious to them, embodied in what is called the *fa’asamoa* or the Samoan way of doing things. I will discuss this Samoan concept in detail in Chapter Five, but for the purposes of this introductory chapter, I argue that *fa’asamoa* is a distinct way which describes the totality of the Samoans – their culture, customs, and worldviews. Their culture, traditions, ethical and moral values, aspirations, hopes and visions are all encompassed in the *fa’asamoa*.

Crucial to the *fa’asamoa* is the religious belief and the spiritual construction of the local people. Before the arrival of Christianity, the Samoans were very religious in their own ways, with distinctive cultural manifestations and forms such as *tapuaiga* or worship, expressing their piety to their religious affiliations. Having said that, I disagree with the claims made by early Europeans who visited Samoa in the past and said Samoa is a non-religious land. This theory was based on their observation that they had not seen any worship places or houses as they had experienced in other islands of the Pacific such as Tahiti, Marquesas Islands, and so forth.⁹ They could *tapua’i*¹⁰ and practice their religious allegiance as individuals in their own homes or corporately in the special culturally-designated *maota* and *laoa* or house. These different worship practices of the Samoans will be discussed in

⁹ Felix Maxwell Keesing, *Modern Samoa: Its Government and Changing Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1934), 399.

¹⁰ *Tapua’i* is the act or the actual process of worship whilst *Tapua’iga* is worship itself. Thus, *tapua’i* is normally used as a verb and the word *tapua’iga* as a noun derives from *tapua’i*. Adding the suffix ‘ga’ to a verb in the Samoan syntax is usually making it a noun. C.f. Fanaafi Aiono Le-Tagaloa, *Tapuai: Samoan Worship* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003).

greater detail in Chapters Five and Six, to illuminate the fact that the Samoans were and are indeed a religiously-oriented population. Therefore, it is proper to state at the outset the fact that religion plays an integral part in the life of the Samoans. So much so that religion has been a part of the Samoan culture since its formation and has a strong possibility of continuation in the future. In this respect, I subscribe to Paul Tillich's affirmation regarding the relationship between religion and culture: "religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion."¹¹ According to Tillich, religion is ultimate concern, hence the meaning-giving substance of culture; and culture is the totality of forms in which the profound concern of religion expresses and manifests itself. In this regard it could be argued that such a consideration would prevent the establishment of dualism of religion and culture. Hence every religious act in organised religion, and in the most intimate movement of the soul, is culturally formed.¹²

Christianity as a new religion arrived in Samoa in the early nineteenth century with many differences from the traditional religions in terms of philosophical emphasis and the actual religious practices. Despite these differences, however, the two have progressively become assimilated and integrated both consciously and unconsciously to the extent that Christianity became dominant in terms of beliefs, ethos, principles, and doctrines while the practices tended to follow the traditional Samoan methodologies. This merging of the two cultures and the two religious emphases – the Samoan ideology and the missionaries' western ideology - has created conflict and confusion amongst the Samoans themselves as to what is the ideal way of life to accept and adopt. At the same time, the Samoan culture and the *fa'asamoa* inevitably have changed significantly in their journey towards the future.

One agent to the legitimisation or otherwise of such change, is the *fa'amatai*¹³, which is, the chiefly system of Samoa. In fact, the *fa'amatai* is the steering wheel, if I may call it so, that has guided Samoan society in all facets of life from the beginning of time. A *matai*¹⁴ has

¹¹ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford Press University, 1959), 42; Mark Kline Taylor, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (London: Collins Publishers, 1987), 121.

¹² Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 42.

¹³ Fanaafi Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga* (Alafua: Le Lamepa Press, 1997), 12-55; Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu, *O Si Manu A Ali'i: A Text For the Advanced Study of Samoan Language & Culture* (Honolulu: Pasifika Press/ University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), Unite 1 Mataupu 3; Saleimoa Vaai, *Samoa Fa'amatai and the Rule of Law* ([Samoa]: National University of Samoa, 1999), 30.

¹⁴ Out of the Samoa population of 180,741, 9 percent are matais; 80 percent of those are males and the rest are females. See Samoa Bureau of Statistics, *Samoa: Population and Housing Census Report 2006* (Government of

the responsibility of overseeing the society and diligently scrutinizes the everyday affairs of Samoans so that any unwarranted attitudes, immoral behaviour and bad discipline of the people that might threaten the harmonious character of the society can be eliminated. So having the *fa'amatai* in place has in fact provided some form of security for the population as well as maintaining the traditional *status quo*, whether or not such *status quo* was practically acceptable to the Samoan people themselves, or otherwise. Any foreign ideologies and attitudinal aspects of the people's life were intensively criticised by the *fa'amatai*. At times, the Christian Church has fallen under the wrath of the *matai* when and if the Church did not conform to their requirements and their expectations.¹⁵

Since the inauguration of Christianity, Samoans have believed that the Christian Church was the fulfilment of the prophetic message of the traditional Samoan prophetic Nafanua of the past. Nafanua prophesied that Samoa's theocratic government would be heralded from heaven above. On that prophetic understanding, Samoans eventually viewed the arrival of the missionaries much later, though they were in fact not from heaven, as the manifestation of Nafanua's prophecy. Thus from then on, everything to do with the Christian Church has been treated as sacred and holy – a thing from above in the sky and/or heaven. This means that all traditional worship activities of the past have been abolished and rejected totally by Samoans on the understanding that their traditional religious manifestations were wrong, ineffective, powerless, temporal and mortal. This of course has been a big shift in the belief and religious systems of Samoans. All other dimensions of the life-world¹⁶ of the Samoan milieu have been influenced and shaped by the presence of the Christian Church; even the *fa'amatai* system and *fa'asamoa* came under scrutiny by the Christian Church and the Gospel. The metaphysics of the Samoan context and its aesthetic values have been rigorously overturned by the presence of the Christian Church, not by the single-handedness of Christianity but most often by the initiative of the *fa'asamoa* based on virtuous respect and

Samoa, 2008 [accessed 30 Oct 2009]); available from <http://www.sbs.gov.ws/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=xZE7Ip3423g%3d&tabid=3615&language=en-US>.

¹⁵ There is a case in mind where the majority of the local village congregation agreed to have their minister returned from his normal *fa'amalologa* or sabbatical leave after serving six years in the congregation as required by the Church constitution. Disagreeing with this decision, which was obviously made in accordance with the Church's Constitution, two paramount chiefs of the village overturned it and decided against the return of the minister to continue his work with the congregation. In this situation, it is clear that the *fa'amatai* power had the upper hand in the decision-making process for the local village congregation.

¹⁶ This term is referred to as originated in the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). However, others suggested that the concept was coined by Wilhelm Dilthey as quoted by Anthony C Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 7.

honouring their original covenant protocol with the first European missionaries, John Williams and Charles Barff¹⁷. Fortunately, most of the impact of Christianity on the Samoan people to date was, and still is, for the common good of the people.

Traditionally, there are three *fa'asinomaga* or fundamental principles, of existence for Samoans or the philosophy of Samoa¹⁸ or the indigenous references¹⁹ of Samoan context that are vital for this study. *Fa'asinomaga* literally means one's points of reference – and his/her referees.²⁰ These are the *Matai* (chief), the *Fanua* (Land), and the *Gagana* (Language).²¹ They are traditionally regarded as the tri-pillars of Samoan society that determine the 'being', the 'dasein', and/or the existence of Samoans. However, in this contemporary Samoan situation I would argue that a fourth pillar, namely, *Atua* or God, must be added to the said three pillars of Samoan existence. Today all Samoans believe in *Atua* irrespective of one's family of origin within the wider traditional Samoan society; they are cognisant of God's interventions in their lives as individuals and importantly in the life of the communities.

There is no individual 'self' as such in the metaphysics of the Samoan context, unlike the western individualistic construct since the industrial revolution. To be a Samoan, one has to know and understand his/her own family of origin, which has its own structure and organization. What does it mean to know your family of origin? It means that a Samoan 'must' know and understand the *Matai* title to which one belongs for it is the only means of identification for Samoans. For instance, if I claim that I am a Samoan by birth because my parents are Samoans and I was definitely born in Samoa, that is not enough as a form of identification in the eyes of Samoan society and the *fa'asamoa*. That obviously reveals only part of one's origin as such, which does not have much bearing on the true sense of identification required in the *fa'asamoa*. What is fundamentally obligatory in this situation is the fact that one has to be related genealogically to a *matai* title whose cultural authority and

¹⁷ Lowell D Holmes and Ellen Rhoads Holmes, *Samoan Village: Then And Now*, Second ed. (Fort Worth, Philadelphia, San Diego, New York, Orlando, Austin, San Antonio, Toronto, Montreal, London, Sydney, Tokyo: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 65.

¹⁸ Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*; Aiono Fanaafi LeTagaloa, *O Motuga-Afa* (Apia: Le Lamepa Press, 1986).

¹⁹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi, *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance - Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau Suaali'i-Sauni, et al. (Apia: The Centre for Samoan Studies: National University of Samoa, 2009).

²⁰ LeTagaloa, *O Motuga-Afa*, 19-20.

²¹ Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 3 –10. The in-depth discussion of this concept is set out in Chapter Three.

power encompass everything that belongs to his/her family including people. In other words, I do not belong to a Samoan family unless I am a beneficiary of the authority of the specific *Matai* title relating to that family, no matter how closely I may have been associated with the family. Thus, the Samoan philosophical saying, “*o le tagata ma lona tupuaga o le tagata foi ma lona fa’asinomaga*” sums up this whole phenomenon. I will discuss further this philosophical understanding later in the thesis. However, as far as this section of the thesis is concerned, the saying can be translated as ‘a person and his/her origin; a person also and his/her destiny’. The translation does not embrace fully the entirety of the Samoan sense and meaning. To elaborate more on this saying for guidance in life, it reiterates the fact that any Samoan person must have an authentic family and a place of origin. Such concept of ‘origin’ not only implicitly points to the heritage and historical lineage of the person, but also encompasses the present as well as the forward movement of life existence. This indicates the communal nature of the Samoan society whereby there is a somewhat limited sense of individuality within the community and a strong sense of relational life existence. It has that sense of relativity in time and space, but confined within the boundaries of the Samoan culture and customs. Failing to identify my own *tupu’aga* or ‘origin’ would certainly mean I am not a Samoan *per se* and hence my future destiny is unsure and unsecured.

In the contemporary world, Samoans have now replaced the name *Tagaloa-lagi* with simply *Atua*. *Atua* seems to be the ‘Godly title’ for Samoans in which encompasses both the Christian understanding of God (the Triune God) as well as that of the traditional godly beliefs. They indeed believe in the spiritual nature of *Atua*, which is somewhat parallel to that of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. *Atua* is the source and sustainer of life, the provider and the protector of all, including the entire environment. For Samoans, the *Matai*, through his/her spiritual functioning in the family, is the head of the Samoan family, and represents *Atua* in the family. *Atua*, being God, is to be worshiped in adoration and with thanksgiving every day and in all life activities, be they in the personal sphere or in the community circle. An individual or community is spiritually connected to *Atua* through their leap of faith at all times.

Overall, this study basically focuses on the Samoan society that is existentially operating within the *Fa’asamoa* or the Samoan lifeways, within which there is the *Fa’amatai* or the Samoan chiefly-system, which traditionally controls and determines the past, present, and the future of Samoan society. These two spheres of the Samoan lifeworld both nurture and continuously uphold the Samoan religious belief, which is Christianity in the

contemporary world and in the future. This, therefore, provides the philosophical perimeter of this research.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

There are important concepts that will contribute significantly to this thesis hence they are briefly explicated below and the respective in-depth discussions will be carried out in the appropriate places in the thesis.

1.4.1 Praxis

Different people in different academic disciplines have defined and used praxis in various ways. These variations of definition are indeed an indication of it not being as straightforward a concept as it may appear. Praxis has often been related to, or sometimes equated with, 'practice' and/or 'pragmatic'. In a way, it can be so, depending on the context in which it is being used and the expectations for which it is being utilised. For Aristotle, praxis meant reflective action informed by *phronesis*, the practical knowledge and skill that enable a person to transform a tradition's meaning into the immediate social context.²² The words of David Tracy serve as a good benchmark for hermeneutical studies today when he says,

The word praxis...by its very strangeness in English, reminds us that every worthwhile practice is informed by some theory. Praxis can also remind us that theoretical activity is itself praxis – and one to be tested by the practice it serves. If we need to remind ourselves of these central facts of intellectual life, then by all means let us use the word praxis to do so.²³

Reflecting on Tracy's comment, it is clear that the relationship between theory and praxis *per se* involves a hermeneutical circle whereby one seems to define and enlighten the other, and vice versa, thus enriching the interrelationship between theory and praxis.

1.4.2 Samoan theological praxis

I define the Samoan theological praxis in this thesis as being the domain of actions and activities of the individuals and groups in Samoan society, both within and outside the Church. This domain is open to the inspiration of Christianity in the lives of people – both

²² Jerry Stone, "Christian Praxis as Reflexive Action", *Legal Hermeneutics* ,

²³ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Rowe, 1987), 10.

individual and collective – in such a way their lives and salvation are influenced through an understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The actions and activities of Samoan people, which have many expressions in daily life, are understood as expressions of “true faith” responses of Samoans to the unceasing love of God they have experienced in their lives from the past till the present.

It is important to note here that such a Samoan faith response encompasses the entirety of the Samoan life worlds, which include cultural traditions and, more importantly, religious ethos and mindset, which are oriented in Christian terms and denoted by theological expressions. Praxis in this respect is dynamic in its practical orientation in so far as it encompasses all dimensions of Samoan life - social, economic, political, moral, ethical, and religious.

1.4.3 ‘Samoan cultural-theological praxis’

Samoan cultural-theological praxis denotes the nature of how Samoans live out their way of life and their approach to living the realities of life as Samoans. This includes the form, content, style and emphasis of life within their own cultural setting as they practice their Christian faith convictions alongside their own cultural beliefs, values, and norms. On the one hand, faith convictions and cultural beliefs have integrated and assimilated within the various spheres of life in subtle ways, both consciously and unconsciously. Hence these gradually become a new or a modified form of life reality whereby some cultural practices have been readdressed and refashioned to incorporate appropriate Christian ethics, morals and values.

On the other hand, some aspects of the Christian message have been severely compromised in the dynamics of the interface between the Gospel and Samoan culture. Thus, it could be said that the Gospel has theologically conditioned the content of Samoan life, and the emphasis of the Samoan life has been ethically focused on the ‘forward thinking’²⁴ phenomenon whereby the personal and community life development is ultimately achieved to the maximum within the framework of the interface between the Gospel and culture.

²⁴ This phenomenon was one of the wisdom *clichés* in Australian politics and economic strategies during the 2007 general elections. In fact the then opposition leader of Australian politics, namely Kevin Rudd, used the term very often during his election campaign. I am using this concept as I think it has a meaning-extension which no doubt has a great bearing on the theological outlook for Samoa. Having said this, I will be mindful that this notion will be used within the framework of the cultural-theological orientation in Samoa.

1.4.4 ‘Samoan philosophical hermeneutic’

The Samoan philosophical hermeneutics to which this study specifically refers is known as ‘*O le Tofa Liliu*²⁵ a Samoa’. First, I will attempt to establish the literal meaning of this Samoan concept and then explain its deeper manifestations and usage at a more formal level within the Samoan society. *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* literally means the ‘turning wisdom of Samoa’. In a more formal usage, the concept is quite difficult to translate into English in order to fully grasp its much deeper meaning for this study.

The concept could be interpreted as a ‘vigilant objective contemplative, self-evaluated and a self-reflective wisdom of Samoa’. It entails a sense of broad and specific articulate thinking, which considers and recognises the present state and conditions of things, but also treasures the past traditions of the people’s life-world, and a forward thinking with caution and diligence. In many respects this idea corresponds to the Greek concept *phronesis* or ‘practical wisdom’ used by Aristotle²⁶ and later scholars. The process of contemplation and deep thinking in the Samoan ‘*tofa liliu*’ is fundamentally grounded in the practical life experiences and understanding the life-worlds of Samoans. Thus it is a philosophical phenomenon.

The contemplative process takes into consideration appropriate ethical and moral values of the society as an integral part of creating good practical decisions for the benefit of the people. Moreover, it nurtures the horizontal relational dimension of people’s relationships not only amongst themselves but also towards their immediate natural surroundings and environment. Having that recognition for environmental contribution to the well-being and the livelihood of humanity, one becomes aware of his/her role in the continuous formation and reformation of the world’s future. This is, indeed, an indication of the holistic nature of the *tofa liliu* concept in the Samoan worldview. It goes deep into the essence of the life of being or the *dasein* of the Samoan person in order to identify both the positives and the negatives of existence, in order that one may appropriate a reasonable judgement and decision about life. *Tofa liliu* is the final stage or the final ‘product’ of the whole process of continuous

²⁵ Aiono, *O le Fa’asinomaga*, 33-35. Aiono touches on this *Tofa liliu* concept in her discussion of one of the related Samoan concepts, *Soalaupule*. Both of these are interrelated and interconnected within the spheres of *Soalaupule*. Traditionally, the product of the interrelationship between the two is *ua tasi le tofa mamao ma le fa’autautaga* or in western terms, a consensus has been reached between different parties involved in a negotiation for a good decision.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H Rackham (London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1934).

contemplation and *tofa liuliu* or deep thought about something relating to life situations of the Samoans. In other words, *tofa liuliu* is the process of continuous deep contemplation and cautious consideration about something, until it finally reaches the point where one ultimately makes a decision, *tofa liliu* or *ua tasi le tofa*.

The concept is rarely found, heard of, or spoken about by someone within the circle of ordinary Samoan conversation or in everyday informal gatherings. Rather, it is an expression used rhetorically by important members of Samoan community such as *matai* or chiefs, pastors, and elderly people in the realm of formal deliberations and discussions. The spheres of *aigapotopoto* meeting, *nu'u*, and the *fono a le ekalesia* or Church formal gatherings are the arenas where one can experience the nature of the process of *tofa liuliu* towards achieving the so-called *tofa liliu*.

Samoa has two types of Samoan language: '*gagana tautala o aso uma*' or the everyday Samoan spoken language, and '*gagana fa'aaloalo*' or the respectful honorary language. The concept of *tofa liliu* is mainly found within '*gagana fa'aaloalo*' usage. The 'objective self-assessed, self-evaluated and self-reflective wisdom' may encompass the everyday knowledge, experience, and understanding possessed by a human individual person. It concerns the interpretation and understanding accomplished by and derived from rigorous deliberations between two or more people who are willingly and genuinely open to one another's advice and support. In other words, Samoan wisdom is a 'shared' interpretation and understanding among the people involved in a deliberation. The knowledge shared in this process from one person to another goes with a sense of responsibility, transcends human boundaries, and goes beyond the actual participants of a deliberation.

1.4.5 *O le Fuata Ma Lona Lou*²⁷

Empirically, the Samoans have their common belief in the Samoan saying '*O le fuata ma lona lou*', which literally means 'a harvesting season and its own '*lou*' or tools for harvesting'. The saying derives from one Samoan life way relating to the gathering of their food materials. One of the main foods of Samoans is '*ulu*' or breadfruit. The breadfruit tree bears fruits seasonally in *fuata-ulu* or breadfruit season, normally from June to January of the

²⁷ Asofou So'o, "*O le Fuata Ma Lona Lou: Indigenous Institutions and Democracy in Western Samoa*" (Thesis PhD-Australian National University, 1996).

following year. When the fruits are ripe and ready to be used, they are removed from the breadfruit tree using a *lou*, or a very long stick with a *maga* or a cross-like structure affixed to one end of the stick. The *lou* is quite similar to the '*lou koko*' or 'cocoa collecting stick' except the actual *lou* for gathering *ulu* has an 'X'-shape like structure at one of its ends, whereas the *lou koko* has a 'P'-shape like end. One can stand underneath the breadfruit tree with this long *lou* and remove the '*ulu* (fruit) which are usually found at the tips of every branch of the breadfruit tree, using the *maga* at the end of the *lou*. The *lou* is very important to the *taule'ale'a* or the untitled man and the *au tautua* or the family serving people because it helps a lot in gathering the *ulu* for their family food. This means the *lou* plays a very important part in the life of these Samoan people, thus they have to look after it well during the *fuata-ulu*. Once the *fuata-ulu* finishes and no more *ulu* to be gathered, the *lou* will be thrown away because it will become breakable by the next season and therefore unusable. When the next *fuata-ulu* season comes, a new *lou* will be constructed. Thus the saying goes, '*O le fuata ma lona lou*' or a new breadfruit tree season and its new *lou* or tool. The saying applies figuratively to other life situations in Samoan milieu. For example, when a new change is needed to replace the old one or a new person is required for a specific job to replace the old, Samoan people would say such a changing process is said to be '*O le fuata ma lona lou*'.

1.4.6 *Soalaupule*

Soalaupule is usually translated literally as 'to deliberate'. *Soalaupule* is made up of three different words being, *soa* which literally means 'a partner'; *lau* which means 'your or yours' or 'a leaf'; and the word *pule*, which literally means 'authority'.²⁸ So the combination of these three words forming the word *soalaupule* can be literally translated and interpreted as 'to share your authority with your partner'. The sharing is implemented through rigorous deliberations amongst *matai* and/or some elderly people in Samoan community. But this, however, still cannot reflect the complete sense of the word in Samoan understanding. The sharing may involve giving, conferring, and delegation of one's authority to another. *Pule* or authority in Samoan understanding may include ideas, opinions, power, individual right, and responsibility. When the *matai* are having a meeting or a deliberation on an important issue, they are certainly in the process of *soalaupule*. *Soalaupule* is normally executed in a formal

²⁸ Aiono Fanaafi LeTagaloa, "The Samoan Culture and Government", in *Culture and Democracy in the South Pacific*, ed. University of the South Pacific (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1992), 122-123.

manner with a sense of respect for one another, and a sense of openness amongst the participants of such a meeting. The end product of such deliberations is a consensus²⁹ amongst the participants and this is called in Samoan '*ua tasi le tofa*' – a consensus has been reached. *Soalaupule* also involves deep meditations upon issues and pastoral problems within a congregation.

1.4.7 *Ua Tasi Le Tofa*

The phrase literally means a consensus is reached between two or more parties involved in a *soalaupule* process or a genuine dialogue for a specific purpose. It is the formal linguistic rendition of the notion of consensus and normally entertained within the sphere of formal Samoan cultural gatherings where cultural chiefs and elders gather for important meetings.

1.4.8 Christian Era

The phrase 'Christian era' as it will be used throughout this thesis refers to the period from when the early European settlers had first rendered Christianity to Samoan people, including the arrival of the first official visit of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830,³⁰ till today. Although there is scanty information on Samoan milieu in the period between the first explorers of Samoa in 1722,³¹ and the LMS arrival in 1830, I would still attach some weight to this span of time as it was the first exposure of the Samoans to the *papalagi*,³² or Europeans, and their worldviews, which were very much coloured by their Christian affiliations in the west at the time. In this context, it is also important to bear in mind the fact that prior to the arrival of the *papalagi*, Samoa was in constant contact with the neighbouring island groups of Tonga and Fiji, as Samoan stories, legends and myths reminisced on those times of the past. In other words, Samoan worldviews and religious

²⁹ E Huffer and A So'o, "Consensus versus dissent: Democracy, Pluralism, and Governance in Samoa", *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 44, no. 3 (2003).

³⁰ Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", 244.

³¹ George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*. (London: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 1884), 2-3; John Bettridge Stair, *Old Samoa, or, Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1897), 21-22.

³² *Papalagi* is normally used for plural and *palagi* for singular. Sometimes *papalagi* can be used for singular, thus the use of the words depends on the context.

mindset at the time had been influenced in various ways by these interactions and inter-relationships. This period of interaction between Samoa and these island nations will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

1.4.9 *Fa'amatai*³³

Fa'amatai, or the *matai* system,³⁴ is the primary authoritative social institution within the *fa'asamoa* whose power permeates and transcends all levels of the Samoan society.³⁵ Having that superior power and authority of the *fa'asamoa*, the *fa'amatai* too instituted the special godly and spiritual powers in the past within the realm of families and villages, thus the people have been honouring *matai* as priests and priestesses at a more or less religious level.³⁶ The *fa'amatai* is the collective administrative power of all *matai* who formulate and establish rules and principles by which they lead and maintain justice and peace within all layers of the Samoan society.³⁷ The governing body of the *fa'amatai* at the village level is the *saofaigaa matai o le nu'u*, or *fono a le nu'u*, the village council that is constituted of a number of *matai*, each representing his or her extended family within the village social setting. There are many more male *matai* than female *matai* in a local village in Samoa. *Fono a le nu'u* is in fact the powerhouse of the *fa'amatai* in terms of propagating, promoting, and policing the village to make sure the social, economic, political, and religious livelihood of the village are properly administered and taken care of. There are two main ranks of *matai* in the *saofaigaa matai o le nu'u*, namely the *ali'i* the honorary chiefs, and the *tulafale*, the orators. The former

³³ For more information regarding this Samoan concept refer to Simanu, *O Si Manu A Ali'i: A Text For the Advanced Study of Samoan Language & Culture*, Mataupu 3; Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 12ff; Vaai, *Samoa Fa'amatai and the Rule of Law*, 29-30; see also LeTagaloa, *O Motuga-Afa*, 21-22; LeTagaloa, "The Samoan Culture and Government" 117-137; Asofou So'o, ed., *Changes in the Matai System (O Suiga i le Fa'amatai)* (Apia: National University of Samoa - Centre for Samoan Studies, 2007); Ioana Tu'ugalei Chan-Mow, "The *Fa'amatai* in the Face of the Winds of Change", in *Changes in the Matai System: O Suiga i le Fa'amatai*, ed. Asofou So'o (Apia: Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2007), 119-137.

³⁴ Iutisone Salevao, "Samoa's Electoral System: Cultural Propriety & Constitutional Anomalies" (paper presented at the 'Political Culture, Representation and Electoral Systems in the Pacific' Conference, Vanuatu 2004, Vanuatu, 10 - 12 July 2004), 3 - 7, Salevao in his article focuses on the word *Matai* and its syntax and especially the cultural-legal aspects of this significant Samoan reality.

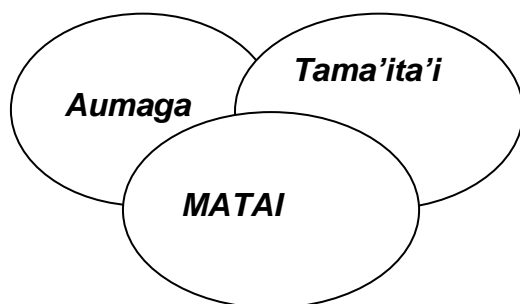
³⁵ Vaai, *Samoa Fa'amatai and the Rule of Law*, 30; Simanu, *O Si Manu A Ali'i: A Text For the Advanced Study of Samoan Language & Culture*, Unite 1 Mataupu 3 under the subtitle "O le Fa'amatai a Samoa"; Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 12ff.

³⁶ Simanu, *O Si Manu A Ali'i: A Text For the Advanced Study of Samoan Language & Culture*, Unite 1 Mataupu 3 under the subtitle "O Matafaioi a le Matai".

³⁷ Asofou So'o, "The Rewards and Challenges of Holding Several *Matai* Titles", in *Changes in the Matai System*, ed. Asofou So'o (Apia: Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2007), 228

are the main leaders of the village, with the help of the *pulenu'u*, the village mayor, who may also be an *ali'i* or a *tulafale*. The latter are the spokesmen of the village who traditionally act on behalf of the *ali'i* on social occasions as well as in political discussions with other villages and government organizations in matters relating to the wellbeing of the village. It is prudent therefore to acknowledge the fact that the *fa'amatai* is responsible for the organization and the livelihood of Samoan society in all spheres of life – in the land, sea, and sky. Structurally, the *fa'amatai* consists of three main *saofaiga* or groups of people in the pre-Christian era, each with its own *nafa* or set of goals and responsibilities. These *saofaiga*³⁸ include *Matai* (chiefs), *Tama'ita'i* (village women), and *Aumaga* (untitled men). There have been some variations to this *fa'amatai* structure today as new trends of new sociological, economics, cultural, and religious demands appear on the new horizons. Thus, the Samoan *fa'amatai* structure now has three additional *saofai'ga*, which include *Faletua ma Tausi* (wives of high chiefs and the talking chiefs) and the *Fanau lalovaoa* (the young children). Diagrammatically the pre-Christian *fa'amatai* and the current modified structures can be presented as follows:

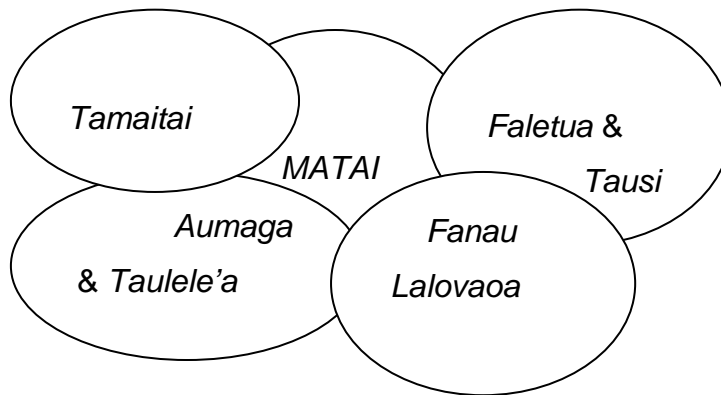
Figure 1: Pre-Christian *Fa'amatai* Structure³⁹



³⁸ Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 12ff.

³⁹ Ibid., 12. I have adopted these diagrams from Aiono for a better understanding of the dynamics of these significant components of the Samoan life.

Figure 2. *O Saofaiga e Lima o ona po nei*⁴⁰ (The five groups of today)



1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is two-fold. The first part comprises the literature inquiry and the second involves qualitative fieldwork research. Regarding literature research, the thesis is based on two basic sources of materials namely, primary and secondary. Primary materials consist of literature about Samoa and the Samoan Church, EFKS in particular, which is written, in the Samoan language. The English translations given in the thesis were made by the author, especially with interview transcripts. The secondary sources constitute all other research data in English including website materials. All these are in the public domain except some archival materials in the possession of the EFKS main office and Samoan government, for which permission was given to access. As mentioned earlier, the role of the Samoan Government in its own juridical and governing responsibilities for the Samoans has a significant impact on the life of the people, as it shapes the growth and development of the society. Hence a very considerable number of government records have been researched thoroughly with permission for the purposes of this inquiry.

The second part of the research involves three methods of collecting data: one being personal observation; the second is the carrying out of formal semi-structured interviews with the selected participants from the various layers of Samoan society and the EFKS; and third consists of 'autoethnography' in which my personal experience and knowledge of Samoan

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12.

context, especially the EFKS, is utilised appropriately with utmost care. The Melbourne College of Divinity's Human Research Ethics Committee granted its approval for this research.

The following chapter is focused on the entire methodology component of this study and in which I will elaborate more on the details of these qualitative research methods employed in the research.

1.6 PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE FIELD AND ITS CONTRIBUTION

A great deal of research has previously been carried out on the Church in Samoa and on Samoan society generally⁴¹. These research studies, of course, have had their own respective foci and emphases. Therefore, I acknowledge with respect their invaluable contributions to scholarship about Samoa and the EFKS as a Church in particular. These scholarly investigations vary, ranging from the studies of fundamental theological doctrines for the Samoan Church to contextual theology, eco-theology, pastoral theology, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and historical-theological issues relating to the Church in Samoa⁴² and New Zealand⁴³, as well as the relationship between the Church and the state in Samoa.

⁴¹ Some of these research studies include Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*. (Suva: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1994); Manfred Ernst, *The Role of Social Change in the Rise and Development of New Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands* (Hamburg: Hamburg University, 1996); Manfred Ernst, ed., *Globalisation and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands* (Suva, Fiji: The Pacific Theological College, 2006); Tuli Fepulea'i Samuelu, "E Mamae Le Tava'e I Lona Fulu: A Study of the Impact of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa on Vaigaga's Social Structure" (Master of Social Work, Massey University, 1999); Ronald James Crawford, "The Lotu and the Fa'a-Samoa: Church and Society in Samoa, 1830 - 1880" (PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977); David Jackson Inglis, "Change and Continuity in Samoan Religion: the Role of the Congregational Christian Church" (PhD in Sociology, University of New South Wales, 1992); Taipisia Leilua, "Covenant for a new Oceania [manuscript] : a theological response to the environmental crisis from a Samoan perspective" (D. Theology, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2001); Peniamina Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic" (PhD, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005). These are just a few of the many significant researches done on Samoa and the church.

⁴² For example: Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i: O Le Tala Fa'asolopito O Le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa*. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005); Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and The Christian Gospel* (Suva: University of the South Pacific Library, 1996); Fanaafi Aiono LeTagaloa, *Tapuai: Samoan Worship* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003); Featuna'i Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004); Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*. (Suva: University of the South Pacific., 1987); Fa'alepo Taumaloto Aveau Tuisuga-le-taau, "Toifale "Pregnancy Within The House". A Pastoral Care Concern for the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa" (Unpublished MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2000); Siu Vaifale, "Mataupusilisili of Fa'ailogaina/Fa'amanatuina" (Theology of Celebration: South Pacific Context)", *Iuleo o le Maluapapa* 12 (1994).

⁴³ Danny Ioka, "Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) in Aotearoa New Zealand" (PhD, University of Otago, 1998).

Local undergraduate theological students have carried out the majority of these studies, especially at the Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Suva, Fiji, with a few at the post-graduate level around the Pacific Region, including institutions in New Zealand and Australia. Manfred Ernst⁴⁴ in his two books has written about the work of churches in the Pacific from a western perspective. These works have tended to draw a lot of criticism from local scholars⁴⁵ because of his perceived insensitivity towards some crucial cultural mindsets about the Church in Samoa. He has touched on the churches in Samoa in general with a particular section relating to the works of the EFKS. Again, all these previous studies have had their own points of departure and foci, which are of great value to this study. However, there are obvious gaps within such scholarship that need further exploration, and to be addressed in a scholarly manner, as has been done in the previous studies mentioned.

In this particular inquiry, therefore, I will take the lead towards such further exploration of Samoan milieu. In doing so I will embark on a study of a different area of emphasis of the Church and Samoan society from those of the previously mentioned works. It is different in that this is the first major work of this nature to look thoroughly at the cultural-theological praxis of Samoan society by way of a hermeneutical critical analysis. I argue in this study that a hermeneutical critical analysis of this magnitude of the interactions, interrelationships, integration, and assimilation of Samoan culture and the Christian Gospel within the Samoan context is long overdue. The study will open up more philosophical and psychological avenues to a greater understanding of the cultural-theological construct of the Samoans. As mentioned earlier, Christianity and culture are deeply interwoven in Samoan life, so much so that one could find it rather difficult to separate the two in the 'being' or the 'existence' of Samoans. I believe therefore that it is this well ingrained cultural-theological mindset and life-world of Samoans, propagated by their Christian beliefs, that dictates their existential practical life today and will indeed determine their future destiny.

1.7 THE STUDY'S CONTRIBUTION

I consider that this study will establish an academic benchmark against which good meaningful responsible interpretation and understanding of Samoan society can be measured.

⁴⁴ Ernst, *Winds of Change*; Ernst, ed., *Globalisation and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*.

⁴⁵ Levesi Afutiti, "Samoa Church and Church Diaspora: A Case Study of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa", *Pacific Journal Of Theology* 16 (1996).

It will indeed pave the way in answering the ‘challenge’ from ethnographers and historians such as John Barker⁴⁶, to whom I referred earlier in the stimulus section of this chapter.

This research will not only explore the context comprehensively but it will also clarify some divergences already documented in the experiences, as well as the presentations and misrepresentations, disclosed by some previous studies which are already in the public domain. Moreover, this inquiry will also highlight the peculiar nature of the cultural-theological praxis of Samoan context through a philosophical hermeneutical analysis of the same, and provide some indications as to whether Christianity has been a progressive religious institution or otherwise in Samoa up until today and whether it will continue to be so in the future.

I also envisage that at the end of this study it will become clear to the EFKS in particular, that the significant areas of its practical ministry and theology may need a revisit for re-evaluation and some serious revamping in the immediate future. Moreover, it shall provide significant implications and direction for the Church’s responses to the existing and forthcoming challenges in its ministry in this twenty-first century. This study’s recommendations and proposals, together with those of previous studies on the EFKS, shall establish a solid foundation for a more serious review for the Samoan Church in, with, and through the help and intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, that it is possible that the implications of this study could be usefully considered by other Christian churches in Oceania, and perhaps even by Churches in other parts of the world with backgrounds similar to that of the EFKS.

To my understanding, this research is the first major large-scale inquiry in this particular area of the cultural-theological praxis of Samoan context. Hence, this study is of value as it traverses a field not previously explored.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I have to admit at the outset of this study that there is no intention that it will eventually be able to solve all the hermeneutical issues involved in understanding the cultural-

⁴⁶ Barker, "Introduction: Ethnographic Perspectives...", 6, 8, 9.

theological praxis of the Samoan context. Rather it is only a beginning of an academic form of investigation into Samoan setting, an attempt to interpret and understand the present Samoan situation with the current hermeneutical tools available. This study is also limited to my Church denomination allegiance, the *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) or the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), and excludes the *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Amerika Samoa* (EFKAS) which is the Congregational Church in the United States territory of American Samoa, though of course the two institutions do have much in common. The outcome of this study will predominantly be applied to the EFKS as a Church in the Independent State of Samoa.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of four parts. Part One, which consists of Chapters One and Two, contains the introductory information which lays out the background details of the thesis; and provides explanation of the research methodology. Part Two consists of Chapters Three and Four which explain the philosophical hermeneutical framework used in the study, and the outline of the Samoan philosophical hermeneutic: *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*. Part Three is made up of Chapters Five and Six which outline the general Samoan context, both the pre-Christian and Christian Samoa with an overview of the cultural-theological praxis of Christian Samoa in particular. Part Four of the thesis, comprising Chapters Seven to Chapter Ten, focuses on the critical hermeneutical analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS in the three major areas of its ministry, namely, Church Government and Leadership, Church Services, and Church and State relationship. Finally the Conclusion of the study is presented.

The chapter contents are as follows: after this introductory chapter, Chapter Two discusses the research methodology used in this study and the selection of research participants.

Chapter Three concentrates on the hermeneutical stimulus and focus of the study; and lays out the hermeneutical framework of the study. It consists of the definition and an attempt to develop and establish my particular philosophical hermeneutical tool for the analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of Samoan context with reference to hermeneutics since Fredrick Schleiermacher.

Chapter Four establishes what I propose as the relevant Samoan philosophical hermeneutic, which would not only be a realistic, meaningful approach for Samoa, but also performable. The chapter explores the Samoan philosophy expressed in the adage, '*O le fuata ma lona lou*' as being the appropriate hermeneutical approach and stimulant to the cultural-theological praxis of Samoan setting; and the Samoan axiom '*O le Tofa Liliu A Samoa*' as being the most appropriate hermeneutical method. The concept *phronesis* is discussed here in a comparative approach with the Samoan concept *tofa liliu* in order to establish the appropriateness and the authenticity of Samoan hermeneutical methodology of '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*'

Chapter Five discusses the pre-Christian Samoan context. It explains the historical genesis of Samoa and some relevant insights on myths and legends relating to its beginnings; the outline of the cultural and social content of Samoan context; and the intrinsic values of Samoan oral traditions as such in the research. This would provide a launching pad for understanding the Samoan context of the past and to decipher the 'meaning structures' of the Samoan people and their worldviews in the pre-Christian period as a bridging phenomenon to the Christian era.

Chapter Six discusses the Christian Samoan context and the contents of its *cultural-theological praxis* with reference to the development of such praxis from the time of the first London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries. Important Samoan concepts, which have contributed significantly to the form and shape of the cultural theological praxis of the Samoan Church of the past and today, will be explored here.

Chapter Seven explores in depth the *cultural-theological praxis* of 'Church Government and Leadership' in the EFKS. It introduces the constitutional framework of these dimensions of the praxis of the EFKS namely the Church governance and Church leadership. Samoan cultural-theological concepts such as *Faifea'u*, *Auauna a le Atua*, *Matua Faale-Agaga*, *Fai-lotu*, and others, are explained in detail. A hermeneutical critical-analysis of these exponents of the praxis of the EFKS is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Eight embarks on investigating the *cultural-theological praxis* of 'Church Services' in Samoa. This will cover the Church worship, sacraments, theological dogmas, theological training, Christian education, women's fellowship and their roles and responsibilities in their services for the Gospel through the Church. A hermeneutical analysis

is carried out in these particular dimensions of the cultural-theological activities in Samoan setting.

Chapter Nine investigates the cultural-theological praxis of the relationship between the EFKS as a Church and the state or the government of Samoa. For the purposes of this investigation, this chapter focuses specifically on the interface between the Church and Samoan government with regards to their complementary roles for the betterment of the Samoan people; a critical assessment of the National Council of Churches and its advocacy role in sustaining the Christian religious nature of Samoa as a nation, with the complementary support of Samoan government.

Chapter Ten succinctly summarises the whole thesis and provides the conclusions and implications of the findings of this study. In addition, some potential contributions this study presents for the wider Samoan society and the EFKS Church in particular, for today and the future generations, are highlighted here. The research provides a launching pad for emancipating the Samoan Church from some of its traditions and practices, which are not only debilitating in this post-modern and post-colonial Samoan community, but of which some are also obviously irrelevant.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0 RESEARCH METHODS

It is important that an appropriate research methodology is consistently used from the outset and that such method should fulfil the goals and objectives of this research. I have stated in the preceding chapter that the main research question for this study is “How can we understand the Samoan Church as a contextual indigenous Church of the twenty-first century?” This question and other relevant questions for this investigation are adequately addressed by employing the ‘qualitative research method’ to gather data from people relevant for this study. In addition to this empirical method, literature and archival materials also made a significant contribution to this study, by way of providing integral support to the records about Samoa in general. Thus, a thorough literature search of primary and secondary sources and resources has been undertaken. These include archival materials, relevant literature, and historical records belonging to both the EFKS and the Samoan Government. Permission was granted for me to have access to these materials. Most of the literature is in the public domain, and has been accessed through the generous support and permission of various libraries and institutions in Samoa and overseas.

Given that one of the most significant aspects of this study was to seek understanding about the Samoan Church within the Samoan context, qualitative research then found its impetus in ideographic knowledge, life experiences, and people’s aspirations, in order to effect such a task. Thus, it was essential that qualitative research must be employed, as

It is not to seek to explain the world in ways that will make sense across cultures to all reasonable people at any moment in history. Rather the tasks for qualitative research is to describe reality in ways, which enable us to understand the world differently, and in understanding differently begin to act differently.⁴⁷

Qualitative research facilitated this study by way of gathering the relevant data as well as ascertaining both the philosophical and phenomenological needs of the research. In its

⁴⁷ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 44.

normative effort to search for meanings in a specific social/cultural context,⁴⁸ in this study in particular, an effort has been made to seek the experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of the Samoan people about the nature of the Samoan Church within the Samoan context in the twenty-first century. To do so, the study was specifically focused on the cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS in both retrospect and prospect. In other words, it was an attempt to gather understanding, insights, and beliefs of the Samoans as to the meaning of the EFKS and its ministry to the life of the individual members and the whole Church community in the past and the contemporary era.

The nature and focus of the research questions required the use of qualitative research methods primarily because of the inductive approach involved, which enabled the exploration of questions of specific organisational situations, interaction relationships, concern with individual and corporate behaviour, and the emphasis on beliefs and meanings given to events and things.⁴⁹ Qualitative research also had the ability to explain meaning, processes, and the interrelationships existing between the Samoan context as a whole and the EFKS as one of its organic components. More important is the fact that qualitative research meets the rigorous scientific standards required for this type of research such as 'reliability, validity, sampling, and generalisability'.⁵⁰

While recognising the value of qualitative research for this study in particular, I also acknowledge that it had its own limitations in obtaining the relevant information and data for the study. For instance, the selection of the 'research participants' was not an easy undertaking, especially in the Samoan context where traditional culture and customs predominate in the decision-making process of the society. Failure to recognise that significant aspect of community life could result in choosing 'inappropriate' people as participants. Were this to happen, the information thus collected could be unproductive and unrelated to the original aims and objectives of the research. Therefore, it was important to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (London & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998); John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (London/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998), 14ff.

⁵⁰ Dave S Collingridge and Edwin E Gantt, "The Quality of Qualitative Research", *American Journal of Medical Quality* 23, no. 5 (2008), 389-395.

ensure a careful selection of the participants, recognising the role and contribution of each one of them, both within the realm of the Church as well as within Samoan cultural-social society.

Hence, to provide a research framework which faithfully interprets the reality of the Samoan context, and the EFKS as a Church, it was important to give due consideration to the individuals and their communities as well as their traditions, culture, religion, language, and their historical and genealogical origins. Failure to do so could intrude upon and exploit the vulnerabilities of these communities. Pacific Island researchers, such as Tamasese and others,⁵¹ had shown much concern for cultural sensitivity towards Samoa and other Pacific indigenous cultures when these communities were subjected to intensive qualitative research in the past. Thus, this study also recognised these researchers' sensitive approaches⁵² and incorporated them into this investigation. At the same time, the invaluable contributions to the research from various scholars from western cultures too were taken into consideration as a 'balancing' mechanism of academic research for this study.

2.1 ETHNOGRAPHY & AUTOETHNOGRAPHY RESEARCH METHODS

The research was oriented in Ethnographic⁵³ and Autoethnographic approaches and the necessary conventional 'Qualitative Research Procedures' were carefully utilised for gathering the significant data. The former was the primary method, and the latter secondary and a supportive tool for the research.

'Ethnography' is defined as "the art and science of describing a group or culture".⁵⁴ It is

⁵¹ Kiwi Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 39, no. 4 (2005).

⁵² Tamasese et al. identified the Samoan research method, *Fa'afaletui*, to carry out research in Samoa with the hope that other Pacific cousins would be able to utilise it somehow in their own context. However, although similarities in cultural values have been recognised between different Pacific Island cultures, it is not possible to generalize these findings for other Pacific Island communities. I am grateful that Tamasese is advocating this indigenous method, which would assist researchers in undertaking research in Samoa. This study has adopted this Samoan method with respect and humility, as it requires deeper relational understanding in communication skills in both the vernacular language and indigenous public relations.

⁵³ Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), 164-173.

⁵⁴ David M Fetterman, "Ethnography: Step by Step", *Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol 17* (1989), 11.

One social research method, albeit a somewhat unusual one, drawing as it does on a wide range of sources of information. The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned.⁵⁵

Given that ethnography in this work is a microanalysis⁵⁶ of the Samoan context *per se*, one of the basic assumptions of ethnographic qualitative research is that it has a holistic outlook in its investigation to gain a comprehensive and a complete picture of a social group or culture.⁵⁷ Part of this ethnographic approach leaned towards adopting the 'grounded theory approach' where personal interviews were involved.⁵⁸ Moreover, it is contextual in that it recognises the various embedded indigenous cultural dimensions of the setting and the situation being researched.⁵⁹ This enabled me to see beyond the immediate cultural scene in a Samoan village congregation, the EFKS as a Church, and even beyond the Church-state relationship *status quo*.

It is because of these characteristics of ethnographic qualitative research that it has been employed in this study as the most relevant and appropriate approach to gathering required information. It not only catered for the underpinning objectives of the current inquiry but also suited the cultural complexities and sensitive realities of the Samoan context. I do acknowledge the fact that there were both advantages and disadvantages of this research method, as have been identified by various research scholars. These were taken seriously into consideration. Ethnography has, on occasion, been criticised as being subjective "and, mere idiosyncratic impressions that (could) not provide a solid foundation for rigorous scientific analysis"⁶⁰. Nevertheless, this inquiry in particular took a naturalism paradigm of investigation which benefited from ethnography as being perhaps the only research method

⁵⁵ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London & New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983), 2.

⁵⁶ Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*, 162-164.

⁵⁷ Fetterman, "Ethnography: Step by Step", 29.

⁵⁸ Collingridge and Gantt, "The Quality of Qualitative Research", 393-394.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 392-393.

⁶⁰ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 2

that could bring to the fore the meanings that give form and content to the social processes under investigation.⁶¹

Since this study takes the ‘emic perspective’ of the Samoan context seriously, I considered that autoethnographic qualitative research also would be important for the purposes of this inquiry. Autoethnography is a relatively new postmodernist construct that synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and the objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question.⁶²

The theoretical emphasis of the autoethnographic research approach appeared to be in harmony with Hans-Georg Gadamer’s⁶³ philosophical hermeneutical concept of ‘prejudices’. For Gadamer the ‘pre-understanding’ and ‘pre-knowledge’ of the context being investigated by the researcher was a vital component for the process of hermeneutics. Therefore, while this inquiry was an attempt to unfold the meanings and nuances of the Samoan context through critical interpretation, it was integral to this study to recognise also my prior experiences, pre-knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of my own context, as part of the possible ‘prejudices’ to which Gadamer’s hermeneutics referred.

In autoethnography, the researcher is taken as the primary participant/subject of the research in the process of writing personal stories, experiences, and ethnographic narratives. Moreover it brought into serious consideration my personal experience and beliefs about Samoa and the EFKS. This included my direct observations of the daily behaviour and culture of the Samoan people, unearthing of local beliefs and perceptions, and the recording of the life histories (e.g. kinship, education, etc) and in-depth interviewing. Hence, the data analysis process fundamentally involved critical interpretation by the researcher. This was important because it acknowledged the fact that not only was I an indigenous Samoan researching the Samoan context with great depth of experience and knowledge about my own people and

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

⁶² Deborah E Reed-Danahay, ed., *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997), 2.

⁶³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 238f.

culture, but also seriously recognised my perceptions and opinions as an ordained Church minister and a theological educator of the EFKS.

As a researcher, I was drawing from my own embedded experiences to emphasise the ways in which I had interacted with the experiences of the participants who were being researched. Thus, it created connections and made use of my insights as a practical theologian in this cultural-social context. It was not what my identity had influenced in the research process that was important, but rather what I could offer and contribute to the research data to make sense of it in the light of my own story. To do this effectively I adopted both ‘personal reflexivity’⁶⁴ and ‘epistemological reflexivity’⁶⁵ as the most appropriate qualitative research tools enabling the research data to unfold the research question and other pertinent concerns. *Personal reflexivity* recognises the fact that all research is, to a great extent, autobiography.⁶⁶ However, I had to treat this with caution as it might lead towards my being overly subjective, hence losing the credibility of the inquiry.⁶⁷ *Epistemological reflexivity* would bring into the research my reflections upon and insights into the assumptions I had made in the course of the research, and help me to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings.⁶⁸

To facilitate the ethnographic fieldwork research, I opted for both ‘interview’ and ‘participant observation’ as the primary means of gathering the required data. Despite the fact that one method of gathering data would have been much easier as well as somewhat alleviating time constraints, I finally chose these two methods for the task at hand. Swinton and Mowat supported this decision when they said,

It is our opinion that the most effective way that practical theologians can use qualitative research methods is by developing an eclectic and multi-method approach, which seeks to take the best of what is available within the accepted models of qualitative research, but is not necessarily bound by any one model.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 59-61.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁷ Christine Dearnley, "A reflection on the use of semi-structured interviews", *Nurse Researcher* 13, no. 1 (2005), 19-28.

⁶⁸ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 60.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 50; See also Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 117-119.

It was more appropriate for this study to use these two methods of data collection in order to achieve its explicit goals and objectives. Semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate method of obtaining from the identified participants oral traditions, knowledge, beliefs, aspirations, and visions about Samoa and the praxis of the EFKS. The study used interviews as one of the most commonly used methods to gather data.⁷⁰ A number of texts⁷¹ differentiate between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and for the purpose of this study semi-structured interviews were used because the method enables scheduling of interviews in advance at a designated time; arranging a location normally outside everyday events; organising the interview around a set of predetermined questions; allowing other questions to emerge from the dialogue; and flexible timing: interviews may last from 30 minutes to several hours.⁷²

Oral research in the Samoan context as a means of gathering relevant qualitative data had been well supported by Pacific Island researchers,⁷³ hence it became also an integral research methodology in this study. In an earlier publication, I summed up the value of oral traditions in qualitative research as follows:

As always the case, myths and oral traditions have been arguably categorised as irrational and fluid hence unacceptable to be of any value and use as concrete foundation for academic research. Philosophically speaking, these oral discourses have been and still are treated with utmost care by the indigenous people as being genuine and reliable expressions of their world realities. These real life experiences and memories of people cannot so easily be omitted, edited, erased, shredded, or swept away.⁷⁴

Along the same line of thought are Tamasese and others,⁷⁵ including Bruce L Berg who said,

⁷⁰ Crahtree BF DiCicco-Bloom, "The Qualitative Research", *Medical Education* 40, no. 4 (2006), 314-321.

⁷¹ Eg. Frey J Fontana, "The Interview: from neutral stance to political involvement", in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Denzin N and Yvonna S Lincoln (California: Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2005), 695-728.

⁷² DiCicco-Bloom, "The Qualitative Research", 314-321.

⁷³ Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning"; Samuelu, "E Mamae Le Tava'e I Lona Fulu", 51-56.

⁷⁴ Fa'alepo A. Tuisuga-le-taaua, "The Nafanua Prophecy: An Earlier Version of the One Word for 'Setting the Scene' of Samoa's Religious and Political Formation", in *One Word, Many Versions: A Re-reading of the Holy Books - Essays on Intertextuality*, ed. Ruwan Palapathwala and Abraham Karicam (Kerala, India: Dr. Alexander Marthoma Centre for Dialogue, 2007), 106.

⁷⁵ Kiwi Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental", *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 39, no. 4 (2005).

Oral histories ... can be useful for providing background and social texture to ... research. It provides increased understanding and a living context to the otherwise one-dimensional information frequently offered by documents alone. It is, consequently, very dynamic.⁷⁶

The fact remained that no one knew more about these realities other than the indigenous people themselves who are the inhabitants of the context, through their life experiences and their active participation in all facets of life within their own society. Berger further suggested that, "first person accounts such as oral histories and biographies are necessary if a researcher is to understand the subjectivity of a social group that has been muted, excised from history, and invisible in the official records of their culture".⁷⁷

It was noted that the research methods that were essential to Western cultures were seldom appropriate to interpret and explain the realities in the non-western cultures like Samoa. This was because when these Western cultural research methods were applied to non-Western societies, they contributed directly to what was called 'exclusions'. For Thi Minh-Ha Trinh, exclusions underlined a particular kind of discourse:

... a conversation of us about them, of the white man with the white man about the primitive-native man... a conversation in which 'them' is silenced. 'Them' always stands on the other side of the hill, naked, and speechless, barely present in its absence⁷⁸

Such an attitude towards education, and especially where it concerned the notion of gaining knowledge from research, was prejudiced and biased. Hence, it was imperative that the role of the researcher in producing that knowledge needed to be recognised in the context of being inclusive.⁷⁹ In the same vein, Jones reaffirmed Liz Stanley's point of view on the importance of being known, noting that "'I' is central; that our account of the world can only be constructions, made up from the language, meanings and ideas historically available to us, the 'I'".⁸⁰ In spite of this inclusivity of the 'I' in the Samoan context, the prevailing scientific

⁷⁶ Bruce L Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston/London: Allyn & Bacon, 1995), 170.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 171.

⁷⁸ Thi Minh-Ha Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 65-67.

⁷⁹ Liz Stanley, ed., *Feminist Praxis, Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), 67.

⁸⁰ A Jones, "Writing Feminist Educational Research: Am I in the Text?" in *Women and Education in Aotearoa 2*, ed. S Middleton and A Jones (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 1992), 18.

research prefers and emphasises the value of Western culture as the premise for theoretical development at the expense of the culture of the minorities. Against this understanding was the argument by some Pacific Islanders⁸¹ suggesting that it was central to any research project, whether from an inside or outside perspective, to have the methodology and research problem defined within the parameters of the Pacific Islander context. To do so would reflect the true and authentic nature of the situation being researched in its own world. For this study in particular, the research was therefore confined within the Samoan context, with special emphasis on the ministry and praxis of the EFKS. The research was culturally based, with the intention of minimising the danger of western interpretation and meaning construction, and enabling an authentic Samoan-based approach.⁸²

2.2 RESEARCH RATIONALE

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there were two dimensions of this research, firstly the literature and archival investigation, and secondly the qualitative field work research. This study therefore anticipated with confidence that all its conclusions and relevant findings at the end would be derived not only from the thorough investigation of archival and literature materials, but equally important were the theological reflections and insights of the recruited participants of the research. In other words, equal weight was given to both the literature investigation and to the interviews as the primary sources of information on which the conclusions of this study are based.

2.2.1 Interviews

Careful designing and planning of interviews was fundamental to this study. Consideration of the nature of the research was an integral part of conducting interviews as well as the designing of the types of questions asked. In fact interview was an ontological concept where two people, especially in this study, were in active communication and conversation. The process of dialoguing was actually generated in the manner originally anticipated. Interview questions and all pertinent aspects were designed to achieve the objectives of the research.

⁸¹ Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental".

⁸² Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning", 301.

Some important questions, which were not included in the pre-prepared list of questions, eventually made their way into the process from time to time depending on their relevancy to a particular interview. Semi-structured interviews were predominantly utilised throughout the research.⁸³ Informal interviews were also used with great care in gathering more pertinent information during occasional informal conversations and meetings with the informants. This dimension of the research was conducted with caution along the lines of the Samoan research method called *Fa'afaletui*, to which Tamasese and others⁸⁴ referred. The informal interviews and conversations also took place to gather personal opinions, embedded beliefs, and the theological reflections of the indigenous individuals.

The selection of informants or interviewees was carried out with utmost care, particularly important in a context such as Samoa, which has complex cultural protocols needing to be acknowledged and respected at all times in order for the research to be successful. It is vital to mention at this point that any attempt to separate the traditional Samoan social structure and life worlds from the EFKS Church structure and dynamics when choosing the research participants would be rather impractical and unrealistic in the eyes of Samoans. The generic philosophical understanding of Samoans since the arrival of Christianity was that the two institutions, the *fa'asamoa* or the Samoan way of life, and the *lotu* or Church, would remain inseparable forever. Hence, the selection of the research participants was based on the understanding that Samoan society is an entity in which both the Samoan cultural traditions and the Church co-exist. In this study, I call this independent entity the 'Samoan Church'.

The fieldwork research took place within the period of three months. The participants were selected as the participants sampling group of people to fulfil the specific purpose for the study.⁸⁵ They represent every stratum of the EFKS and of Samoan society. Hence, there were 12 informants' chosen from across the Samoan Church. Each respondent represented a specific level of the Samoan society involved in the life of the EFKS in various capacities.

⁸³ Lisa S Whiting, "Semi-structured interviews: guidance for novice researchers", *Nursing Standard* 22, no. 23 (2008), 35-40; Dearnley, "A reflection on the use of semi-structured interviews", 19-28.

⁸⁴ Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental", 301-302.

⁸⁵ Collingridge and Gantt, "The Quality of Qualitative Research", 391.

Some of them could be categorized under the so-called the ‘elite individuals’⁸⁶ and were treated as such under normal cultural protocol circumstances.

Given the serious reliance on personal reflections and insights by this study, the experiences and opinions from the elites of the Church structure were obtained through interviews and conversations. Some were selected from the apex of the Church hierarchy as well as from other influential positions of both the Church and society. Apart from the obvious selection of the Chairman of the EFKS, the rest of the informants were randomly chosen, each from every layer of the EFKS solely to serve the specific purpose consistent with the objectives of this investigation. The participants’ chosen were:

1. The incumbent Chairman of the EFKS (Participant A). This participant was chosen simply because he was the head of the EFKS as an institution, and he has played an influential role in leading the EFKS in its decision- making process to this day. The chairmanship position is normally for the period of twelve months and subjected to re-election annually at the EFKS General Assembly or *Fono Tele*.

2. Senior Church minister of the EFKS (Participant B). The research required a reflection on the life of the Church in its relation to the *fa’a-Samoa* from the past to now. It was therefore important to get this type of perspective from someone with a sense of maturity in the ministry as well as with rich experience in matters pertaining to the interrelationship between the Church and the Samoan culture.

3. Theologian and lecturer at the Malua Theological College (Participant C). This participant was selected to provide theological perspectives on both the Samoan Church and Samoan society. In Samoa a theological college lecturer is considered a person with influence in the Church and the society at large. Malua Theological College was and still is the institution where all EFKS ministers are trained for the ministry and the mission of the Church. A deeper academic theological perspective on the ministry of the EFKS was expected from this participant.

4. Laywoman (Participant D). It was essential to obtain the perspective of a female member of the CCS Church on her role and responsibilities within the Church as well as her experience of the relationship between the Church and Samoan culture. This mature person with some involvement in the activities of the ministry of the Church was chosen particularly for this purpose.

⁸⁶ Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 113–114.

5. Layman (Participant E). Similarly, a male perspective was also sought from the members of the EFKS concerning their roles and responsibilities as members of the Church. This person was selected on the understanding that he was deeply involved in various activities of the Church as well as the Samoan community.

6. Christian politician (Participant F). This person was an active politician in the Church life and ministry also a former Member of Parliament and a Cabinet minister. He was chosen in order to get a perspective and a reflection on his experience of the ministry of the EFKS in relation to the political situation in Samoa, and his involvement in the life of the EFKS.

7. Ecumenical leader (Participant G). The Secretary General of the Samoa Council of Churches (SCC) was identified as the most useful informant. The Secretary General is in charge of the administrative activities of the SCC and he provides proposals and recommendations for various SCC policies and undertakes relevant research from time to time. His opinions on the Church in Samoa as a whole and on Samoan society would be invaluable for this study. The ecumenical dimension of the SCC vision and its aspirations were some of the reasons for selecting this informant. As the office of the SCC deals with all matters pertaining to the ecumenical movement in Samoa and coordinates all members and activities of the Samoa Council of Churches, it was therefore fitting to have the experience of the Secretary General of the SCC as an informant for this study.

8. Male junior youth (Participant I). I chose this person randomly as an active member of an EFKS junior youth group member of a village congregation. He was able to offer a typical male youth perspective on the youth involvement in the Church as well as in a village setting where the *fa'asamoa* prevailed at its extreme. Moreover, he could give a personal reflection on the relationship between the Church and the village *fa'asamoa* setting.

9. Female junior youth (Participant H). Similarly, this female member was an active person of the youth group from an EFKS village congregation. She was chosen to give a female perspective on the work of the youth within the Church as well as in the Samoan village as a whole. Her personal reflection on aspects of participation and involvement in the Church in her capacity as a youth member was vital in this interview.

10. Samoan Matai or Chief (Participant J). This person was also randomly selected to represent an important stratum of the Samoan society. His personal reflection on his life as a *matai* for his family and the village and his influence in the decision-making process of the EFKS village congregation was critically important to this research.

11. *Taule'ale'a* or an untitled man (Participant K). This participant was selected from among the many *taulele'a*⁸⁷ in Samoa. He presented his personal experience and reflection on his life as a Samoan untitled man who had been actively involved in all cultural life situations and protocols. Irrespective of age, *taule'ale'a* is an automatic cultural status within the Samoan community for those men who are not *matai*. *Taule'le'a* are responsible for all hard physical chores of any household and within the environment of the village council. *Taulele'a* were normally called the *malosi o le nu'u*, which literally means 'the strength of the village'. Thus, this Samoan informant was chosen in recognition of these significant roles and responsibilities.

12. *Tama'ita'i* or an untitled woman (Participant L). Similarly, the *Tama'ita'i* was chosen randomly. This person represented the views and the experience of the young women of the village. *Tama'ita'i* had their own distinct cultural obligations and prerogatives, which differentiate them from the rest of the married women in a village. Some of them could become titleholders and chiefs for their family of origin later in life.

These people were interviewed individually, on a one-to-one basis, at set times and venues appropriate and convenient for them. Semi-structured guidelines⁸⁸ for interview questions were prepared before each interview and they were closely followed during the process. More relevant questions arose during the questioning process were taken into account and therefore added to where necessary.

Samoan language was a vital component in the research. All interviews and conversations with the participants were done primarily in the Samoan language and, at other times, bilingually, depending on the comfort zone of the participants. The interviews were later translated into English for analysis. Using Samoan language was the best means of gathering invaluable information from the local people on the research topic, allowing them freedom to express themselves and their experiences. Hence understanding the local Samoan language was integral to the interview dimension of the research. What became very important in this aspect of the research was the fact that Samoan language with regards to communication and transmission of significant information involved the use of an allusive

⁸⁷ *Taulele'a* is the plural of *taule'ale'a*.

⁸⁸ Dearnley, "A reflection on the use of semi-structured interviews", 22; Whiting, "Semi-structured interviews: guidance for novice researchers", 36.

style of language which sometimes referred to as ‘riddles and ‘camouflage’.⁸⁹ These language styles, however, play an important part in the Samoan culture and were viewed as one characterisation of oral tradition which was well restated by Finnegan when he said, “...though in one sense they centre on words, in another they involve more than words”⁹⁰. It was therefore important to understand this form and style of orality when researching in the Samoan context to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations of ideas and concepts.

For this study, it was advantageous for me to undertake the research with the Samoans as a Samoan myself. However, I was conscious of the fact that knowing about one’s own culture and customs may sometimes lead to carelessness, causing the overlooking of sensitive cultural interpersonal communication boundaries, which could jeopardise the disclosure of valid and crucial information by the research informants. Such tendencies were curtailed with care.

2.2.2 Observations

The observation part of the research was important. Given that one aspect of the study was to focus on social changes to a traditional village life situation, it was therefore necessary to observe carefully the socio-religious dynamics of a typical Samoan village. Sapapali’i village was specifically chosen for this purpose because it embodies both cultural and historical legacy that was vital and had much influence on this research. In particular, Sapapali’i was chosen as a case study to reveal, or otherwise, similarities and/or differences between the social and the religious life of a typical Samoan village of the past and the contemporary situation. Secondly, this village was historically, culturally and religiously significant to the Samoan society. Sapapali’i was where the first LMS missionaries from London first landed and Christianity was accepted in 1830. Furthermore, the village also belonged to one of Samoa’s paramount High Chiefs, Malietoa Vainu’upo, who received Christianity in 1830 and accepted it as the religion of the Samoans from that time.

There were specific objectives for the research observations. Firstly, it was to experience the actual life situation of a typical religious Samoan village context. Secondly,

⁸⁹ Tamasese et al., "O le Taeao Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental".

⁹⁰ R Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

was to observe the religious life of the people in their daily/weekly routine of domestic activities in relation to their cultural-religious obligations. Such activities include daily devotions (morning and evening), the beginning and ending of all gatherings with prayer, week-long Church activities such as *aoga faifeau* (pastor's school), *lotu au leoleo* (prayer meetings), *aoga Aso Sa* (Sunday School) and so on. Thirdly, was to observe the impact of social changes on the social, religious, economic, and political life of the community, in order to identify some major social changes and their distinctive impact on people's lives. For example, the use of new technology such as TV, videos, mobile phones, cars, boats, buses, telephones, by the populace. These observations were significant in that they gave an impression of the changes in the life of the village people concerning education, employment, and politics.

The village's everyday activities and the movement of people, as well as the schedules of their daily routine chores, were closely observed. I actually participated unobtrusively in the village life and noted the daily life routine of the people concerning both their spiritual and cultural/social life habits. A weekly routine for four weeks was closely monitored and recorded in the research observation journal. The important days such as Sunday in the religious life of the village, was carefully examined. Sunday was observed by the village as day of rest following the teachings of the Ten Commandments of the Christian bible. I also attended and participated in their religious services on Sunday to observe the actual dynamics of their Church services and how Samoan culture was incorporated and entertained therein as part of their religious life and services.

I also examined how the village continuously supports its *faifeau*, or Church minister, and his family every day of the week in terms of providing their livelihood and security; as well as observing with particular interest in the dynamics of this same relationship on Sundays. I watched with interest how the villagers managed to merge their spiritual and social life in their daily life preoccupations.

PART TWO

PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

CHAPTER THREE

A HERMENEUTICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

I have discussed in the preceding chapters the overall aims and assumptions of this inquiry. In order to fulfil and realise those aims and suppositions, this chapter will endeavour to lay down the hermeneutical component of the study and the framework within which this investigation operates, so that a coherent unit of analysis and relevant discussion would eventually prevail throughout the thesis. However, such a hermeneutical framework may not be well understood without locating it within the broader context of the historical development of the hermeneutical enterprise in academia, hence providing a solid footing for the hermeneutical investigation appropriate for this study.

First, I will attempt to give a definition of hermeneutics and its origin in general, as well as how it is used throughout this inquiry. Part of this will involve explaining the notion of cultural-theological praxis for which hermeneutics will be used, and to which this study predominantly refers in this investigation.

Secondly, given the hermeneutical nature and emphasis of this study, I shall also delve into tracing those aspects of the historical development of the hermeneutics discipline that are relevant for this thesis from the period of the so-called father of modern hermeneutics, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his ‘general hermeneutics’.

Thirdly, I will also attempt to give a brief explanation of the Samoan philosophical hermeneutical model, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, as the more elaborate discussion of it will

arise in Chapter Ten. A comparison of its features and characters corresponding to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics will be made.

Finally, I will discuss in detail two most important concepts in this study, being the 'Samoan context as text' and the 'cultural theological praxis', and how they are used within the domain and framework of this hermeneutical exercise. While the traditional approach to hermeneutics tends to focus specifically on written texts, such as biblical and legal texts, there has been an expansion of this 'text' phenomenon in post-modern studies to embrace all human activities including art, action, culture, and all sorts of texts since the hermeneutical explorations of Hans-Gerog Gadamer.⁹¹ This of course is a somewhat radical approach, but a sound deviation from the normal hermeneutics of written text as in literary theory.

3.1 WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?

The word 'hermeneutics' is often related to biblical interpretations and the attempt to understand the meaning of scriptural texts. This was the usual way in which hermeneutics was formerly used. It is a familiar term within the various academic disciplines such as philosophy, theology, law, literature, anthropology, medicine, as well as within social scientific contexts.⁹² 'Hermeneutics' has a very long and complex history, which I will attempt to explore to a certain degree particularly for the purposes of my inquiry. In various contexts, hermeneutics is said to be a "theory, a philosophy, a view of reality, a methodology, an approach, a hope, a promise, an ideology, or a slogan, a battle cry, ... a field of study, (and) a discipline."⁹³ This indicates how broadly hermeneutics could be employed not only in academic investigations but also in the practical life situations of the human race. However, for my purposes in this chapter it is prudent at the outset to focus on:

- i. The etymology of the original term *hermeneioun* (Greek);
- ii. The definition of hermeneutics and its brief historical development;

⁹¹ Augustine Pagolu, *Contextual Hermeneutics: A Study in Method* (2003 [accessed Dec 2006]); available from <http://www.ocms.ac.uk/docs/Pagolu%20Lecture%2020030923.pdf>.

⁹² Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 3.

⁹³ Shaun Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 3

i. First, it has always been understood that in classical Greek literature, from Plato onwards at least, the term hermeneutics (*hermeneutike techne*) referred to the interpretation of divine signs and oracles as they related to the fate and destiny of people and individuals.⁹⁴ Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek verb *hermeneuein* and it seems to be paralleled with the work of the Greek god Hermes and related etymologically to him, who was the messenger carrying messages from god Zeus to everybody in the human realm⁹⁵. This process of transferring of messages to and fro from the gods in the divine realm to the world of humans was in fact the bridging of an ontological gap between the thinking of the gods and that of humans as well as between the invisible and the visible beings. *Hermeneuein* in fact has been used with several meanings. It is generally translated “to interpret” and the Greek noun *hermeneia* means “interpretation”.⁹⁶ *Hermeneuein* means “to say” in the sense of “to express” or “to announce”; but also “to translate” in the sense of “to interpret”.⁹⁷ Richard E. Palmer clearly puts these in three directions of meanings of the verb *hermeneuein*: first is *to express* aloud in words, that is, “to say”; secondly, *to explain*, as in explaining a situation; and thirdly is *to translate*, as in the translation of a foreign language.⁹⁸ The three directions seem to be expressed by the single verb “to interpret”. However, each direction is independent from one another and is posing important meaning(s) of interpretation. Thus interpretation then can refer to the combination of oral presentation, a reasonable explanation, and a translation from another language. This process of interpretation or *hermeneuia* is basically referring to literary text as such. This emphasis has been the focus of biblical or scriptural exegesis and interpretations. In early Jewish and Christian tradition, hermeneutics dealt with the application of the Holy Scriptures in view of new circumstances and problems of life. In this respect people such as Origen and Augustin wrote about the rules and other related perspectives on such scriptural interpretation.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Anton Houtepen, "Hermeneutics and Ecumenism: The Art of Understanding a Communicative God", *Interpreting Together: Essays in Hermeneutics* (2001), 1.

⁹⁵ Richard E Palmer, *The Relevance of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics to Thirty-Six Topics or Fields of Human Activity* (Southern Illinois University, Carbonade, 1999 [accessed March 2006]); available from <http://www.mac.edu/faculty/richardpalmer/relevance.html>, 2.

⁹⁶ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 12.

⁹⁷ Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology* (Cambridge: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 179; see also Palmer, *Hermeneutics*.

⁹⁸ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 13.

⁹⁹ Houtepen, "Hermeneutics and Ecumenism: The Art of Understanding a Communicative God" Houtepen also noted here that the term *interpretation* is the Latin translation of *hermeneia*, focusing mainly on texts. Origen's writing on this subject mentioned by Houtepen is *Peri Archoon* and *De Doctrina Christiana* for Augustin.

ii. However, from the so-called modern period to the post-modern, contemporary approaches to hermeneutics also dealt with interpretation of non-textual matters, cultures and contexts, and/or situations. Hence, hermeneutics has certainly taken a new direction whereby it is no longer confined to interpretation and understanding of biblical text and literary works as such, but its focus has been broadened to encompass non-textual works, social sciences, and contexts.

This thesis focuses specifically on this relatively new direction of the hermeneutics theory whereby the process of interpretation explores the meaning and understanding of the integration of the Christian gospel and Samoan culture, rather than a literary text *per se*. This involves people and their existence within the life world framework of Christianity in a specific context, in this case, the Samoan context. The inquiry has critically analysed the interface and interactions between the gospel and culture within this particular context based on such an interpretation.

Richard E. Palmer in his book *Hermeneutics* discusses in detail what he called the six modern definitions of hermeneutics as evolved in modern times. While each of these definitions points to various important dimensions of hermeneutics, I have put much emphasis on the fifth definition: ‘Phenomenology of existence and of existential understanding.’ To be more specific, the inquiry has focused on hermeneutics as the phenomenology of being and existence, as well as existence of understanding thereby drawing heavily from Martin Heidegger’s understanding of phenomenology. For Heidegger (1889-1976), hermeneutics is ontology; it is about the most fundamental conditions of mankind’s being in the world.¹⁰⁰ It is the attempt to interpret humanity rather than a literary text, within its own context, so that one would come to understand such particular context and the way human beings survive and exist therein. ¹⁰¹ Following Heidegger’s ontological apprehension, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) advocated his hermeneutics as a theory, which illuminates the conditions of possibility of understanding. Thus he proposed that the “the best definition for hermeneutics is to let what is alienated by the character of the written word or by the character of being

¹⁰⁰ Bjorn Ramberg and Gjesdal Kristin, *Hermeneutics* (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Nov 2005 [accessed June 2006]); available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2005/entries/hermeneutics/>.

¹⁰¹ Miikka Ruokanen, *Hermeneutics as an Ecumenical Method in the Theology of Gerhard Ebeling* (Vammala: Helsinki, 1982), 25.

distantiated by cultural or historical distances speak again. This is hermeneutics: to let what seems to be far and alienated speak again.”¹⁰²

3.2 A SAMOAN PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICAL MODEL (PARADIGM)

It is prudent at this point of the research to state the predominant philosophical hermeneutical model for the critical analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context is called, ‘*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*’.¹⁰³ This Samoan saying is a complex phenomenon, which, especially for academic investigation, requires careful treatment and consideration so it must be analysed in some detail. This may appear to be a limitation, but it cannot be avoided, as it is essential to an understanding of this study. I have gone into some detail in defining the Samoan concept *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, or simply *o le tofa liliu*, in Chapter One. However I will briefly recall it for the purposes of this section. *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* literally means the ‘turning wisdom of Samoa’. In more formal Samoan usage and understanding, the concept is relatively difficult to interpret in English, but its deeper meaning must be deciphered for this study, and I shall attempt to do so.¹⁰⁴ The concept could be closely interpreted as a ‘*cautious, objective, contemplative, self-evaluative and self-reflective wisdom of Samoa*’. It entails a sense of both broad and specific articulate thinking, which intensively considers and recognises the present state and conditions of things. It also treasures ‘*tala o le vavau*’, or the past traditions of the people’s life-world, what Gadamer calls ‘effective history’. Also implied is a sense of cautious and diligent forethought based on informed empirical knowledge and understanding. In a way it is very much in line with the Greek concept *phronesis* or ‘practical wisdom’ used by Aristotle¹⁰⁵ and later scholars. The process of *tofa saili*¹⁰⁶ or contemplation and deep thinking in the Samoan ‘*tofa liliu*’ is

¹⁰² Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education*, 4.

¹⁰³ Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 33-35. Aiono touches on this *Tofa liliu* concept in her discussion of one of the related Samoan concept *Soalaupule*, both of which interrelate and are interconnected within the spheres of *Soalaupule*. Traditionally, the product of the interrelationship between the two is *ua tasi le tofa mamao* or in western terms, a consensus has been reached between different parties involved in a negotiation for a good decision.

¹⁰⁴ Misa Telefoni, "Speech by Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Misa Telefoni at the Opening of University of the South Pacific's Cultural Night - 25 August 2006", (Government of Samoa Webpage: Government of Samoa, 2006). Hon Misa Telefoni in his speech also acknowledges the difficulty in defining the Samoan terminology *Tofa* in English.

¹⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

¹⁰⁶ This Samoan phrase is somewhat equivalent to the phrase *tofa liuliu*. The core emphasis of the two phrases is the process of intensive contemplation and deep thinking in order that one may reach an understanding of something and/or arriving at a decision or ideas. Therefore the two – *tofa saili* and *tofa liuliu* – could be

fundamentally grounded in the practical experience and the empirical understanding of the Samoan life world.

For this chapter, however, I shall proceed to explicate the Samoan hermeneutical model, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* in its theoretical framework, which constitutes its ‘three phases’. The explanation of the practical application of the model will be the focal point of Chapter Four of the thesis.

First it is imperative that there is a need for hermeneutics of the praxis of the EFKS in the Samoan context. This need must be clearly evident in the life of the Samoan context in general and in the life and ministry of the EFKS in particular. Several issues in the life of the EFKS have emerged as challenges to the Church. These issues are directly related to the various dimensions of the Church’s ministry such as, Church Government and Leadership, Church Services, and Church and Society. It is undeniably true that these issues have come to the fore due to the natural pressure and demand for social changes at possibly all facets of life. When such issues become apparent there needs to be some form of understanding by the Church and the populace at large as to what these issues really involve, their cause and effect, and what are possible solutions, if so needed. Indeed some of these problems within the life of the Church have been precipitated by people’s reactions and responses towards traditional and cultural demands, as well as due to the incompatibility of the theological norms of the day with the challenging theological dynamics of the ever-changing world in the twenty-first century.

In acknowledging these aspects of the life of the Church, the Samoan saying, ‘*O le fuata ma lona lou*’ appears to be the most relevant psychological approach to accepting the fact of the need for hermeneutics in order to understand the various issues in the praxis of the Samoan context. I have discussed at some length the traditional cultural meaning of this Samoan saying in Chapter One, so I will not dwell on that here. However I shall discuss further its relevancy and its psychological significance in this hermeneutical model.

Empirically, the Samoans have their common belief and trust in their own adage, ‘*O le fuata ma lona lou*’, which literally translates ‘a breadfruit harvesting season with its own

interchangeably used in Samoan oratory speeches. Note that these phrases fall in the category of formal, respectful Samoan language and are rarely used in the realm of normal everyday conversations.

‘lou’ or breadfruit collecting stick’. What does it mean? It means that inevitable natural changes in life require a new mindset, new attitudes, new approaches and new ideas as to how an individual or a community should handle them efficiently and effectively. Thus it is necessary that a psychological sense of flexibility and an open-minded approach to life must be the guiding forces to achieving understanding and nuances of meaning of such new challenges in life. Moreover, the Samoan saying echoes Jesus’ teaching about the need for a new wineskin in which the new wine ought to be stored.¹⁰⁷ New wine would be wasted if it were put in an old wineskin, as the old wine skin would burst and be destroyed.

The second phase of the model is actually the practical part whereby *Soalaupule*¹⁰⁸ becomes the predominant focus. It is the actual dialogical process whereby each individual Church member and/or leader is seeking to know and to understand the reality of the issue in question. This is when the Church and the Samoan context are seeking understanding of the identified issues and their cultural and theological implications. In other words this is the part where people’s horizons are dynamically brought together through *soalaupule* and *tofa saili* in such a way that all these horizons would eventually become fused, thus reaching a decision – *O le Tofa Liliu*. That decision is basically the final product of the *soalaupule* and the *tofa saili* processes. *Tofa saili*, or deeper contemplation and consideration as a process, takes into consideration appropriate ethical and moral values of the society as part and parcel of creating good practical decisions for the benefit of the people. As well, it nurtures the horizontal relational dimension of people’s interrelationships not only amongst themselves but also towards their immediate natural environment.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Gospel of Matthew 9:17.

¹⁰⁸ *Soalaupule* is usually translated literally as ‘to deliberate’ in a somewhat dialogical manner. It is made up of three different words being, *soa* which literally means ‘a partner’, a colleague, a friend, a comrade; *lau* which means ‘your or your’s’ or ‘a leaf’ – the former meaning prevails here; and the word *pule*, which literally means ‘authority’. The combination of these three words, forming the word *Soalaupule*, can be literally translated and interpreted as ‘to share your authority to your partner’. It is in fact a genuine ‘dialogue’ where each party is willing not only to share thoughts, experience and personal reflections on a specific issue in question but also is prepared to listen, think, analyse, explain in order to form an opinion. The sharing is implemented through rigorous deliberations amongst *matai* and/or some elderly people in the Samoan community. But this, however, still cannot reflect the complete sense of the word in the Samoan understanding. The sharing may involve giving, conferring, and delegation of one’s authority to another. *Pule* or authority in the Samoan understanding may include ideas, opinions, power, individual rights and responsibilities. When the *matai* are having a meeting or a deliberation on an important issue, they are certainly in the process of *soalaupule*. *Soalaupule* is normally executed in a formal manner with a sense of respect for one another, and a sense of openness amongst the participants of such a meeting. The end product of such deliberations is a consensus amongst the participants and this is called in Samoan ‘*ua tasi le tofa*’ – a consensus has been reached. *Soalaupule* also involves deep meditations upon issues and pastoral problems within a congregation.

¹⁰⁹ Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion", in *Pacific Indigenous Dialogue on Faith, Peace, Reconciliation and Good Governance*., ed. Tamasailau M suaali'i Sauni

Having that recognition for environmental contribution to the psychological well-being and the livelihood of humanity, one becomes aware of his/her role in the continuous formation and transformation of the world's future. In other words, Samoans are somehow part of the continuous creation and recreation of God in the Samoan milieu and beyond. In any event, Samoans are very much co-creators with God with a positive intention to make their world comfortable and fitting for livelihood as well as being part of God's wider created world. This is indeed an indication of the holistic nature of the *tofa liliu* concept in the Samoan worldview. It penetrates deeper into the '*tagata lilo*'¹¹⁰ of the Samoan individual and the essence of the life of being, or the *dasein* (Heidegger,) in order to identify both the positives and the negatives of existence so that one could appropriate a reasonable judgement in making decisions about life.

Tofa liliu is the final stage or the end product of the whole process of continuous *tofa liuliu* or contemplation and reasoning about something relating to the life of the Samoans. In other words, *tofa liuliu* is more or less the actual process of continuous deeper contemplation and careful consideration about something until a consensus is finally reached. The point at which one ultimately makes a decision, *ua tasi le tofa*, is based on understanding or the fusion of horizon in terms of Gadamer's hermeneutics. The term *liuliu* in Samoan literally means to turn over and over again. It implies patience, endurance, and an urge to re-do or to reconsider something in order to achieve the utmost perfection needed. Hence this leads on to the Samoan adage, '*ua liuliu fa'ala'au mamafa le tofa saili a Samoa*' which literally means 'Samoa's search for a wise decision is being turned over and over again like that of turning over of a massive heavy log of wood'. It is a figurative expression symbolising an intensive attempt by the Samoans leaders, *matai*, and the elderly people to consider something in order to achieve a sound and a reasonable decision on an issue at hand. The Samoan expression is rarely heard, or spoken by someone within the circle of ordinary Samoans in their conversation or in the realm of everyday informal gatherings. The nature of the process towards achieving the *tofa liliu* could only be heard of and experienced within the spheres of

Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Betsan Martin. Manuk Henare, Jenny Plane Te Papa, Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese (Apia: USP, 2007), 1 – 11. Tuiatua describes well in his article these interrelational relationships existing in the Samoan milieu not only between people themselves but also between people and their environment and indeed with their creator, God.

¹¹⁰ *Tagata lilo* simply means in this study the 'being' of the human person, or it can be taken at face value as being the internal natural construct and character of the human being. For the Samoans, *tagata lilo* constitutes the whole person, being the physical body, soul or spirit, and the mind (psyche).

aigapotopoto (extended family) meeting, *fono a le nu'u* or village council, and the *fono a le ekalesia* or Church meetings and formal gatherings.

Since Samoa has two levels of spoken language namely '*gagana tautala o aso uma*' or the everyday Samoan colloquial spoken language, and the '*gagana fa'aaloalo*' or the respectful, formal, honorary language,¹¹¹ the concept *tofa liliu* in Samoa is mainly found within the latter language usage. The '*objective self-assessing, self-evaluating and self-reflective wisdom*' may encompass the everyday knowledge, experience, and understanding possessed by a human person. It concerns the interpretation and understanding accomplished and derived from rigorous deliberations between two or more people who are willingly and genuinely open to one another's advice and support. In other words, the Samoan wisdom, as it were, is a 'shared' interpretation and understanding amongst the people involved in a deliberation. This 'sharing' component is indeed an inherent characteristic of the communal Samoan life world. Thus the empirical aspect of the life of the Samoans is vital in this respect. Personal observations and reflections on their life activities is a crucial component of the praxis of the Samoan context. Despite the sharing aspect of the Samoan wisdom as it were, each participant however, has his/her own *horizon* and *effective history*, which is the fundamental interpretive element by which the Samoan interpreter shapes an understanding and explanation of the 'object', issue or a text in question. It is vitally important to acknowledge the fact that the knowledge shared in this process from one person to another goes with a sense of responsibility, respect, honour, and care; and it shall transcend human boundaries and limitations and go beyond the actual participants of a deliberation. In other words, such knowledge and understanding may somehow encroach onto new horizons of other people of the community (subject) participating in the interpretive process; as well as the horizons of the event or issue in question (object). This concept, therefore, normally runs parallel to another significant Samoan concept '*Soalaupule*' which I have mentioned earlier, which is an integral part of this hermeneutical paradigm.

The third section of the model is the actual practical application dimension in addition to what has been explained in the preceding section. In simple terms it refers to the notion of *ua tasi le fa'atofala'iga* or *ua tasi le tofa* and the Church leaders and the people concerned finally achieve an 'informed understanding and knowledge' on a situation at hand. This may

¹¹¹ There is one language but of two levels. The differences may be found in vocabulary items and with pronunciations.

be a slow process depending on the complexity of traditional protocols involved when a decision stemming from ‘understanding’ is finally put into practice. The nature of this procedure may sometimes seem rather lethargic, and become a hindrance to the model, as all parties involved must reach a consensus somehow. Sometimes the ecclesiastical component of the deliberations turns out to be much easier and swifter in achieving understanding, and a decision, while the cultural construct of the Church community seems quite tough and difficult to deal with within a short period of time. On the other hand, though time-consuming, this considerate, cautious, and sensitive approach is very appropriate to the actual needs of the people affected.

I have to reiterate thus far, that the hermeneutical model or approach mentioned above is basically from the perspective of the EFKS practical theology and ministry in Samoa. Indeed the cultural construct of the paradigm is somewhat complex at times, as the notion of consensus has been the focal point of Samoan deliberations. The Western democratic principle of majority rule for decision-making has never existed at such level of negotiation in the Samoan context. Samoans are culturally sensitive to Church matters especially when hard decisions are being sought for the betterment of the Church and the community as a whole. Thus the only approach, to satisfy the sensitive nature of the community, is through hard deliberations and negotiations, ultimately gaining such a consensus, or the *Tofa Liliu*. This is the core nature of the *fa’amatai* system and the *fa’asamoa*, which is the guiding body of Samoan culture and traditions, regulating the existence of Samoans in a Church community, as well as in the wider community in general. At the other end of the spectrum, it is important to remember that theology is all about the unity of knowledge, faith and action.¹¹² Perhaps the Samoan concepts mentioned and discussed in this model, with their respective functional designations mentioned herein, will work together intimately to illuminate ‘understanding’ in this unity of knowledge, faith, and actions within the praxis of Samoan society.

An attempt to achieve an understanding of the Samoan context both culturally and theologically requires deeper hermeneutical assessment, and Gadamer’s philosophical approach to understanding appears to be an invaluable hermeneutical tool fitting in such case. The use of a methodological approach with a specific set of rules laid down, as a hermeneutical strategy to comprehend this context, for example those promoted by philosophers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher or Wilhelm Dilthey could be somewhat

¹¹² Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 110.

misguiding. Such approaches are too scientific and would not reflect the true philosophical mindset of the Samoan people concerning gaining a consensus of understanding, and would not only distort the fundamental aspects of the indigenous Samoan milieu but also be incapable of integrating all the necessary unique characteristics of the subject in question.

Nonetheless, despite such weaknesses of scientific hermeneutics, I believe Schleiermacher and his followers have contributed significantly to the discipline of hermeneutics in advocating the fact that the idea of understanding other cultures is not something we can take for granted. Rather “understanding others involves an openness towards the fact that what seems rational, true, or coherent may include something deeply unfamiliar. This openness is only possible in so far as we systematically scrutinize our own hermeneutical prejudices”.¹¹³ For Schleiermacher, this is a stricter hermeneutical practice as opposed to a laxer one, which is a very significant point. This is a vital position for any attempt to gain understanding of another culture and a context like Samoa, for instance.

The pre-scientific and pre-colonial aspects of ‘being in the world’ are vital phases in my analysis of the Samoan context. In other words, the ontological-humanistic hermeneutical approach will be the predominant analytical drive of this work. Gerald Bruns summarises Heidegger’s hermeneutical thought by saying that “understanding is not an activity of consciousness but a condition of belonging to a world”.¹¹⁴ So for the praxis of the Samoan context therefore, a valid understanding of such a context can be derived from being part of the context somehow, and to belong to Samoa intimately and with passion. For such understanding it is important to have some idea of the so-called pre-scientific and pre-colonial period of the Samoan history. ‘Pre-scientific’ and ‘pre-colonial’ aspects in this instance basically refer to the authentic and pure undisturbed Samoan setting prior to the arrival of foreigners, colonial powers, and the introduction of modern scientific ideologies. These foreign imports of worldviews and sociological philosophies imposed positive as well as detrimental activities onto the Samoan cosmogony. The scientific and colonial periods of the Samoan setting have strongly influenced the development of the Samoan life-world in later years up to today. These developments, though inevitable consequences of the ever-changing

¹¹³ Ramberg and Kristin, *Hermeneutics* ([accessed]).

¹¹⁴ K.C. Abraham, *Third World Theologies: Commonalities & Divergences* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994); H Gerald L Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient & Modern* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), 2.

world conditions, have been accepted, not without criticism, in general at every sphere of life in the Samoan context.

3.3 SAMOAN CONTEXT AS 'TEXT'

As mentioned earlier, this inquiry is not dealing with a hermeneutical analysis of a literary text *per se*, in the conventional, traditional understanding of the 'text'. Rather it is a hermeneutical analysis of the *cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context*. In other words, the text for this critical interpretation for understanding is the Samoan context and its cultural-theological praxis, as described earlier. Thus it would necessary to be more specific and articulate what 'text' really means in this work.

In the words of Stephen Daniel, 'text' may be defined¹¹⁵ as 'any group of signs which constitute a whole and which take on meaning through interpretation'. Robert J. Schreiter¹¹⁶ notes that, "while the word 'text' comes from linguistics, texts are both verbal and non verbal phenomena, which can bear a message and thus serve as the basic unit of investigation...thus a text can be a set of words, an event, or even a person". F. P. A. Demeterio II accurately sums up my own emphasis by saying that "today, not only documents, literary texts and scriptures can be called texts, but also symbols, rituals, practices and customs, myths, structures of power, kinship and social set ups, and many more besides".¹¹⁷ In other words a text can be a literary work, a poem, a novel, a biblical passage, a historical event, or even a cultural context like Samoa. The Samoan context therefore can become the total sum of all these texts shared by the Samoans. Thus in this regard, the Samoan context as text is like a 'mosaic of various texts' all naturally integrated in a corporate fashion in such a way it ultimately portrays the truth and reality about Samoa. For this study in particular, the

¹¹⁵ Stephen Daniel, "The Patient as Text: A Model of Clinical Hermeneutics", *Theoretical Medicine* 7 (1986), 195-210; Werner Jeanrond also reflects on the shift of the definition and meaning of a text. For him, a text is no longer a clearly confined, but a fluid, phenomenon. C.f. Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994), 103; also refer to Rodolphe Gasche, *The Train of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 278-93; see also Stephen Crocker, *Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences* [Internet] (1990 [accessed September 2006]); available from <http://www.mun.ca/phil/codgito/vol1/v1doc2.html>; Rhod V Nuncio, *The Text and the Logos: Language Debate in Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction* (2002 [accessed November 2006]); available from http://www.geocities.com/philodept/diwatao/derrida_and_saussure.htm?20063.

¹¹⁶ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 55.

¹¹⁷ F P A Demetrio, *Introduction to Hermeneutics* (San Beda College, Manila Philippines, 2001 [accessed Sept 2006]); available from http://www.geocities.com/philodept/diwatao/introduction_to_hermeneutics.htm?20069.

existence of the EFKS as a Church and being part of the mosaic of texts within the Samoan context is thus the main focus and emphasis of the investigation.

Moreover, with regards to ‘intertextuality’, in the eyes of Julia Kristeva, as a practice of reading and/or writing, she maintains that text “is not a vehicle of information but rather as so many forms of reflexive language...in a dynamics of cooperation”¹¹⁸. Andrew Wicking sums up Kristeva’s emphasis in this regard by saying that,

It is not merely the text itself that is in ‘dynamics of cooperation’ or ‘in process’ ...but so too the subject, the author, the reader, or analyst. Thus the reader/writer joins a process of continual production – is ‘in process/on trial’, over the text. This recognises that a text is always in a state of production, and that the readers are intimately involved in the process.¹¹⁹

Thus the Samoan context as text in this study recognises these various aspects of text. Being an evolving organic cluster of organisms, ideologies, economics, politics, religions, and so forth, all dynamically cooperating continuously in the process of growth, production, change and development, the Samoan context no doubt could be recognised as text as the focus of my inquiry. The interweaving, interrelatedness, and the interconnectedness of these several processes and productions within the Samoan milieu, with particular focus on the EFKS as part of the natural generic growth of Samoa as a nation, is fundamental to my investigation. Hence, it is imperative for such text to be liable for critical interpretation and analysis at any time in the life of any individual or group of individuals, either from ‘inside’ it – the emic perspective – or from ‘outside’ – the etic perspective. Thus in this particular work, the former seems to be the prevailing viewpoint taken specifically from the analysis of the EFKS Church activities.

People by nature interpret the world around them and their place in it. They would therefore recognise their experiences propagated by their existence within their life world. In other words, their life world is a sum of their experiences, their contributions in one form or another, as well as their reflections as individuals and as a community, which are intrinsically important in the hermeneutical task. The Samoan context with all its diversity of social,

¹¹⁸ Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (New York: Polity Press, 2003), 30.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Wicking, "The Kristevan Notion of Intertextuality as Imperative Theoretical Framework for an 'Intertextuality of the Holy Books'", in *One Word, Many Versions: A Re-Reading of the Holy Books: Essays on Intertextuality*, ed. Abraham Karickam Ruwan Palapathwala (Kerala, India: Dr. Alexander Marthoma Cente for Dialogue, Kottarakara and Cosmic Community Centre, Karickam, 2007), 41.

political, economical, religious, and cultural features will be metaphorically dissected in a manner that will expose its relevant aspects for this investigation. What is required at this point is to have a relatively clear understanding about the Samoan context with regards to the cultural-theological components of the Samoan context. As far as Heideggerian-Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics is concerned, interpretation cannot be overcome by some more objective knowing. Rather, interpretive understanding is humankind's inescapable way of experiencing the world, a world in which every act of understanding is an implicated one. Therefore "human understanding is constituted less by the rational autonomy of critical consciousness than by an unavoidable interpretive engagement with others, with physical environment and with what come to humankind in a wide diversity of voices from the past".¹²⁰ So rational articulation through a scientific methodological approach to interpretation and understanding is strictly beyond the emphasis of this *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical analysis of the Samoan context. This leads on to my next section, the Samoan philosophical hermeneutical paradigm, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*.

3.4 CULTURAL-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

The 'object' of this hermeneutical analysis is the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context. I have explained in some detail this notion previously in Chapter One, and expand this explanation here. '*Cultural-theological praxis*' implies the two significant dimensions of the praxis of the EFKS upon which this analysis will focus later. These were, firstly the Samoan cultural components and secondly the theological contents, nuances of meanings, articulations, and dynamics of the life world of the Samoan context. These would include all life activities of the Samoan people. The investigation is therefore cultural in the sense that it probes deeply into and analyses the traditional Samoan cultural influence and impact on the Church, and contents of the activities of the Church. It includes what and how the cultural beliefs of Samoans shape and condition their response to God, and how such cultural beliefs play a significant role in the pragmatic life of the Samoans.

A particular example: why do Samoans entertain such practice where the amount given by each family or individual is publicly announced as one of the important parts of the normal Church service on Sunday? This issue has been in the pipeline of theological

¹²⁰ Padraig Hogan, *Hermeneutics and Educational Experience* (National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2000 [accessed Nov 2006]); available from <http://www.vusst.hr/ENCYLOPAEDIA/herm.htm>.

criticisms in the last decade, and in fact has been a controversial matter about the EFKS for some years, especially from the perspective of the younger generations of the Church, and some non-Samoan observers. The manner in which such practice has been implemented is not, I think, at all the normative Christian principle of *foa'i* or *taulaga* or giving for the Church.

The public announcement of Church offerings and tithings is indeed a perfect example of the reflection of the indigenous nature and the 'Samoanness' of such a Church praxis. It happens not only in the local congregation but it also applies to all levels of the EFKS both nationally and internationally. On the other hand, such giving for the Church is basically biblical and theological, as it is a biblical teaching to make tithes and other similar charity offerings for the needy and the poor people of God. These 'givings'¹²¹ and 'offerings'¹²² as such are in fact the physical manifestations of people's faith response to and belief in the Almighty God. They embody the true nature and spirit of people's intimate love for God and their continuous faith in the gospel. So in actual fact, the concept of 'offering' and 'giving' for the Church in Samoa resembles the amalgamation in faith of both the cultural and the theological significances of offering to God Almighty by the Samoans. In other words, there is a clear correlation here between the Samoan traditional *taulaga* and the biblical concept of tithes and offering. This corresponding relationship between Samoan traditional culture and the gospel in this particular instance is somewhat in line with what Paul Tillich calls, a 'dialectical' relation when he refers to the relationship between Christianity and the so-called quasi-religions.¹²³

The *taulaga* or the offerings therefore, are some of the important practices of the Samoan Church, which utilise the corresponding Christian notion of tithes and offerings for the sake of understanding the true nature of giving for the Church, the 'Body of Christ' in the

¹²¹ The 'givings' in this instance are basically referring to *foa'i* or the monetary offering and other material donations to the Church through various means by the Church people. These *foa'i* are either for the welfare of the Church minister and his family (stipend) or for the development of the local congregation.

¹²² The 'offerings' are those normative monetary *taulaga* or tithes given annually to the 'mother Church' (EFKS) from local congregations for the development and upkeep of the EFKS as a whole. These are normally done twice a year, one in September called *Taulaga o le Talalelei* as part of the commemoration of the arrival of the Gospel in Samoa, and the other in the month of November called *Taulaga mo Samoa*. There are other minor offerings called *Taulaga mo le Auleoleo* and *Taulaga mo le Au Taumafai*. The last two offerings are for specific purposes of the Church.

¹²³ Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions, Fortress Texts in Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), Chapter 2, especially pp17 – 32.

world. I will explain more fully these specific cultural-theological aspects of the Samoan Church in the following chapters.

As the world continuously experiences the process of change in so many spheres of life, likewise the Church life in any context such as Samoa in the Pacific has to seriously subscribe to those changes somehow, depending on the cultural and theological needs of the people at different times. Thus '*o le fuata ma lona lou*'¹²⁴ Samoan mentality towards attaining Samoa's 'contemporarisation'¹²⁵ and to resonate with the current tempo of social changes is timely and fitting. The Church and its role in the Samoan setting undeniably needs constant evaluation, reassessment, and reformulation of its work and ministry at all levels whilst it progressively encounters challenges in its theological journey towards future. This could be carried out through a continuous 'action-reflection-action' momentum of the dialectical relationship between Samoan people and the Church. Again, such a task could be carried out through serious hermeneutical analysis of the context.

While there are a number of established hermeneutical traditions and models already in use in the various academic disciplines, I have chosen *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* particularly as being the most appropriate and practical paradigm for the Samoan context. I can draw much from Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutical approach, in which I find some significant concepts corresponding to this Samoan model. In that way it would be much easier and convenient to grapple with the emphasis and nuances of meaning of the *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model. These concepts to which I refer include *horizon*, *fusion of horizons*, *effective history*, and *hermeneutical circle*. Some of these have been seriously criticised subsequently by Gadamer's colleagues¹²⁶ but I find them to apply very effectively to the Samoan hermeneutical situation.

For Gadamer's hermeneutical analysis, once the fusion of horizons is somehow realised, meaning and understanding shall be achieved, thus a consensus is therefore reached. Similarly, in the *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model when it is used in the spheres

¹²⁴ I have defined and explained this Samoan adage in Chapter One.

¹²⁵ I refer here to the updating of the Samoan context and its cultural-theological praxis with the current trends of new ideologies, new approaches to living life, new understandings about people, environment, scientific researches and findings, and, more importantly, to new tides of theological studies and beliefs.

¹²⁶ I would bring into this category of Gadamer's critics people such as E. D. Hirsch and Paul Ricoeur.

of the Church activities, once the fusion of the horizon¹²⁷ of the interpreting subject (which in this case is the faithful Samoans), and the horizon of the Samoan context, (text and object), is achieved as such, a meaning and an understanding would possibly be achieved. And this is the ultimate focus which *O le Tofa liliu a Samoa* as a hermeneutical model is striving to achieve, especially in this study. Through the *soalaupule*¹²⁸ process of *O le Tofa liliu a Samoa*, it is highly anticipated that the horizon of the Samoan individual would somehow fuse with the horizon of the Church activity in question, which would eventually reach a level of understanding acceptable to both parties. Hence, such a fusion is none other than the achievement and manifestation of *ua tasi le tofa*, or mutual consensus, being reached by the two parties. Such accomplishment is therefore a firm grasping of meaning and understanding that has been vigorously sought by the Samoan individual.

Considering the example of *taulaga* and offering in the Church, as referred to above, as an issue for hermeneutical analysis, once the investigator/reader has brought to his/her attention (horizon of the reader) all the nuances of cultural meanings of traditional Samoan *taulaga*, and the corresponding tithes imperatives in scriptural traditions (horizon of the context/text), a somewhat fair and reasonable meaning and understanding about its adaptation and usage in the Samoan Church could possibly be achieved at last (fusion of horizons/*ua tasi le tofa*). In this context of change and development in the world in general, and for the Samoan milieu in particular, one has to look critically at the Samoan Church and its ministry in an effort to interpret and understand it. This in effect would identify relevant and necessary changes of faith actions and activities needed to be formulated and ultimately be implemented intelligently. Indeed an in-depth knowledge of the Samoan Church and context is vital in this exercise, and hence a contextual hermeneutical model should be imminent.

As I have mentioned in the earlier chapter, it is my understanding that the main emphasis of the theological praxis of Samoan society in the past (I am referring here to the period commencing from the arrival of the first European missionaries up to the present), today and in the future is to mediate the Christian faith in the life-world of modern and post-

¹²⁷ I am adopting Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept 'fusion of horizon' in this sense in order to describe the process of reaching or attaining understanding by the faithful Samoan individual when his/her horizon grasps the horizon of a Church activity in the process of interpretation. The coming together of these horizons in the mind of the individual thus creates meaning and a new understanding of such an 'object' of interpretation.

¹²⁸ I have explained this Samoan concept in Chapter One.

modern society¹²⁹ so that the Kingdom of God is ultimately realised in the world. It is through this process of mediation of the Christian faith through various means and media, that the gospel encounters Samoan culture at many levels of the life existence of the Samoans. Hence the two are vigorously interacting in such a way that one influences and shapes the other both consciously and unconsciously. Consequently there emerges a Christian faith that has been culturally and theologically conditioned and blended in the life activities of the Samoan Christians – thus cultural-theological praxis emerges. These domains of actions and activities as part of the responses of faith of Samoans are normally categorised and classified in the Christian Church as Church government and leadership, Church ministry and services, and Church and society.¹³⁰ Each category represents the Church's specific spiritual dimension in its life in which the Christians would express their faith responses through life actions both within the realms of the Christian Church as well as outside in the pluralistic Samoan society of today.

There are various forms in which the Samoans can express their Christian faith and their response of faith to God within their own context which reflect both the Christian theological teachings as well as their cultural identities. These cultural-theological activities stem from their interpretation and understanding of two vital sources namely the traditional or indigenous Samoan culture and secondly, the gospel message through reading the scripture, and their ability to interpret Christian traditions and theology in the light of the Christ-event. Part of that process of understanding involves making corresponding connections between these Christian principles and the normative Samoan culture and customs. The relationship between the corresponding concepts and ideologies of the two is in fact a 'dialectical'¹³¹ process whereby both could either become amalgamated into one form or another, or each one could maintain its own autonomous entity without distorting and/or degrading the other.

Christianity regards the Christ-event as being the ultimate revelation of the truth about God and his salvation for the world. Samoan tradition could somehow correlate itself to this Christian reality in order to accomplish the integration of the two in such a way that Samoan

¹²⁹ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 6. I have adopted Heitink's understanding of the role of practical theology in the Christian Church as the best description for the practical theological praxis of the Samoan context.

¹³⁰ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2006), 4-18.

¹³¹ Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, 31, 32.

Christians would eventually understand this Christian axiom in the light of their culture in this post-modern society. Conversely Christianity must also recognise somehow such a two-way process of accepting one another on one's own merit in order to realise the true meaning of Christianity as a religion being 'inculturated'¹³² in the Samoan context in the twenty-first century. Thus indigenisation of Christianity in Samoa would take place eventually, although slow and would indeed encounter many challenges with regards to the process of theologising various aspects of Samoan culture. One may ask if this process of integration of Christianity and Samoan culture is possible. The Samoan context so far reveals a perfect example of such a possibility as long as one respects and upholds the moral and ethical values propagated by the other. Even Frederick Downs in his article "Christianity and Cultural Change in North East India" has confirmed that such a new contextual indigenisation has taken place in North East India, which has a certain form of tribal culture.¹³³ The question then is: how can the Samoans correctly understand such a foreign reasoning and somewhat supernatural phenomenon? Such integration and assimilation is technically called 'inculturation' or sometimes called enculturation. Samoa is not the only country, especially in the Oceania region but also in many other parts of the world, in which this process has been actively operating successfully, though with difficulties from time to time.

The *Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model being proposed by this study, I argue, is the best possible approach to understand the dynamics of such integration between the Samoan cultural context and the normative Christian gospel and traditions. Where the Samoan culture and customs contradict the gospel of Christ, the latter shall prevail indeed, while full respect for the integrity of the Samoan cultural entity is maintained at all times. In any case, such Samoan customs must be reviewed critically within the sphere of the Samoan culture in an attempt to uphold such customs as being part of the authentic Samoan world. This in fact involves modification and transformation of these aspects of culture in such a way that they still play an important role in the life of Samoans whilst portraying the integrity of the gospel for the people. To demonstrate this point of my discussion, the authentic Samoan notion of

¹³² Collins Moonga, "Culture and Evangelization", *Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection*, no. 67 (2006), 12-13; Cormac Burke, *INCULTURATION: JOHN PAUL II AND THE THIRD WORLD* ([accessed Sept. 2008]); available from <http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr95/burke.htm>.

¹³³ Frederick S Downs, "Christianity and Cultural Change in North East India", in *Christian Faith and Multiform Culture in India*, ed. Somen Das (Bangalore: United Theological College, 1987), 101.

traditional marriage or '*fa'aipoipoga*'¹³⁴ which we have today has been the incarnation of such a transformation and modification of indigenous Samoan culture to accommodate the morals and values of Christian marriage. The traditional marriage involved the cultural ritual called *fa'amaseia'auga*¹³⁵ and other related activities which tend to be looked upon as pagan practices by the Christians of today. Thus radical modifications of the ritual were necessary for Christianity whilst maintaining corresponding values between the two. To understand these essential changes as such, the *Tofa liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical paradigm would serve such purpose well, and thus would serve to appreciate the focus of the authentic significance of Samoan marriage.

As far as Samoan culture is concerned, Samoans normally refer to their myths, legends, stories, rituals, proverbial sayings, symbols, signs, artistry, ceremonies, and so forth as the sources and resources for their knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of life. These are all mutually combined within the whole of the life-world of Samoans, thereby contributing to the formation of their empirical reality and culture, the *fa'asamoa*. Crucial to all this is the ability of the Samoans to responsibly articulate all these within the sphere of the *fa'asinomaga*¹³⁶ or the quad-pillars of the Samoan existence – the *Atua* (God), *Matai* (chief), *Fanua* (land), and *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan Language).

I can point to one classic example of this process of 'making connections' between Samoan culture and Christian theology that reflects first, the hermeneutical model used by the

¹³⁴ The traditional Samoan marriage has many focuses, none of which have corresponding meanings or emphasis with Christian marriage. The main emphasis here is to make sure the *taupou* or the bride is a virgin and that she represents honour, dignity, wealth, and unity of families' allies. The *taupou* was the ceremonial maiden of a Samoan village to whom all honorary respect and dignity of the village was given. The *taupou* was traditionally a daughter of a village high chief and she was usually conferred with a specific title similar to a *matai* title at a special ceremony in the village. A *taupou* was expected by her village to be a virgin and to display good behaviour and leadership attributes. She was also required to participate in village special ceremonies especially to officiate in the mixing of the '*ava*' (*kava*) at welcoming ceremonies of important village guests or *malaga* (visiting parties). Her virginity was tested at her wedding in the defloration ritual *fa'amasei'auga*. In the event, however, that the *tama'ita'i* was found not to be a virgin at the '*fa'amasei'auga*', she was severely rebuked by her parents, brothers and her friends. She was even beaten up publicly for she had brought shame to her parents and family. Her friends rejected her by calling her a prostitute. The intended bridegroom refused to take her as his wife. This indicates the special value and honour that was incorporated in the Samoan concept of virginity. Hence it became the highest point of all expectations from a *tama'ita'i* in Samoan customs. Once again, Samoa's insistence on the cultural significance of *taupou* and her virginity, reflects a special value of *taupou* and virginity in Samoan traditions. Moreover, it reflects what Samoan marriage really means in the eyes of Samoans. The cultural emphasis on a *tama'ita'i's* virginity has been the focal point of marriage. Mutual love between the bride and the groom in traditional Samoan marriage may seem absent or at least unimportant in many instances.

¹³⁵ This is the traditional defloration ritual of Samoan *taupou* and *tama'ita'i* (woman, but not a *taupou*) during a traditional Samoan wedding.

¹³⁶ I have discussed this concept thoroughly in Chapter One.

Samoans; secondly the clear parallel between the gospel teachings and some of the Samoan customs; and thirdly, the relevance of contextual emic interpretations in the mission of the Christian Church. The Christian virtues of forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and hope are integral exponents of the Christian faith, which have to be well ingrained in the hearts of the Samoan people in order that they may experience the Christian truth therein. These Christian virtues are encountered by Samoans in so many ways within their family life, in Church, as well as within the realm of their village social life dynamics. One of the best possible examples whereby these Christian virtues are fully realised and experienced is the Samoan cultural ritual '*Ifoga*'¹³⁷. *Ifoga* falls within the category of Church services where it can be theologically regarded as a ritual of forgiveness and reconciliation. Although this cultural ritual normally occurs post-event rather than a preventative measure for serious offences such as murder, it is the best possible way that Samoans could put into practice the depth of the true nature of what is regarded as forgiveness, reconciliation as well as hope for life. Moreover, *ifoga* is also a Samoan social-cultural mechanism to prevent further serious offences in the life of the community. The effect of such prohibition of further crime to be committed by either party causes the parties involved to forgive and to accept one another in love and hope.

The extension of this prevention would presumably reach beyond physical geographical boundaries of the place at which the parties involved reside at the time. This means that the power and influence of the *ifoga*, once it is accepted by the grieving party, would transcend all boundaries, and encompass all families and relatives of both parties residing all over the nation and even those living abroad at the time. Indeed it would include everything connected to the families in question, for example their farm animals, plantations

¹³⁷ Kenape T Faletese, *O le Tala Fa'asolopito O le Ekalesia Samoa (LMS): A History of The Samoan Church* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1959). *Ifoga* is the Samoan ritual whereby the two parties involved in a fight or an accident which results in the death of a family member of either party, come together to resolve their differences. The actual ritual involves the kneeling down, or even the prostration, of the *matai*, or chief, of the offender's family, the offender, and some elderly family members of the offender in front of the victim(s) family from the early hours of the morning until they are accepted by the victim's family and thereby allowed to enter the victim's house. The *matai* of the perpetrator's family is covered with the *ietoga*, the Samoan traditional fine mat, while kneeling. This *ietoga* is very important as it symbolises the best possible material possession owned by the *matai* and the perpetrator's family offered in return for the life of the victim. The *ietoga* therefore must be 'the best of the best'. Normally it is huge in size and *memea*, or very delicately fine. The *ifoga* may not be accepted and it is up to the discretion of the victim's family what to do. Traditionally, in such a situation the kneeling process was in fact an invitation for a revenge attempt by the victim's family. In other words, *ifoga* is an offering of a life or lives in return for the life of the victim(s) in order to create harmony between the two families. *Ifoga* is the traditional Samoan way of mending inter-personal, inter-family, inter-village relationships that have been destroyed by the unfortunate circumstances; see also Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and The Christian Gospel*, 45-46.

and all other physical belongings. The ethical dimension is demonstrated by acknowledging the difference between choosing to do well in refraining from committing further crimes. The moral dimension is exhibited by upholding good human behaviour and conduct acceptable within circles of Samoan life. This is cultural-theological praxis in its true social life implementation and realisation. It is cultural in that the form and symbolism involved is purely Samoan in its content. The characters involved have a sense of connection through local semantics and symbolism interpretations. Communication between the two parties in the actual process of *ifoga* is largely in terms of cultural gestures and body language, these are critical in the process of understanding. The actual language of communication employed through oratory and speeches are, of course, all in Samoan. The dynamics of rhetorical exchanges and responses between both parties are all executed within the realm of Samoan cultural protocol and mindset. Without those specific cultural ingredients in the ritual, its meaning would indeed be distorted or completely lost.

Moreover, the *ifoga* ritual is also theological because it reflects true attributes of God such as forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and hope. It is in line with the theological emphasis of Christian teachings on these virtues of life. It may not be exactly similar in content to the actual theological practice stipulated in the scriptures but the end results point to upholding ‘good life’ through healing the inner pain of the victim’s family caused by the unwarranted actions of the perpetrator(s), and by providing a sense of hope and optimism in life for those involved. Forgiveness is achieved when the *matai* of the victim’s family takes the *ietoga* and the *ifoga*-makers rise from the ground. The two parties accept and embrace each other through both physical actions of acceptance of one another, and inner emotions expressed through shedding of tears. Reconciliation is accomplished when the two enemies come together embracing each other in love and forgiveness of one another. A handshake as a normal diplomatic gesture of greetings and acceptance may not be enough. but a complete physical person-to-person embrace of each other is ideal. In addition there is an actual exchange of culturally-valuable material items, such as *ietoga* (fine mats), food, and even money nowadays, between the parties involved, from the perpetrator’s family to the victim’s family.

The acceptance of these tokens is symbolic of true reconciliation between the two parties. In the event where any member of either of the families breaks this cultural contractual agreement of forgiveness and reconciliation, such person or persons will be dealt with severely within the cultural protocol of the village *fono* (council). It should be noted

that, though traditionally an *ifoga* was the sole method of dealing with crime, these days really serious crimes will inevitably be dealt with in the criminal courts. However acceptance of an *ifoga* will be taken into account in sentencing, as would any breach of such. The experience of this Samoan ritual and its authenticity can only be fully comprehended, acknowledged, and appreciated by the true Samoan personality who has been intimately involved in the Samoan life-ways and moulded by the *fa'asamoa* context, the Samoan way.

An attempt to investigate the Samoan context both culturally and theologically requires deeper hermeneutical assessment in line with Gadamer's philosophical approach to understanding. The use of a scientific methodological approach, with a specific set of rules laid down as a hermeneutical strategy to comprehend this context as promoted by other philosophers such as Schleiermacher and Dilthey, is misguided. In this respect I agree with Gadamer, especially in dealing with a society such as Samoa, where exposure to advanced scientific learning and thought is not readily accessible. A relaxed attitude to life is a normal characteristic of the Samoan milieu. I argue that a scientific approach to methods of thinking and analysis would not reflect the true philosophical mindset of Samoans with regards to gaining a consensus of understanding. It will distort the fundamental aspects of the Samoan milieu and also make it impossible to integrate all the necessary unique characteristics of the subject in question.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘O LE TOFA LILIU A SAMOA’: A SAMOAN PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICAL MODEL

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, I have identified some aspects of the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context within the *Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) framework, through hermeneutical critical analyses, which are due for interpretation and revision in order for it to cope well with the continuing processes of global change and development. This is one of the continuing tasks of practical theology as a discipline. This chapter therefore is an attempt to outline a distinctively contextual Samoan realistic response to that challenge, from a specifically Samoan perspective. In so doing, I will propose a hermeneutical paradigm, which is relevant and both culturally and theologically performable in the Samoan context. It is decidedly sensitive to the on-going cultural and theological desires and demands of the context to which it belongs. This is followed by the practical articulation of the model in such a way that it could be utilised by the EFKS in its ministry today and in the future.

This model is an indigenous attempt at a realistic interpretive approach for the EFKS to employ in its critical analysis of its ministry now and in the future. The model may help the EFKS ministry in its ever-challenging role of making its message available in a manner that is theologically sound, contextually meaningful, socially appropriate, and satisfying and fulfilling to Samoans in the early twenty-first century

4.1 A NEED FOR SAMOAN HERMENEUTICS

It has been established that there is an all-important need for the EFKS to make changes in many aspects of its ministry and practice. No matter how desperately any institution, in Samoa or elsewhere, may try to maintain its own traditions and culture in the belief that they are the determinants of its identity, it is inescapable that such a group will

encounter social changes and challenges, which will require it to make changes to itself, sometimes very extensive and seemingly fundamental to its own ethos.

This is the case in the Church spheres in general, where practical theology and scriptural interpretation reflected in its preaching and practice need transforming and updating from time to time. Relevance is the key issue for scriptural interpretation and preaching for the Church today. There have been various issues within the ministry and practical theology of the EFKS, which have raised serious questions not only from within the Church itself but also from outside. These questions need good practical solutions based on thorough research and deep theological reflection and consideration by the Church. Thus, in order to facilitate these answers, I believe the Samoan Church today needs a perceptive contextual hermeneutical paradigm to do so, and that model *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, the title of this thesis.

The model comprises of three phases and each one is significant in its own right. To understand the whole model one has to understand its parts or phases. The first phase is called *o le fuata ma lona lou* (a breadfruit harvesting season with its own collecting stick); the second is *Soalaupule* (to share ideas authorities); and finally, *Ua tasi le Tofa* (wisdom is one)

4.1.1 *O le Fuata Ma Lona Lou*¹³⁸ - A Stimulus/Need for Change

It is essential that EFKS Church leaders should have a clear and open psychological mindset, which would acknowledge and accommodate the need for change, and be prepared to act appropriately. In other words a psychological stimulus to implement such a hermeneutical model for Samoa is an integral part of the process towards the analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of Samoa. Samoans, of course, have to look at these dynamic processes realistically and to ensure they would be able to cope with the changes. Therefore, I am advocating here the Samoan philosophical belief “*O le fuata ma lona lou*” as being the more relevant and practical psychological stimulus towards attaining such a hermeneutical task. It is an approach whereby an individual Samoan, as well as the community, would be able to prepare themselves psychologically to confront change and made action relevant and achievable. I have explained this Samoan concept earlier in Chapter One, thus this section of

¹³⁸ So'o, "*O le Fuata Ma Lona Lou*: Indigenous Institutions and Democracy in Western Samoa" It is a common Samoan saying, which has been used by Asofou Soo as the title of his dissertation.

the thesis will bring it much closer to both its theoretical and practical uses. In this study, it is utilised as a specific Samoan frame of mind that could be employed as a stimulus and a motivational drive for the Church to continue revising its ministry and praxis.

Having established the cultural and sociological meaning of the Samoan adage, I would advocate therefore, that such a Samoan frame of mind is intrinsic for the Samoan hermeneutical model, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*. It dynamically operates as the motivational force empowering and enabling the Samoans to implement the said hermeneutical paradigm effectively in the Samoan context. It can be implemented when the status quo is questioned and regarded as irrelevant. It can also be materialised at all levels and at all facets of the ministry of the EFKS in Samoa and abroad. The information data gathered from the praxis undoubtedly emerges from Samoan generic insights and their personal and communal theological reflections. This means the socio-cultural life experiences of the people, and their interactions with the Church from day to day, are the foundational data for analysis and interpretation.

It can be seen from the results of this research that some aspects of EFKS theology, worship, leadership, Church order and government, as well as its relationship to the wider society, have become problematic and inappropriate. The Church must be prepared to respond responsibly to these matters within the current climate of the pluralistic society. It should react with humility to its people's spiritual needs at all levels; and, most importantly, recognise the quad-pillars of the Samoan society *fa'asinomaga* namely, the *Atua* (God), *Matai* (Chiefs), *O Eleele ma Fanua* (lands), and the *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan language) and the bearing these have on Church life. It should proceed cautiously, but with courage and determination.

4.1.2 Soalaupule - Genuine Dialogue

Soalaupule is usually translated literally as 'to deliberate', 'to discuss', or 'to share thoughts and ideas'. *Soalaupule* is made up of three different words being, *soa* which literally means 'a partner'; *lau* which means 'your or yours' or 'a leaf'; and the word *pule*, which literally means 'authority'. The sharing is implemented through rigorous deliberations amongst *matai* and/or some elderly people in the Samoan community. But this, however, still cannot reflect the complete sense of the word in the Samoan understanding. The sharing may involve giving, conferring, and delegation of one's authority to another. *Pule* or authority in

the Samoan understanding may include ideas, opinions, power, individual rights, and responsibility. When the *matai* are deliberating on an important issue, they are in the process of *soalaupule*. *Soalaupule* is normally executed in a formal manner with a sense of respect for one another, and a sense of openness amongst the participants of such a meeting. The end product of such deliberations is a consensus¹³⁹ amongst the participants and this is called in Samoan ‘*ua tasi le tofa*’ – a consensus has been reached. *Soalaupule* also involves deep meditations upon issues and pastoral problems within a congregation.

Soalaupule is an integral part of the *Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model for the EFKS and its operations. As described above it is the second phase or stage of the model where an issue or a problem is officially brought to the attention of the *aulotu* for deliberations. An issue can be raised in a Church meeting by the *faifeau* or any *tagata ekalesia* or Church member. Once it is expressed as such, the process of *Soalaupule* would then proceed. This is the most important part of the model as it involves much of the thinking process by the members as well as the sharing of their experiences and theological reflections on a topic discussed. It is during this phase that people’s opinions, and their interpretation and/or reinterpretation of Church doctrines, Church policies, Samoan culture, customs, traditions, and ideas are presented. Again it is a long process if the issue in question is important. The decision may not be favourable to everyone. Sometimes the *aulotu* would prefer to *moe le toa*, meaning to let the people ‘sleep on the matter’ until the next meeting, if the topic under discussion needs more time for contemplation. When a decision is made the participants would say, *ua tasi le tofa ma le fa’autautaga*, meaning ‘a verdict is reached’ and the congregation would eventually abide by such a decision until such time in the future when it is raised again for modification and amendment.

4.1.3 *Ua Tasi le Tofa* – Fusion of Horizons¹⁴⁰

This Samoan phrase literally means ‘one wisdom’ and has been explained in an earlier chapter. As I have explained earlier in the thesis, *Tofa* means the Samoan wisdom, which could be attained through deep contemplation and thorough articulated thinking. It is

¹³⁹ Huffer and So'o, "Consensus versus dissent: Democracy, Pluralism, and Governance in Samoa".

¹⁴⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273f; 337. I am adopting Hans Gadamer’s meaning of ‘the fusion of horizon’ in this thesis. Gadamer uses the phrase referring to gaining understanding like the reader understands the text. In such case the reader’s horizon is fused with the horizon of the text, both of which involve their own historical backgrounds deeply embedded in themselves.

normally used to refer to the wisdom of the older people, the *matai*, and the high-ranking people in the *aiga* (family) and the community, who make fundamental decisions for the people. The Samoans believe that these people possess special wisdom and knowledge in all matters of life. They have the relevant experience and the pragmatic approach to life situations, which the younger generations may lack. The phrase transpires from the process of *saili le tofa*, meaning the search for wisdom, which was traditionally undertaken by the older people or leaders of villages and the community deliberating on important matters. This process is sometimes referred to as *Soalaupule*, as described above, both of which should end up in reaching a decision to which all parties involved would agree. Arriving at such a decision is called *ua tasi le tofa*. In Gadamer's terms, the 'horizons' of the parties involved in the dialogue or conversation have finally 'fused', thus the 'fusion of horizons'.

Simply the phrase, '*Ua tasi le tofa*' is, to the ears of the Samoans, like beautiful music played softly in the breeze, because everyone is hoping for an outcome, favourable or otherwise, of a deliberation. This is because attaining a final decision on sensitive issues involves a lot of work, serious thinking and rethinking processes, and the results of some discussions are sometimes unwelcome.

4.2 APPLICATION OF *O LE TOFA LILIU A SAMOA* HERMENEUTICAL MODEL

From this point forward, I will consider the three dimensions of the praxis of the EFKS: Church government and leadership, Church services, and the Church and society. The three dimensions will be further illuminated individually through the use of relevant case studies.

4.2.1 Church Government & Leadership

First, I shall endeavour to explain how this Samoan model would be implemented when the EFKS encounters difficulties with its Church order and leadership. Church order depends on the quality of leadership in operation. Likewise, effective and trustworthy leadership depends on both the Church structure and organization already set in place by the Church constitution, as well as the charisma, character, and personality of the individual. Like any society, Samoa operates on its own cultural norms and etiquettes, which determine features of leadership. When such cultural components are integrated with spiritual aspects of

Church leadership, problems can arise, which the Church has to address and solve, with discernment.

As is globally practiced, the current fundamental administrative and management principles on which all organisations should be based include accountability, transparency and good governance. Failing to demonstrate these can lead to confusion, mistrust, disrespect, and possible corruption amongst members. The Church in fact is not immune from these symptoms of poor governance and inefficient administration. Sometimes people point to the ineffectiveness of the organisational structure as the cause of these issues whilst others see the problem as being more at the personal level with failure to abide by the rules and objectives of the organization. The latter sometimes may involve the negligence of the employees to follow the instructions and the binding obligations stipulated in their job responsibilities. Some problems stem from the inexperience and ignorance of the employees. It is at these times when the Church order and leadership are at crossroads that the Church people at all levels are requiring change; they are undergoing the socio-cultural psychological phase of *o le fuata ma lona lou* as I have described earlier.

People desire a change in the Church government. So the question then arises – how can the Church understand these problems, assess them, and solve them professionally and efficiently in accordance with the charter of the Church? This of course contributes to the major research question to which I referred earlier. It is important to acknowledge thus far that this is in fact a hermeneutical question where the Church needs to read the situation with ‘fresh eyes’ as Anthony C. Thiselton¹⁴¹ reminds readers in his book *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*. It is observation with fresh eyes of the Church situation within the larger society, and listening with fresh ears, that will bring understanding, love in action, acceptance and respect for the other in life as the major characteristics of serious hermeneutical inquiry identified by leading writers in the field. After all “hermeneutics is...a practice, the art of understanding ... In it what one has to exercise above all is the sensitivity for perceiving prior determinations, anticipations, and imprints that reside in concepts”.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Anthony C Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 3.

¹⁴² Hans-Georg Gadamer, ""Reflections on my Philosophical Journey"", in *The Philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1997), 17; cf. 3-63.

There is little detail relating to Church Order in the EFKS Constitution apart from the identification of certain officers in the Church. I would argue that such lack of detail in the Constitution, as well as the lack of prompt actions of the leaders in dealing with various issues relating to the life and spiritual growth of the Church has all contributed to the situation in which the Church now finds itself.

The topic of 'Church leadership' as an issue in the praxis of the EFKS is discussed in Chapter Seven. There are of course many dimensions of this leadership dilemma in the EFKS. This study could not identify them all individually, nor attempt to suggest solutions separately. However, throughout the research the key aspects of such leadership problems have been pointed out by the various respondents and these urgently need revisiting and revision today.

One of the long outstanding issues for the EFKS relating to its leadership ministry today is the question of the ordination of women. There have been various attempts by Church members to encourage the Church leadership to explore the possibility for women to be ordained in the EFKS. Although this has never been successful so far, it is one of the examples of an issue relating to the general ministry of the EFKS which needs an overall consensus of the Church to be accepted or otherwise. The current situation of this issue is that the EFKS does not permit ordination of women at all, irrespective of the many attempts by some Church members in the past. Again a very similar process to the hermeneutical analysis and procedures of *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* could be followed in this instance in order to obtain a consensus for women's ordination and to articulate appropriate practical procedures towards attaining this.

As has been experienced in the past, every time this issue was brought to the attention of the leadership of the Church, there was very little discussion of it at the *aulotu* level, which makes things more difficult at the top level. As discussed in Chapter Seven, this issue has a lot to do with the cultural mindset and social organization of Samoan society, which makes it such a sensitive matter. Sometimes, the Church's reluctance to proceed with women's ordination in the EFKS has to do with fear and uncertainty on the part of Church leaders. Fear of failure, and of ridicule of the Church from other denominations and the Church conservatives; also fear of the possibility that women *faiifeau* might threaten the Church's *status quo* once they are ordained. But I would argue that if all Church members could come

together and discuss the issue at the *aulotu* level in a strategically responsible manner, it is very likely that reasonable understanding amongst all members would be achieved, and a solution would be reached for all to accept. Such deliberation must give all members equal opportunity to speak and share ideas – this includes *matai* and all village leaders in the EFKS, women, and young members of the Church – hence the *Soalaupule* phase of the *Tofa Saili a Samoa* hermeneutical process would prevail. This would possibly take a few sessions or meetings until *ua tasi le tofa saili* or a consensus is reached, then such resolution by the *aulotu* would pass on to the next level, the *Pulega*, where the same process would occur, and continue on until it reaches the *Matagaluega* and then the *Fono Tele*, the highest authority in the EFKS. Indeed it is a laborious and tedious process but I believe in the integrity and dignity of the *Tofa Liliu a Samoa* embedded in the procedures. The result might be either acceptance or non-acceptance of the notion of ordination of women in the EFKS. Whatever the decision, justice has been done in that all Church members would have had a say in the decision, even though all might not be completely satisfied with the outcome. Sometimes the elders' view becomes the dominant voice, but at least the basis of their choice becomes clearly heard by the younger generations who may not have had any idea of the conventional views of the Church on such issue.

4.2.2 Church Service – *Tapua'iga*

Secondly, the Church Worship dimension of the EFKS ministry has been for a long time in need for some changes and modifications especially with regards to the Samoan *tapuaiga* or worship.¹⁴³ *Tapuaiga* is one of the most significant elements of the praxis of the EFKS. A call for change and modification of *tapuaiga* has been one of the burning issues for the EFKS over the last two decades or so. One of the ramifications of such a long delay of changes to *tapuaiga* has been the slow growth and development of the EFKS although its total membership is much greater than any other Church in Samoa.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Lau Dr. Asofou So'o has expressed this urgent need by the adherents of the EFKS in a personal communication with the author on 6 February 2008. Other informants have expressed the same general feeling during this research and especially during the 'Theology by Extension Programme' carried out by the Malua Theological College from 1999 – 2002. Notably the same concern was raised by the Wellington Subdistrict of the EFKS, New Zealand during the same theological programme at the end of 2002.

¹⁴⁴ Statistics, *Samoa: Population and Housing Census Report 2006* ([accessed], 13-14; The Samoa census report of 2006 reveals an alarming rate of 1.2 percent decrease in the number of EFKS adherents from 2001 to 2006. Another mainline Church, the Methodists also face the same membership decline in the same period. The two are generally known for their conservative attitude towards changes to Church matters.

A significant number of people have withdrawn their faith allegiance from the EFKS to other groups such as the Latter Day Saints, Assembly of God and Seventh Day Adventist Church.¹⁴⁵ Families and villages have encountered various social problems, like family splits, children moving away from homes to follow other religious organisations, marriage breakdowns, financial difficulties, and so forth. They have gone because of their unfulfilled spiritual needs within their original Church.¹⁴⁶ EFKS *tapuaiga* is unique in its style, content, and presentation, hence very different from other worship practices, especially in the western world. This *tapuaiga* praxis is discussed at some length in Chapter Eight, especially as to why it has such a peculiar form, style, and contents. Thus in this section I shall be very concise about its nature and its role. Again *tapuaiga* is one component of the EFKS cultural-theological praxis that reflects an exemplary integration and assimilation of the Samoan culture, and traditional Congregational worship, ethos and practice. The combination of the two reflects the historicity of the Church and the impact of the work of the early missionaries in Samoa; it also reflects Samoan cultural and ethical values. For example, *tapuaiga* has instilled in the lives of the people the sense of awe and dignity required for worship at all times, which is a significant component of the Samoan life world and their traditional protocols. People have practiced *tapuaiga* with sincerity, and have been very loyal to its form and style ever since the missionaries started it in the 1830s. Thus Samoan life style, language, symbols, moral and ethical values have all been shaped and conditioned by the people's loyalty to their *tapuaiga*.

Some people, however, have expressed their serious dissatisfaction, and are very critical with the way the EFKS conducts Church services on Sundays, which in fact is one of the many reasons why there have been so many of its adherents joining other denominations.¹⁴⁷ They have been wanting real change, not only to satisfy their spiritual

¹⁴⁵ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 166; Fepa'i Fiu Kolia, "The Church and Development", in *Samoa National Human Development Report: Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing Samoa*, ed. Unasa Felise Va'a Asofou So'o, Telesia Lafotanoa, Juliet Boon (Apia: NUSamoa, 2006), 137-147.

¹⁴⁶ Kolia, "The Church and Development", 138.

¹⁴⁷ These insights and theological reflections from the EFKS adherents were well monitored by the Malua Theological College programme called Theology by Extension or *Mataupu Silisili Fa'alautele* from 1999 to 2002 of which I was part. There was a strong demand for the EFKS to review its *tapuaiga* style and methods in order to cater for the needs of the young people as well as to accommodate the new changes to worship style adopted worldwide. This challenge, although real, was not well accepted by the EFKS, as the Church is somewhat conservative and also very cautious in dealing with such issues, which they normally refer to as spiritual matters. It was through this programme and my experience of the way the EFKS managed to handle such challenges at the time, that I have been prompted to advocate this distinctive Samoan philosophical hermeneutical model, '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*'.

hunger for relevant worship, but also to be consistent and in line with the new changes of worship they have already experienced in other denominations in Samoa and abroad. In other words, these EFKS adherents had this *o le fuata ma lona lou* mindset for some time, thus asking for a new *lou* and new approach to handling the new challenges and new ideas about *tapuaiga*. Therefore, I would propose the hermeneutical model “*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*” as the most practical and realistic attempt by the EFKS Church, and the Samoan community at large, to cater for these needs in an effective and diplomatic fashion.

Indeed to gain understanding about a situation in hand is when there is a ‘fusion of horizons’ - a consensus is reached, according to Gadamer. As far as the *Tofa liliu a Samoa* model is concerned, such a fusion of horizons is achieved *ina ua tasi le tofa ma le fa’autautaga* (when a consensus is reached) between the leaders who are trying to interpret and analyse the situation, and those who are part of the situation, namely the Church leaders and ministers. In other words, the hermeneutical task in this instance is “communal understanding, transmitted wisdom”, just as a Christian doctrine is not simply a matter of individual belief but also of communal consciousness, transmitted traditions, wisdom, commitment, and action”.¹⁴⁸ ‘The interpreters’ (subject) or the readers of the ‘text’ (Samoan context) are actually components and part of the text – the Samoan context - and the readers and interpreters of the text are also actively involved in almost all Church activities. A sense of both subjectivity and objectivity is dynamically interplayed in these interrelationships and interactions when an understanding of the context is rigorously sought hermeneutically.

Embarking on a critical analysis of the praxis of the Samoan *tapuaiga* to ascertain whether or not there is a genuine need for change is a community effort has to be started at the level of the local congregation, according to the ethos of Congregationalism, to which the EFKS is affiliated, where “all Church members have the right, and upon them lies the duty, of taking part in the government and welfare of the Church...”¹⁴⁹. The *faiifeau* or the Church minister in charge of the congregation will come together with *tagata ekalesia* or the local

¹⁴⁸ Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, xvii.

¹⁴⁹ Albert Goodrich, *A Primer of Congregationalism* (London: Congregational Union of England & Wales, 1894), 96.

Church communicants, in their monthly meetings, the *Fono a le Ekalesia i le nu'u*¹⁵⁰ or sometimes called *Filifiliga*, to discuss various matters pertaining to the spiritual life of the congregation. This is the opportune time for the *Ekalesia* to engage in *Soalaupule*, as being the appropriate forum where everyone shares his/her opinion about *tapuaiga*. In other words, everyone now becomes the reader, the interpreter and the subject of *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model. People's theological reflections and insights are the essential elements of this procedure and therefore become the valuable data for analytical purposes. Ideally, this is the basic premise for the *O le Tofa Liliu* model to become successful in its effort to achieve its goal of gaining understanding of the praxis of the Church.

It is important to note that theology, I believe, is done and realised when the scripture meets the context and the context responds to it accordingly through the life of the Church and its people. The theological reflections and insights of the people regarding *tapuaiga*, which are intimately shared through *Soalaupule*, are part of such a Christian response and they embody what is supposedly the truth about the real need of the Church. These theologically-oriented deliberations amongst Church members would bring the 'effective history' of *tapuaiga* into serious consideration. An important part of that 'effective history' consists of the normative aspects of Samoan culture and customs concerning *tapuaiga*, as well as the Christian Church traditions. Such historical narrative of *tapuaiga* is effectively part of its horizon and is now brought closer to the interpreters, the communicants and other Church people. Simultaneously the horizons of these people are also brought to *tapuaiga*, either consciously or unconsciously, thus accomplishing the fusion of the two, if that is ultimately possible. The extent of the people's horizons encompasses what Gadamer calls their 'pre-understanding' or 'prejudice' which eventually constitutes understanding. This is when they bring in their life experiences as well as their traditional cultural beliefs about *tapuaiga* into the *soalaupule* forum. I would suggest therefore, that this is the difficult part of the process when they may find it difficult to rationalise their thoughts in such a way that their presuppositions, expectations and prejudices about *tapuaiga* do not impinge on their

¹⁵⁰ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 8. As I have mentioned in the text above, it is sometimes called 'Filifiliga'. There is also another congregational meeting called o le 'Aso o le Ekalesia'. The two are obviously for two different purposes but sometimes seem to overlap with regards to their contents and objectives. *Aso o le ekalesia* meeting basically revolves around the discussion of the material and the outward physical matters pertaining to the congregation; whilst *Filifiliga* focuses on deliberations relating to the spiritual dimension of the congregation. The *Filifiliga* normally occurs once a month especially on the last Sunday before the Holy Communion service, which is celebrated in the first Sunday of the next month; while the *Aso a le Ekalesia* gathers once or twice a month depending on the particular needs of the congregation.

*fa'autautaga atamai*¹⁵¹ and *phronesis*; especially with regards to the use of their traditional *tapuaiga* beliefs as an ingredient of the Christian *tapuaiga*. This may be a problem for some local congregations as some people do not have the cultural perception, or sufficiently wide experience, to regard these traditional cultural pre-understandings objectively. Christian ethics and well-informed theological thinking should be the guiding beacon for making intelligent decisions in these circumstances.

It is also apparent in '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*' hermeneutical model that *soalaupule* would involve more than one person at one time; all are involved in the process of seeking to understand *tapuaiga* in order to formulate some changes to it. Thus in this case whatever shared comments and suggestions emerging out of *Soalaupule* that relate directly to *tapuaiga* must be taken seriously by the Church leaders and other decision-makers. As the term *soalaupule* traditionally means, each participant in the process comes with his/her own *pule* or authority, *mana*, reflections, aspirations, beliefs, and ideals to *fa'asoa* or to share with others. A sharing which shall entail truthfulness, humility, love, *phronesis* or *fa'autautaga atamai* (practical wisdom), as well as an open-mindset for all participants.

While the *soalaupule* is underway, there are other intangible dynamics of this process occurring, which need to be acknowledged and recognised, as they contribute to its integrity and dignity. First, the inter-relationship dynamics between *tagata ekalesia* or Church members themselves are significant. This is the *vatapuaia*,¹⁵² which I have explained in the earlier chapters. It basically means the *tapu* (sacredness), *mamalu* (honour), and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) existing in the relationship between different persons and roles within the Samoan community – be it within the Church or society at large. Such respect is embedded in the lives of the people and it is particularly recognised between the young and the old, between the *matai* and the untitled, the leaders and their subjects, and between men and women. Although non-Samoans, because of ignorance, may not take this *vatapuaia* seriously, it certainly plays an essential role in the sharing of thoughts and ideas of the Church community when they are

¹⁵¹ This is my Samoan translation of the word *phronesis* used by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. *Fa'autautaga atamai* is an embedded personal cognitive capability of an individual to rationalise the world through reason and intelligence shaped, conditioned by one's practical experience and general knowledge; and to consider appropriate actions to deliver positive changes to enhance the quality of life. It certainly demands maturity, intelligence, patience, vigilance, and diligence.

¹⁵² This Samoan concept is thoroughly discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Seven. It is the same meaning that is used in this chapter.

engaged in the *soalaupule* event. The *vatapuia* between Church members may become a hindrance to achieving the expected objectives of the model, which is to arrive at, and gain their *tofa loloto*, their objective opinions. When the young people recognise this cultural norm in deliberations, the majority of them may not have the courage to speak freely and voice their opinions. Inversely, it gives confidence, maturity and relatively powerful authority to the opposite party in the *vatapuia* to speak, lead and make decisions.

Similarly, the untitled members would not be able to contribute fully as they would be very careful not to offend their *matai* leaders and the *faiifeau* with some of their critical radical thoughts. To avoid embarrassment, young and untitled people usually simply resort to silence. They seem to consider that once their *matai*, leaders, or parents have the opportunity to speak in these deliberations, such representations suffice. There is no point in their speaking openly or critically, as this will prolong the task at hand but make little difference to the final decision. In other words, the *soalaupule* and the sharing in this regard could be perceived as superficial and possibly unbalanced because of this cultural concept *vatapuia*. However, *vatapuia* on the other hand can also be a pleasant concept in that it maintains a sense of order, peace and composure amongst the participants of the *Filifiliga* as well as throughout the *soalaupule* process. It is somewhat a blessing in disguise when it brings respect and order to the meeting at all times. Sometimes it also speeds up any Samoan deliberations, as it would definitely reduce the number of speakers in a discussion and a consensus is reached quite quickly. However, such decision would not reflect the actual dynamics of silence and naiveté of some participants. Thus, this process needs to be radically re-evaluated, or even changed, to something which is more representational and truly reveals the choices of the people.

So it is within the sphere of this *soalaupule* process that the congregation and its leaders would be able to critically analyse *tapuaiga* as the praxis of the EFKS. It is also expected from this sharing that *tapuaiga* as such, would clearly unfold itself, i.e. its nature, rituals, existing shape, form, and content. In addition the sharing would also be able to flag down the cultural components of *tapuaiga*, which have been regarded by some members of the Church as being irrelevant, old fashioned, unbiblical, and even redundant. For example, its ‘silent’ nature would be explored further within the current climate of the dominance of charismatic style of worship; and whether or not the Samoan conventional ideas of Church offerings and tithes (*faiga-taulaga*) as part of *tapuaiga* are relevant and theologically sound; and whether the Samoan cultural presentations of *sua* and *ietoga* as part of the *tapuaiga* on

the occasion of the *malumalu* or Church building is theologically viable and appropriate for the EFKS in today's social and economic contexts. Theologically speaking, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model and its *soalaupule* dimension would also alert the Church and its mission to take on board people's theological reflections and insights as invaluable data forming a solid foundation for changes if such are considered warranted. The model and its other elements would also be subjected to refinements from time to time depending on the issues at hand. The more severe the problem, the longer it takes for the *Tofa Liliu* to be reached by the *soalaupule* process. It could take days, or weeks, or even years, to deliberate in order for all parties to finally come to a consensus. Thus it is so important to acknowledge the fact that while this model appears to be culturally and theologically sound in its essence and focus, it also poses its own very serious limitations. It is nevertheless strategically proper for the EFKS, as a religious institution aiming for the betterment of its people both spiritually and physically, to keep on revising the model from time to time, taking into consideration the problems continuously confronting the general mission and ministry of the EFKS. Theologically practical actions should always give birth to sound theory and principles for practical theology. The schema, 'action to theory to action', I believe is the appropriate undergirding principle and basis of the '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*' hermeneutical model. It is a philosophical model born primarily out of an empirical understanding of the Samoans about their own life-worlds and their religious beliefs.

4.2.3 Church and Society

The EFKS plays an essential role in all aspects of the life of Samoa as a nation. This has been achieved through a very close relationship between the EFKS and the Samoan government and society as whole. There have been many avenues through which the EFKS injects its support for the government, especially with issues relating to social and the religious orientations of the people. The government in return also has been very proactive and supportive of the Church and its various programmes. Nevertheless, there are aspects of the general governance and leadership of the nation, which require input from the churches, and a clear opinion for the sake of the religious beliefs of the people. The *Fa'alapotopotoga o Ekalesia i Samoa* (FES)¹⁵³ or the Samoa Council of Churches (SCC) was established on 22

¹⁵³ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 773 – 775; see also Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 176f.

June 1971¹⁵⁴ under its former name, *Mafutaga a Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa* (MEKS)¹⁵⁵, as an arm of the religious bodies of Samoan society to act as a communicative tool through which the various Church denominations of Samoa could approach the government at an official level voicing the churches concerns. In return, the FES has also been acting as a point of contact by the government for political matters relating to the religious life of the Samoans. The EFKS has been part of FES since its beginning and its incumbent chairman is an EFKS *faifeau* who is also a former Chairman of the EFKS *Fono Tele*.

When the EFKS has any issue of interest, which has direct association with the government, it would have to go through the same processes as outlined above, in order to obtain its official opinion from the *Fono Tele* on such issue. When the *Fono Tele* establishes its stance on such issue in question then it would have to approach the government through the FES, who would then refer the matter to the government for its consideration. That is basically the channel through which all churches' enquiries go in relation to concerns associated with the government.

A case in mind that could be considered a classic example where the traditional hermeneutical model has been practised is that arising in the village of Sogi, an *aulotu* belonging to the EFKS. The government of the day required the *aulotu* and the village to relocate to another place much further away from where they are now, for environmental reasons. The village objected to the government's proposal. In addition to their objection, which was lodged directly with the government, they also approached the EFKS for help and support. When the issue reached the *Fono Tele* of 2009 through the normal Church procedures described above, the matter was then discussed thoroughly. The *Fono Tele* expressed its grave concern for the Church people involved in the relocation proposal for multiple reasons, the most prominent one being that the land is their identity and part of their heritage from their forefathers and ancestors. Losing their land is effectively losing their *fa'asinomaga* or their traditional and cultural reference. Eventually the *Fono Tele* agreed to support Sogi's objection to the government and agreed that it should ask the government

¹⁵⁴ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 176f. There is a discrepancy relating to the actual date of the establishment of FES or SCC in Ernst's record.

¹⁵⁵ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 773.

through the FES to reconsider its proposal. The matter is now in the hands of the FES to process the *Fono Tele* request promptly.

This is an example of the relationship existing between the Church and the state at which the *Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical paradigm could be effectively utilised with dignity and integrity. The *fa'asamoa* plays a profound role in such circumstances in order to maintain peace and harmony between the people concerned and the government. The '*O le fuata ma lona lou*' phase of the hermeneutical model could be established as a stimulant to re-examine and reassess a Church doctrine or the like, which has been severely compromised by a government policy; or it could simply be a problem like the Sogi case arising out of the government's normal political activities and systemic processes. Whichever the case, the same principles of the *fa'asamoa* and the traditional search for meaning and understanding would apply. Similarly the '*Soalaupule*' phase not only occurs at the *Fono Tele* but also at FES, and at the government level in order to achieve necessary in-depth understanding about the issue and hence could reach a sound decision for all parties involved in the end.

In this chapter I have outlined the Samoan philosophical hermeneutical model, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, which I believe is relevant, practicable, and very meaningful not only to Samoans generally, but particularly to the EFKS and its ministry. Certainly there is a definite need for a Samoan hermeneutics, which the Samoans could effectively apply within their own cultural traditions. To achieve that, the model itself has to be contextual and be well comprehended by the Samoans. The model comprises of three phases; the first one is *O le fuata ma lona lou*, the second is *Soalaupule*, and the last phase is *Ua tasi le tofa*. The Samoan hermeneutical paradigm could be fully understood when the traditional meaning of each stage of the model is thoroughly grasped. I have also made an attempt to apply the model to the three important dimensions of the mission and ministry of the EFKS in Samoa namely Church government and leadership, Church services, and finally the Church and society. It is important to bear in mind that the model may not be as simple as it seems, but I would argue that once it is practiced and appreciated within its contextual basis, it should be of great value to the EFKS and Samoan society at large. It is my conviction that once this hermeneutical approach is well underway in its practice, all research questions posed earlier in this study would gradually be answered and understood not only from within the EFKS and Samoan society, but also from outside.

PART THREE

THE SAMOAN CONTEXT

CHAPTER FIVE

PRE-CHRISTIAN SAMOA

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The Samoan people believe that Samoa originated in Samoa.¹⁵⁶ While this traditional belief may sound relatively strange in relation to the Christian creation stories in the Holy Scripture, and other recorded theories of the origin of the Polynesian people, nevertheless it has always been accepted by the Samoans as true and authentic. The Samoans are Polynesians with their own distinct and unique cosmogonical background and anthropological worldviews. Many Samoan historians who write about the Samoan origins validate this claim of ‘Samoan origin’ despite some academic theories¹⁵⁷ to the contrary on the subject. Malama Meleisea notes this validation of the origin of Samoa in his book, *Lagaga*¹⁵⁸. There are also *tala tu’u* or oral traditions, which are currently told and retold by the Samoan possessors of these stories to their own children and grandchildren.

¹⁵⁶ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), Meleisea refers briefly to this understanding in this book. He is quoting and reflecting on the Maori Scholar Te Rangi Hiroa’s (Sir Peter Buck) presentation in which he was talking about the origin of the Polynesians (including the Samoans) as coming from Asia to the Pacific. Sir Peter’s theory was totally rejected by his Samoan audience. Meleisea has written two popular versions of the origin of Samoa, the earth and the Samoan islands, and the origins of the chiefs and people of Samoa from the time of creation.

¹⁵⁷ Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline Of Samoan History* (Apia: Commercial Printers Limited, 1980); Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 3f; see also LeTagaloa, *Tapuai*, 8 -11. where two important versions of the Samoan cosmogony are clearly described, with one as evolutionary or genealogical whilst the other being creative. The evolutionary creation suggests that the formation of the earth and the world was the outcome of an evolutionary process of some physical objects that already existed at the beginning. On the other hand the creative version seems to suggest that the universe is the creative work of a super being.

¹⁵⁸ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*.

These oral stories are mostly told as to authenticate and legitimise the storyteller's agenda, hence there are variations from one village to another. Such fluid nature as well as the subjectivity of these stories has sometimes caused them to be academically regarded as inauthentic, superficial, and even irrational.

However, I argue that it is important to recognise the fact that no matter what academic theories say about these various creation stories, the stories would still be told and retold by the Samoans to their future generations as true and reliable. The local people take these oral traditions, stories, legends and myths seriously and literally. In this regard, Houston Wood¹⁵⁹ argues that, "spoken memories should not be associated with inaccuracy or held up to invidious comparisons with supposedly more reliable written documents. Oral traditions are not 'free floating tales disconnected from the physical world, impossible of verification'". In that respect, I believe that despite the various versions from one village to another, it is prudent to regard these individual stories on their own merits and treasure them as they are. As Ama'ama Tofaeono¹⁶⁰ succinctly puts, "It is the art of story telling that orients us [Samoans] about our life ways. While the oral relaying of customs and traditions is a dynamic and ever-evolving process, oral traditions also undergo modifications in narration". I believe that to discard all these myths as wrong and irrelevant is an act of injustice to the traditions of the Samoan society. The history of Samoa was largely in oral traditions, especially in the pre-historic period, and this fact must be honoured with sincerity at all times. The truth and objectivity of these oral records lies with the Samoans themselves, and hence academic researchers must find its own ways to implement their own investigations into these traditions, in order to achieve their objectives without doubting the authenticity of these oral stories. Perhaps a synopsis of these would give us meaningful insights into the origin of these stories and their validity for research purposes.

5.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The creation stories of Samoa must not be overlooked as part of such a rich oral tradition, which is a crucial component for any anthropological or other cultural study of Samoa and Oceania at large. There have been many creation stories as recorded by various

¹⁵⁹ Houston Wood, "Cultural Studies for Oceania", *The Contemporary Pacific: The Contemporary Journal of Island Affairs* 15, no. 2 (2003), 359.

¹⁶⁰ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga -The Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*. (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag Fur Mission und Okumene, 2000), 24.

local Samoans,¹⁶¹ as well as some by foreigners, and this multiplicity sometimes creates confusion and conflict in the academic arena. However, this should never discredit the vitality of oral traditions as being the medium through which orally-oriented societies of the world like Samoa sustain their historical past, ancestral life aspirations, their understanding of life and its mysteries, as well as their indigenous perceptions of the social and natural environment. Like everything else, these oral traditions would have undergone inevitable modifications due to the telling and re-telling process throughout time. In a way, this process enables Samoans to relive the beauty of their authentic *tupu'aga* or origin.

The creation stories recorded by Meleisea¹⁶² and Le Tagaloa¹⁶³ are very much the ones that have been in regular oral circulation amongst the Samoans in their homes and in both informal and formal educational forums. Hence, from the perspective of the individual Samoan, the one accepted is the most familiar, the one that has been heard and re-heard and therefore sounds most authentic. Naturally a person prefers the story to which he/she might have some genealogical and traditional connections. However, while acknowledging these different versions and preferences, I shall here present the stories recorded by both Meleisea and Le Tagaloa, and consider the language patterns, thought forms and characters involved.

One interesting point about these different versions of creation stories, which was picked up by Tofaeono¹⁶⁴ in his analysis, is the difference between the Upolu-Savai'i (Western Samoa's) version and the one from Manu'a (Eastern Samoa). The dissimilarity is helpful in any attempt to interpret and understand the Samoan cosmogony in relation to other island nations of the Pacific as well as the world at large. According to Tofaeono, the Upolu-Savai'i rendering of their creation story seems to give an impression that the creator god is very much connected to his creation through participation and involvement with the day-to-day activities of the created world. The gods "had close contacts with the human world and identified themselves with the ordinariness of life". In other words the creator god in this version dwelt in the midst of his/her creation. There are no obvious distinctions of either the

¹⁶¹ These local Samoan academics include Malama Meleisea, Amaamalele Tofaeono, Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa, Asofou So'o, and others in other academic disciplines.

¹⁶² Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 2-10. Note that Meleisea adopted these creation stories from Rev. Thomas Powell's historical collection of 1840 and those of 1870. The 1840 version was written probably when there was not many Samoans converted to Christianity.

¹⁶³ Le-Tagaloa, *Tapuai*, 21-37.

¹⁶⁴ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 175-179.

god's presence or absence for the creation of Samoa. The Manu'a story, on the other hand, depicts a slightly different creation. It portrays a creator god being a transcendent Supreme Being isolated from his creation but controlling all acts of nature with his power and might. The creation story gives an impression that Manu'a itself is a sacred place, for it was chosen by the creator god Tagaloa-a-lagi as his "primeval residence where he began creating the Samoan world. Hence the islands were observed with awe and fear because of the awareness of the presence of the high and majestic progenitor of all creation".¹⁶⁵ This sense of awe and sacredness of Manu'a islands is still being felt and observed by its inhabitants to this day. In fact the Manu'a islands are traditionally called and recognised the *motu-sa* (sacred islands).¹⁶⁶

None of the recorded creation stories I have mentioned earlier actually mentions nor refers to the creation of a human being 'in the image of God' as depicted in the bible. All seem to point toward the creation of the whole of the Samoan cosmos, part of which was humankind. There is no reference to humankind being made in the 'image of God'. Because of the polytheistic understanding in traditional Samoan custom, involving faith in gods, which were objects of nature such as rocks, fish, trees and so forth, it would have been difficult to incorporate into the ancestral religious beliefs any notion of humanity been made in the image of the supreme God, Tagaloalagi.

The religious orientation of the Samoans, especially their relationship to their *atua* or gods in the beginning, seems to have been the significant domain in which their worldview is situated. The cosmogony of the Samoans revolves around the traditional notion of *va* or 'relationship' with their *atua* including the creator God, Tagaloa-a-lagi, often called Tagaloa¹⁶⁷ for convenience. Having acknowledged the fact that the creator created one individual person at the beginning of time, thus there is an immediate natural connections between the Creator and the created beings and a clear-cut relationship established between

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 175-176.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 176.

¹⁶⁷ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 2 -7; Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Technology: Aiga - The household of Life : A Perspective from living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*. (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag Fur Mission und Okumene, 2000), 176-179; Le-Tagaloa, *Tapuai*, Chapter One. It is important to note here that the reference here is to to this creator God of Samoa as *Le Tagaloa*, another modification of the supposedly original name *Tagaloa-a-lagi*. There maybe some misunderstanding in the interpretation of this situation as outlined herein.

the two parties. This natural association between the two is called ‘*va*’.¹⁶⁸ The *va* naturally articulates the various aspects of such a relationship in both major and subtle ways which are of utmost importance in the Samoan life world. For example, there is an automatic sacred spatial relationship between the creator – Tagaloa – and the created, which gave rise to an obligation for the created beings to obey Tagaloa and make offerings to him at specific times, especially at *tapuaiga* or worship. Traditionally, the innate intention of such obligation was always to please Tagaloa so that he could continuously protect, provide, support, and give guidance to the Samoans. *Va* establishes not only the physical but also the spiritual essence of existence and relationship between humankind. To ignore this *va* totally would be tantamount to rejection of the *fa’asamoa*. This *va* is integral to the Samoan culture for it determines the future aspirations and destination of the *au tautua*. The Samoan philosophy “*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*”, which literally means ‘in order to become the ruler one must serve’, evolves from this relationship. To become a *matai* one has to serve the incumbent *matai* of his/her *aiga* as well as the *aigapotopoto* (extended family) to the best of one’s ability. In other words one needs to perform a good *tautua* explicitly in ways and manners sanctioned by the Samoan culture, although there are some cultural issues as to how such *tautua* could be carried out by relatives residing elsewhere, particularly overseas.¹⁶⁹

In relation to the religio-cultural nature of the Samoans in the pre-Christian period, a person would establish a pleasant *va* with the creator god by offering the *Tapuaiga* or worship, part of which includes the offering of *taulaga* consisting of food of high quality and other important Samoan goods and commodities with high exchange value. Celebrations by way of festivals and feasts in honour of certain district gods such as *Fe’e*, (the octopus) at Leulumoega in A’ana, and *Tupualegase* at Falefa and Lufilufi were popular in the past. The

¹⁶⁸ Le-Tagaloa, *Tapuai*, Chapter one; Le-Tagaloa defines ‘*va*’ as being the “relationship between the Creator and the created. It is this ‘*va*’ that is expressed in the imperative, directing the created-person to make a spiritual connection with the creator in the act of *Tapuai* – worship. *Va* is relationship, connection, affiliation, boundaries, difference, separation, space, distance, responsibility, obligation, state of being, position, standing, and so much more.” See also Vaai, *Samoa Fa’amatai and the Rule of Law*, 54.

¹⁶⁹ This concept *tautua* and relevant aspects pertaining to it became the cultural and political issue during the Samoa General Election 2006. The gist of the discussion revolves around the notion of enabling those people rendering *tautua* residing overseas to become legally eligible to vote as well as to become running candidates for their districts of origin in the national general election. The law states that no one is eligible to vote or to become a candidate from outside Samoa, as they do not fulfil the traditional requirements for *Tautua*, which enable one to become a candidate for the general election.

people contributed to these socio-religious gatherings large quantities of various kinds of food including fish, pigs, taro, and other similar good food.¹⁷⁰

5.1.1 Pre-European Contacts

A historical discussion about the pre-Christian era in Samoa would not be complete if the activities in which the Samoans participated prior to the European discoveries of the Samoan archipelago were ignored. The pre-European contacts of the Samoans have had a remarkable influence on the way of life, sociological outlook, and undoubtedly on the Samoan psychological construct. Strong oral traditions proliferated in this period before the arrival of the first Europeans in Samoa. Meleisea¹⁷¹ refers to this period of the history of Samoa in some detail, especially the interactions between the Samoans, Tongans, and the Fijians. Constant sea travelling between these island countries during this period led to intermarriage and regular transactions between the three islands. There is still some concrete historical evidence of these inter-island activities in contemporary Samoa. For example, one of the high titles in Samoa, called 'Tonumaip'e'a', at the village of Neiafu, Savai'i, is believed to have been brought over from the place also called Neiafu in the island of Tonga. This transmission of the important titles between the two island nations in the past was made prominent by the process of intermarriage between the high-ranking families of the time. When the inhabitants of these islands travelled from one island to the other, they took with them their family chiefly titles as these were precious to them and proof of their traditional identity. In fact one of the reasons for intermarriage at the time was to seek alliances and to make genealogical connections to other high-ranking people in order to sustain their paramount significance in their communities. Indeed there was exchange of material possessions between these families in their marriages as tokens of social legitimisation and sanctification, in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji.

5.1.2 The Nafanua Prophecy

The idea of a new God coming to Samoa was not novel to the people before the arrival of the first missionaries in Samoa. Samoans in earlier periods had passed on to the later

¹⁷⁰ F J H Grattan, *An Introduction To Samoan Custom* (R. McMillan, 1948 [accessed 23 Jan 2008]; available from http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-GraIntr-_N65654.html, 136.

¹⁷¹ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 41.

generations by word of mouth the legend and story of the Samoan war goddess Nafanua¹⁷² who had prophesied the coming of the 'Ao', which literally means 'head of the Samoan people from the heavens'. This prophecy points to the coming of a new religion to end the rule of the old gods of Samoa. The words of the prophecy say, "*Malietoa, ia tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*" (Malietoa, await the head of your government from the heavens).¹⁷³ *Lagi*,¹⁷⁴ or heaven, is the place where the *Atua* resides. Nafanua promised Malietoa Fitiseanu, who was one of the most important chiefs of Samoa at the time, and also the predecessor of Malietoa Vainu'upo who accepted the first missionary John Williams, that the head of his government would certainly be heralded from the heavens. In this respect, the arrival of John Williams at Malietoa's place in 1830 was and still is interpreted and understood by the Samoans as the fulfilment of Nafanua's prophecy. Interestingly, Malietoa Tanumafili II who was the Head of State of the Government of Samoa for 67 years till his death on 11 May 2007, was the heir and the successor of the Malietoa¹⁷⁵ title.

As I proposed in an earlier paper, "The Nafanua Prophecy: An Earlier Version of the One Word for 'Setting the Scene' of Samoa's Religious and Political Formation"¹⁷⁶, the Nafanua prophecy set the scene for the arrival of the early missionaries and this has been the traditional worldview of the Samoans. In some ways, it prepared the Samoans to expect a new beginning in life and a new focus of religious and political aspirations. So by the time the missionaries landed in Samoa, the people had had prior expectations of their arrival, though in no certain terms. That is to say, the Samoans easily recognised the missionaries and their new message of life and salvation in Christ as the manifestation and the fulfilment of Nafanua's prophecy. Thus the Christian message and all its attendant factors were well accepted and became an intrinsic element of the religious life of the Samoans. For the Samoans, the

¹⁷² Ibid., 36, 52, 56-58; Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 16-18; Andrew Hamilton, "God in Samoa and The Introduction of Catholicism", in *Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion*, ed. Phyllis Herda, et al. (Canberra: Pandanus Books, ANU, 2005), 90 – 94.

¹⁷³ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, Fauolo's rendition of the same prophecy says "*Sau ia ina e alu ma i'u o malo; ae tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*". The difference in wording has not much bearing on the meaning of the prophecy, my version is simply a shorter variant of it.

¹⁷⁴ The Samoans traditionally believe that the *Atua* or god resides at *Pulotu* (the after world) or in *lagi* (the heavens). When one dies, his or her spirit goes directly to *Pulotu* where the *Atua* lives. Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 36.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 57-58.

¹⁷⁶ Tuisuga-le-taua, "The Nafanua Prophecy: An Earlier Version of the One Word for 'Setting the Scene' of Samoa's Religious and Political Formation", 105 – 124.

coming of the new religion, Christianity, which brought great changes to their life ways and a great sense of peace and harmony amongst themselves, was nothing but the direct fulfilment of Nafanua prophecy. From the arrival of the first missionary and his acceptance by Malietoa Vainu'upo, the successor of Malietoa Fitiseanu to whom Nafanua's original prophecy was proclaimed, the Samoans interpreted this occurrence as the materialisation of the prophecy.

Amaamalele Tofaeono rightly summarises Nafanua's significance for the Samoans by saying that to some extent "she is recognised as the daughter of the opportune time, a manifestation of divine wisdom, a child of nature, a national warrior, a priestess, a saviour, and Goddess".¹⁷⁷ Tofaeono further labels Nafanua as a 'theo-ecological model of life'.¹⁷⁸ This is interesting because Tofaeono points to another important aspect of this woman's complex nature (of natural and supernatural elements), which has represented the history of Samoa as an ecological system as well as a political nation. One of the important aspects of Nafanua's history is that it "bridges the gap between the mythical aspects and the historical experiences of the religio-cultural heritage of Samoans".¹⁷⁹ It is this typical Samoan mindset through which the Nafanua prophecy has been interpreted within the religio-cultural background of the Samoa milieu. Since the arrival of the early missionaries, Christianity has been regarded as the fulfilment and realisation of Nafanua's prophecy.

Hermeneutically speaking, the prophecy is read and interpreted through the eyes of the Samoans amid the complexities of the natural growth and development of its religious and political spheres. Such interpretations have recognised the religious as well as the political mindset of the time, thereby putting emphasis on the religious and political roles of the prophetess. In religious terms, the prophecy is highly regarded by the Samoans because it was spelt out from the mouth of their prophetess Nafanua during the time when she was their *aitu fafine* or goddess and prophetess. Being also a warrior in many of the indigenous wars, including the one called *Taua o Papa* or War of Chiefs, had actuated her high reputation within the traditional spheres of the Samoan society of the past. She thus gained such high recognition that whatever prediction or prophecy she uttered was regarded as having tremendous authority and power. Did that power and authority have any divine aspect as

¹⁷⁷ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 182.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 182.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 182.

such? I argue that, traditionally, Nafanua's oracles were in the category of having divine nature as they all seemed to have been related to gods and their dealings with worldly affairs.

Nafanua's prophecies resemble the prophetic characteristics of those biblical prophets¹⁸⁰ in the Old Testament of the Christian Scripture. She foretold the future of the Samoans through her dialogue with Malietoa Fitiseanu who came to ask for his share of the government that was then under the headship of Nafanua, the warrior. That is to say, she was the mouthpiece of *Tagaloalagi* proclaiming his divine mind and will to the Samoans. Although she was also regarded as the 'goddess' of the Samoans at the time, the natural Samoan religious mindset was somewhat unclear as to the differences between a 'god' and a 'prophet'. For the Samoans, the two deities or identities were encompassed within the religious and social jurisdictions of the same person, Nafanua. This remains to be proven through further academic inquiry, but the Samoans strictly believed that Nafanua was the embodiment of a great many roles and functions in their society in the past.

The religious spheres of the Samoan context today tend to cite Nafanua's prophecy as being the 'wellspring' of the current cultural-religious context of the Samoans. The prophecy sets the scene for the religious mindset of the Samoans from which derives true acceptance of Christianity and the gospel of Christ as being the Word of God heralding God's salvation of the world. Notwithstanding the fact that the context of the prophecy was actually an incident occurring within the traditional pre-Christian period, its religious reality and content were still highly regarded by the Samoans thus giving rise to its continuous recognition since then. It has established a religious emphasis and direction of hope, patience, perseverance, and a sense of fulfilment that are now being identified as theological concepts in the Christian era. There were obviously some high hopes for the manifestation and the arrival of such headship from *Tagaloalagi* in heaven as prophesied. The historical circumstances during this period encouraged patience and perseverance to await the fulfilment of the prophetic prediction.

Today, every time a Samoan speaker delivers a keynote address within the religious and political forums and makes reference to the connection of the past and the present religion

¹⁸⁰ Bruce Vawter, "Introduction to Prophetic Literature", in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1990) 186-200; Vawter suggests that prophecy is not specifically or even principally the forecasting of the future but rather the mediation and interpretation of the divine mind and will. As far as the means of communicating prophecy is concerned, this was basically done through dreams, visions, ecstatic or mystical experiences, and various divinatory practices.

as well as the political administration, a reference will always be made to the Nafanua prophecy. It is the sign of affirmation and the cultural–theological legitimatisation of the relationship between the prophecy and the present circumstances of the Samoan political context. It highlights the strong conviction of the Samoans about the divine authentication and validation of the prophecy within the spiritual and political spheres of the Samoan world.

5.1.2.1 Impact of The Prophecy on The Samoan Context Then and Now

No doubt the Nafanua prophecy contributes in one way or another to this journey by way of providing a solid backstage setting for the betterment of the people of Samoa today and with hope for tomorrow. When Samoan *matai* and leaders make long speeches and public addresses, they constantly bring to the attention of their audience the significance of the prophecy in the affairs of the Christian Church as well as the political spheres of the nation. For the religious Samoans, it prepared the minds of the people of the past to expect something extraordinary and of great importance for them to experience and to reflect upon. Nafanua being a prophetess and a goddess simultaneously gave a sense of spiritual confidence and power for the Samoans to do whatever they liked, knowing that they had been under the protection of this powerful woman. Christianity is believed by the Samoans to have been the direct fulfilment of the prophecy so all the good works of the gospel since 1830, which have been realised in the lives of the Samoans, have been attributed to the works of Nafanua in the past. It is not that Nafanua is God as such in the eyes of the Christians today, but rather that, in the light of her role and responsibilities as goddess, a liberator, and a prophetess within the Samoan community of the past, she had bridged the religious gap between the traditional Samoan religious mindset and the Christian religion of today.

Any Christian Samoan will always remember and make reference to the prophecy as if it was the source of the religious transformation and regeneration of the society in all the years subsequent to the arrival of the missionaries. I would therefore argue that the Samoans have actually integrated the religious conceptions of the pre-Christian era, in which the Nafanua prophecy belongs, with the deep-seated depth of the gospel of salvation in the Christian period, as if one complements the other in one way or another. Such an inter-textual complementary relationship between the two periods must be hermeneutically analysed through religio-cultural praxis of the Samoan society from an emic perspective in order that one could fully comprehend it with sincerity.

The late Head of State of the Independent State of Samoa, Malietoa Tanumafili II, was holding the Samoan Paramount chiefly title ‘*Malietoa*’ as being the heir to the Malietoa title to whom Nafanua’s original prophecy pertained. He continued this leadership as the surviving co-joint leader, after the death of his co-leader Tupua Tamasese Mea’ole in 1963, as stipulated in the Samoan constitution¹⁸¹. This line of Samoan leaders from the Malietoa title since Malietoa Fitisemanu has been looked upon as part of the fulfilment of the prophecy by the majority of the Samoans. It is an indication of the continuation of the Malietoa government divinely given by God in the past till today. Thus the question remains as to whether or not Samoa would still continue with its tradition of having the Malietoa title as the Head of State of Samoa in the future. It is clear from the current constitution of Samoa, however, that on the death of Malietoa Tanumafili II, the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the Samoan constitution shall elect a new head of state.¹⁸² In other words there is a possibility that there may be someone other than the holder of Malietoa title in the future, who would be elected by parliament to be the Samoa head of state. This possibility has now become a reality today, as the newly inaugurated Head of State for Samoa is Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi.

5.2 CULTURAL CONTEXT – ‘*AGANU’U MA LE AGAIFANUA*’

Culture is defined in various ways depending on one’s own life experience. Thus Carson states that “today, culture has become a fairly plastic concept that means something like, ‘the set of values broadly shared by some subset of the human population’ ”.¹⁸³ David Matsumoto defines culture as “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, communicated from one generation to the next via language, or some other means of communication”.¹⁸⁴ Culture also includes people’s aspirations and visions of life within their own society. A much revealing expression of culture is that by A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn cited by Don Carson¹⁸⁵ which says,

¹⁸¹ *The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, (1960), Part III Section 17 (2).

¹⁸² *Ibid.* Part III Section 17(5) and Section 18 (1), (2), (3).

¹⁸³ D A Carson, *Christ and culture revisited* (England: Apollos, 2008), 1.

¹⁸⁴ David Matsumoto, *People: Psychology From A Cultural Perspective*. (California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1994), 4.

¹⁸⁵ Carson, *Christ and culture revisited*, 2.

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of further actions

For my purposes culture simply means the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought of a given society, in this case the Samoan society. This of course applies to the culture of the Samoan civilization, which is translated '*aganu'u*'. The word '*aganu'u*' is formed by two syllables, '*aga*' which means attitudes, behaviour, mentality, fashion, style, or a manner of doing something; and '*nu'u*' meaning village or the Samoan social institution, which consists of several *aiga* or families. Therefore, the combination of the two syllables forms the word *aganu'u*, which means the attitudes, behaviour, and the way in which a village does and operates its everyday living.

5.2.1 *Fa'asamoa*¹⁸⁶ (Samoan way of doing things)

Samoan culture of course has its own unique characteristics, which are very important in this exercise. These characteristics to a great extent determine and dynamically dictate the life of the people in their personal interactions, interrelationships, integration, and assimilation with other beliefs and lifeways, including Christianity in the Christian era. *Aganu'u* is practiced at all levels of the life of the Samoans. It is treasured, loved, protected, and upheld with dignity by Samoans. Thus Samoans refer to such mind-set of doing things in the Samoan way as the *fa'asamoa*. The prefix '*fa'a*' in this particular sense literally means 'to do something in a certain way, fashion or style'. It basically functions as a causative prefix to a word. Therefore its combination with the word Samoa (*fa'asamoa*) means 'to do something 'Samoan-ly' and in a Samoan way' which is special to Samoans. Similarly, the Tongan way of doing things is termed *faka Tonga* whilst the Fijian way is called *vakaviti*.¹⁸⁷ This understanding seems to suggest that *aganu'u* is very much broader in its meaning and

¹⁸⁶ A holistic perspective on *fa'asamoa* and its various dimensions is discussed by Unasa Leulu Felise Va'a, "The *Fa'asamoa*", in *Samoa National Human Development Report 2006*, ed. A So'o, et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2006), 113 – 147.

¹⁸⁷ Nicholas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997), 192.

reference, and it does encompass *fa'asamoa* as a specific *aganu'u* or culture. Generally the two Samoan terms cannot be used interchangeably with specific references.

Moreover, *fa'asamoa* also denotes a sense of the uniqueness and honour of the Samoan culture. It demands one do away with all other traditions of doing things but the *fa'asamoa*. The Samoan concept '*fa'aaloalo*' or 'respect' is vital in the *fa'asamoa*. It is reflected in the social attitude and the outward behavioural expressions of the Samoans, though not strongly amongst the Samoans born outside Samoa today who have been isolated from the authentic everyday Samoan life ways. *Fa'aaloalo* also constitutes the unwritten cultural rule, which allocates a specific time for an individual to speak within the social units of *aiga* (family), *aigapotopoto* (extended family), *nu'u* (village), *ekalesia* (Church), *itumalo* (district), and the *atunu'u* (nation). Everything in Samoan life has to be done with *fa'aaloalo* according to the norms of the community. It is not that there is no freedom for the individual as such, but rather that individual freedom is to be implemented within the framework of the community life, where freedom is exercised though overridden with responsibilities towards others.

Fa'asamoa also includes the use of the Samoan language in a honourable manner because it is sacred in the eyes of the Samoans and therefore is to be revered. The Samoan language generally consists of two important 'versions', as referred to in Chapter One. The first is the *gagana fa'aaloalo*¹⁸⁸ or the respectful honorific language used on special occasions and speeches made for the general public. It is also used when one converses to an elderly person, *matai*, *faifeau*, and other important people in the community. Secondly, is the *gagana tautala o aso uma* or the everyday speaking language. This is used in everyday conversation and communications. For the former language, its application and usage is basically the combination of the two types, but one can identify the difference between the two in the use of certain honorific and respectful words of the Samoan language. As language gradually evolved, many of these evolutionary changes to the Samoan language particularly affected this language type. I will touch more on this Samoan language aspect in the following section of this chapter.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Loius Stevenson, *A Footnote To History: Eight Years Of Trouble in Samoa* (Newton, Auckland, New Zealand: Pasefika Press, 1996), 1; Robert Louis Stevenson is referring to this Samoan language of respect as 'the whole private dialect' set specially for the 'real noble'.

5.2.2 *Fa'asinomaga* – The Four Pillars of the Samoan social system

Fa'asinomaga is an integral concept in the *fa'asamoa* as it determines the point of reference of a person towards the past, at the present time, as well as the future. In other words it defines a Samoan person in relation to place, family, and village of origin. Aiono Fanaafi defines *fa'asinomaga* as the “points of reference – and his/(her) referees”.¹⁸⁹ For her, there are three main traditional pillars¹⁹⁰ of the *fa'asamoa* namely the *matai*¹⁹¹ (chief), who is in charge of a Samoan family; the *eleele ma fanua* or land(s), which belongs to a *Matai* and his family; and the *gagana Samoa* or Samoan language as spoken and used by Samoan people at all levels. The *matai* is the chief of a Samoan family. The family from its own genealogy and heritage chooses the *matai* to ‘be in-charge’ of his/her family, lands, and everything that belongs to the family. The selection of a competent *matai* is one of the difficult tasks commonly encountered by Samoan families in the past and even today. However, secure measures and guidelines for such selection are provided by the *fa'asamoa* and the *fa'amatai* system. The general rule of thumb for this selection is that a competent candidate for the *matai* title must be a *suli* or an heir to the title; and he or she has been serving the *matai* title and the family satisfactorily and competently. In fact these are the same guidelines used by the Land and Titles Court for their proceedings if the family’s selection for a suitable candidate fails to reach a consensus and eventually the decision of court is sought.

The *matai* disseminates each individual’s responsibilities and chores from day to day in a managerial and administrative way. In other words, he gives instructions to his *aiga* and *au tautua* and is responsible for overseeing these activities to make sure all are done well. Being the leader of the Samoan family, he is also in charge of all family lands. He makes sure the lands are used effectively, efficiently, and productively for the good of the family. Part of the *matai*’s land management responsibility is to distribute the lands to his family members for their own use and to serve the *matai* from time to time. This can become a controversial issue at times, and sometimes leads to legal proceedings at the Land and Titles Court.

¹⁸⁹ Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, *O Motugaafa* (Apia: Le Lamepa Press, 1996), 20.

¹⁹⁰ Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 4-10.

¹⁹¹ According to the Samoa Bureau of Statistics records of 2006, 9 percent of the total population of 180,741 are *matai*; 80 percent of that figure are males and the rest are females. See Statistics, *Samoa: Population and Housing Census Report 2006* ([accessed]).

‘*O ‘ele’ele ma fanua*’ are vital to Samoans. They are called the *fa’asinomaga*, or one’s own place of belonging and destiny. *O ‘ele’ele ma fanua* are important in that they are the source of life for the Samoans. They provide everything required for living, thus it becomes one of the *matai*’s major responsibilities to look after his family’s lands and to apportion them fairly for all members of the family under his control. Every Samoan must have some land to which he/she belongs either on the maternal or the paternal side. This belief emerges from one of the traditional birth practices whereby the newborn baby’s placenta and the umbilical cord are buried in the land. This traditional Samoan practice qualifies one to be called “*o le tama o le eleele*” or ‘a native of the land’. This is in a way similar to the Maori phrase the “*tangata whenua*” (people of the land). This cultural qualification makes any Samoan eligible to reside on, and to cultivate the land in question for one’s purposes, and to participate in village activities. More importantly, it enables a person to speak on behalf of, and to make decisions for, the people of the land. In other words, the burying of one’s umbilical cord in a specific area traditionally binds that person to that land and all things pertaining to it.

Gagana Samoa or the Samoan language is the third pillar of the Samoan culture. Undoubtedly, language plays a significant role in any culture as it is the middle ground in which understanding and agreement take place between two people.¹⁹² It is the medium through which people communicate and which conveys meaning and understanding. Thus, it also performs the task of bringing people together through interpretation and understanding one another within a specific social context.

Oral tradition plays a very important role in the *fa’asamoa* and the life of Samoans. These oral traditions are basically myths, legends and etymological narratives of the origin of Samoa and specific Samoan ideologies, concepts and customs. These traditions are passed on from one generation to another through story telling. Storytelling is an important part of the life of the old people in the community. They tell stories and myths of their genealogy and their ancestors to their children and grandchildren so that they themselves re-tell to their children in the future generations. The story of Nafanua and her prophecy, for example, occupies a significant space within such oral traditions and myths of the Samoans.

¹⁹² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 345-346. Gadamer discusses in his *magnum opus* his elaborate understanding about the various aspects of language as it is understood and used in human life.

Whilek this may not have been the standard traditional understanding about the *Fa'asinomaga* for Samoans, I would argue that there is a 'fourth pillar' for this Samoan concept, namely *ATUA* or God who is honoured, worshipped, and revered in *Tapuaiga* or religion. Considering the continuous influence of social changes and development within the Samoan society, it is imprudent to ignore the role of *Tapuaiga* in the life worlds of Samoans today. All Samoans are religious people in one way or another and they do have some sort of religious affiliation, where they worship and gather in fellowship under the banner of spiritual nurture, formation and transformation. *Tapuaiga* was fundamental to the life of the Samoans in the past. It played an integral part in shaping and conditioning people's behavioural patterns, attitudes, values, ethics, aspirations, visions and future life expectations. Thus it is imperative to recognise the significant roles played by the religious faith in *Atua* and *tapuaiga* in the lives of the people, and its contribution towards the development of a nation strongly built on solid foundations of Christianity and the gospel.

5.2.3 *Ava-Ceremony*¹⁹³

The Samoan 'Ava-ceremony has been an integral component of the *fa'asamoa* from the ancient times until now. Other islands of the Pacific have their own stories about the origin and the use of 'ava as a traditional social drink in their traditions. The 'Ava-ceremony, although specifically related to the Samoan culture of hospitality and fellowship, has an interesting connection with the Church in Samoa, which this study should not ignore. Thus I will endeavour to explore it in such a way that I could reveal the undergirding features of the Samoan ritual, which has significant religious overtones for which the Samoan Church emphasised. The preciousness of the 'ava to the Samoan people is well depicted in one of its native songs,

Le ava e sili lona taua i le aganu'u (The 'ava is so precious to culture)

Pe a alu o se usu, o le matai ma lana e u'u (When *matai* gathered to welcome visitors, each one brings an 'ava)

Ae a te'a le inati, le aumaga ia fa'anatinati (When *ava* are distributed, servants shall be swiftly)

A'o le taupou i le tanoa aua ne'i sasi (And the maiden at the *ava* bowl shall be agile)

Le palu 'ava ia popoto ai uma o tama'ita'i (All maidens must be competent in mixing the 'ava)

¹⁹³ 'Ava in this section is used both to refer to the actual traditional ceremony called 'Ava, and also to refer to the actual drink called 'ava.

Le folafola 'ava ia e manatua (The 'ava distributor must remember)
Le inati o le tanoa, ia te'a muamua (The allotment for the bowl be first)
O 'oe o le latasi, fa'apea ma le lupesina (You the one-branch as well as the white pigeon)
*O 'ava o ipu e puipui e lau fetalai*¹⁹⁴ (Ava for the high chiefs be protected by your oratory manners)

The *ava* as a ceremonial Samoan ritual was originally an even more important event than the ceremony as experienced today. Te'o Tuvale affirms this notion when he says, "no important undertaking, no valediction, no consequential ceremony, no momentous event whether pleasurable or otherwise, no trial by oath, is complete and worthy the name without the kava ('ava) ceremony".¹⁹⁵

5.3 SOCIAL CONTEXT

Samoan society, like any other society, has its own social structure and organisation, which are clearly defined within its own cultural and social life framework. The structure of the society revolves around the sociological controls and measures already put in place by the *fa'asamoa*, part of which is the *fa'amatai*, which are all practiced throughout the whole nation. However, it is inevitable that such organisation has gradually changed both consciously and unconsciously in the course of time when changes, both local and global have impacted on the Samoan community. Samoa is a patrilineal society, which operates on a communal system. Traditionally, the core unit of the social organization is the *aiga*. The *aiga* is the lineage group of common descent. The term *aiga* can also refer to a nuclear family, of which the father may well be a *matai*. This comprises the *matai* and his or her spouse and their immediate children.

The second component of the organisation is the *aigapotopoto* or the extended family. This is the group of individual *aiga* collectively united under the criterion of being under the headship of the *Sa'o o le aiga*¹⁹⁶ or the paramount high chief of the whole group. In other

¹⁹⁴ The composer of the song is unknown but a local band group named 'Le Foafoa Boys', from the village of Saoluafata, sang it. It once topped the 'Samoan Songs Top Ten' competition.

¹⁹⁵ Te'o Tuvale, *An Account of Samoan History up to 1918* (Victoria University of Wellington, 1918 [accessed April 2007]); available from <http://www.nzetc.org/>.

¹⁹⁶ From here on this title *Sa'o o le aiga* will be shortened to *Sa'o* throughout this chapter.

words, the *aigapotopoto* can be made up of more than one *matai* all under the authority of the *Sa'o*. All these *matai* including the *Sa'o* represent the *aigapotopoto* on the *Fono a le nu'u* or the village council. The third component of the sociological structure is the *nu'u* or village itself, which is more or less the gathering of all *aigapotopoto* within specific geographical boundaries separating one village from the other. The governing body of a specific *nu'u* is the *fono a le nu'u* or the village council of chiefs. They normally meet to discuss matters concerning the welfare of the village people and to make rules and regulations to maintain harmony amongst the people. In other words the *fono a le nu'u* formulate and articulate social norms and rules for the people to abide by. At the same time, they also give rulings and appropriate punishments for various civil offences such as disobedience, breaking *nu'u* curfews, adultery, infidelity, murder, stealing, physical assault, immoral behaviour affecting the young people. In the Christian era, the *fono a le nu'u* even forbids people missing Church services on Sunday as well as banning them from swimming in the sea or rivers on Sunday.

All in all, the social controls of the Samoan social structure is provided from within the structure itself, though cultural forces from outside the *nu'u* may reign in sustaining civil order when the *nu'u* itself could not provide means for peace from within at times. In such a situation, the district within which a *nu'u* is situated shall exercise its cultural authority in maintaining social order, although such a process has been rarely encountered in the past. Such authority of the district is derived from the cultural political connections between a *nu'u* in question and other *nu'u* within the subject district.

5.3.1 Education

A saying from Samoan education philosophy is '*E fafaga tama a manu i fuga o la'au, a'e fafaga tama a tagata i upu ma tala*'.¹⁹⁷ In English, it literally means, 'animals/birds feed their young siblings with fish and blooms/berries of trees, but the young of humans shall be fed with words'. This denotes the great emphasis of the Samoan people on education through oral instructions and story telling. Cognitive learning through reading is rather a foreign concept for Samoans. In the pre-Christian period they believed in the role of oral traditions and practical learning through observation and practice in their education. Samoan epistemology is basically pragmatic and practical. Knowing and learning are practical

¹⁹⁷ Le Tagaloa, *O Motugaafa*, 12; Fofu F Sunia, *Lupe o le Foaga* (Pagopago, American Samoa: American Samoa Department of Education, 2002), 3; I have adopted Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa's English translation of the Samoan philosophy.

phenomena deeply rooted in the experience of carrying out of all life activities within the spheres of the Samoan family, village, and district. The children must be nurtured psychologically within their own homes by observing what their parents and peers do and practice. Dialogical method is crucial for Samoan education and rarely any critical interchange of ideas occurs between parent and children as they believe in the repertoire of knowledge and wisdom vested in the parents and older generations,¹⁹⁸ thus children could only listen and learn.

The continuation of their family lineage is updated through storytelling and legends being told and re-told. The recognition of specific cultural protocols like the *va* inter-relationships amongst the people at different levels of the society, and the *feagaiga* relationship, were very much a specific unwritten curriculum for the family domain as well as within the village spheres. When an untitled man is mature enough to support his own family and the village through farming and fishing, he is always told by his parents “*alu i le fale o matai e te poto ai*” which literally means ‘go to the house of the chiefs where you can gain wisdom’. This means that the house where the village *matai* are gathered is the schooling environment for any Samoan male. Learning in this environment is achieved through listening very carefully to how the *matai* speak and learning the *matai* honorary language for speeches and for high-level cultural communication techniques and practices. It is within the *fale o matai* (house of chiefs) that one learns the dynamics of Samoan *ava* ceremony and other critical factors relating to how one can participate and contribute to such an important part of the Samoan life.

The Samoan women are expected to attend the *auluma*¹⁹⁹ where all the *tama’ita’i* of the village gather and deliberate for the execution of their own socio-cultural responsibilities. *Tama’ita’i* are those women who are the true natives of the village, while those who married village men and are also residing in the village are called *fafine nofo tane*.²⁰⁰ The latter also have their own grouping called *ava-taulele’a* and they have their own meetings when they need to. It is expected that the young girls and women of the village community must learn

¹⁹⁸ Malama Meleisea, "We want the Forest, Yet Fear the Spirits: Culture and Change in Western Samoa", *Pacific Perspective* 9, no. 1 (1980), 24.

¹⁹⁹ Holmes and Holmes, *Samoan Village: Then And Now*, 39-40.

²⁰⁰ Michiko Ete-Lima, "A Theology of The *Feagaiga*: A Samoan Theology of God", in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania*, ed. Lydia Johnson and Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies: University of the South Pacific, 2003), 28.

their own cultural roles and responsibilities from participating, and observing their relevant groupings. Thus education and learning in the pre-Christian times was generally encompassed within the communal life of the people within the village protocol.

Failure to participate in these social activities would result in becoming ‘un-knowledgeable’, with non-cognisance of the cultural dynamics of one’s own community. Thus one would become isolated from the reality of existence and, in extreme situations, probably be reprimanded by the village *fono*. A knowledgeable Samoan male is one who can render his *tautua* (service) not only to his *matai* but also to the village’s *saofaigaa matai* or *fono* to the best of his ability. Such males can participate in the *ava o le fonofono* (ava ceremony of the chiefs meeting) and are also be proficient in the speech and etiquette of the Samoan language at any level of the Samoan society. Normally such a Samoan male must have a ‘*tatau*’ (Samoan tattoo), that is, be a ‘*soga’imiti*’ (*tattooed person*). Culturally speaking, these were the only males who were awarded the honour of sitting in and serving the *fono* at the *ava* ceremony in the early Samoan world.

Likewise, the Samoan *tama’ita’i* is expected to learn all her cultural duties from within her home and the relevant cultural grouping to which she belongs. Traditionally, the domain of duties and responsibilities of the *tama’ita’i* was basically within the *fale* (house) while the men were outside. It is said that the *tama’ita’i* who is very close to her mother and respects her peers within her *aualuma* would be a smart and a knowledgeable woman. The Church minister and his wife actually became the people in-charge of all these etiquette matters of Samoan educational life when Christianity arrived and launched its ministry.

5.3.2 Punishment – ‘*Aulape a Samoa*’

Sociological controls to encourage people to behave well and create a hospitable environment are necessary. The Samoan setting has its own traditional means of sociological controls which are badly needed for a society where violence sometimes may creep into everyday life in the village and districts. Also the village *fono* has to put in place ‘*aulape a le nu’u*’²⁰¹ or some village social protective measures, to minimise, if not eradicate totally, acts of immorality such as *moetolo* or *solitofaga*²⁰² (covertly entering a house of sleeping people to

²⁰¹ Sunia, *Lupe o le Foaga*, 186.

²⁰² Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: the making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*, 244-251; Lowell Don Holmes, *Quest for the real Samoa : the Mead/Freeman controversy & beyond* (South Hadley, Mass:

attempt and indecent act or intercourse), *amio-le-pulea* (bad behaviour), and various criminal activities such as *fa'ao'olima* (assault), *fasioti tagata* (murder) and *gaoi* (stealing), that might arise from within the society. Thus there are traditional *fa'asalaga*,²⁰³ or punishments, imposed by the village *fono* for the perpetrators who might disturb village peace and the harmonious existence of people in the village and its surroundings. The *fa'asalaga* ranges from minor to the very serious punishment, some perhaps regarded as inhumane by today's standards. These punishments include '*mu le foaga*'²⁰⁴, '*soloa-ile-aufuefue*'²⁰⁵, '*ati ma le lau*'²⁰⁶, '*saisai ma fa'ala*'²⁰⁷, or '*fa'asavali ma le nu'u*'²⁰⁸.²⁰⁹ All these cultural punishments amount to ostracism and banishment from the village indefinitely. Despite these punishing measures being seriously severe and inhumane at times, they were very effective and thus provided security and protection for the inhabitants of every village. These *fa'asalaga* varied from one village to another and their application depends on the severity of the crime committed.

5.4 RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Pre-Christian religion in Samoa was about venerating multiple spirits and objects of great value and significance to the individual and the community, hence polytheistic. Samoa was a religious nation right from its beginning before the Christian missionaries arrived on its shores.²¹⁰ Samoans had their own traditional religions and beliefs, which are diverse and

Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987), 78. A man who uninvitedly enters the house of the victim at night and undertakes a sexual act, which can amount to rape and/or sexual assault on the victim, undertakes *Moetolo*.

²⁰³ Sunia, *Lupe o le Foaga*, 188-192.

²⁰⁴ '*Mu le foaga*' literally means 'burn the place'. This is the worst type of Samoan cultural punishment to be imposed on the culprit or *aiga*.

²⁰⁵ '*Soloa ile 'aufuefue*' means taken off from the '*aufuefue*'. It requires the culprit to be taken away from the *nu'u* indefinitely. It is a less severe punishment than the '*mu le foaga*' and the '*ati ma le lau*'.

²⁰⁶ '*Ati ma le lau*' literally means, 'to pluck out with the leaf'. This Samoan punishment demands the culprit or the alleged *aiga* or family to take everything they have in their possession and move out of the *nu'u*.

²⁰⁷ This requires the culprit to be tied up with a rope and left exposed in the sun all day.

²⁰⁸ '*Fa'asavali ma le nu'u*' literally means, 'make to walk out of the village'. This cultural punishment is very similar to the other ones mentioned before. But it is less severe in that it only requires the culprit to walk away from the *nu'u*.

²⁰⁹ See also Va'a, "The *Fa'asamoa*", 120 for further information on Samoan punishment.

²¹⁰ This is the general belief of the Samoans about their religious life beginnings until the Christianity arrived. Discussion with Rev. Fa'amate Fepulea'i, Autagavaia Tupa'i Alopopo and others during the research.

complex. However, they were systematic in the ways they honoured and respected the spirits, which were particular and specific to certain individuals and certain groups of people like families, villages, and even districts.

Samoa is very similar to other Pacific Island groups with regards to their religious philosophy and their existential focus on the significance of religion in their lives. Such similarity in the generic religious mindset of the Pacific islanders echoes in the words of Felix Keesing when he says,

People (of the Pacific) are usually more sensitive about religious matters than any other aspect of their lives. For most of the islanders, religion is likely to mean considerably more than it does to the average white man. It covers not only their beliefs about such problems as the nature of deity and the hereafter, but also much of what Westerners call science, medicine, and philosophy. It represents their fundamental interpretations of the universe, and of their own place in it – the assumptions and verities upon which their life is founded.²¹¹

However, Samoa has its own peculiar religious characteristics, which have been neatly interwoven with its traditions and culture. Such blending of religion and culture in the existential living of Samoans sometimes makes them very difficult to separate. Thus for Samoans, it is traditionally believed that religion and culture are inseparable²¹². Samoans referred to religion as *Tapua'iga*, which is commonly understood today as worship or the faith denomination to which one belongs. The concept of *Tapuaiga* will be discussed further in the next chapter, but for the purposes of this section it is pertinent to say that it plays a profound role in the religious context of Samoa.

John B. Stair,²¹³ author of some of the earliest written records on Samoa of the past, states that “the Samoans had several superior divinities and a host of inferior ones, ‘lords many and gods many’, and they were also accustomed to deify the spirits of deceased chiefs.” Such is the complexity of the Samoan world of deities. Stair continues by classifying these orders of spiritual beings into four main groups namely, the *atua*, *tupua*, *aitu*, and *sanaali'i*.²¹⁴ The religious mindset of the pre-Christian period was fundamentally focused on various spirits and deities, which were often honoured within families, villages and districts. Given

²¹¹ Felix M. Keesing, *Native Peoples of the Pacific World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), 121.

²¹² Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 25.

²¹³ Stair, *Old Samoa*, 210.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

the nature of the spiritual beliefs of the people within their domestic environments, the *matai* was normally regarded as the priest; if not the *matai*, then an elderly person, usually the *feagaiga* or the sister of the *matai*. Stair also highlights a suggestion made by some western writers about Samoan religion, namely:

The absence of a priestly hierarchy and the localisation of village and household deities under chiefly protection provided favourable conditions of the acceptance of Christianity, which was accompanied by little social disruption, contrasted to the experiences of Hawai'i and Tahiti.²¹⁵

This may have been the case, but Samoans have a different interpretation of this. They strongly believed in the mighty power of God from the time of their prophetess Nafanua, who prepared all these *various* dimensions of Samoan society in such a way that Christianity on its arrival would be accepted with open arms and with the sincerity of the hospitable Samoan nature.²¹⁶ With regards to the acceptance of Christianity in Samoa as such, again the attractiveness of foreign goods to the Samoans, and the sense of 'uniqueness' of the early missionaries, could have played part in that process, but the Samoans also believed that God alone in his own time and in his own ways brought the 'word of life' to the shores of the islands. One of the marked evidences to such a belief was the timely removal by the Samoan people themselves of the *various* likely obstacles to the arrival of the true God in Samoa. This was the killing of the 'devil chief' Lei'ataua Tonumaipe'a Tamafaiga just before John Williams and his fellow missionaries landed at Sapapali'i.²¹⁷ It is very important to recognise how the Samoan religious mindset operated through the transition period from the pre-Christian to the early Christian times. While it may have been violent when deaths occurred, materialistic in the alacrity of the Samoans to possess western goods, and viewed as somewhat supernatural in the eyes of scientific researchers today, the undeniable fact is that Samoans regarded it all as dictated by the great power of God. This was the essence of the deeper theological reflection and witness of the Samoans about their religious worldview, then as it is now.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 429.

²¹⁶ Tuisuga-le-taui, "The Nafanua Prophecy: An Earlier Version of the One Word for 'Setting the Scene' of Samoa's Religious and Political Formation", 105-124.

²¹⁷ Stair, *Old Samoa*, 428-429.

Traditionally, there have been two forms of *tapuaiga* in Samoa in the past, namely the private and the public. There are different participants in these different forms due the purpose and aim of *tapuaiga*.²¹⁸ First, the private *tapuaiga* is known as *Fanaafi o Fa'amalama*. Fanaafi Le Tagaloa²¹⁹ recorded that Rev. James Newell, one of the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries, wrote an article regarding this *tapuaiga* of the Samoans. The *tapuaiga* placed emphasis on the lighting of the fire until the flames shot up and lit up the whole house, thus referred to as *fanaafi o fa'amalama*. *Fanaafi* literally means 'fire votives', whilst *fa'amalama* means 'window of a *palagi* or European house'.

What is the purpose and aim of a private *tapuaiga*? Basically it is a family spiritual occasion conducted by the *Matai* or chief, or the eldest woman of the family, or the *matai*'s sister – the so-called *Feagaiga*, who in fact act as a family priest. John B. Stair²²⁰ refers to this priest as *Taula-aitu-o- aiga* (anchors of gods of families) who intercedes for the family. It is one of the four classes of Samoan priesthood, common in pre-Christian Samoa.²²¹ The family in this context is not similar to the European notion of nuclear family but rather a combination of a number of nuclear families all under the leadership of one *matai*, all living within close proximity of one another. In other words, they are all living within the confines of the family lands within the same village. At the time for their *tapuaiga* they would all come together to where the *matai* resides, to conduct their worship.

Actual temples were not used for private *tapuaiga*, as they were in some other Polynesian islands, but rather the chief's *fale tele* or *maota* was used. Inside the *fale tele* are the three huge posts in the centre supporting the central part of the *fale tele*. The prayers in the *tapuaiga* varied from thanksgiving, confession, and intercessions. All the participants must observe a strong sense of awe in the *tapuaiga* as each participant's *mauli* or soul is deeply connected to the *atua* of the family. This of course demands complete silence throughout the whole occasion. Not even a slight motion is allowed and the young children are kept as still as possible. I am excited that this sense of awe and imposition of silence in *tapuaiga* of the pre-Christian Samoa are very much alive and practised in the Samoan worship today. This

²¹⁸ Le-Tagaloa, *Tapuai*, 61.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 64ff.

²²⁰ Stair, *Old Samoa*, 222.

²²¹ Ibid., 220-225.

tapuaiga is normally observed twice daily, one in the early morning before daylight and in the evening when the last ray of the sun disappears.

The second form of worship is the public *tapuaiga*. This of course involves many participants from within a Samoan village setting. In fact it is a village community worship service. These public *tapuaiga* are for specific purposes. For example, one can be conducted as part of a preparation for a village sport competition against another, or for a village corporate fishing expedition, or even engaging in war in the pre-Christian period. Normally, there are three phases of this public *tapuaiga*. First it begins with the *alofisa*; then follows a big village feast, then a finale with the *anapogi*. The *alofisa* is basically the *ava* ceremony to be conducted at the *fale tele* of the ‘*ali’i taua*’, the village honorary *matai* (high chief), where all the village *matai* (chiefs) are gathered inside and the rest of the village people outside or in a nearby relatively small *fale tele*. The Samoan *ava* ceremony protocol has to be followed closely.

The protocol involves an exchange of traditional *lauga-usu* or speeches of welcome, the *lauga-tali* or the response speech, and then the words of encouragement and support for the team readying to play, or for the fishermen preparing to go out fishing²²². Again complete silence is to be observed except for those who are making speeches. This inspires a unique sense of awe to be felt within the *fale tele* during the whole *tapuaiga* and the *ava* sacrifice. When a *matai* receives his or her cup of *ava*, he normally says a few words to the effect of thanking God for facilitating the gathering and about the hopes of the village, and more importantly offering the *ava* sacrifice to God by saying, “*o lau ava lea le Atua*” (this is your *ava* God). At the same time God’s protection and guidance for all their endeavours of the day is requested, by saying, “*alofa mai ma fa’amamalu ou a’ao i a matou fuafuaga uma o lenei aso*” (may your love be upon us and protect us in your loving arms as we embark on our duties of the day) or words to that effect. For the Samoans this *ava* sacrifice is the utmost important aspect of the *tapuaiga*. They believe in the spiritual power and effect of that ceremony in bringing about a special task encountered by the village.

²²² Fanaafi Le Tagaloa in her book, *Tapuai*, on page 73 refers to the ‘*tapuaiga o le umuti*’ which is the worship conducted when the fishermen are out fishing for sharks.

The *anapogi* phase of the public *tapuaiga* is equally important in that every *mauli*, or soul, within the inner person of every individual citizen of the village is connected in a leap of faith in prayer, seeking Gods blessings and guidance for the task at hand. It is a very quiet period of time for all members of the community and every action is performed with the utmost care, so that people's minds and *mauli* are not disturbed in any manner while experiencing their inner connectedness to God. Theologically speaking, this inner connectedness of the *tapuaiga* participants and Tagaloa, their god, echoes the dynamics of the vertical-horizontal spiritual relationships between the Christians and God – the vertical - as well as their spiritual interrelational and interconnectedness – the horizontal – between each other. The horizontal interconnectedness of the Samoans *mauli* typifies the power of unity and oneness of thought when the Samoans come together pleading to God for peace, harmony, good fortune, good health, protection and security.

As indicated above, there were no specific temples for worship. Worship for the family was conducted in a rather honourable manner at the family's *fale tele* or big house. The priest gathered his family early at dawn and in the evening around a fireplace-like spot called '*magalafu*'²²³ in the house and he prayed to their spiritual guardian while the fire was lit and glowed. At the village level, places of worship were at either at the house of the village high chief, normally called *maota fono*, and at a sacred malae, or an open paddock, or piece of land identified for a district's gatherings. These gatherings could be for worship or for meetings, to deliberate of waging wars against other groups, or to organise traditional games and competitions. Offerings were made to the gods of the Samoans just as in other Polynesian island religions. These Samoan ancient gods or spirits are sometimes called *aitu* and the postmodern Christian recognises them as evil spirits.

Traditionally the *aso* or offerings were made to the *matai* or chiefs of the families in the form of food and other material goods.²²⁴ In like manner, the people made similar offerings to their gods but only symbolically, and the act of offering something was all that was needed to ensure the favor of the gods.²²⁵

²²³ Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa, *Tapuai: Samoan Worship* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 69 – 71.

²²⁴ Interview with Rev. Oka Fauolo, February 2008.

²²⁵ Peter Henry Buck, *Anthropology and Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1939 [accessed July 2009]); available from <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-BucAnth-t1-body-d1.html#n13>, 20.; Interview with Rev. Oka Fauolo, February 2008.

CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTIAN SAMOA: CULTURAL-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The background understanding of Samoa would not be complete without a discussion of the arrival of Christianity on the soil of Samoa and its broad impact on the lives of the people in general. It was the intervention of God through the missionary work of the London Missionary Society (LMS) that turned a ‘new leaf’ in the worldviews and the lifeways of the Samoans. The coming of the new religion Christianity to Samoa in 1830 was a ‘prophecy in fulfilment’ in the eyes of the Samoan people. The prophetic expectation of the old Samoans is shown, in this section of the chapter, to have played an integral part in the history of the transition from the traditional Samoan worldviews of the past to those of the modern period. Thus this chapter will investigate the adaptation processes and mechanisms involved in the acceptance of Christianity by the Samoans of the early nineteenth century, and the fruits and flaws of the integration of the gospel and the Samoan culture. Part of this will involve the discussion of various changes and new developments of cultural-religious perspectives of the Samoans in this Christian era, which influenced and shaped the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context then and now. This section also addresses one of the thesis questions posed earlier: ‘how could we understand the Samoan context with regard to its religious mindset and practices?’

When two or more different cultures, beliefs, or cults come to exist synchronistically within a context, they would normally undergo specific adaptation mechanisms such as politicisation or compression, elevation of the ‘low’ to the ‘high’, emulation, establishment, syncretism, reconciliation or confusion, and superimposition.²²⁶ In any case, the coming together of these cultures and beliefs can result in conflict, which sometimes lead to unhealthy and cynical relationships between the parties involved. At some stage the seemingly dominant culture would somehow tend to gain the upper hand and exercise its superiority and authority at almost all facades of existence, and the inferior one succumb to it. Therefore I believe that, having recognised all the pertinent dynamics of the integration, assimilation, and interactions

²²⁶ Ruwan Palapathwala, "Lectures in Religious Traditions of South and South East Asia", (Melbourne: Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009), 5.

between the Samoan traditional beliefs and Christian worldviews, emulation and superimposition have been the predominant prevailing adaptation orientations in Samoa in the Christian era. Emulation in this instance is the effort of the Samoan culture to imitate zealously the traditions of Christianity brought by the missionaries. How far this is possible is a different issue altogether.

The intrinsic focus of such imitative processes is, on one hand, to avoid relegation of the entire local *faasamoa* and its integral components to a lower status, whilst on the other hand to have the propensity of promoting both Christianity and *faasamoa* synchronically in such a way that one supports the other in all aspects of life. The integration of Christianity with Samoan traditions and beliefs has also been made possible by the superimposition of an adaptation mechanism. This entails Christianity's effort to absorb the entire range of local primal deities of the Samoan milieu and thus become the dominant religion. By the same token, Christianity should recognise and acknowledge the legitimacy of the *fa'asamoa* in the whole process of superimposition, in order to earn acceptance and recognition by the subordinate *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* systems. There have been yet other adaptation mechanisms penetrating the Samoan milieu during its social and political journey towards the future, but these have been on a much lower scale. This chapter will therefore explore the Samoan context in the Christian period, as it has undergone integration and enculturation processes between the two traditions through emulation and superimposition.

6.1 EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN SAMOA

The arrival of the first missionaries in August 1830²²⁷ officially marked the new phase of the social, religious, cultural, political, and economic life of the Samoans. However, Christianity as a religious belief is believed to have been practised in various areas of Samoa prior to the arrival of the so-called first missionaries. This early work of Christendom was foreshadowed by the arrival of the early European settlers, beachcombers, traders, and the return home of a local Samoan named Sio Vili who was travelling around the Pacific and

²²⁷ There is confusion as to the true date of the arrival of Rev. John Williams and his crew in Samoa. The traditional belief as appeared in some early writings record the significant date as 23 August 1830. [See Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*; Robert Mackenzie Watson, *History of Samoa* (Wellington and Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., 1918), 30; Newton Allan Rowe, *Samoa Under The Sailing Gods* (London & New York: Putnam, 1930), 23; Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 81 footnote 87].

Australia on a whaling ship.²²⁸ Some of the early Europeans or *papalagi* (burststers of heaven or sky-breakers)²²⁹ in Samoa were refugees and criminals who had escaped from prison settlements in New South Wales, Tasmania, and Norfolk Island.²³⁰ Others were sailors who had become tired of the hard life on board the whaling ships. Some had been friendly to the local people and had possessed special skills and trades, thus they were regarded by the local Samoans as invaluable experts who could be of great asset to them. Hence they were accepted and treated well by the Samoans. Others, however, were violent and tyrannical. Thus the Samoans regarded these violent *papalagi* as a threat to their power. For example, ‘Irish Tom’, one of these cruel *papalagi*, was killed by his host.²³¹ These early *papalagi* subtly established and taught some aspects of Christianity to the locals in various areas in the 1820’s²³² but were not recognised by the first official missionaries who came after 1828. The early exposure of the indigenous people to the Christian Church initiated by the *papalagi* was known as the ‘Sailor’s *Lotu*’. Sio Vili upon his return was very much interested in putting into practice his Christian knowledge and belief hence he established a Christian-like cult called ‘*Sio Vili* Movement’ and quite a number of locals became adherents to this movement at the time. Clearly, the Sailor’s *Lotu* and the *Sio Vili* Cult, though unofficial, were the first signs of Christendom on the soils of Samoa, and thus had influence on the Samoan context in various ways.

The interesting point here is that God in his own ways and time revealed himself to the Samoans regardless of whether such revelation was through the arrival of the first official missionaries of the London Missionary Society or through other means. It is important to recognise in this regard the earlier arrival of the Wesleyan missionaries such as Peter Turner and one local chief Saiva’aia of Tafua-Salelologa who brought news of the Gospel from

²²⁸ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 52; Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, 121.

²²⁹ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 42; R.P. Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community* (London, Wellington, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 65; Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, 121; Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before.*, 199.

²³⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 45; Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community*, 68.

²³¹ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 45.

²³² *Ibid.*, 52.

Tonga and arrived in 1828 prior to the LMS missionaries, although no mission was established²³³

The history of the Christian Church in Samoa speaks of the early differences between the London Missionary Society workers and those who came earlier and propagated an unofficial version of Christianity according to the LMS standards. Moreover, while some of the early *papalagi* settlers made a limited attempt to teach Christianity as they knew it, they also introduced to the indigenous people their own western ideologies and thought forms. I would argue in this thesis that these early overtures of Christianity in the Samoan context through the early European settlers and Sio Vili had significant impact on the Samoans. The imposition of these new ideologies, therefore, created suspicions amongst the indigenous Samoans, as to where and how these new religious manifestations came to their own realisation. For example, R. P. Gilson²³⁴ refers to this new spiritual awareness of the local Samoans at the time by saying, “Into some quarters, the news of mission activity penetrated, and Samoans, pragmatic about their religion, began to wonder whether a supernatural being of surpassing power was at work in the islands”. This is an indication of the local uncertainty as to what the new face of their religious expectations would be as the consequence of the introduction of the belief in the God of the foreigners. In other words, the locals’ sense of enthusiasm to know more about the new religion began, though scantily, some years before the arrival of the first LMS missionaries John Williams, Charles Barff, a Samoan named Fauea²³⁵, and eight other teachers from Tahiti and Rarotonga. The Samoans wanted to know more about the new religion but they were also curious about the foreigner’s way of life and how they did simple things. It is undoubtedly clear that such influence of the earliest *papalagi* had begun to condition the way the Samoans looked at their concept of god, their approach to their religion at worship, and their outlook on life in relation to their traditional belief systems.²³⁶

²³³ Ibid., 60.

²³⁴ Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community*, 68.

²³⁵ Fauea was a native Samoan who was residing in Tonga. He joined John Williams and his LMS mission team on their way to Samoa and became part of the mission to Samoa. His contribution to the LMS mission was remarkable, and he is known to have been the key person assisting John Williams in his first encounter with the Samoan people on their arrival; see Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 56.

²³⁶ Ibid., 45-46.

Exposure to these new worldviews and a different focus on life presented a challenge to the Samoans. In the midst of all their traditional beliefs and religious understanding they had now encountered the new idea, from a Christian perspective, of God being the sovereign ruler, the powerful one, and the provider of everything in life,. Most importantly, there was now a centralised God who is omnipotent, omniscient, transcendent, and the only true God. In other words the new idea of ‘monotheism’ encroaches onto the religious worldviews of the Samoans who had been venerating and worshiping many gods in the past.²³⁷ Their traditional convictions about their own powerful gods was questioned as they gradually came to realise somehow the difference between their normal gods and the power of the new God of the foreigners.

As mentioned earlier, some of the Samoans were drawn not only to the early Europeans’ religion but also to their material possessions. This attitude became obvious when the first missionaries arrived in the eighteen thirties. N. A. Rowe²³⁸ reports on Fauea’s attempt to introduce the papalagi missionaries to the local Samoans of Sapapali’i village where they first anchored their *va’a-lotu* or praying ship. Fauea said,

Can the religion of these wonderful papalagi’s be anything but wise and good...Let us look at them, and then look at ourselves; their heads are covered, while ours are exposed to the heat of the sun and the wet of the rain; their bodies are clothed all over with beautiful cloth, while we have nothing but a bandage of leaves around our waist; they have clothes upon their very feet, while ours are like the dogs; and then look at their axes, their scissors and their other property, how rich they are...²³⁹

It can be said that the missionaries and their goods lured the indigenous people into accepting Christianity. I cannot rule out such an insight in this situation as new things and new ideologies sometimes attract people without their realising the true worth of these material possessions and beliefs for themselves. On the other hand Fauea’s tactical approach of comparing and contrasting Samoan ideas and ways of life to those of the missionaries was in fact part of the strategy in trying to persuade the people to accept the papalagi and their mission. Fauea’s careful selection of words indicates his deep knowledge and understanding of the Samoan psyche at the time and their philosophical expectations of life. The

²³⁷ Stair, *Old Samoa*, 211.

²³⁸ Rowe, *Samoa Under The Sailing Gods*, 25.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

missionaries recognised the value of having Fauea as part of their mission team, and considered him an important asset.

Since then, Samoan culture and the *fa'asamoa* has been very much influenced by Christianity. Traditional norms of the *fa'asamoa* have been reorganized in such a way that Christian principles, practices, moral and ethical values have all become integrated and assimilated with the *fa'asamoa*. This reorganisation of traditional norms and the incorporating of western worldviews was perhaps somewhat easier than one would have expected in such a situation. This was because many Samoan moral and ethical values were relatively similar to those of Christianity, as has been indicated in earlier sections

The *papalagi* culture of individualism, as exemplified by the missionaries, was introduced when the ideals of a nuclear family were gradually propagated within Samoan families through the works of the local *faiifeau* or pastors. Part of the intensive theological training of *faiifeau* at the Malua Theological College, commencing in the mid-eighteen forties, revolved around nurturing the domestic and family life of the trainees of the time. Such training was shaped by the early missionaries' ethical and moral life ways of English middle-class origin, where males were the bread winners who worked for the welfare of the family while the women/housewives were confined to housekeeping chores and cooking inside the house.

The missionaries tended to emphasise the couple and their children over against the Samoan traditional protocol of *aiga*, which was basically an extended-family group. For the Samoans then, there was no such thing as a nuclear family. A cluster of nuclear families together formed a unit, especially for matters relating to *tapuaiga* (worship) and other important traditional occasions of Samoan life.²⁴⁰ Traditionally, *tina ma tama'ita'i* or wives and daughters of the family, were confined within the perimeters of the *fale* or house and expected to generally look after, and prepare the beds for, the parents, children and family elders, whilst the Samoan *aumaga ma taulele'a* or serving men and male youths predominantly worked around the *umukuka ma le tunoa*, the kitchen, which was usually located outside at the rear of the *fale tele*, and prepared food for the family. It was rare for the untitled men to appear in the *fale tele* during the day as they would normally be expected to

²⁴⁰ LeTagaloa, *Tapuai*, 74.

be either planting in the bush and plantation or out fishing. These men may be seen around or in the *fale tele* only at night, when they would approach the *matai* asking for their jobs for the next day, or be summoned by the *matai* for a special job to be done.

I contend in this thesis that some of these changes, whether made consciously or otherwise, were not to discredit the viability and the practical application of the traditional behaviour and customs of the Samoans, but rather they were inevitable changes, which the missionaries saw fitting at the time in order that they could achieve the purposes of their mission. Moreover, the changes were the signs of the developing success of the missionary enterprise within the Samoan context and the Pacific as a whole. Having said that, it has been unfortunate that some of these changes turned out to be detrimental to the Samoan culture and customs. For example, the missionaries prohibited some of the authentic graceful Samoan dances and music at the time because they thought these were pagan practices with sexual connotations.²⁴¹ Thus they were immoral and unacceptable in the eyes of Christianity. In that sense the changes were a loss for the Samoans in one way or another, but reflected the power of the missionaries at the time. In retrospect, the work of the missionaries has been criticised because of its negative impacts on the culture and customs of the indigenous Samoans.

However, I still believe that such changes were inevitable in the course of time, as the missionaries' focus was both to 'civilise' and to Christianise the indigenous people. The enculturation of the gospel in any context demands changes whether or not the results of such changes are predictable. As Collins Moonga²⁴² suggests, "the gospel also comes in to propose a style of life among people who already have another style of life as defined by culture. This brings the two in conflict." In other words the integration of the gospel and the Samoan culture is no different from any other similar cultural integration. Changes would emerge over time and patience is required so that fruits of such assimilation could be achieved and enjoyed within the divine plan of God for the salvation of his people.

²⁴¹ Keesing, *Modern Samoa: Its Government and Changing Life*, 411.

²⁴² Moonga, "Culture and Evangelization", 12-13.

6.2 THE SAMOAN CHURCH (LMS)

For Samoans, there is no doubt that the fulfilment of the Nafanua Prophecy is revealed and manifested in the formation of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, which used to be the Samoan LMS Church, now known as the EFKS. The Samoan LMS Church existed for several years under the leadership and governance of the London Missionary Society in Britain. Almost all the LMS missionaries who came to Samoa were from Britain, and some Germans, French, and American Catholic missionaries, except a few Tahitian pastors who were brought over by John Williams and his colleagues in the early period. History reveals that while the mission work was predominantly undertaken by the European missionaries, there was always a 'forward thinking' vision by the LMS whereby the local Samoan pastors were moulded to be in control over the affairs of their own Church when the missionaries considered it appropriate. Early negotiations between the *Au Matutua*²⁴³, *Au Fa'atonu*²⁴⁴ and the Samoan pastors with regards to such a move encountered difficulties at its early stages but it was eventually accepted by the two major parties – *Au Matutua* and *Au Fa'atonu* – as the most viable option in the early nineteen hundreds.²⁴⁵ Featuna'i Liua'ana rightly expresses such feeling amongst the leaders of the Church at the time when he says,

For the *Au Fa'atonu*, it was a step in the right direction in filtering out Samoan culture and cementing good relationships with the Samoan pastors. The Samoan pastors' sense of loyalty to the *Au Fa'atonu* and recognition of its authority in the final decision-making was, for the moment, unquestionable²⁴⁶

The Samoan (LMS) Church from then on propagated its ministry vigorously and expanded into various spheres in the fabrics of the society. The *Au Toeaina* was established in 1907, as the helping hand in promoting the warm relationship which existed between the *Au Fa'atonu* and the Samoan pastors of the time in Samoa. It was an attempt by the leading authority to consolidate the leadership and governance of the Church without much trouble from the local pastors. The Samoan pastors considered this as the recognition of their status in the Samoan Church by the *Au Fa'atonu*.²⁴⁷ Since then, the *Au Toeaina* became the central

²⁴³ LMS directors in London.

²⁴⁴ Samoa District Committee (European Missionaries).

²⁴⁵ See Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 242-273.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 249.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 248.

ecclesiastical body of the EFKS that worked as the steering committee and an advisory council overseeing the growth and development of both the clergy and the wider Church.

The injection of this Samoan flavour of leadership into the structure of the Samoan Church at the time ensured a collaborative effort by the local Church people and the LMS missionaries to establish a warm relationship between the two parties as well as preparing a Church that was missional, relevant, performable, meaningful and appropriate for the Samoans in the future. Despite earlier signs of the capability of the Samoan LMS Church to look after its own affairs under the leadership of the *Au Toeaina*, there was then still a sense of caution amongst the leaders, thus such moves towards a total independence of the Samoan (LMS) Church were rejected and delayed. The *Au Toeaina* itself rejected the idea and refused to give it any consideration at the time.

God however, works in mysterious ways which no one knows until his will is revealed in his own time and in his own fashion. In spite of the initial reluctance of the Samoans to take over the leadership responsibilities of the Church, they finally agreed to assume all the responsibilities of taking over the administration and leadership of the Samoan Church from the LMS in 1962, which coincided with the political independence of Samoa from the New Zealand administration and its establishment as a sovereign nation in the same year. From then on the Samoan Church was no longer known as the Samoan LMS Church but assumed the new name *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) or the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS).

This new Church has flourished with hope and faith that God alone through the power of the Holy Spirit would lead it to new pastures of growth and development. Overall statistics for Samoa according to the latest Population and Housing Census Report 2006²⁴⁸ from the Samoa Bureau of Statistics, show that population of Samoa is predominantly Christian. The Report reveals that the EFKS constituted the highest proportion of members in the total population 5 years of age and over, comprising 34 percent, followed by Catholics with 20 percent and then Methodists with 14 percent. Other denominations include Latter Day Saints with 13 percent, Assembly of God with 7 percent, Seven Day Adventists with 3.5 percent, others with 6.6 percent. The rest denotes those people who have not stated their religion. It is with no doubt that this diversity of religious beliefs in Samoa has given rise to other pertinent

²⁴⁸ Statistics, *Samoa: Population and Housing Census Report 2006* ([accessed], See Appendix iv.

problems and social issues which the Samoan people have now been struggling to overcome or at least reduced significantly.

6.2.1 *Ekalesia* or Church

The word *Ekalesia* which often refers to the ‘Church’ in the spheres of the Christian Church in Samoa, is the Samoan transliteration of the Greek word ἐκκλησία or *ecclesia*. Sometimes it denotes a local congregation as a separate entity. The Constitution of the EFKS renders the word *ekalesia* being the translation of the word ‘Church’ in English. Thus *Ekalesia* or ‘Church’ is defined in the EFKS Constitution as

The name given to the company of those who are gathered together with Jesus, who believe in Jesus and who celebrate the sacraments ordained by Jesus for His Church.

Our belief arises from the promise of Jesus, which has become the hope of His people, namely, “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Mat.18: 19-20).²⁴⁹

While the word *ekalesia* has its distinctive theological meaning and reference for the EFKS as a Church, it could also be used interchangeably with the Samoan words *lotu* and *tapuaiga*. This sometimes creates confusion in the Samoan milieu unless one is quite familiar with the context of reference.

Although the Samoan Church has a constitution and other related Church literature, wherein roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, some of the adherents of the Church itself are not thoroughly clear as to its roles and responsibilities in their individual lives and in the community at large. Furthermore, some are not even sure of their spiritual obligations towards the Church, or how they fit into the Church as individuals. For some, being a member of the Church is symbolic of being part of the Church in terms of numbers and especially to be ecclesiastically eligible to participate in the sacrament of the Holy Communion. Others think the Church is a place where one can go and meet people at Sunday services and listen to what God says through the *faifeau*’s preaching. For others, it is a place where they can take their children for spiritual nurturing and education on Sundays, and parents rarely attend these gatherings.

²⁴⁹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 4 - 5.

All of these are, part of the understanding that members have of the Church, and their particular aspirations. Whether these are satisfied as originally envisioned by the Church members is a separate issue. What seems to be important here is to articulate clearly the basic functions of the Church as such, so that each and every individual Church member has a good grasp of the essence of the Church in their lives, as well as in the life of the Samoan society at large. I will draw largely on Johannes van der Ven's articulation of the functions of the Church in *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*²⁵⁰ as he relevantly relates them to what he calls the 'hermeneutic-communicative praxis' in the basic functions of the Church. These functions include *kerygma*, *leitourgia*, *koinonia*, and *diaconia*. *Kerygma* includes evangelisation, preaching and catechesis. *Leitourgia* or liturgy refers to Church rituals, worship, and sacraments. *Koinonia* is the attempt to build and develop the community of Christ in the world, in this case the Samoan milieu. This entails bringing people together in faith within the spiritual framework of the Christian Church and the effort of maintaining such fellowship in continuity. Finally, it is the diaconal function of the Church to alleviate suffering in the world. Moreover, it is conceived as the process of creating conditions for liberation from suffering by acting on the factors in the Church and society that impinge on both material and spiritual suffering. This function is in fact much broader and encompasses all the works of the Church, which focus not only on the physical arm of the Church but, more importantly, on its spiritual dimension.

6.3 CHANGES IN PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

I have mentioned above the changes to the Samoan context once the first European settlers and missionaries arrived and started interacting with the locals in various spheres of life. Not only were there marked adjustments in the attitude, mentality, individual and corporate life outlook and expectations of the locals, but also in those of the foreigners themselves. The religious attitude and philosophical focus of the local people was clearly transformed in one way or another in this newly Christian era. Some of these philosophical and religious life aspects and their changes are discussed below.

²⁵⁰ Johannes Van Der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Kampen Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993), 2; Van Der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, 41 – 44.

6.3.1 Samoan Personality

The Samoan conception of ‘individual personal life construct’ is somewhat complicated, as Samoans believe there is no such thing as an individual ‘I-being’ in existence in its lifeworld. Instead, they believe in the ‘I-being’ in existence within and in relation to other ‘related-connected beings’ forming what I term the ‘corporate Samoan personality’. e Samoans normally speak and act within the framework of such a corporate personality mindset. Traditionally, I as a Samoan cannot speak or act on my own behalf but rather on behalf of others and in relation to other ‘I-beings’ to whom I am closely related, either through genealogy, or village-district connections. One’s individual being in existence cannot be regarded as a self-identity in isolation from one’s *fa’asinomaga*, although one is conscious of the existence of that self-identity being. Ama’ama Tofaeono²⁵¹ puts it more precisely when he says “the (Samoan) human being found his/her true identity, not in the essence of one’s own being, but in association with other selves, including the natural environment and the Gods”. There is always that sense of belonging to some group of people - be it family, village or district. It is such ‘belongingness’ of the ‘I-being’ of the self-identity that makes it difficult if not perhaps impossible for a Samoan to be an ‘individual personality’. This does not mean that an individual cannot ‘do his/her own thing’ in life, but that when doing so, there must always be consciousness of the fact that he/she is representing his/her parents and (extended) family, village and district. For instance, if a person speaks in a traditional forum, successfully or otherwise, such a speech act would reflect directly not on the concerned individual, but on the family and all other related persons. Again this relates directly to the Samoan concept, *fa’asinomaga*, discussed in Chapter One.

So the ‘I-being ‘ personality as an individual, both separate from and connected to the ‘corporate Samoan personality’ as we have today is rather a new ideology for the Samoans. The individualistic mindset I believe has been a new injection into the *faasamoa* imposed by the early European settlers and the impact of Christianity brought by European missionaries. Neither the corporate nor the individualistic mindset is wrong, the two are separate conceptions and each stands on its own merits.

²⁵¹ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 171.

6.3.2 Death (body & spirit)

In the Samoan realm of realities and life expectations, the concept of death as a religious phenomenon in the pre-Christian times was not as clear-cut as that of Christianity. For the pre-Christian Samoans, the dualism of *tino* (body) and *agaga* (soul) in relation to the human person was emphasised. The *tino* refers to the natural physical body of a person. When one dies, his/her *tino* will go to the ground, decompose and later become earth and dust. The significance of land or earth as one of the three tri-pillars of the Samoan *fa'asinomaga* has been previously mentioned. When death comes one must have some place on earth in which he/she would be buried, just like the burial of one's umbilical cord at birth. This is in fact the completion of the life cycle of the human person, from birth to death when the *tino* returns to its original place – earth and dust. 'Human blood' in Samoan is *palapala* or '*ele'ele* or *toto*, which means earth or dust. It always carry the connotation of *ola* or life, existence, growth, and production or productivity.

There is also the implication that anything to do with the notion *tino* in Samoa is destined for death and the natural process of *pala* or decomposition prevails, thus the human body and blood are returning to earth and dust. My assumption in this respect is that the traditional philosophy regarding this personhood dualism of *tino* and *agaga* did not carry the dualistic notion of good and evil as such, but rather that the differentiation process at death was just another stage in the life of the normal person. The categorisation into good and evil is done only in relation to one's ranking in the community, that is, whether one is a *matai* or an untitled person. The former falls into the good category, the latter to the evil category. The *matai* ranking has always been looked upon as the apex of the Samoan social structure and *matai* have held priesthood status. Thus the *matai* rank carries the implication of being good, respectable, and reputable, and enjoys a multitude of benefits, not available to the ordinary people. An untitled Samoan could be said to enjoy fewer benefits in life. In this Christian era, however, Christian dogma seems to reflect the idea that anything of materialistic nature seems to be apart from the spiritual realm of Christendom, categorized as mortal, temporal, physical and non-spiritual. Sometimes materialism seems to have the connotation of evil, and indicates a degree of removal from the perfection of God's utopian world.

The *agaga*²⁵² portion of the human person however, will somehow become a spirit at death, which leaves the human body and goes to the place called *Pulotu* or *O le Fafa o Sauali'i* (the Hades) or *Sa-le Fe'e* (the Hades of the god - *Fe'e*)²⁵³ at the village of Falealupo on the far western side of Samoa. Stair²⁵⁴ gives an explanation of this Samoan after-death conception. *Pulotu*²⁵⁵ was a place for the habitation of the gods and the final destination for the spirits of the dead. Those spirits recognised as pure and perfect would enter *Pulotu* whilst the condemned and punished spirits would proceed to the place *Sa-le-Fe'e*. *Le Fafa-o Sauali'i* is like the entrance to both *Pulotu* and *Sa-le-Fe'e*. Thus the *agaga* or the soul of a person upon death would first enter *Le Fafa-o Sauali'i*, leading on to either *Pulotu* or *Sa-le-Fe'e* depending on whether or not one is of chiefly ranking and purporting to be perfect and pure in morality. Chiefly ranks were normally recognised as being of good status, whilst untitled people were regarded as being imperfect.

Christianity has been in Samoa for nearly a century and a half, yet still there are traces of this traditional understanding of the dichotomy of the human personhood and their destinations amongst the Samoan people, though the belief is not strong as it was in the past. In this Christian era, however, there is no *Pulotu* nor *Sa-le-Fe'e*, neither is there *Le Fafa-o Sauali'i* as the destiny of humankind, but a strong Christian belief in the end of humanity at death. Salvation is given freely to mankind through the death and resurrection of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. It is faith in this great work of liberation and salvation by Christ that enables one to achieve such as salvation. Therefore, upon death, everyone is entitled to that salvation unless one chooses otherwise.

²⁵² Stair, *Old Samoa*, 220; *Agaga* in this sense refers to soul. Sometimes the word *agaga* also refers to *loto* or *manatu* or *finagalo*, which means thinking or feeling. Sometimes the differentiations between the two seem problematic as *loto* can also refer to both feeling and thinking faculties simultaneously in some situations. Sometimes *Agaga* and *finagalo* can be used in a respectful way of saying *loto* in the Samoan honorific language. For example, in the Samoan honorific language, *O lea lou agaga/finagalo I le mataupu o loo talanoaina?* (What do you think about the subject/issue that we are discussing now?). In the ordinary spoken Samoan language the same question can be said as *O lea lou loto/manatu i le mataupu o loo talanoaina?*

²⁵³ Ibid; Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 173.

²⁵⁴ Stair, *Old Samoa*, 211, 215, 217.

²⁵⁵ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life* 173-175; Tofaeono discusses three different renderings of the term *Pulotu* in the Samoan milieu. First is the place where the chiefly people personifying noble acts and good manners will reside upon death. Secondly, *Pulotu* is the 'worship aspect of the life beyond'. It is the place of the most honoured life of praise and worship, or simply paradise where one enjoys salvation beyond death. Thirdly, *Pulotu* is a residential place of the gods under the sea, which implies that such a place is under the human world.

6.4 FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURAL-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS IN SAMOA

The phrase ‘cultural-theological praxis’ used throughout this work indicates the underlying premise and the main focus of the inquiry. It is therefore important to discuss its meaning and attendant aspects. In doing so, first I will explain and discuss the three major components, being ‘praxis’, ‘cultural’, and ‘theological’, and their combined meaning as utilised in this investigation.

In this study, as stated in Chapter One, praxis²⁵⁶ is defined as the domain of actions and activities of individuals and groups in Samoan society, both within and outside the Church, who are open to the inspiration of the Gospel in their lives (both individual and collective) thus focusing on their salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The domains of actions as such are established, identified and are being conditioned by both culture and gospel as they rigorously interact and interrelate, resulting in ingraining of new meanings of such relationships in the minds and lives of Samoans. For example, I have mentioned earlier that gospel and culture are inseparable for Samoans since Christianity became part of its social and religious life. The two interweave and are embedded within the life of Samoans.²⁵⁷ Hence the Samoan adage, *‘E va’ava’alua le Talalelei ma le Aganu’u’* (gospel and culture go hand in hand) has been the philosophical belief which undergirds and ensures the good relationship between the two institutions. This philosophical phenomenon derives from the people’s observation and empirical reflections on how the two react, integrate, and interrelate to each other during their life journeys.

There is of course an assumption of social harmony and peace as existing amongst the people in their everyday life realities and the practical application of the adage within their local context. It assumes that gospel has to be the driving force that compels the people both spiritually and physically to implement their various obligations in life. Moreover, it is the force and power that glues the two institutions together, creating such bondage that makes the two inseparable in their social realities. In other words, the people must abide by the teachings of the gospel and dynamically practice all the good deeds of Christianity. While Christian principles and practices are to be implemented and manifested in the Samoan context, the Samoan culture on the other hand has to be respected and honoured in order that the gospel

²⁵⁶ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 9, 151.

²⁵⁷ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 25

prevails effectively and efficiently within society. Achieving such goals, therefore, results in the emergence of the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context. While praxis encompasses a broad range of practical aspects of theology in particular, and various dimensions in the life of the Church in general, it must be critically interpreted in more depth so that such praxis must be a dynamic phenomenon, rather than static and naïve. In that respect, therefore, this thesis focuses on the critical hermeneutics or ‘depth’ hermeneutics of the praxis of the Samoan context from a contextual theological perspective.

There are two clear dimensions of the praxis, among many others, that need to be explored, particularly with regard to Church ministry. These are the cultural dimension and the theological dimension, I will discuss each of these in the ensuing sections of this chapter, with the intention of touching briefly on some of the other dimensions of the praxis, yet to be mentioned.

6.4.1 The Cultural Dimension

The cultural dimension of the praxis of the Christian Church in Samoa is basically rooted in the culture and customs of the Samoan people. Culture has different meanings to different people. There is no consensus among scholars and philosophers as to what exactly the concept should include. For the purposes of this work, therefore, I will define culture as ‘the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, art, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought’. It includes attitudes, *values*, and biases that constitute the social milieu in which we live. Traditional Samoan philosophies and ideologies make important contributions to the worldview and life-ways. These traditions are maintained and transmitted from one generation to another through people’s stories, dances, myths, legends, and rituals, hence oral traditions have been and still are an integral component of people’s life realities. Culture also entails interrelationships and interactions between people, as well as the relationship between people and their environment - the land, sea, and sky. This definition is in fact a combination of various understandings of the word ‘culture’ as it existed and developed from earlier perceptions, to the current emphasis of the academic fields of social sciences and cultural anthropology. Samoans refer to their *aganu’u* or culture as the *fa’asamoa*.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Matsumoto, *People*, 4.

There are several essential aspects that we need to acknowledge about culture as such. First, there are necessarily no hard and fast rules of how to determine what a culture is or who belongs to that culture. Very often that we tend to assume we know what culture is and all its relevant aspects. Certainly members of the same culture share psychological phenomena such as values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. That means members of different cultures indeed do not share the same psychological construct. Secondly, culture is not race, or necessarily rooted in biology.²⁵⁹ As Matsumoto argues, two members of the same race may share the same values and behaviours, or they can be totally different in their cultural constructs and emphasis. For example, two Samoans may have been born, and raised in Samoa, have shared the same socialisation processes and share similar attitudes towards Samoa. On the other hand, though they both share the same social upbringing, they may be disparate in their attitudes and beliefs about Samoa. Thirdly, culture is also not nationality.²⁶⁰ This means that although I am from Samoa and well versed with Samoan culture, for example, it does not necessarily mean that I will hold Samoan nationality. Moreover just as culture does not conform to race and racial stereotypes nor does it necessarily conform to a person's nationality and citizenship. These characteristics of culture may not necessarily be universally accepted as the norm but they certainly give some good indication as to what culture is considered to be in this research.

6.4.2 The Theological Dimension

Life is 'theological' when it is both experientially and existentially understood and oriented within the holistic perspective of God's creation and his salvation work for fallen humanity. In other words, the notion of life for the Samoans became a theological enterprise when it was recognised within the framework of the spiritual spheres of what I call '*Le Atua Kerisiano*' or the 'Christian God'. The Samoan milieu became a 'theological context' once it became a Christian nation, and its national motto states that clearly: "*E Fa'avae I Le Atua Samoa*" (Samoa is Founded on God). This presupposes the fact that the Samoan Constitution, national policies, and economic, social, ethical and moral activities, are to be created, shaped, and fashioned in accordance with the will of God and the Scriptural message. This religious aspect of Samoa is clearly stipulated in the preamble of the Constitution which states "Whereas the leaders of Samoa have declared that Samoa should be an Independent State

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 4

based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition”.²⁶¹ As far as the individual person is concerned, the gospel message is theological because it is concerned not only about the inner spiritual life of an individual, one’s spiritual experience, but also one’s eternal state.²⁶² Given this understanding of the perimeters of the theological dimension in this instance, it is implicit that I am reluctant to define the Samoans traditional religious beliefs as theological in the pure Christian connotation of the word. This is because I believe that ‘theology’ or ‘God-talk’ as the study of God is basically a Christian rendition of the belief in the monotheistic God of Israel and the Christians. It implicitly encompasses the Trinitarian nature of God, which is totally absent from the traditional polytheistic Samoan understanding of their *atua*. However, having said that, I will contend that although the Samoans were not Christians as such prior 1830, they did believe in their own ‘*atua*’ or gods.²⁶³

The *atua* in whom they believed had given them the sense of life, love, protection, power, security, sustenance, comfort, and mana just as God Yahweh did for Israel and the early Christians. In other words, God Almighty revealed Himself to the Samoans of the pre-Christian era on his own terms so long as the Samoans could comprehend life in their own culture and customs. Christianity for the Samoans after all, was observing and experiencing the revelation of their *atua* in a ‘new light’ within the confines of their own culture and traditions. The Samoans empirical reflection on their own milieu in the light of their Christian faith in fact initiates an articulation of their theological comprehension of the nuances of Christianity and the gospel message. This articulation process indeed can be effectively undertaken and formulated through thorough critical interpretational processes of the Samoan context.

The missionaries brought the Christian religion into an island nation, which for a long time had had its own traditional religious beliefs. These beliefs were centralised on the Samoans beliefs in their *atua* and *aitu*. Also, the people had had their own strong cultural values and norms, which were the controlling forces in their lives. However, Christianity as a religion has its own foundational belief in the Supreme God who is the Creator, Sustainer, Liberator, and the Almighty powerful Being. There are no other gods or any *aitu* at all. The

²⁶¹ *The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 7.

²⁶² Allan Tippet, *Introduction to Missiology* (California: William Carey Library, 1987), xxi.

²⁶³ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*. 35.

emulation of Christianity by the Samoans through the slow process of adaptation and accommodation has been a continuing task over a long time since the first missionaries arrived. The question is, why did the Samoans accept and try to imitate Christianity in the first place whilst they had their own religion, which was very strong and distinctive at the time. Furthermore, if they believed at the time that their *atua* were supportive and protective of themselves at their times of need, why turn to the God of the missionaries? They were already advantaged at the time because they had not only a superior *atua*, but also were aided by their multitude of *aitu* and other similar spiritual beings.

I contend that one of the reasons for the quick and prompt acceptance of Christianity by Samoans was the distinctive nature and the attendant circumstances surrounding the Christian religion at the time. First, the persuasive nature of the missionaries' approach to mission, and the spiritual integrity and dignity of the salvation message which the gospel proclaimed, were the major factors. While the missionaries preached on the power of the heavenly God who created the heavens and the earth, the Samoans psychologically wrestled within themselves, making linkages to their own religious beliefs in their *atua Tagaloa* who resided in the ninth heaven. In fact they had realised some congruencies of the God of the missionaries and their own. The aspects of the 'unseen God' who was 'isolated and resided in the heavens', and the notion of 'God being the creator of all things' seemed to be evidence of such similarities between the two. Given these closely related understandings of the two Gods in question, Samoans rapidly grasped the essence of the missionaries' religion.

Secondly, the Samoans also vigorously made connections between the newly-proclaimed religion and their hope and expectations for the long-delayed fulfilment of the Nafanua prophecy from the past. It was a coincidence at the time of the arrival of the missionaries when the Samoan milieu had been in the state of civil war and social upheaval²⁶⁴ due to seeking political and social power of Tamafaiga, the relative of Malietoa who received the early missionaries and the gospel, and other high chiefs of the time. In the spirit of the time, there was the urgent need for civil stability and social order; political and social leadership was in dire need because of internal problems. Thus the sense of peace and harmony in the island nation²⁶⁵ after the death of Tamafaiga had been promising, though brief, and interpreted optimistically as the impact of the Christian religion on the context at

²⁶⁴ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 56.

²⁶⁵ Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 1.

the time. The death of such a fearful man was actually a hopeful stepping-stone towards consolidating the people.

6.5 CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN CULTURAL-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS

Some scholars²⁶⁶ have argued that the main reason for the Samoans acceptance of Christianity, replacing their traditional religious convictions, was purely because of their desire for wealth and material goods possessed by the early missionaries. Sharon Tiffany refers to some of these perceptions and says,

A host of factors, including the nature of indigenous religious organization and the Samoan desire for western goods, contributed to the acceptance of Christianity...several writers suggested that the absence of a priestly hierarchy and the localisation of village and household deities under chiefly protection provided favourable conditions for the acceptance of Christianity, which was accompanied by little social disruption, as contrasted to the experiences of Hawaii and Tahiti. Religion in precontact Samoa was not everything, and the new opportunities for status enhancement and acquisition of material wealth made available through the missionary presence encouraged chiefly acceptance of new religious doctrines and practices.²⁶⁷

This may have been the case at the time. The natural instinctive reaction and attitude of the Samoans towards these new objects brought by the LMS *papalagi* was to have them in their possession for good. In this situation it was inevitable as the *papalagi* goods were attractive and very tempting for the local people. Naturally attractiveness of *mea fou* or things and objects that were new and strange to the Samoans raised curiosity and a sense of inquisitiveness as to what these things really meant.

Moreover, as indicated above, it could be considered that by the time the first official missionaries arrived, the Samoans had been exposed much earlier to another version of Christianity through the work of the Samoan, Sio Vili²⁶⁸ or Joe Gimblet. According to records by John Williams²⁶⁹ he was very effective in his cultic work and many Samoans followed his

²⁶⁶ E.g. Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", 250.

²⁶⁷ Sharon W. Tiffany, "The politics of denominational organization in Samoa", in *Mission Church and Sect in Oceania* (London: University Press of America, 1978), 428-429.

²⁶⁸ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*; Tiffany, "The politics of denominational organization in Samoa" 427-428; see also Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 77-78.

²⁶⁹ Amaama Tofaeono cites from John Williams missionary works manuscripts. See Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 77.

preachings, at least in the short term, as he was a very talented speaker and possessed a charismatic persona. Also, contemporary to Siovili were some earlier *papalagi* traders and beachcombers who actually practised their interpretation of Christian faith during their stay in Samoa. Therefore, having such a background of mixture of religious cults in addition to the primitive Samoan gods, I argue that there would have been uncertainty, curiosity, and a sense of mixed feelings amongst the Samoans about the ‘truth’ in these early forms of religion. Thus, it is certain that there was that inner urge to search for new religious explanations for that truth.²⁷⁰ In other words, the launching of the religion of the missionaries during such a period of religious dilemma was recognised by the locals as a new form and a new version of the explanation of that truth – the Triune God, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit – which had been imprecisely expressed by the early *papalagi* settlers and traders, as well as by Siovili.

Truth, or true religion, for the Samoans at the time was very much related to the actual physical appearance of material things, which tended to work for the benefit of the people and was somehow connected to the conception of ‘power’, ‘authority’, and ‘social unity’ as experienced within the village, district, and the national social settings of the time. Thus truth in this regard was very much related to the religion that was powerful and catered for the everyday immediate needs of the people, one that had the authority over all people in all matters of life and that which could bring all people together at any time when needed.

Moreover, the people’s perception of the God they preferred was that of an existential realist God, a God who could somehow fight for them in times of war, and One who could protect them from dangers of the wars. In the age of wars waged by one village or district against another, acquisition of power and honour seemed to have been the dominating ideology and aspiration of the time. Wars between the villages and districts had been triggered by the search for power and genealogical allies, which focused on attaining traditional honour, dignity and economic prosperity. One of the ways these villages attempted to consolidate victory and power through these traditional wars was by engaging their ‘gods of wars’ who were the intermediaries between the people and Tagaloa, their supreme god of the time. For example, as mentioned earlier, Nafanua²⁷¹ was one of these gods and goddesses who stood for the Samoans at the times of wars. This was the evidence of the truth for which the Samoans

²⁷⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 52-53.

²⁷¹ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 16-18; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 52.

were looking for at the time. They sought power, honour, and dignity as part of their life reality.

6.5.1 *Tapuaiga*

The Samoan LMS Church always strived for worship or *tapuaiga* to be conducted in the Samoan way, with regards to its language, symbols, rituals and rites of passages, so that the local people could understand. This became one of the unique characteristics of the Samoan Church right from its beginning. Silence, and acknowledging the sense of awe in *tapua'iga*, became the marked characteristics of the Samoan Christian worship, thus it is called the *tapua'iga filemu*²⁷² or 'silent worship'. While this had been the urgent need of the locals for their religion, the missionaries on the other hand were of course in the process of learning the mother tongue well in order to be competent in conducting their ministry of preaching and teaching amongst the locals. The undergirding theological perception of silence in worship is so that the Samoan *mauli* or the inner soul of the person may leap in faith, seeking the majestic spirit of God for comfort, protection, support, and peace of heart.

The concept of silence has an important function in the Samoan *tapua'iga* as it provides a moment of peace and the environment of quietness in the immediate surroundings of the *tagata tapua'i*, the worshipper. That peaceful moment enables one's *mauli* and soul to connect directly to the otherness of God. Once united with God, the act of *tapuaiga* will ensue with honesty, sincerity and faith, and the hope that God will respond affirmatively to the demands of the worshipper's soul. Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa²⁷³ suggests that the closest equivalent in the English language to *mauli* is the psyche. My opinion, however, is that psyche has more to do with the thinking faculty of the human person, which is perhaps just a minor proportion of what *mauli* really means in Samoan.

The significant role and function of the *mauli* for the Samoans is *tapua'i* or to worship, which is basically an attempt to make spiritual connection with God for another person or for a situation. *Tapua'i* is a reciprocal act of worship amongst members of the Samoan community where one pleads to God to provide good health and better livelihood for

²⁷² Peletisala Lima, "Silent Worship" (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 1999).

²⁷³ LeTagaloa, *Tapuai*, 48.

others. For Samoans the best way to carry out the leap of faith that was taught by the missionaries was to do it in the Samoan manner of *tapua'i*.²⁷⁴

It is clearly evident from this development of the Christian religion that the local people had been vigorously modifying and remodelling the earlier version of the missionary worship into a more meaningful and relevant manifestation for them – thus a contextual approach. In this respect therefore, I would argue that the Samoan LMS Church and its praxis has been the earliest and perhaps the first Samoan church denomination to have been contextualized and truly grounded in the Samoan religious ethos as such. I will dwell more on this worship praxis of the Samoan LMS Church and its contextualisation development in Chapter Eight.

6.5.2 *Feagaiga/Faifeau*

By the same process by which Christian worship was made an integral part of the religious life of the Samoan people, the Samoan concept of *feagaiga*, which is literally translated 'covenant', has been installed as the cultural emulation of the theological relationship between God and the Samoans, similar to God Yahweh's biblical relationship with his chosen people Israel in the Old Testament. *Feagaiga*²⁷⁵ or covenant refers to the sacred relationship between the brother and his sister within the family social life. It is the concept, which upholds the cultural depth of the interpersonal relationship between the brother and his sister within the milieu of Samoan family from the past to the present. The sister-brother relationship was and still is one of the most important Samoan concepts, which holds the balance within indigenous family life, hence the Samoan adage '*o le feagaiga o le pae ma le auli*' or 'the sister/covenant is the peace maker' in the Samoan family. It connotes the intrinsic role of the sister as the mediator who can figuratively iron out and solve any problem or differences in a family. Within the same covenantal relationship are special obligations on the part of the brother to perform to the highest standard he could reach. The

²⁷⁴ *Tapuai* is normally used as a verb meaning the act of worship or doing worship of God for the good of someone. *Tapua'iga* is the noun form of the word *tapua'i*. Sometimes *tapua'i* can be used as a noun depending on the context it is used. Today *Tapua'iga* refers to the worship of God, and sometimes, on the secular front, casually refers to an act of cheering for and supporting someone or a team competing in a sporting event.

²⁷⁵ Tuisuga-le-taui, "*Toifale* "Pregnancy Within The House". A Pastoral Care Concern for the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa", 35-37; see also Ete-Lima, "A Theology of The *Feagaiga*: A Samoan Theology of God", 24-31; Morgan Tuimalealiifano, *Samoans in Fiji* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa Extensions Centres of the University of the South Pacific., 1990), 42-43 Tuimaleali'ifano goes further into stipulating the equivalent Fijian concept *vasu* ; Aiono, *O le Fa'asinomaga*, 15-20.

sister's powers and rights were treated with special care for she had the cursing power capable of visiting upon her brother and his descendants sterility, illness, or even death.²⁷⁶

The reciprocity of *fa'aaloalo* or respect between the two parties (brother and sister) is very important in this relationship. This *fa'aaloalo* extends, but with diminishing intensity, to other female members of the *aigapotopoto* or the extended family of a male's own generation.²⁷⁷ The Samoan proverbial saying, "O le 'ioimata o le tuagane lona tuafafine" reiterates the true innate character of this relationship. It is literally translated as, "a sister is the pupil of her brother's eye". The saying indicates how sensitive and fragile this relationship is in the traditional perspective of the Samoans. Bradd Shore identifies five major aspects of this sister-brother relationship in Samoa as

The rendering of respectful service by the brother to his sister, whom he should serve at meals, eating only when she has finished; (2) avoidance of casual or light-hearted conversation, particularly when it includes bawdy banter or references to boy or girl friends; (3) rigid separation of sleeping quarters, the sister traditionally sleeping in the large fale tele 'round house'; (4) protection of the sister by the brother from the sexual aggressiveness of other boys, often to the extent of stoning or beating a would-be suitor caught with the girl (whether or not the girl herself wishes the interference) and severe disciplining of a sister who has been caught in a compromising situation with a lover; and (5) a mutual air of suspicion, sometimes bordering on hostility, that often accompanies any relationship of formalized 'respect'.²⁷⁸

Given these realities about the *feagaiga* concept, it is intrinsically clear that there existed, and still does, the sacredness and the sanctity of this brother-sister relationship within the *faasamoa*. It was this sacredness, which made it fundamentally important in the theological considerations of the Christian Church in Samoa in the past to adopt it as being the theological metaphor and/or symbol for the relationship between God and Samoa. Thus the personification of such a sacred relationship for the Samoan Church from the past to the present is embodied in the *faiifeau* or the Samoan Church minister. His calling to become the *faiifeau* for a local village congregation is ecclesiastically validated by creating a contract-like relationship between the congregation and the *faiifeau* through a ceremonial Church service

²⁷⁶ Richard P Gilson, "Samoan Descent Groups: A Structural Outline", *Journal of Polynesian Society* 72, no. 4, 375. Gilson also noted the declining value of this sister power today; Bradd Shore, "Incest Prohibitions and the Logic of Power in Samoa", *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 85, no. 2 (1976), 283. I do not think this is the real situation as they have claimed, but rather a different approach to it in this modern age of change. The authentic traditional power of the sister is still there but should be identified and analysed in the context of social changes in Samoa.

²⁷⁷ Shore, "Incest Prohibitions and the Logic of Power in Samoa" 283.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 283.

called *osiga-feagaiga*²⁷⁹ or making a covenant between the two parties. There are no legal obligations as such attached to this relationship, which is purely grounded on an ecclesiastical covenantal basis and on mutual understanding that the *faiifeau* will be the spiritual leader whilst the local congregation in return is responsible for the welfare and protection of the *faiifeau* and his family in all facets of his ministry.

The *faiifeau* symbolises the presence of God and his authority in the midst of his people, hence the Samoans sometimes referred to the *faiifeau* as ‘*o le sui va’aia o le Atua*’ (the physical representative or the personification of God), ‘*o le auaua a le Atua*’ (the servant of God), ‘*o le tama fa’ale-Agaga*’ (the spiritual father), ‘*o le fai lotu*’ (the ‘doer’ or ‘conductor’ of worship), ‘*o le Fa’afeagaiga-tau-lagi*’ (covenant for the heaven), amongst other cultural designations. I will explain more about this *faiifeau* and Church minister personality in the next chapter when considering Church leadership and the ordained ministry.

What is important to understand thus far is the propensity to adopt important Samoan cultural concepts in the praxis of the Christian Church, thus influencing the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context. Having attained such a high status in Samoan society, almost on a par with the honorary chiefs or *ali’i taua* of the Samoan community, the *faiifeau* thus becomes more or less an added power and a very influential voice within the Samoan community at all times. He is highly respected within Samoan society with immense power in his hands regarding many matters of the life-world of Samoans. However, his authority is basically confined within the spiritual spheres of people’s life and rarely encroaches on to the cultural aspects. But, nevertheless, there are times when the *fono a matai*, village chief’s council, would seek his opinion on social issues and other very important matters which the *fono* may decide they are not competent to deal with. Again it is a sign of the mutual relationship existing between the Samoan culture and the praxis of the Christian Church. Each party of the *feagaiga*, or the partnership between culture and gospel, has its own clear-cut roles and responsibilities to be executed efficiently and effectively. To Samoans, both partners support each other in their life diversities with a view to encouraging harmony, peace, and justice in the society.

²⁷⁹ The *osiga-feagaiga* concept is when the village congregation and the *faiifeau* committed themselves into a *feagaiga* or covenant in which then they are bonded to work together for the ministry of Jesus Christ until the death of the *faiifeau*. What is important for us at this point is the fact that this Samoan cultural phenomenon is the representation of the theological mutual partnership between the Church congregation and God, through His representative, the *faiifeau*.

6.5.3 *Tautua* (Service)

One may ask the question: how would the Samoans within this cultural- theological protocol '*feagaiga*' interpret the presuppositions of such a covenant? What are the assumptions behind this *feagaiga*, which make it a theologically viable institution for the contextualisation of Christianity within the Samoan context? For the first question, it has always been the backdrop of the Samoan religious ethos to honour *Le Atua* or God to the best of their ability by whatever ways and means they could. The most significant means of executing such a religious obligation is through their *tautua* or rendering service to the Church. *Tautua*²⁸⁰ is the Samoan traditional concept that embodies all performance, service, work, and activities undertaken by the Samoan people for the purpose of serving their *matai*, leaders, parents, guardians and especially the elderly people of the community. In the pre-Christian period, the same *tautua* was also rendered to Tagaloa, their *Atua*, but obviously in different forms. Acknowledging the fact that the *matai* is the *sui va'aia o le atua* or the personification and representative of god in the midst of one's family and village, the Samoans likewise provide that similar *tautua* to the *matai*. In philosophical terms, *tautua* is a means by which one can achieve *manuia o le Atua*, or God's blessings, which are traditionally believed to trickle down to his/her family and heirs in the future. This is the critical focus and premise of forward thinking of any Samoan of the past, today and in the future.

There are basically two different types or categories of *tautua*, classified according how each is performed within the *aiga* or the village. The first category comprises *tautua tuavae* or service executed by the legs. This refers to services rendered with distinction and integrity. *Tautua matavela* or service with burning face. It also reflects service mostly oriented in and from the kitchen preparing food for the *matai*; and *tautua toto* or service with blood, indicating service with true commitment, to the extent of being prepared to die for the *matai*. These are normally regarded as in the category of good service. The second category includes *tautua pa'o*, or service with noises, implying a service rendered without commitment and no sense of compassion for the *matai* and one's family; *tautua tuaupua* or service with talking back, implying a service rendered grudgingly with discontent, and mumblings, which

²⁸⁰ The concept *Tautua* is also explained in detail by Ama'ama Tofaeono in his book Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, see Appendix vi, 300; see also Le'apai Lau Asofou So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", in *Samoa National Human Development Report 2006*, ed. A So'o, et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2006), 157.

are classified as poor rendering of service in the *faasamoa*. In the process of choosing someone to be the *matai* of an *aiga*, the first category of *tautua* is naturally the preferred option, in addition to other criteria for the selection, such as being a potential heir to the *matai* title, appropriate age, possessing sufficient overall knowledge and wisdom to lead the family in village matters, a good reputation in all sectors of the village and community, and being a relatively wealthy person. However, the Samoans also say '*aua e te tautua fia matai*' which literally means 'do not serve in order to become a *matai* or chief of the family'. This refers to the deceitful attitude and cunning motive for carrying out one's service for the *matai*. Some *tautua* may not be sincere, but only performed to impress the family so that he/she can be voted in to be a *matai* or to become the successor to a *matai* title. For Samoans, such a dishonest approach to gaining a *matai* title may never succeed at all. It may turn out that such a dishonest insincere person could become a *matai*, but often only for a short period. If such a person ends up becoming a *matai* at some stage, he/she would definitely encounter rejection from some quarters of his family, no one would trust him and his role as a *matai* within the village and the Church circles would only be illusional. Samoans sometimes become philosophical about these things and they believe that *tautua* should be a total life commitment, performed with the pure motive of contributing to the betterment of the family at all times. In other words *tautua* is a sacred reality of life, which not only legitimises one's existence within the Samoan family and community but also is the educational forum whereby a true Samoan shall become acquainted with the *faasamoa* and learn how to live like a Samoan. If someone becomes a *matai* through the Samoan notion of *tautua fia matai*, the Samoans will say that he/she will reap the bad fruits of his poor service in the future. In short, *tautua* embodies true love and compassion for one's family and for the *matai* who is in charge of the family. It is very much a sanctified philosophical concept contributing to the dynamics of the Samoan cultural milieu at the present time, and determines one's destiny in the future.

In the Christian era, *tautua* still continues as it was in the past, with some relevant modifications, which have occurred over time. *Tautua* can be performed and implemented not only from within the immediate surroundings of the recipient but also from afar. It can be performed through the use of tangible goods and services, or in the form of moral support and of prayer to God, seeking his protection and provisions for the livelihood of the family elderly and *matai*. It can be said that *tautua* can be implemented at a horizontal direction at the human level towards one's superiors and appropriate relatives to whom it is due, as well as vertically towards God residing in heaven.

6.5.4 *Manuia o le Atua* (God's blessings)

The notion of *tautua* is most often used simultaneously with, and in relation to, the concept '*o manuia o le Atua*', sometimes referred to as '*o fa'amanuiaga*'. The former literally means the blessings of God whilst the latter means the blessings. It is always believed that the fruits of one's *tautua* are the reaping of God's blessings through various means. The more good service one renders for the family and the *matai*, the more blessings he/she will enjoy in physical terms as well as spiritually. It is spiritual because these blessings are hard to identify, as they may be intangible, but are well ingrained in the hearts of the people. Some untitled people are very keen to offer their *tautua* without any intention of becoming a *matai* in the future. These people are quite happy 'to serve and not to be served' as they would rather be the recipients of '*o manuia o le Atua*' through their service. Some also believe that their call as Samoans is to serve and support their *matai* and family in whatever way they could afford. Again the fruits of their works may be phenomenal as this *fa'amanuiaga* or reapings of their *tautua* may trickle down to their children and grandchildren, the future generations.

Interestingly, *tautua* and its ramifications have unconsciously seeped through to the Christian way of life not only in the Church sphere but also within the realm of the Samoan family. Thus the Christian approach to all facets of the Church life has been conditioned by this Samoan mindset and the notion of *tautua*. The normal traditional *tautua* or service for the *matai* is now having an added dimension of '*tautua i le Atua ma lona finagalo*' or service to God and his will. What used to be traditionally done for the *matai*, labelled as *tautua* now is carried out for the Church, and can be seen as the physical embodiment of the works of the gospel present amongst the Samoans.

So far I have dwelt with the exposition of the general Samoan context in this Christian era, indicating a significant number of changes and developments of the context itself in terms of its cultural–theological identity. Many of these changes have been highlighted within the realm of the general Samoan milieu. The next three chapters will focus on in-depth discussion and hermeneutical analysis of the dynamics of the praxis of the EFKS in three distinct areas of its ministry, namely, Church government and leadership, Church ministry and services, and the relationship between the Church and the state.

PART FOUR

‘CULTURAL-THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS’ OF THE *EKALESIA FA’APOTOPOTOGA KERISIANO SAMOA* (EFKS)

CHAPTER SEVEN

HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL - THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND LEADERSHIP

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This part of the study will engage in the hermeneutical analysis of the ‘cultural-theological praxis’ of the *Ekalesia Fa’apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS), using the *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* model, particularly in the three dimensions of its overall ministry namely, Church Government and Leadership in this chapter, and Church Service and Church and State in the next two chapters.

The EFKS as a Church is like any other Church denomination or organisation with regards to its structure, methods and style of governance, having a specific philosophy and purpose, unity, cohesiveness, guiding principles, regulations and policies. It is also important that the people who are gathered under the banner of the Church have to be aware that it is also a spiritual and a religious institution comprising a group of people coming together for a

specific purpose under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The biblical and theological basis of the EFKS²⁸¹ as a Congregational Church is derived from Jesus' teaching:

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.²⁸²

Moreover, significant considerations have been given in determining the overall principles of governance appropriate and relevant for Congregationalism since its beginning in England in the sixteenth century. According to Albert Goodrich²⁸³ there are three distinguishing principles of Congregationalism namely,

1. That the person composing a Church should be a sincere Christian believer. The Episcopal Church really makes no such requirement. The Presbyterian are for the most part are less positive in such requirement.
2. That all Church members have the right, and upon them lies the duty of taking part in the government and welfare of the Church; the Church is Congregational
3. That no body, civil, or ecclesiastic, outside of a particular Church, has the right to revise the decisions of that Church; there is no appeal; the Church is independent of external control.²⁸⁴

These are the clear guidelines upon which the early Congregational churches were supposed to be built, and all other Congregational Church groups born out of it later must follow them faithfully. Congregationalism is the fourth form of Church polity²⁸⁵ which arose originally from the Non-conformist religious movement in England during the Puritan reformation. The other three are the Papal, which is the polity of the Roman Catholic, the Episcopal, typical of the English Church; and the Presbyterian, where the government of the Church is not vested in the clergy nor in the people but in a Presbytery, a certain elected body, with the pastor.²⁸⁶ One of Congregationalism's marked characteristics is the autonomy of the local church, where decisions can be made without interference from any external force other

²⁸¹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 5.

²⁸² Matthew 18: 19 – 20 (NRSV); see also Ibid., 5.

²⁸³ Goodrich, *A Primer of Congregationalism.*, 95-96

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 95-96.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 95-96.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 95.

than the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁸⁷ Its object is to “seek democratic life and organization, simplicity and vitality of faith, intellectual freedom to follow the dictates of conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit, educational quality, evangelistic purpose, missionary zeal, social passion, non-sectarian fellowship, and unselfish devotion to the kingdom of God”²⁸⁸. Hence, the EFKS as a Church born in the early nineteenth century in the Pacific falls within the framework of Congregationalist ethos worldwide, with a clear mission in mind as revealed in its mission statement.²⁸⁹

That she represents God to men in its testimony and loving service to people, and may all its words and actions be a way to draw God’s Holy Love to people; and

The Church also represents the world before God through its prayers of confession, intercession and thanksgiving.

Such a mission is perceived by the Church to be fulfilled within its spiritual scope and the points are to be implemented in an organized fashion, which is critically sensitive to Samoan culture and context, hence ‘contextualisation’.²⁹⁰ Thus this chapter aims at exploring the EFKS structure and governance as a Church and how it is operated as the third domain of the cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan society namely, Church Government and Leadership

7.1 EKALESIA FA’APOTOPOTOGA KERISIANO SAMOA CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The title ‘Church Government’ in this section at first glance prompts several perceptions and implications. On one hand it may refer to the structure and the organisation of the EFKS, as well as its various associated committees, which is certainly a huge and a complex phenomenon. On the other hand, it may also refer to the actual manifestation of the power of those in leadership positions of the Church at all levels, from the local to the

²⁸⁷ *Congregationalism* (Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia, 2009 [accessed August 2009]); available from <http://au.encarta.msn.com> 1.

²⁸⁸ Leslie R. Shultz, *CONGREGATIONALISM: A Statement of Explanation and Purpose* (Arena Congregational Church, 2009 [accessed August 2009]); available from http://www.lesandhelga.com/cong_ism.html.

²⁸⁹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 9-10, Part IV.

²⁹⁰ I am adopting this terminology rather than other similar words such as ‘inculturation’ and ‘indigenisation’ as used by some other theologians. I adhere to Stephen Bevan’s understanding and usage of the term ‘contextualisation’ in Steven B. SVD Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 21.

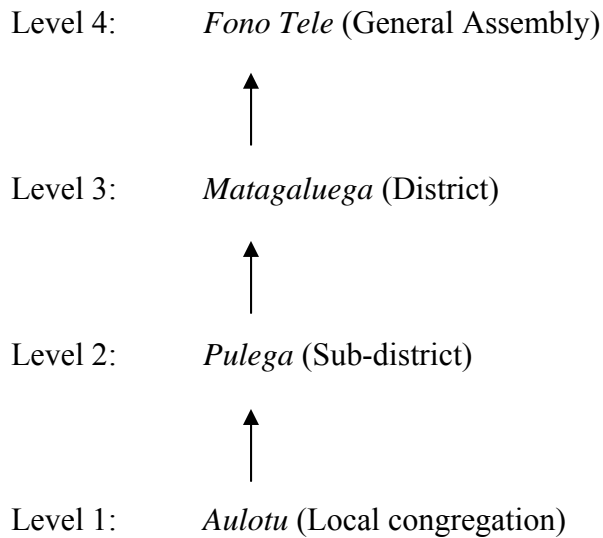
national mother Church. This entails the processes of officiating at sacraments and ordination, as well as preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and the implementation of catechisms for the faithful. This study takes the standpoint that although these two dimensions of the Church as a religious institution seem diverse, they converge under the overall sphere of Church government in general, reflecting the breadth of scope of the Church.

In this section I will focus specifically on the dynamics of such convergence in the Church structure, organisation, and administration of the Samoan Church as a whole. In practice, of course, what happens at the level of the national Church central administration, the EFKS, tends to affect each *aulotu*, the local congregation in the village. However, I will begin by looking at the dynamics of Church government within the traditional village or the Samoan local community in which the *aulotu* is situated, because I believe that it is at this level of the structure and the praxis of the Samoan Church that the cultural governing traditions and practices are encountered, and also at which such cultural components are propagated dynamically by the EFKS. Moreover, this is where the actual process of contextualisation of the praxis of the Church is in its most vibrant form. Congregationalism as a denomination places considerable emphasis on ‘bottom up’ direction of leadership. This ensures that the grass roots level of organisation, the village Church, must always be recognised as the power base of the whole institution and that the individual churches contribute in various ways in making all decisions of the centralised or national Church. Given the nature of Congregationalism to which the EFKS affiliates, and the spiritual philosophy of the EFKS, it is essential that the local *aulotu* be the beginning point of discussion in this chapter.

7.1.1 Church Order, Structure, and Organization

There are four levels of the EFKS hierarchical structure. These are the *aulotu* (local congregation), *Pulega* (sub-district), *Matagaluega* (district), and the *Fono Tele* or the General Assembly), from the bottom to the top. The hierarchical order of the EFKS as a Church organization is briefly summarised in the diagram below:

Figure One: Hierarchy of EFKS Organisation



The *Aulotu* is basically the local congregation in the village in Samoa, and in a town or city for overseas congregations outside Samoa. There are 347 *aulotu* in total, including all those outside Samoa.²⁹¹ *Aulotu* comprises of *tagata lotu*²⁹² (Church goers), *tagata ekalesia*²⁹³ (congregants), *tiakono*²⁹⁴ (deacon), *A'oa'o fesoasoani*²⁹⁵ (lay-preacher), and the *faiifeau*, or Church minister, at the top. The *faiifeau* is the head of this lower sub-group of the EFKS, and he leads the *aulotu* in all matters, especially those involving the spiritual and pastoral dynamics of the Church. There are no female *faiifeau* in the EFKS. In most cases, the *faiifeau* will be in the forefront of all the *aulotu* activities, including, of course, the physical dimension of the Church ministry. Normally he conducts all Church meetings and is in charge of all worship services. He represents the *aulotu* in the meetings of all the *faiifeau* of the *Pulega* and *Matagaluega*.

What I have elaborated above is very much the reality of the *aulotu* organisation of today, the modern Samoa, which is not much different from that of the early periods of the

²⁹¹ Statistics supplied by the EFKS Central Office in Samoa, 11 September 2009; See Appendix iv.

²⁹² EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 5.

²⁹³ Ibid., 5-6.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 11.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 11.

Church with regards to its structure. However the cultural content of this structure was perhaps more obvious fifty years ago. The Samoan cultural philosophical impetus for Church governance and leadership is embedded in the Samoan saying, *E va'ava'alua le Talalelei ma le aganu'u* (gospel and culture always go hand in hand). I will elaborate on this Samoan adage later in this chapter. Such mutual relationship between the two institutions has been in place since the acceptance of Christianity by the *matai* and people of Samoa in the early nineteenth century.

The appointment of *A'oa'o Fesoasoani* was not by examination in the past as is the practice today, but rather candidates were selected from the elite of the *aulotu* and *nu'u* or Samoan village irrespective of whether or not they are competent to do the work. The elite in this respect are the *tamali'i* or high chiefs and the *tulafale taua* or the main orator(s) of the village.²⁹⁶ The *Faifeau* selected these people based on their status and rank in the village structure. The rationale behind this leadership strategy was basically for easy and efficient running of the *aulotu* in all matters. In village politics, these individuals had the trust and confidence of their congregation and, more importantly, they were the most influential authority in the village congregation. The decision-making process for the *aulotu* is very similar indeed to that in village government. If the *aulotu* government is organised differently from that of the village structure, there would be a lot of conflict amongst members of the *nu'u* and *aulotu*, and the *faifeau's* role in relation to the *aulotu* would be highly difficult to perform, if not impossible. Selection is usually according to the length of their service as *tiakono*, and a character reference.²⁹⁷

The *Pulega* level is made up of several *aulotu* situated within close proximity of each other. In Samoa these *aulotu* are usually located within the traditional Samoan district. Similarly, the congregations outside Samoa are grouped to form a *Pulega* in accordance with their proximity of each other within a geographical location, town or city. The *Faifeau Toeaina*²⁹⁸ who is normally elected from amongst *faifeau* of the *Pulega* is the administrative leader and the spiritual father of the *Pulega*. He must be an ordained *faifeau* who is looking

²⁹⁶ Conversation with Rev. Iakopo Pesaleli, 19 Sept. 2009.

²⁹⁷ EFKS, *Tusi o I'ugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952-1978*, ed. EFKS, trans. Malua Printing Press, *Komiti Au Toeaina* (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1979), No 5(e), 3.

²⁹⁸ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 9, 39-40; see also EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 18, Part IV.

after an *aulotu* within the same *Pulega*.²⁹⁹ He is usually the senior *faifeau* who gains the trust of the group in his leadership and administrative skills.

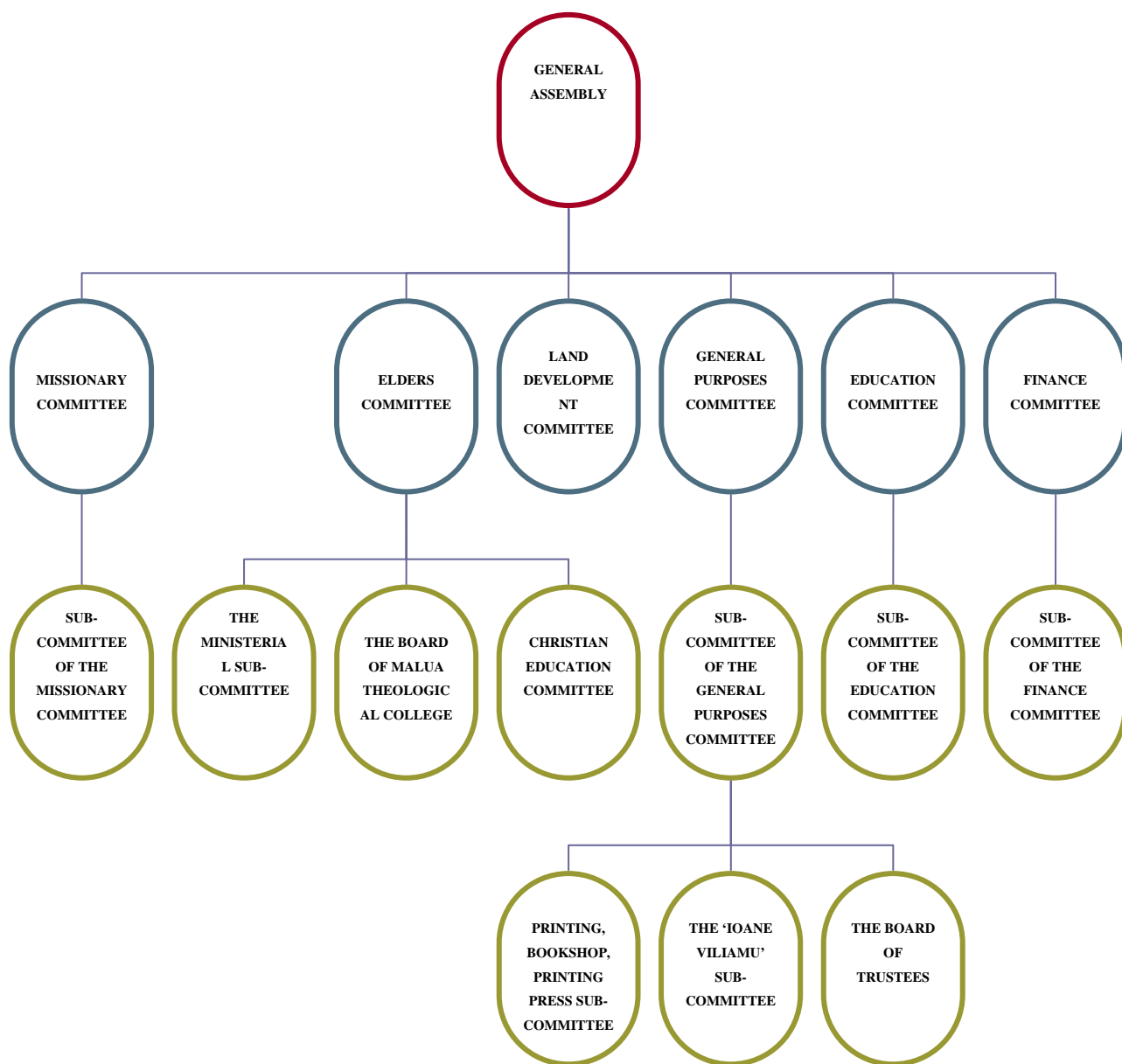
The *Matagaluega* comprises two or more *Pulega* or Subdistricts; and the *Pulega* consists of various local congregations, which are located within a particular geographical area in Samoa or overseas. In total, there are 17 *Matagaluega* for the EFKS, in Samoa and abroad.³⁰⁰ Theoretically, the leadership of the *Matagaluega* lies in the collaborated effort of all *Toeaina* within the *Matagaluega*. They normally choose amongst themselves the *Komiti Fa'atonu* who practically becomes the senior leader for the *Matagaluega*.

The foundational order and structure of the *Fono Tele* and its administrative organization according to its Constitution is illustrated in the diagram below **(Figure Two)** - [see next page 143]

²⁹⁹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 9, 39-40; see also EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*.

³⁰⁰ Information and statistics supplied by the EFKS Central office, 11 September 2009.

Figure Two: Constitutional Structure of *Fono Tele* (General Assembly) of EFKS³⁰¹



³⁰¹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 3.

Apart from Jesus Christ, the Supreme Head of the Christian Church, the highest authority of the EFKS is the ‘*Fono Tele*’ or The General Assembly³⁰², which meets annually in the month of May at the Church headquarters at Malua. The *Fono Tele* is the ultimate forum whereby all Church decisions and resolutions relating to all spheres of its administration are discussed and finalised. The participants of the *Fono Tele* are representatives from each ‘*Matagaluega*’ or district, and members of all six major Church committees (Missionary Committee, Elders Committee, General Purposes Committee, Education Committee, Land Development Committee, and Finance Committee); there are also representative of the Women’s Fellowship; and representatives from other minor Church bodies like the Christian Endeavours, the Watcher’s Prayer Union, Christian Education, Malua Theological College, retired elder ministers, retired ministers, and representatives from missionary churches (Fiji and American Samoa) abroad. Allocations of these representatives are clearly stipulated in the Constitution of the EFKS.³⁰³

7.1.2 Women’s Fellowship

There is one other important body of the *Fono Tele* of the EFKS that needs special mention in this section despite its absence from the above structure, as it is pragmatically the most powerful supporting hand for the EFKS. This is the Women’s Fellowship or *Mafutaga a Tina*³⁰⁴. It is interesting the way the *Mafutaga Tina* operates within the scope of the EFKS’s governance and leadership. What needs to be remembered is that EFKS has still not allowed women to be ordained in the Church’s ministry. The whole of the EFKS order and structure is fashioned on the understanding that women are not permitted to be ordained and work as Church ministers in the EFKS. However, the Constitution has clearly acknowledged the *Mafutaga Tina* organization as one of the ‘societies assisting the ministry’³⁰⁵ of the Church. Only a brief explanation as to how such assistance has to be implemented in the Church is given. According to the Constitution, the Women’s Fellowship is one of the active segments, which is working strongly within the Church circle to promote Christian conduct in families,

³⁰² *O le Fa'avae O le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa: The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa*, (May 2001), 19.

³⁰³ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 20.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 11.

congregations and the whole Church. They have become strong supporters of the Church's mission in areas of worship, promotion of moral life, and carrying out of good service for others. The Women themselves continue to administer their own affairs through consolidating the appointments of personnel for the Fellowship as is the case within the Districts, Sub-Districts and each Congregation.³⁰⁶

First, this is another classic example of aligning Church order with traditional Samoan village order, as the appointment of officers of the Fellowship is similar to those of the *Pulega* and *Matagaluega*. Secondly, the perception is implicit from the Constitution that the *Mafutaga Tina* is somewhat independent from the actual administrative body of the EFKS, that is, it is only a supporting society for the ministry. This in fact echoes the traditional social structure in the village realm where the women's circles affairs are independent from the main Church activities and it offers a supporting hand for the *Saofa'iga Matai* circle, although it is always subject to the authority of the *Matai*. The difference is that in the traditional village set-up, women are never precluded from becoming *matai* and may participate as members of the *Saofaigaa Matai* circle, whereas in the EFKS, women are not permitted to become *fai'feau*. This has been the Church's tradition from the past and still is today. Why is there such a significant difference? How did this situation of the non-ordination of women arise in the EFKS, when its structure and order is aligned with the *fa'asamoa* in the village? These are some of the questions that have been hammering the EFKS's governance and leadership in the last few decades when the issue of ordination of women emerged throughout the Christian world.³⁰⁷ It is clear in my mind that the issue of the non-ordination for women in the EFKS is not a contextual phenomenon but rather a foreign ideology, originating from the background context of the early missionaries who brought the gospel to Samoa in the first place. However, when the EFKS leadership attempts to respond to these questions they seem unsure of themselves and ironically point to the *fa'asamoa* as the source of the problem'. As a defence for the EFKS status quo relating to the non-ordination of women, they point to the Church tradition from the past as the guideline for the Church policy. Sometimes they

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 11-12.

³⁰⁷ Marie Ropeti, "A Biblical Basis for the Ordination of Women in the Pacific Churches", in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania*, ed. L. Johnson and J. A. Filemoni-Tofaeono (Suva: SPATS & USP, 2003), 133 – 139; Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono, "A Reflection on Luke 10:18-42 Marthya: Her Meneutic of His Story", in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania*, ed. Lydia Johnson and Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono (Suva: south Pacific Association Theological Schools & USP, 2003); Ropeti, "A Biblical Basis for the Ordination of Women in the Pacific Churches" 108-132. where reference is made to this non-ordination for women dilemma in the Church in Samoa.

contradict themselves with the *fa'asamoa* when they say the role of women in the *fa'asamoa* is to help and support the husband, thus encouraging the subservient role of the *faletua*, the *faiifeau*'s wife in Samoa.³⁰⁸ However, traditional history of Samoa portrays the opposite, as women such as Nafanua and Salamasina were genuine Samoan leaders, warriors, goddesses, prophetesses, *Tafa'ifa*,³⁰⁹ and paramount chiefs of Samoa in the past. All in all, it must be clear that the *fa'asamoa* definitely allows women to any level of leadership in Samoa, but the EFKS does not. The continuing challenge for the EFKS with regards to this dimension of its leadership is: why are women not permitted to be ordained?

In relation to Womens Fellowship leadership at the local Church level, problems have arisen in that traditional cultural leadership structure and dynamics within the village has been translated into the leadership organisation of women in the Church. To a great extent such leadership dynamics usually involve dominance of some women over the others, which contradicts Christian principles and values. *Faiifeau* are aware of this tendency and some have been very upfront in eradicating such a mindset, and openly advocate true Christian expectations of women's relationships and interaction in the Church circles. Participant A reflects on his experience in his ministry relating to this issue when he said:

O le isi mea o le culture faalenuu ae ua aumai i totonu o le lotu, ma uphold e tagata o le lotu. O le tasi lea battle sa iai, ... o le example o le omai o le mafutaga a tina ma aumai e peiseai e lua itu. Ona omai loa lea aumai fai ai foi i totonu o le mafutaga a tina. Ona ou fai atu lea iai "E leai la, o totonu lava o le lotu e tasi lava le ta'u o le mafutaga a tina. O le faigata foi la le tulaga lena e le faigofie. Aua foi o le isi vaega ua faaaloalo tele i le isi vaega, e tiga lava ona iai manatu lelei e tataua ona faaali ae ua lolo lava ona o le faaaloalo lea."³¹⁰

(Another problem is the village culture that people have brought into the Church and some have upheld them. This was one of the battles [in my ministry]...for example the women attended their fellowship as if it is made up of two groups. They brought such [village culture] understanding and translated it into the Church's women's fellowship. Then I told them, "No, in the Church there is only one group called *Mafutaga Tina* (Women's Fellowship)". And that was hard, because one group would respect and honour

³⁰⁸ Some interesting Samoan perceptions of why the women should not be *faiifeau* are well stated by Marie Ropeti at the beginning of her article, Ropeti, "A Biblical Basis for the Ordination of Women in the Pacific Churches" 133. See also Lusa F. Tuautu, "O le Tulaga o Fafine i le Tusi Paia", in *O Faifaiva ma o latou Upega*, ed. Matagaluega Apia i Sasa'e (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1997), 43-47. There are also some Samoan women who do not subscribe to the notion of ordination of women in the Church. They believe it is not yet time for such a move by the Church. See Fereita L. Vui, "Pe tataua ona avea fafine ma *faiifeau*?" in *O Faifaiva ma o latou Upega*, ed. Matagaluega Apia i Sasa'e (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1997), 56-59.

³⁰⁹ *Tafa'ifa* is the paramount Samoan title bestowed on an individual who holds four of the highest titles or *Papa*. In the past, Salamasina, a woman, was actually a *Tafa'ifa*. See Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 32.

³¹⁰ Interview with Participant A, February 2008.

the other. Thus in their deliberations some women with good ideas would never have a chance to speak because they respect the others.)

In many situations, Women's Fellowship at the local level is well organised and with good leadership controls. In others, their gatherings have become arenas for exercising power, authority and dominance of some, usually the minority, over the others. In my opinion, the Church should never encourage such forms of oppression of women, but seek to emancipate them at all levels of the Church structure. Sometimes the women involved may themselves not really be conscious of the oppression occurring within their Fellowship group, and need to be helped to overcome it .

7.1.3 The Impression of EFKS Church Government

It has always been the belief among the Church members of the EFKS that as a Church it is supposedly 'congregational' in its polity. However, this may not be true in the way the EFKS operates and is governed at the moment. A critical evaluation and analysis of its current polity indicate that its working ethos is Congregational while its government and practice is somewhat in line with Presbyterianism. It is Congregational in its philosophical outlook in that each local Church or congregation selects its own *faiifeau*, and each is autonomous to some extent in its authority and operations. The selection of the *faiifeau* as mentioned earlier, is solely the prerogative of the local congregation,³¹¹ and they also have the power to dismiss him when they think necessary, in addition to the *Fono Tele*'s authority to expel him for disciplinary reasons. However, there have been some situations in the EFKS where a local congregation has attempted to remove its *faiifeau* for what they thought were sufficient reasons but the *faiifeau toeaina* of the *Pulega* in which the local congregation was situated did not agree. On the other hand, there has also been a case when the *Fono Tele*, through the *Komiti Au Toeaina*, removed the *faiifeau* from his congregation due to non-conformity to Church policy, but the congregation refused to agree.³¹² In these instances, while there were differences between the village congregation and the *Fono Tele* in matters

³¹¹ EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, 17-18.

³¹² EFKS, *Tusi Iugafono Au Toeaina 1995 - 2007*, vol. 3 (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2008), KAT97/89, 181-182. This was the case where the *faiifeau* in a local Church was alleged to have misappropriated the congregation's money for a use contrary to the lending policies of the Church. The village originally brought the matter to Church leadership's attention but later withdraw it and wanted to retain their *faiifeau*. Despite the village's pressure to keep their *faiifeau*, the *Fono Tele* through the *Komiti Au Toeaina* eventually dismissed the incumbent *faiifeau* at the time and the congregation eventually appointed a new *faiifeau*.

relating to ecclesiastical policies and principles, there is always a need for balance. At times the *Fono Tele* insists on delivering justice for both sides - the *faifeau* and the congregation in a 'fatherly manner'. However, the congregation normally argues that the *Komiti Au Toeaina* has mishandled the matter, thus causing confusion amongst Church members and, sadly, compelling some members to dissociate themselves from the EFKS.

The EFKS Church government and organisation is Presbyterian because it reflects close resemblance to the Presbyterian organisation model where Church authority is vested not in individuals, nor the local congregation, but in representative bodies comprising of *Aulotu* or village congregation, the *Pulega* or sub-districts, *Matagaluega* or districts, and the *Fono Tele*. Similarly, the Presbyterian organisation model is made up of the Session, which is the local congregation, the Presbytery or the higher assembly of elders, the Synod, that is the group of Presbyteries, and the supreme authority, the General Assembly comprising the nationwide Synods.³¹³ I have illustrated the respective organisation of the two denominations in **Figures Three and Four** in the next two pages, for a better assessment of the similarities and differences between them.

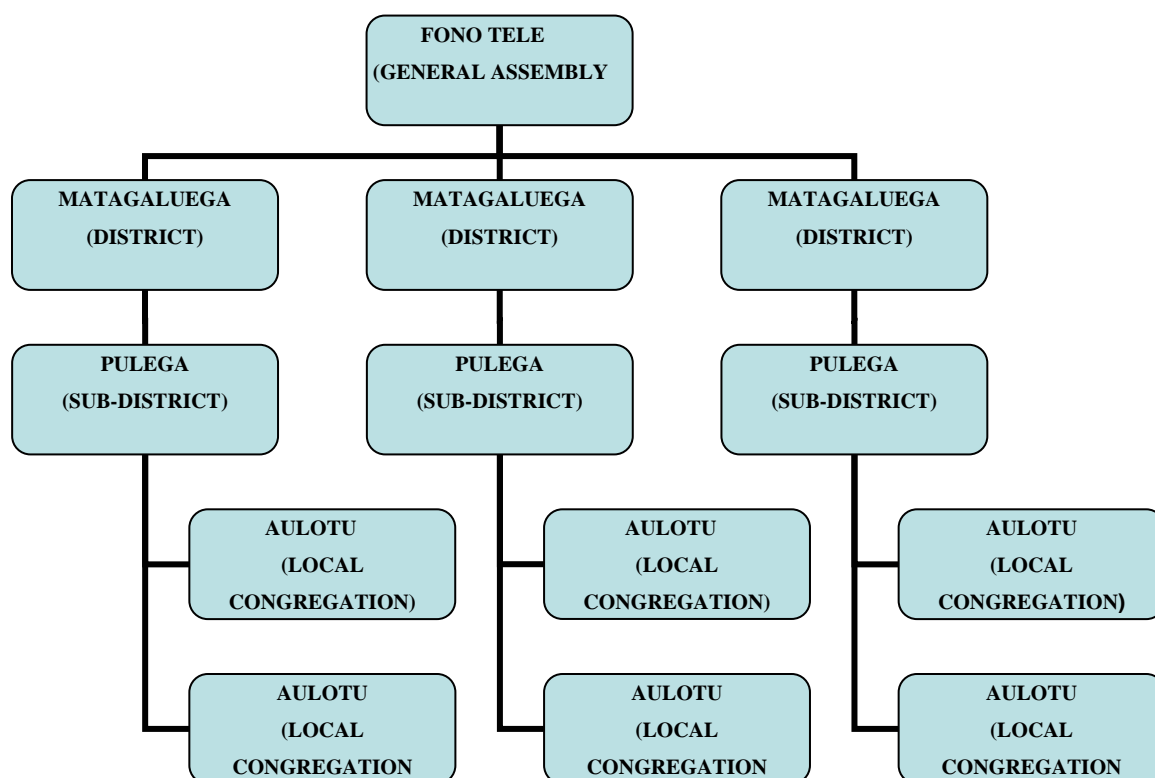
Figure Four illustrates my view of the Presbyterian denomination and its organisation. This structure, I believe, has a bearing on the creation of the *Komiti Au Toeaina* or the Elders Committee, in the EFKS structure. Presbyterian churches are characterized by a representational form of Church government, in which authority is given to elected laypersons known as elders. The word *presbyterian* comes from the Greek word *πρεσβυτέριον* (presbyterion) or group of elders (from the Greek word *πρεσβύτερος* (presbyteros), which means "elder"). Elders are both elected and ordained (set apart for ministry). An elder remains ordained after his or her term is completed.³¹⁴ The title 'elder' is translated in the EFKS Church, *Toeaina*, thus an 'elder minister' is called *Faifeau Toeaina* and the Elders Committee becomes *Komiti Au Toeaina*. The word 'Komiti' means committee while 'Au' means 'a group of people or things', hence the combination *Komiti Au Toeaina* stands for Elders Committee.

³¹³ Anonymous, *Presbyterian Organization and Leadership* (26 June 2007 [accessed August 2009]); available from <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/presbyterian/organization.htm>.

³¹⁴ Ibid.([accessed]).

Figure Three:

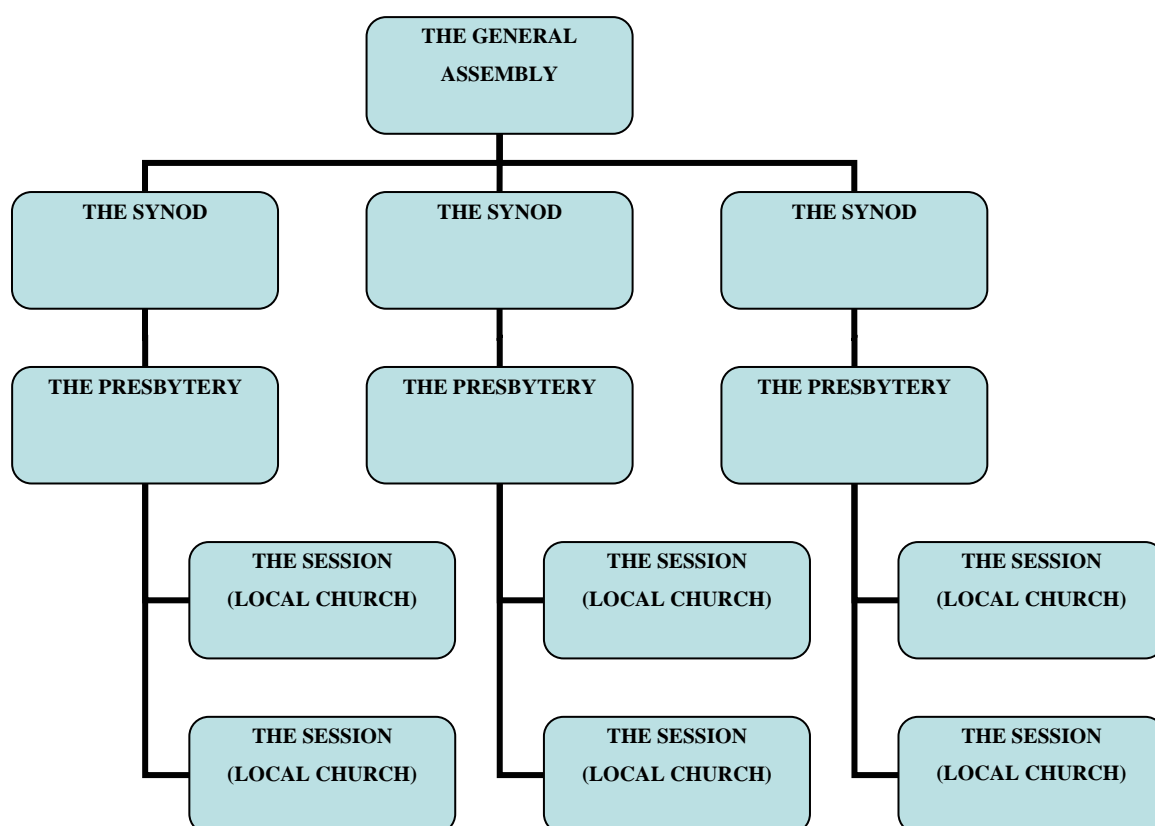
EKALESIA FA'APOTOPOTOGA KERISIANO SAMOA (EFKS)
ORGANISATION MODEL³¹⁵



³¹⁵ Author's impression of the current church organization for the EFKS from the local congregation to the Fono Tele.

Figure Four:

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ORGANISATION MODEL³¹⁶



The *Komiti Au Toeaina* is now recognised by members of the EFKS as the superior and most authoritative committee to scrutinise all matters relating to the life of the Church and make recommendations to the *Fono Tele* for final approval or otherwise. While there is a reasonable representation of the local Church in the *Fono Tele*, as stipulated by the Church Constitution, the autonomous authority of the local congregation in deciding its own decisions is limited to the internal deliberations and local Church developments. In the event where a local Church proposes to approach the *Fono Tele* regarding an important issue because it

³¹⁶ Anonymous, *Presbyterian Organisation and Leadership* (26 June 2007 [accessed 21 September 2009]); available from <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/presbyterian/organization.htm>

holds the final approval, such proposal has to run through first the *Pulega*, then *Matagaluega* and finally to the *Fono Tele*. Some of these issues may not be able to reach the *Fono Tele* simply because the *Pulega* might reject them, and that would be the end of the matter. In such a situation it would become obvious that the autonomy of the local congregation is compromised and its direct link to the *Fono Tele* as the centralised controlling authority for all local congregations is ambiguous. Important issues relating to a particular congregation would be totally discarded in such a system. Therefore, I would argue that Congregationalism as a Church ethos for the EFKS, and to which it affiliates, is no longer prevailing, hence the EFKS would definitely need to reassess its true nature as a Congregational Church per se. As it is, the EFKS is a particular denomination with a polity that reflects a combination of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. In my opinion, this is rather confusing for its adherents.

7.2 CHURCH LEADERSHIP

According to the Constitution of the EFKS, ‘Church’ “is the name given to the company of those who are gathered together in Jesus, who believe in Jesus and who celebrate the sacraments ordained by Jesus for His Church”.³¹⁷ This definition is particularly theological and ecclesiastic in its nature and it is directly related to the works of the clergy. The Church also has a secular dimension, as was recognised during the Roman Empire when the political and social welfare gatherings and meetings of free citizens were known as *ecclesia*, which gradually became known as ‘Church’.³¹⁸ The term ‘*ecclesia*’ was also used as reference to voluntary associations, early universities, and schools of philosophy and rhetoric.³¹⁹ No doubt some of these meetings had some religious overtones. In the light of the Church as a religious organization, in this instance Christian, it is a group of people who may have been born Christians coming together for the purpose of propagating the faith through various means of its ministry to and for the world. Lesslie Newbigin identifies six of the marked characteristics of the Church’s ecclesiastical focus and responsibility. These include the Church as “a community of praise”; “a community of truth”; “a community that does not

³¹⁷EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 4.

³¹⁸ Wesley Carr, ed., *The New Dictionary of Pastoral Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 52.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

live for itself but is deeply involved in the concerns of its neighbourhood”; “a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world”; “a community of mutual responsibility”; “and a community of hope”.³²⁰ These are very significant in the holistic ministry of the Church today and in the future. All these are intrinsic to the EFKS.

Lovett H Weems defines the concept of ‘Leadership’ as,

A process in which one or more persons:

Working with constituents to discover an appropriate vision of a preferred future for the group;

Marshall those key persons and resources required for the vision to become a reality

Gain the co-operation of most in the group, so that movement is made towards the vision.
³²¹

This definition in particular highlights the Church’s pastoral roles and responsibilities, which all should come within the scope of Church leadership. It seems clear that there are special personal qualities required in order to fulfil one’s calling to leadership. In particular, people with visions of a prosperous future for the Church are necessary, and they must be able to read, interpret, and have the urge to implement those visions faithfully and diligently along the lines of the mission of the Church, and most importantly according to the will of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. In other words, such leadership undertaking is not just an ordinary ‘leadership career’ in an organization but rather leading personnel who possess the spiritual power to read the ‘mind of Christ’ as to what really is necessary and required for the Church at any time. Such a people ought to have courage, integrity, a critical open-minded attitude, and be intelligent, flexible and humble.

Moreover, good leadership is not possible unless the leader gains co-operation and support from his/her subjects. As Lovett Weems describes, “it [leadership] is a creative way of working together as needed and appropriate to accomplish a shared vision”.³²² In other words, leadership is effectively a two-way process where both parties involved have the

³²⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 227-233.

³²¹ Lovett H. Weems, "Leadership", in *The New Dictionary of Patoral Studies*, ed. Wesley Carr (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 198-199.

³²² Ibid., 199.

respect and trust of one another. It can facilitate the communication of each party's visions and values for the betterment of the whole – here, the EFKS. Therefore, 'Church leadership' in this instance means the Church's scriptural obligation and responsibilities in leading the followers of Christ and all the faithful according to the fashion stipulated by the Holy Scripture in caring and nurturing both the spiritual and the material nature of the faith community of God. Nurturing of the people of the Church has to be implemented through good stewardship, and this requires strong character, Christ-like mentality, and focused commitment. Leaders must be people with visions for mission and who could truly nurture the Church in order to proliferate. As Participant C says, "we really need some excited people; people that have visions for the future of the Church; not the ones they just sit being looked after by the parishioners".³²³

The work of the Church in Samoa, as in any other Christian nation, is formulated, organised, and implemented by and within a certain structure in conformity with the realm of the Samoans' own culture and traditions. It has been influenced, and still is, by its interface with the Samoan culture and traditions. The multifaceted nature of this relationship between Samoan society and the Church for the betterment of the social, religious, economic, and political life of the people has required the establishment of a concrete framework for various Church ministries and practical theology in Samoa. Practical theology in this respect refers mainly to the theological perspectives and articulations on all the work of the Church within Samoan society. It includes critical theological reflections and appropriate actions in the ministry of the Church. The word 'practical' refers mainly to the domain of actions and activities rather than mere practice. These practical responsibilities of the Church include spiritual formation, sacraments, Church leadership, evangelism, Christian education, Church government, pastoral care and counselling, and its relationship with the ruling state.

Different theologians have dealt with the essence and scope of practical theology in their own ways. One of the founding pillars of practical theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher, spent years of his life laying the foundations of this theological discipline with marked achievement. Schleiermacher has been commonly referred to as the father of practical theology, and having been influenced by the Enlightenment period worldviews, he was the first modern theologian who wanted to bridge the gap between the old and modern humanity

³²³ Interview with Participant C, February 2008.

by reflecting on the Christian faith on the basis of the experience of the subject.³²⁴ In his famous *Kurze Darstellung des Theologischen Studium* (Brief Outline on the Study of Theology) he uses three distinct concepts to explain his understanding of the Church and its theological role within society. These concepts are: Church government, Church service, and Church leadership.³²⁵ Wilhem Grab discusses in detail Schleiermacher's contribution to the study of practical theology³²⁶. Grab, however, refers only to two of Schleiermacher's divisions, Church service and Church government. The former relates to elements of Church leadership that concern the local parish, while the latter refers to those that have to do with the Church as an entire organisation. Like Grab, Schleiermacher categorises his practical theology into two parts, namely a 'theory of Church service' and a 'theory of Church government'.³²⁷ Unfortunately, there is no clear explanation for Grab's preference in this case.

Church leadership will be discussed within four specific settings, all being part of the EFKS structure. These four settings are namely the *ekalesia i le nu'u* or sometimes called *aulotu*³²⁸ or the local congregation, the *Pulega* or sub-district, *Matagaluega* or the district, and finally the *Fono Tele* or the general assembly.³²⁹ These four settings will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. It is important at this point to rediscover the Samoan worldview, its traditional impression on leadership, and how it is connected to the leadership in the EFKS as a Church.

7.2.1 Samoan Articulation of Leadership – *Ta'ita'iga*

Ta'ita'iga is not an easy concept to translate or explain in English because of the multifaceted meanings it encompasses. There is indeed no single English word that can

³²⁴ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 19.

³²⁵ Ibid., 26.

³²⁶ Wilhelm Grab, "Practical Theology as Theology of Religion: Schleiermacher's Understanding of Practical Theology as a Discipline", *International Journal of Practical Theology* 9, no. 2 (2005), 181-197.

³²⁷ Ibid., 5.

³²⁸ I prefer to use this Samoan term *aulotu* in this thesis because it truly reflects the true nature of the congregation of believers both within Samoa and overseas. The phrase '*ekalesia i le nu'u*' as appears in the Constitution Part III, Section 3, page 13, specifically refers to a Church in the Samoan village, not recognising the fact that nowadays there are CCCS congregations overseas and that these are not set in a village but rather in cities or towns. The same Church Constitution governs all these CCCS congregations overseas.

³²⁹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, Part III, 13-15.

represent the totality of the meaning of *ta'ita'iga* as such. However possible translations could be 'leadership', 'headship', or 'governorship'. *Ta'ita'iga* is a noun derived from the word *ta'ita'i*. It is a collective act of leading a person, or a thing, to a place or to do something, or can simply mean 'headship'. The word *ta'ita'i*³³⁰ means 'to lead' – as a verb. The person who is doing the leading role can also be called a *ta'ita'i* – as a noun. In this chapter, I shall use the words *ta'ita'iga* and *ta'ita'i* often as they both closely represent the meaning of leadership as it is used in Church governance.

Samoa traditional leadership protocol is basically stable, culturally and socially reliable, and sometimes flexible. The most significant Samoan philosophical statement behind the perception of leadership and its attendant aspects is '*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*', which literally means 'the way to leadership is through service'. This has been the guiding principle in people's endeavour to choose their *ta'ita'i* for Samoan central social organisations such as *aiga*, village, Church oriented organizations, political groups, and other types of association in the society. The *aiga*³³¹ or family, the core social unit in the Samoan society, has had its leadership based on this philosophy since the beginning of time.

7.2.2 *Aulotu* Leadership

As indicated earlier, the *aulotu* setting is made up of two basic distinct groups, namely the *Faifeau*³³² (the servant of God, Church minister), and the *aulotu* or the congregation. As far as Church leaders at the congregational level are concerned, the *faifeau* is indeed the leader of the *aulotu* who is solely responsible for the spiritual and ecclesiastical dimensions of

³³⁰ George Pratt's Samoan dictionary, George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 4th ed. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1862), shows only the first syllable '*ta'i*' of the word '*ta'ita'i*'. Pratt defines '*ta'i*' as meaning, 'to lead'. In such case, 'to lead' means 'to show the way' to a blind person or to someone in need. It does not embrace the meaning for 'leader' or 'leadership' as with the word *ta'ita'i*.

³³¹ Cluny Macpherson and La'avasa Macpherson, "Where Theory Meets Practice: The Limits of Good Governance Program", in *Governance in Samoa*, ed. Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2000); W. E. H. Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition: A Study of Post-War Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Three British Pacific Dependencies* (Sydney; London: Australasian Publishing Co., 1953), 263-4; J W Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), 22f.

³³² *Faifeau* or the Church minister is one of the many Samoan terms referring to this office of the Church. Other terms of office include *Ao o fa'alupega* (pillar or apex of all honorific titles), *Tama fa'ale-agaga* (Spiritual father), *Fa'afeagaiga* (Covenant), *Failotu* (Worship-maker), *Sui va'aia o le Atua* (Representative of God), *Auauna a le Atua* (the servant of God), and others. See also the *Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa* (2006), Part III and Part IV.

the congregation. The *Faifeau* is not permitted to be a *matai* and if he chooses to be a *Faifeau* while he is holding a *matai* title he has to relinquish such title.³³³ The congregation, through their normal selection process, calls him to become the *ta'ita'i* of the congregation. The selection of a congregation's *faifeau* is carefully laid down and articulated by the Church Constitution and other relevant regulations.³³⁴ All other pertinent regulations relating to the *Faifeau* as a leader and how he carries out his leadership roles are clearly stipulated by the EFKS laws and by-laws.³³⁵ These include their ordination, qualifications, the 'dos' and the 'don'ts' of their *faifeau* service, as well as those of his partner in the ministry.

The *aulotu* generally consists of other leaders who are subservient to the *Faifeau*. These include *A'oa'o Fesoasoani* (AF) who normally plays the role of assisting the *Faifeau* (FS) in all Church matters within the local congregation as well as in the district within which the congregation is situated; the *Tiakono* (TK) will assist the *faifeau* and *a'oa'o fesoasoani* in the spiritual side of the ministry and they form the main steering body of the *aulotu* in matters relating to the '*le itu-i-fafo o le galuega a le Atua*' or the outward material side of the Church. *Tiakono* have their own frame of reference articulated in the constitution of the EFKS hence they have to fulfil their roles and responsibilities accordingly³³⁶. These are all Church leaders in their own right and they normally work together as a unit to fulfil their individual and corporate responsibilities within the 'body of Christ'. Although their roles and responsibilities as leaders are specific, they are all under the supervision and authority of the *Faifeau*, who allocates their work. Leadership at this level is very much a prerogative of the *faifeau*, as he is here the main source of authority and control.

All in all, it is quite clear that there is a distinctive structure of leadership for the local *aulotu* as every aspect of leadership ministry is well laid down by both the Church Constitution³³⁷ and the Church rules and regulations³³⁸. The hierarchical leadership structure

³³³ EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, 16, Part IV.

³³⁴ See *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, (2003), 18-19.

³³⁵ Ibid. 2003, Part IV, 14 – 20.

³³⁶ Ibid. 13; see also EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 11.

³³⁷ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 7 – 12 under Section III & IV entitled 'Church Order' and 'The Ministry of the Church' respectively.

at the *aulotu* level shows that the apex is the *faifeau*, followed by the *a'oa'o fesoasoani* and finally the *tiakono* at the bottom. They should all work very closely and be supportive of one another under the diligent supervision of the *faifeau* who exercises balance and equity at all times. As Participant F admits,

*E faufautua mai ma tu'u mai sona lagona pe afai e i ai se mea e le talafeagai ai se fa'aiuga ma le aganu'u.*³³⁹

(We always respect our minister, because he is there... He gives advice and advances his opinion on matters which are in conflict with Samoan culture)

Mutual respect and *tausia ole vatapuia* are the underlying principles of these leadership relationships. Concerning Church meetings, there has been an expressed opinion that the leadership has sometime ignored the voice of the non-*matai*, female Church members as well as the young generations in these meetings.

The Samoan Church has its own structure and organisation on which its governance and leadership were based. Moreover, it also has its own Constitution, which lays down all the necessary procedures through which Church meetings be conducted. It also stipulates appropriate channels through which Church issues and other significant matters reach the Church's *Fono Tele* or general assembly. As a congregational Church, it was always assumed by the congregants that everyone had his/her right as a Church member to voice their opinion in all Church meetings. In theory that was well spelt out in the Constitution and all congregations were expected to abide by such rules of governance. However, that was not the case in practice because such an equal rights feature was somewhat foreign to the Samoan Church. Samoan culture seemed to be the major factor contributing to this issue thus relegating the rights of the young people, some women, such as Participant D, and untitled people to the level of being unimportant or even a sort of non-existence. All deliberations and discussions within the realm of the Church should be conducted according to the Church's Constitution and procedures, but, in practice, all these were implemented according to Samoan culture and fashion. I believe this is unacceptable and unfortunate, especially when the rights of the believers are severely compromised in such a way as if they were unimportant in the Church decision making processes, and treated as outsiders, hence in effect ignored. The feeling of these 'ignored voices' within the village Church setting was expressed well by Participant D when she said,

³³⁸ EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, under Sections II, III, and IV.

³³⁹ Interview with Participant F, February 2008. Participants B, E, J, also expressed the same viewpoint.

*Ou te ioe lava a'u, e pei e malosi atu le aganuu i totonu o le ekalesia. O le mea foi la lena e ala ai ona ta le fia nofo i se 'Aso' aua e maimau fua le taimi ae leai sota manatu e faaleoina. E mafau faapea tagata e na'o tapaau o le nuu ma matai ma tiakono e tatau ona faaali o latou manatu i mataupu. Ona o la e iai o latou lagona a saunoa lava Tapaau o le nuu, faifeau ma tiakono ia ua lava lea. Ao se upu ia ta ita lena e le tauloa, e pei e le fia faalogo mai ai se isi.*³⁴⁰

(I agree with the belief that the Samoan culture seems to take the upper hand in the Samoan Church. And that is why I do not want to participate in Church meetings because it is just a waste of time sitting there and chance to voice an opinion. People think it's only the elite people, the titleholders, and the deacons who are permitted to express their opinion in these Church deliberations. They seem to take for granted that once the highest chief in the village, the titleholders, and the deacons speak on a subject, that would suffice. But for me the unimportant woman, they seem not to want to listen to me.)

Whenever she made an attempt to speak in the decision-making processes of the Church, being an untitled laywoman was severe handicap. Participant D depicted in very precise terms her true experience, feelings, and emotions at being ignored during the Church deliberations at all times.³⁴¹ I believe this was a cultural component in the Church organization and how the Church conducted its meetings and discussions. The generic cultural presumption regarding deliberations in important traditional settings was that only *tagata matutua ma e fai upu o le nu'u* (the elderly people, the orators and speech makers of the village) should speak on matters of great value to the village and Church community.³⁴² In this instance, a laywoman could speak only if she was old and therefore categorised *tagata matutua o le nu'u* (the elderly people of the village). But it would certainly take her a few decades to reach such age group. The theory is that people will have their time to contribute in such discussions when they get old, become *matai*, and leaders of their own families.. Thus it is true that Samoan cultural protocols are still prevalent in these circumstances despite the fact that the Church was not the forum for village meetings. The most heartbreaking part of these unpleasant dynamics of Church meetings was the fact that none other than the incumbent *faifeau* was chairing these Church discussions and dictated the progress of these meetings. Sometimes a *faifeau's* bias towards the elite group of the village in Church meetings is so predictably obvious it causes people to become frustrated and leave the Church. Sadly the ramifications of such an unchristian way of conducting Church deliberations is ultimately realised when some people, especially the younger generation, seek

³⁴⁰ Interview with Participant D, February 2008.

³⁴¹ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 169. Ernst highlights this neglect of the voices of the young people as well as women in the Samoan Church as a major problem in the Church decision making processes. I believe there has been little progress with regards to that issue today.

³⁴² So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", 165.

God and His salvation in other Church denominations which allow freedom of speech for everybody. There are other reasons such as financial burdens³⁴³ and so forth, but this is one of the major reasons why members of the EFKS have drifted to other religious faiths and denominations. For Church meetings, I believe, all Church members, or the congregants, must have the right to speak and express their opinions at any time, especially with regards to matters pertaining to the growth and development of the Church. In some local churches, democracy is followed as closely as possible in their meetings, seeking the democratic principle of majority rule.³⁴⁴

Notable from Participant D's insights is the fact that Samoan culture is relatively strong in the administration and the operations of the Samoan Church at the local Church level. This is not so because of culture attempting to intrude into Church affairs as such, but rather because the Church through its leaders seems to adopt and draw on the Samoan leadership mindset as being the appropriate guidelines and model for administering the Church. Whatever the reason for which the Church adopted this leadership style, I believe there are other spheres of the Church as an organization where Samoan culture could be wisely utilised, but not at the expense of Church democracy, equality, justice and peace, which represent Christian values.

On the other hand, there are cases where the *faifeau* stands fast in his leadership to minimise Samoan culture and its dynamics in Church affairs on the understanding that Church governance and leadership do not mix with cultural influences. This is relatively common in congregations established outside Samoa, in places like New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Ioane Lafoa'i³⁴⁵ describes such a situation in one of the congregations in Australia where one *matai* and his family, which made up the majority of the congregation, seemed to overpower the *faifeau* and dictate all terms of the leadership of the church. Some congregants walked away to join other denominations while the *matai* in question and some of his family formed a new church, the first of the *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Amerika Samoa* (EFKAS) in Australia.³⁴⁶

³⁴³ Kolia, "The Church and Development", 140; Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 169.

³⁴⁴ So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", 165.

³⁴⁵ Ioane Lafoa'i, "Fa'amatai in Australia: Is it Fair Dinkum?" in *Changes in the Matai System*, ed. Asofou So'o (Apia: NUS, 2007), 17.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

In upholding such leadership principles, there is no doubt that, with a little effort, a mutually beneficial relationship between culture and Christianity in Samoa could be achieved and prevail at all times.

7.2.3 The *Pulega* (Sub-District)

According to the organisation of the EFKS, the *Pulega* or the sub-district level is defined as the group of churches in villages all situated within a specified geographical political district of the state of Samoa. These *Pulega* are normally named after their corresponding political districts. There are 49 *Pulega* in total.³⁴⁷ The number of *aulotu* or Church in the village within these *Pulega* varies depending on the number of villages within a particular political district – ranging from four to seven or eight villages or *aulotu* within a *Pulega*. The Church situation outside Samoa in countries like New Zealand, Australia, USA operates on the same principles and *Pulega* are named after the towns or cities in which they are located. *Pulega* structure in itself is not very clearly defined in the EFKS Constitution. It is indistinctly mentioned here and there throughout the formal documents of the Church and one has to unravel its role and purpose from within these fundamental documents.³⁴⁸ However, through observation of the normal practical administrative procedures of the Church it appears that there is an unwritten structure and organisation already being used for general *pulega* processes. The main leader of the *Pulega* is the *Faifeau Toeaina*³⁴⁹ or the elder minister who must be an ordained minister of the EFKS. He is elected for five years from all the presiding *faifeau* of each *aulotu* within the *Pulega*. His duty involves overseeing the works of the *faifeau* in the *Pulega* as well as to make sure the *Pulega* runs smoothly in its ecclesiastical pastoral roles and responsibilities. In fact, he is the spiritual father to lay-preachers and *faifeau* who are resident within his subdistrict.³⁵⁰ The selection of the *Faifeau Toeaina* is made by all the incumbent *faifeau* within the particular *Pulega* on the occasion

³⁴⁷ Statistics from the EFKS Central office, 11 September 2009. (see Appendix iv.).

³⁴⁸ I am referring here to the two main texts used often by the Church as providing guidelines for its ministry. These documents are first the Constitution of the EFKS/CCCS and the *IloIloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, which basically operates as by-laws and regulations for the Constitution.

³⁴⁹ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, Part III Section 5, 17.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Part III Section 5, 17.

when the position is due for re-election or is vacant through death or sickness. All congregations located within the sub-district and registered as members of the *Pulega* are eligible to vote, represented by their *faiifeau*. According to the Constitution, the selection of the *Faiifeau Toeaina* is by voting.³⁵¹

However, that ballot requirement became inoperative sometime in the earlier years of the Church. This is because the selection system gives preference to the idea of ‘seniority’ in the organisation. This is not a new phenomenon to Samoans because it is in fact the core of the *fa’a-Samoa* and its traditional operations. Preference is given to older people whom the Samoans believe have the *tofa ma le moe* (wisdom) and the necessary leadership experience required for a family or a village job. Samoans believe in the notion that the older generations are the repertoires of knowledge, experience, and wisdom. While acknowledging the Samoan aspects of selecting appropriate candidates to certain jobs and responsibilities in leadership, it is also important to recognise the fact that the EFKS as it is today, only became a Church independent of the LMS administration in 1962 when the current Constitution commenced its operation using the ballot system. Prior to that, it was very much following the system of appointment to Church important positions where preference was given to seniority in service for the Church. If not, the missionaries in the past, in their own experience of particular individuals’ capabilities and potential as leaders, appointed appropriate people to these vital Church positions. Nowadays, seniority as a criterion for the selection of people to these crucial positions has gradually become redundant, as these leadership positions definitely require expertise, relevant experience, training in human resource management and effective administrative methods.

What does the *Toeaina* do? The Constitution³⁵² stipulates that he is supposedly the father figure for all people, regarded as possessing God’s gifts of good leadership, vigilance, integrity, impartiality, dignity, courage, and love for the Church of Jesus Christ. He is responsible for all *faiifeau* in a *Pulega*, ensuring that they all undertake their ministry with integrity and in accordance with the Constitution of the EFKS. When problems arise within a local Church and they could not find a solution, he should be able give appropriate advice. Second in line to the *Toeaina* in terms of leadership responsibilities for the *Pulega* is the

³⁵¹ Ibid., 39-40.

³⁵² Ibid., 9, 39-40.

secretary who is normally a *faifeau* elected for three years from all the *faifeau* of the *Pulega* in question.³⁵³ Again the seniority criterion for selection applies in this case: this saves time and, importantly, maintains harmonious relationships, as *faifeau* uphold strongly the Samoan traditional human interrelationship known as *vatapuia* amongst themselves.

7.2.4 The *Matagaluega* Leadership

The *Matagaluega* is the second tier of leadership level within the EFKS organisational structure. It comprises at least two *Pulega* grouped together as one to form a *Matagaluega*. There are seventeen registered *Matagaluega* altogether, excluding those individual congregations which are not part of a *Matagaluega* as such but are directly responsible to the EFKS Mother Church through the *Fono Tele*.³⁵⁴ This number has been continuously changing as new *Matagaluega* has been formed as a result of the splitting of some existing ones into two or more. While the *Pulega* has its presiding *Toeaina* as the top Church officer, the *Matagaluega* similarly has its corresponding officer called *Komiti Fa'atonu* who is elected from all incumbent *toeaina* within the *Matagaluega*. In other words all the *toeaina* of each *Pulega* are eligible under the Constitution as potential candidates to be *Komiti Fa'atonu*. As stipulated by the Constitution, he is "elected by ballot for a term of five years by the ordained ministers and ministers who have covenanted with the congregations of the district and confirmed with the elders committee"³⁵⁵. As a leader of the *Matagaluega*, he is obligated to be the representative of the *Matagaluega* in the so called the '*Komiti Fa'atonu o Mea Tau I le Aufaigaluega*' (*Komiti Fa'atonu*) or the 'Ministerial Sub-Committee for Matters Concerning the Ministries'³⁵⁶ of the EFKS. His responsibilities are very similar to those of the *Toeaina* at the *Pulega* level who acts as the father figure and as the spiritual father for the *Matagaluega*.

The administrative operation of the *Matagaluega* is vested in the authority of the Chairman of the *Matagaluega* who is normally a *Faifeau Toeaina* appointed by the

³⁵³ Ibid., Note (c), 97. This note emphasises the fact that the appointment of a Sub-district secretary shall be made in the same manner as that for the District Secretary.

³⁵⁴ EFKS, "Tusi l'ugafono *Fono Tele* E.F.K.S Malua, Me 14 - 25, 2007", (Malua: E.F.K.S, 2007) see page 85 - *Tu'ufa'atasiga Faiga Taulaga EFKS 2006*; EFKS, "Tusi l'ugafono *Fono Tele* E.F.K.S 2008", (Malua: E.F.K.S, 2008), 53.

³⁵⁵ EFKS, *O le Fa'avay o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 2006, 39-40.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 42-43.

Matagaluega, and the secretary, who is also an officer appointed by the *Matagaluega* through ballot. The secretary is selected from ordained *faiifeau* of the same *Matagaluega*. He works in cooperation with the Chairman in organising constitutional meetings and other activities laid down by the by-laws of the Church, as well as other matters required by the *Matagaluega* from time to time. The majority of these meetings are basically deliberations on matters raised by *Pulega*, which need to be referred to the *Fono Tele* for final decision. In addition to these constitutional gatherings, the *Matagaluega* also deals with ecclesiastical issues, which the Constitution requires it to be carried out for the good running of the Church. For example, the *Matagaluega* also considers and deliberates on the poor conduct of some *faiifeau*, *a'oa'o fesoasoani*, or *tiakono*. They have the penultimate discussion in such matters before referring to the *Fono Tele* for final decision.

7.2.5 *Fono Tele*³⁵⁷ or The General Assembly

This is an annual event for the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. It is the most important gathering of the EFKS where all the districts, sub-districts, and local congregations come together to meet and deliberate on matters pertaining to the development of the Church as a whole, both spiritual and the practical issues. In fact all decisions made by various Church committees, the districts and other related bodies are to be resolved and finalised at the *Fono Tele*.

As far as the leadership of the Church is concerned, the *Fono Tele* is the 'powerhouse' of the EFKS where all its decisions are finalised. The organisational structure of the EFKS clearly lays down all the powers of the *Fono Tele* in relation to its internal administrative control of various committees of the Church and its responsibilities towards other churches and secular organizations within Samoan society. The executive of the *Fono Tele* consists of the Chairman, the General Secretary, and the Treasure. The Deputy Chairman is elected annually and the incumbent Deputy Chairman becomes the new Chairman for the next General Assembly. The other executive positions are for the term of three years, and upon the expiry of their term of office, the *Fono Tele* shall elect the new officers for the next three years. The Church organisation also lays down the condition that the executive officers should be part of all Church committees as members, except for the General Purposes Committee and

³⁵⁷ Ibid. , 19-46; *Fono Tele* is the supreme Council of the Church. The structure and membership of the *Fono Tele* are stipulated in the Constitution of the EFKS 2006.

the Missionary Committee at which they will be the executive officers.³⁵⁸ The Chairman of the *Fono Tele* is responsible for the central office of the Church as well as conducting the *Fono Tele*. The General Secretary supervises the employees of the Church in the Central Office and implements the resolutions of the various Church committees and the *Fono Tele*. The Treasurer is charged with overseeing the finances of the Church and assumes a supervisory role in the absence of the General Secretary.³⁵⁹

The members of the *Komiti Au Toeaina*, or Elders-Committee, are recognised as the ‘Fathers’ of the Church and it holds the respect of the Church in making all good decisions for the EFKS through the *Fono Tele*. The committee deals with the ministerial code of ethics and all matters relating to the morality of the *faiifeau*. They are charged to make sure the constitutional ministerial obligations of the Church are performed properly and the *faiifeau* are carrying out their duties in accordance with the Church’s ministerial code of conduct. In the event that a *faiifeau* fails to comply with the Church’s rules, this committee has the power to summon and reprimand the culprit and to convey their decision, as well as to comfort him with words of spiritual encouragement and blessing. Thus this committee appears to be the most powerful authority from the perspective of the *faiifeau* as it deals directly with matters relating to them. The Church people, in fact, consider the *Komiti Au Toeaina* as the most authoritative and powerful body of the Church apart from the *Fono Tele*. This is because it is not only the Church’s authority, being second only to the *Fono Tele*, but it also has a representative called *Tiakono Toeaina* (TKT) or the Elder Deacon³⁶⁰ within this committee. This officer’s role is to provide strong support to elder ministers and ministers within his own district by overseeing all essential matters for the general material welfare of the *Matagaluega*. This includes ensuring that the *faiifeau* in each village congregation is well looked after by his flock, and that Church buildings and other building assets are being maintained for the welfare of the whole congregation. In addition, he shall provide necessary assistance and support to his deacon colleagues so that their duties and services to the Church are performed to the best of their abilities. The *Tiakono Toeaina* can serve in such capacity for five years and shall be eligible for reappointment by ballot.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 46.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 22.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. 79-80.

7.3 GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE PRAXIS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN EFKS

Appropriate Church leadership is undoubtedly integral to the running and operation of the EFKS Church. Good leadership can be easily determined when it is embodied in the effective execution of all Church responsibilities. What has become clear from the Church order and leadership is the peculiar interweaving of the Samoan cultural values with the conventional leadership style and system of the EFKS. There is such a close alignment of the Church leadership structure and system with that of the traditional Samoan.

For the many years the EFKS has been in operation in Samoa, the local minister, or the *faifeau*, level has been very strong as a body of specialised people charged mainly for the ministry of God to His people and who have great influence on the life of the Samoan population. They have gained their respect from the Samoan community and have earned a special position in the social structure. Due to such social-ecclesiastical recognition of the *faifeau* in Samoa, they have been looked upon as leaders in almost all spheres of life. They are accorded great reverence to the extent that they almost have a *pou* or seat within the *fono a le nu'u* or village meeting, although the *faifeau* is not a *matai per se*. Participant A reflects on this issue of the authority endowed on the *faifeau* and he says,

O le tasi lea fa'asamoa o le 'Pule'. Tai le misi a lea mea i le tele o aulotu – o le Authority. Ae fa'afetai i le authority lea na amata mai ai le mea na tuu i le Faifeau . Leitioa a foi le mavaega a Malietoa. Ou te iloa o le tasi a lena 'key' o le mea atoa, ona sau a i lava lea. E moni a la o e e fai ma feosofi isi tagata ia i totonu e pei o ni sifi, ae pei o la a e i ai le fatu lena i totonu o la latou te iloa le authority la e i le faifeau. Ma o lena e tau taofiofia ai ai o latou lagona e lagalaga i nisi taimi.³⁶¹

(Another *fa'asamoa* is 'authority'. This happens in the majority of local churches. But thanks to the authority originally given to *faifeau* – Malietoa's covenantal will [for the Church].³⁶² I know that is the key for the whole authority. Despite some people's attempt to challenge that authority at times as if they were the chiefs, but deep in themselves they know and respect that authority of the *faifeau*. That is why they eventually relaxed their challenges against the *faifeau's* authority).

In some villages the *faifeau* has been asked to attend their meetings as a counsellor/mediator when difficult decisions have to be made. In such circumstances, and

³⁶¹ Interview with Participant A, February 2008.

³⁶² Malietoa is Samoa's paramount chief who received and accepted Christianity for Samoa in 1830. His last will for the Church as stated by Oka Fauolo in his book, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*, is, "*E amata i le aso, o le a tanu i le elelee le tafa'ifa o Samoa. O le a susu le Malietoa i Poutoa o le tapa'au fa'asisina; ae afio Iesu i le lagi o le Tapa'au Fa'alelagi, o le Tupu lea o Samoa.* (From today, Samoa's four paramount chiefs title will be buried in the dirt. Malietoa the *tapa'au fa'asisina* will reside at Poutoa; and Jesus the Heavenly King will reside in heaven, the King of Samoa). See Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 31.

many others, it would appear that the *faiifeau*'s power transcends all other powers in the *fa'asamoa*, hence his leadership role in the local Church has been rarely challenged by the system. Participant F explains,

*I le pulega lava ia fa'asamoa, o lea le leaga o le faiifeau, o lea le fa'aletonu o le faiifeau, e i ai le talitonuga fa'asamoa, e fa'amasino e le Atua lana faiifeau... A sese le faiifeau e i ona ia a luga, e fa'amasino e le Atua.*³⁶³

(In the *fa'asamoa*, no matter how bad a *faiifeau* would be, any misdemeanour, the *fa'asamoa* believes God would judge His *faiifeau*. If he makes mistakes, he would bear his judgement from God.)

Thus the Samoan context and the Church have placed the *faiifeau* in the rather awkward situation of seeming to have 'absolute' power, of being an authority in everything. Occasionally, a few of the younger *faiifeau* who have not had much general experience of the *fa'asamoa*³⁶⁴, or those who were born outside Samoa and lived there until they took their call to the ministry, may let that power go to their heads and act as if they were in control of both the spiritual and the secular spheres of the life of the congregation. Such a mindset has caused leadership dilemmas in some village congregations, hence conflicts have emerged and, in some cases, the congregation has had no other choice but to expel the *faiifeau* from his duties in the village. Notwithstanding that, most such *faiifeau* do a very good job and their overseas experience and deep knowledge of other cultural norms add an extra dimension to their ministry.

The Samoans treat the *faiifeau* as their leader above all other cultural leaders within the *aulotu*. They refer to the *Faiifeau* as the '*Ao o fa'alupega*' or the apex of all honorific titles in Samoa, yet he is not a *matai* as he is not permitted to be so under the Church regulations.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, in the eyes of the EFKS, the *faiifeau* is the leading authority in the *aulotu* with regards to ecclesiastical and spiritual matters concerning his *aulotu*. Interestingly, this is the same person who will be in charge over the *matai* and cultural leaders of the *nu'u* who are also members of the *aulotu*. Therefore the dynamics of Church government and leadership in the Samoan context is complex and very much prone to conflicts and differences amongst

³⁶³ Interview with Participant F, February 2008.

³⁶⁴ The Samoan philosophical perception about the aspect of *fa'asamoa* to which I refer is that unless one has actually lived the Samoan life of service to/for parents, village, and the Church, s/he would not have a good grasp of the leadership qualities required for a leader, here a *faiifeau*. Such an empirical conception of Samoan impression of leadership is crucial for the EFKS, just as it is much needed as a dominant criterion for the selection of someone to become the *matai*, the leader for a Samoan family.

³⁶⁵ EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, 16.

Church members if the *faifeau* is not deeply aware of his limitations of his role, or conscious of his status as, in effect, a *taule'ale'a* or non-*matai* participant in the decision making processes of the *aulotu*. The question is: how can he effectively carry out his roles and responsibilities in situations where the *matai* are confrontational against him on matters relating to the governing of the *aulotu*?

The Samoan adage: “*E tu le lotu i luga o tu ma aganu'u*”³⁶⁶ which literally means, “Church stands on customs and culture (be it Samoan or any other culture)” has been the guiding principle for the relationship between the *lotu* and culture in Samoa for many years. This is closely related to another Samoan axiom, ‘*e va'ava'alua le Talalelei ma le aganu'u*’, meaning the gospel and culture always go hand in hand. The Samoan implication of these is that the *lotu* cannot practically operate on its own accord in the village and the national levels without the support, help, legitimisation, and the endorsement of the Samoan culture and customs of such village. This is not a rejection of the Christian belief in the omnipresence of the omnipotent God in the world through the Holy Spirit to lead and guide his people, but rather a reference to the mutual interrelatedness and the intimate interdependence of the Christian *lotu* and the Samoan culture and traditions within the Samoan context. The Samoans believe that any foreign ideology, belief or institution such as the Christian Church, which was alien to the Samoans, is unlikely to be able to get established and evolve freely in Samoa unless it is embraced and firmly supported by Samoan custom. Thus in this case, for Christianity to be observed, and practised effectively in the context of Samoa, it has to work intimately in partnership with Samoan culture, recognising Samoan cultural *values*, systems, morals, visions and aspirations of the people. Christianity’s role in this relationship is to Christianise the Samoan culture. In return the traditional culture and customs have to open up to the power of the gospel in order to manifest the spirit of God within the individuals as well as within the whole of the Samoan society. The Samoan people have to make sure the pagan customs, attitudes, *values*, ethics and morals of the Samoans are abolished. The spirit of Samoan *tapuaiga* and its nature of worship are to be critically Christianised, reformed, and nurtured sincerely as part of the Christian formation for the Samoan people.

³⁶⁶ I have learned this from my experiential observation of the Samoan society. In fact the saying has been a topic for heated discussions in various Church related forums. These discussions have opened up other avenues of understanding and new focuses on the relationship between the gospel and culture.

The Church structure and the dynamics of its operations within the local *aulotu* level of the EFKS are also unique in comparison with the traditional denominational Church organizations. The *aulotu* leadership structure is aligned with the traditional *fa'amatai* in the village hierarchical structure³⁶⁷, which makes the operational dynamics of the *aulotu* very effective and relatively efficient. The *faifeau* is the leader and he is in charge of, in particular, the spiritual sphere of the *aulotu*, and assists Church members in their normal secular life activities. As Participant J says,

*O le fa'amoemoe foi la o le faifeau, ia fai mea nei ina ia usitai le nu'u ma maua se nu'u e fealofani ma se nu'u lelei ma lelei le soifuaga o tagata. O le fa'amoemoe a lena e tasi. O lona uiga o le role lena a le faifeau.*³⁶⁸

(The *Faifeau's* intention is for everything to be done in accordance with Christian morals and ethics, and that they may live in peace and be a good village with good living standards. That is the aim and the role of the *faifeau*.)

Matai are normally made *Tiakono* depending on the willingness of the individual, and then perhaps proceed to be an *A'oa'o Fesoasoani* (for male), where it is necessary to pass an examination for competency. Female *Tiakono* cannot become *A'oa'o Fesoasoani*. The involvement of *matai* in the Church structure enables the authority dimension of leadership in the *aulotu* to work very effectively as these *matai* are also the decision and lawmakers of the village concerned. Interestingly, while the *aulotu* leadership and governance closely follow the *fa'amatai* model, the *aulotu* must also try very hard to follow democratic rules in their deliberations and the way they carry out their Church activities.

In a way, the *fa'amatai* is democracy in a different form, or, to be more specific, a 'contextualised democracy'. Today there are non-*matai* members who have become *tiakono* and *a'oa'o fesoasoani* and even hold some administrative positions such as *aulotu* secretary and treasurer, and very few problems have arisen from this. This trend is very popular in the *aulotu* created outside Samoa where the centre of congregational power lies in the hands of all congregation members, unlike in Samoa where the authority and power is relatively in the hands of the *fa'amatai* system. Nevertheless, changes to such *fa'amatai* emphasis in Church affairs today has gradually become materialised in the Church and new ideas of leadership and governance are being critically employed with positive outcomes.

³⁶⁷ So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", 165.

³⁶⁸ Interview with Participant J, November 2008. Participant A, B, C and F express their similar understanding on the works of the *faifeau* in Samoa.

Asofou So'o³⁶⁹ hints at the need for good governance in the *aulotu* or the local village parish; it is imperative for the EFKS to be more sensitive to the needs of the people both at the local and national levels. In addition, EFKS also has to be seen to be practising a balanced approach to the way mission is administered and its responsibilities within the Samoan society, in such a way that it does not contradict its theological messages. For example the leaders of the EFKS have to make sure that people's rendered services for the Church are not too demanding on them, causing suffering, poverty, and hardship on families, which is in fact the opposite of the gospel message it proclaims. This entails a call for a collective effort of both the Church and cultural leaders as part of their mission for good governance in the Church. So'o suggests that, "the biggest challenges is for custom leaders in Church and the Church leaders generally to ease off on custom gift giving and Church contribution supposedly for the needy world out there but in reality to the detriment of the Church members struggling to make ends meet right here and now"³⁷⁰. He also points out that the majority of the Samoan people do believe in the efficiency of the good working relationship between the *fa'asamoa* and Christianity in all facets of life as long as Christianity as a religion is made relevant and meaningful to the Samoan people. This could only be made possible through a good blend of traditional Samoan culture and practices with Christianity at all times thus enabling it to survive in Samoa.³⁷¹

The services rendered by the people for the Church reflect a strong inclination of the Samoan people towards trying to satisfy the Samoan cultural assumptions over against the true Christian values in which Christians believed. The presentation of traditional gifts in the course of Church hospitality has often been excessive, and has always been criticised by some of its own members. These presentations are made in the name of the Church by its own members, although some have been reluctant to do this. Participant D also reflects on this point decisively when she says,

I la'u lava vaai i totonu o le tatou ekalesia, e malosi tele le aganuu i totonu o le lotu. ... O le mea o le amanaia o le tagata e ave uma iai faaaloaloga, ona o le faasamoa faapea e tatau ona amanaia lelei le tagata lea. Ona o le galuega o le Talalelei. Ae ua maualuga lava le faasamoa i ta'iga sua sa fai. E malosi tele le aganuu... E fa'i o faaaloaloga ma toga o mea tau palapala a malo, ae o taumafa foi latou ia. O iina na pei e ta'u mai ai le malosi tele o le aganuu i totonu o le ekalesia i le mea lea e iai....³⁷²

³⁶⁹ So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", 165.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 165-166.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 165-166.

³⁷² Interview with Participant D, February 2008. Participants C, F, and L expressed similar opinions.

(My observation within the Church is that culture is very strong... Our respect for someone of such calibre requires the people to give all due respect for that person. This is because of the *fa'asamoa* requirement that such person be well respected and acknowledged in our midst; because of the work of the gospel. But the *fa'asamoa* was over-done when it offered many *sua* (traditional gifts). The Samoan culture was too strong, but he was not a person who has an intimate connection with the village except his relationship with the *faiifeau* (Church minister). Not only were too many traditional gifts presented but also the material things and food. That is when it tells me that Samoan culture is very strong in the *ecclesia*.)

I believe that in the very last part of Participant D's comment lies the core of the problem when she said, "*O le itu lelei e fai mai lava le Samoa ia o le tala ave i le va ma isi tagata pei o le tasi lena tulaga e lelei ai. Aua o le a avatu ai le talalelei mo le nuu ma le ekalesia*" (However, the good thing about this is the good reputation of the village and the congregation, which will be make known to other villages). I believe that such comment represented the Samoan pride which somehow forced the Church people to do more, to give in excess beyond their capability, and to offer more of these material things to other people all in the name of the Church and God. The Samoan pride becomes the problem in this instance if it is taken to the extreme. It could be both a personal as well as a communal phenomenon. The personal pride could be motivated by one's traditional status within the village community on one hand and in the Church on the other. The two are sometimes integrated in one person, especially the high-ranking chiefs who most often are endowed by the Church with the elite status of being an Elder Deacon and/or a Lay Preacher. As a community feature, Samoan pride also drives people to maintain their village traditional status by contributing more than they could afford at times. Despite the poor financial state of the local congregants, they all vie to get the best to give to the *faiifeau*, the Church, and whoever is their visitor at any particular point of time. Such pride sometimes breeds suffering to a great extent for the Samoan people if it was not managed intelligently, and it could particularly harm the citizens who are at the lower end of the national economic scale, all for the name of the Church and God.

Recently there has been an outcry from the Samoan population regarding the high demands of the Church from its members. In this instance, it was alleged "members of a certain denomination have been asked to buy brand new cars for their pastors".³⁷³ This of course would be an unnecessary added financial obligation on top of many others already

³⁷³ Mata'afa Keni Lesa, "Time for Church to show love", *The Samoa Observer*, 8 June 2009; See also Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 168.

taken up by Church members in the time of financial crisis in the world, which is obviously affecting people of local communities severely. I consider this local congregation's attitude to decision-making was appalling and unethical. Church leaders at the national level have to stop this and implement reasonable levels of control. It is well known that the *faifeau* is probably the wealthiest individual in any Samoan village due to the continuous care and support of his congregation in all facets of life. As Lesa fittingly put it,

It's a shame. Because what happens next is what we all know, pastors included. These people will borrow money they don't have, beg from relatives who are already struggling themselves and are forced to miss out on necessities of life just so they can save enough to continue to give. That way, in the eyes of members of their congregation, they can still hold their heads up high.

This ridiculous culture of pride that has grown and gained a foothold in our community has to stop.

During tough times like these, people should be encouraged to learn to say no when they don't have anything.

The irony of it all is too many poor people are giving to the Church, which is filthy rich already.³⁷⁴

This is what I called the 'culture of pride' in Samoa, and it has become a serious problem today in that it propagates suffering, affliction, and poverty on Church members despite the fact it helps in developing the material dimension of the local churches.

One of the pertinent questions for this research posed in Chapter One is: "*What are the important aspects of the relationship between gospel and culture that have contributed to the contemporary cultural-theological praxis of the Samoan context?*" It suffices to mention two important aspects here, namely *fefa'aaloalo*'i or the reciprocal mutual respect existing between the Church and culture or the *fa'asamoa* in this instance; and the maintenance of the *vatapuia*, or the sacred relationship existing between the two. These are the most important concepts in the Samoan worldview of 'being and existence' at the personal level and at the corporate communal level. There is no doubt in my mind that these aspects of the *fa'asamoa* have contributed significantly to the government and leadership components of the EFKS, and more importantly to the growth and development of both the Samoan Church and the secular Samoan society as existing today.

Again, the notion of *e va'ava'alua le Talalelei ma le aganu'u* in Samoa is founded on these solid Samoan life templates of governance and leadership thus enabling mutual understanding and trust in each other in all matters of life. For that reason peace and harmony

³⁷⁴ Lesa, "Time for Church to show love", 1.

generally prevail and proliferate in Samoa as a nation, with a few odd exceptions from time to time. The cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS has also been smoothly executed within the framework of its Church structure and leadership because of such mutual respect and understanding between both parties – EFKS and Samoan culture.

All the research participants of this study as well as other informants mentioned this important Samoan philosophical saying. The gospel would always go hand in hand with the Samoan culture no matter what situation or occasion. For Samoans, this understanding did not imply that the gospel was equal to the Samoan culture, but rather that the work of the gospel within the Samoan world would not be totally fulfilled if it did not critically recognise and respect the assistance and support from Samoan culture, and vice versa. The Samoans in general did not doubt or question the validity of the spiritual power and mana of the gospel on its own, especially with regards to the mysterious ways in which God manifests his sovereignty and might in the midst of his people at his own time. They simply asserted the fact that God and his gospel was the ultimate truth for humanity and the power of that truth was revealed in God's own ways and at his own times irrespective of what mankind believed. Samoans also believed that since the work of the gospel was performed for and with the people, it was imperative that the traditions and culture of the same people, the Samoans, be acknowledged and respected at all times, so laying a solid foundation for a harmonious mutual relationship between the two institutions at all times. Participant B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J, K, and Participant L have addressed this notion in detail. In particular, Participant C stated his own rendition of the Samoan axiom '*E va'ava'alua le Talalelei ma le Aganu'u*' when he said,

I believe in that [the saying]. I think it depends on how you see how the *va'ava'alua*³⁷⁵ works. If you think the one boat is paddled by the Church and the Culture. OK, maybe there is an aspect of that. But when I see the word *vaavaalua*, I usually see two boats but they both paddling in the same direction. They never actually become one. They touch in and out again. When things are calm they touch and when the waves are high they become apart again. Every time I see that phrase I see two canoes. I don't know for what reason, even though I know what *va'ava'alua* means. *E va'ava'alua* where there are two into one. But the theme says to itself because that's what it's needed.³⁷⁶

However, from a slightly different perspective, Participant A did not totally agree with the Samoan saying. He believed that the gospel and the ministry of God in the world must not

³⁷⁵ Participant C has taken the literal meaning of the word *va'ava'alua* being two boats moving side by side towards the same direction.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Participant C, February 2008.

be tendered for compromise in any way in order to put it on a par with Samoan culture in one form or another. He says,

Ou te le fiafia au iai, e leai se faapea e va'ava'alua e sili ai le muamua o le isi ae mulimuli le isi. Aua a vaavaalua e leai lava se taimi e meet ai, ma e blame ai foi le right o le isi. Ia o lou lava lagona e tataua lava ona tutoatasi le talalelei. E pei la o le mea lea: o loo finau lava isi fai mai a le mamalu le aganuu e le malosi le talalelei. O le aganuu lea e ala ai ona Malosi le talalelei. E le mafai ona ou faasa'oina lea mataupu. O le Talalelei a ia e iai lava lana ia aganuu..... O le faavae lava lena o le talalelei. E le faavae i luga o se aganuu.³⁷⁷

(I am not happy with it (Samoan axiom). There is no 'go hand in hand' but one should be first before the other. Because if there is a 'go hand in hand' between the two (gospel and culture) then there will be no time the two will meet and one blames its right over the other. I believe the gospel should stand on its own. For example, some argue that, "if culture does not give its traditional blessing and support for the gospel, the gospel would have no strength. It is the culture, which grants the strength and ability for the gospel to survive and succeed." I do not avow such a claim. The gospel has its own culture. ... That is the foundation of the gospel. It is not founded upon a culture.)

To some extent, I tended to agree theologically that the power of God in the gospel, and the ministry of the Christian Church, was the ultimate authority to which the Samoan culture was subordinated. To this end Participant F re-emphasised this understanding when he said, *O lona uiga i lo'u manatu, ma lou fa'aaloalao a i le galuega a le Talalelei, e tu tasi a le galuega a le Talalelei, a'o le aganu'u na te support ina le galuega a le Talalelei.*³⁷⁸ (To me, with all due respect for the Gospel, the gospel stands on its own and (Samoan) culture supports its work). This belief reflected the theological superiority of the Gospel over culture. It implied that the Gospel itself did not need any help and support from the Samoan culture but vice versa.

However, the Samoan axiom in this instance, relates directly to the practical reality of the mutual relationship between gospel and culture, theologically and in worldly terms, in the Samoan life world. The various manifestations of the work of the Gospel within villages might become redundant if not impossible in the real world of the *fa'asamoa* and Samoan culture if the Samoan tradition prevailed at its extreme power and effect. In such circumstance, I believe that no matter what the Church said, the *fa'asamoa* and the Samoan traditions had its own ways of ignoring not only the human rights of its own citizens but also the Gospel and its presence in the village context in Samoa. There were clear examples to this

³⁷⁷ Interview with Participant A, February 2008.

³⁷⁸ Interview with Participant F, February 2008.

effect in the history of Samoa and the Church.³⁷⁹ Looking at this case cited by Asofou So'o, one could draw various conclusions with regards to the relationship between the gospel and culture. I would argue that if the gospel and the Church had the upper hand in the village in this sad event, surely there would not have been any killing, nor any burning of this poor man's possessions. The *faifeau* should have had more power and authority over the village decision. Unfortunately that did not happen at all because the *faifeau* himself was aware of the danger involved and the ramifications if he made any attempt to intervene in the village council's resolution. Thus it was indicative from this case that although the Samoan people were generally said to be well-versed with Christian teachings and applications, it is clear from this situation that there were times when not the Church nor the law of the land could stop the *fa'asamoa* and Samoan tradition from exercising its authority, especially at the village level. Human rights then became secondary, whilst the authority of the communal and corporate personality prevailed. Furthermore, Samoans sometimes thought that they would only deal with the law subsequent to the passing of the village council's resolution as reflected in this case. Moreover, one must also bear in mind that there are certain elements in Samoan culture that one must never challenge at all. Again not even the Church and gospel should in any way endeavour to test such extreme limitations without proper recognition of and respect for the cultural protocols. However, its influence was also indicated in this case, where the *faifeau* asked the village people to spare the life of the victim's spouse and save her and his children from burning. If it were not his intervention, the victim's family would all be dead. To some extent, this was in fact evidence of the Samoan notion of 'go hand in hand' between culture and the work of the gospel and the Church, although in this extreme. In this instance, Samoan culture had the upper hand.

³⁷⁹ So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", 159. So'o describes one classic case of this nature about the killing of one *matai* who did not conform to his village cultural traditions and rules, and destruction of his family properties at the village of Lona - Fagaloa,. The Church in fact had very little influence to revert or lessen the village council's decision to destroy the victim's home and all his possessions at the time.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL- THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS OF CHURCH SERVICES

8.0 INTRODUCTION

The discussion of the scope of Church services for the *Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) will cover the actual work of the Church in specific ecclesial contexts. Unfortunately, there may inevitably be some slight overlap with other spheres of the praxis of the Church that I have already discussed in the preceding sections of the thesis, which hopefully will not distract from the focus of this chapter. While it may appear that the major emphasis of this chapter is on the conventional ecclesiastical services of the Church, I will attempt to explore further into the traditional cultural premise of some of these services in order to provide some perspectives on their development from the past to the present situation. This, I envisage, should establish to some extent the authentic traditional thought forms of the Samoans on these particular services prior to the introduction of the western Christian mindset advocated by the early LMS missionaries in the early nineteenth century.

8.1 CHURCH SERVICES

Practical theologians, depending on the context, may define the services of the Church in several ways. Schleiermacher in the early nineteenth century saw a Church service “as consisting of the task of preaching which is an individual expression of the theologian, and liturgics, a more communal expression”.³⁸⁰ This, I believe, was a narrow definition of the services of the Christian Church, past or present. Thus, it is important to establish clearly at the outset what exactly I mean by ‘Church services’, to which this chapter refers. Here ‘Church service’ relates to all ecclesiastical roles and responsibilities carried out by the Christian Church for the purposes of enriching and encouraging the spiritual formation of the faithful, to enhance their knowledge and understanding about God, and to sustain the spiritual welfare of the ‘body of Christ’ - the EFKS. These include the activities such as *o tapuaiga a le*

³⁸⁰ Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 222.

ekalesia, the worship or divine services of the Church³⁸¹, Church sacraments, Christian education and catechisms, theological education, missionary work, pastoral care and counselling, women's fellowship, youth groups, Sunday schools and many more. These are all part of the ecclesiastical life of the EFKS and more importantly are the services required by Christ the head of the Church to be offered to His believers and followers. However, I will concentrate on only the first five aspects of the services offered by the EFKS mentioned above.

I argue that the theological focus of the services of the Church is a holistic ontological-existential construct. However, such a focus is oriented within a specific context and cultural complex. Thus one cannot ignore the influence and the role of human context and culture in the hermeneutical analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of any society like Samoa. Throughout this chapter, I will embark on the hermeneutical analysis of services of the Church in the Samoan context, from the EFKS Church perspective.

8.1.1 *Tapua'iga* - Worship

One of the Church services that make a significant contribution to the spiritual wellbeing of Christians in Samoa is *Tapuaiga* or Worship. *Tapuaiga* has become an integral part of the Church's ontological existence at its two profound dimensions – the life of an individual believer and as a community of faithful people. *Tapuaiga* of the Samoans is something that has been undertaken with spiritual vigour and maintained from the earliest times in Samoa. It was an invaluable element in Samoan spiritual upbringing even before its acceptance of Christianity. It is through *tapua'iga* that Samoans are connected and related in spirit to their creator *Atua*, *Le-Tagaloa*³⁸². The ancient cultural essence of *tapuaiga* for the Samoans is complex. Traditionally, they were polytheists and believed that the powers of gods and spirits of their ancestors played a significant role in human activities.³⁸³ John

³⁸¹ I am referring to this part as described by the Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, page 25-29.

³⁸² Le-Tagaloa, *Tapuai*, 21, 82; other primary literature on Samoa creation stories reveal another name for the creator god of Samoa as *Tagaloa-lagi* (*Tofaeono, Eco-Technology: Aiga - The Household of Life* 32, 163f, 76. *Tagaloa-lagi* is sometimes shortened to *Tagaloa*; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, prefers the title *Tagaloa* for Samoa's creator God.

³⁸³ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 35.

Williams³⁸⁴ in his writings advanced his negative observations that “the Samoans were an impious race, and their impiety became proverbial with the people of Rarotonga; for when upbraiding a person who neglected a worship of the gods, they would call him a godless Samoan”. Despite this, however, the Samoans in comparison with other Polynesian islands of the Pacific have had a concrete religio-cultural heritage that is still being honoured today in Christian forms. A heritage filled with attestations and affirmations of *Le-Tagaloa-lagi*’s blessings on the people of Samoa.

Christian worship in the EFKS is somewhat congruent to the Samoan *tapuaiga* in many aspects. The recognition of the holiness of the sovereign God is intrinsic to Christian worship thus creating a special spiritual bondage between God and the worshipper. In other words the theological essence of worshipping God ‘Christianly’ is by no means different from the contextual understanding and emphasis of the traditional Samoan *tapuaiga*. That is, worshipping God Almighty ‘Christianly’ or ‘Samoanly’ is one and the same. I consider that the similarity in essence of the two contexts of worship makes their merging much smoother and more acceptable.

The two forms of traditional *tapuaiga*— private and public - nurtured the Christian theological essence of the concept ‘*koinonia*’ through the coming together of the family as a unit, as well as the village as a community in worship.³⁸⁵ *Tapuaiga* is an act of spiritual fellowship and communal care for each other distinct from the individual approach to God, which is nurtured in other contexts, especially in the western nations. Although the first *tapuaiga* is labelled in this work as ‘private worship’ as such, it refers really to the privacy of the *aiga* as an individual unit in their act of *tapua’iga*, having a common spiritual optimistic outlook and a unifying expectation of better life for each individual family member. Not only that, but the communal fellowship within such a setting is unique, with its own distinctive features, and sustains the dynamics of interrelationship existing amongst its members – *o le vatapuia*. This reveals the Samoans’ awareness of the sacredness of the relational relationship existing between an individual and God and between the individuals themselves. The continuity of such relational reverence amongst *aiga* people within the *tapuaiga* context

³⁸⁴ Cited by Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life*, 158.

³⁸⁵ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 91.

becomes the bearer of respect, recognition, peace, and love, which overall sustains the virtue of unity and solidarity amongst family members.

One other distinctive feature of this private *tapuaiga* is the collective focus of the prayer language used. For example, Fana'afi Aiono Le Tagaloa refers to four of the traditional prayers in Newell's article³⁸⁶, which were actually said by the priest conducting the private *tapuaiga* in the pre-Christian period. The priest said,

O le fanaafi o fa'amalama mo lau afio, le Atua

Ia apepelea i matou i lou agalelei

(This is a fire votive for you our God. May you wrap us, cloak us in your goodness and kindness)

O le fanaafi o fa'amalama mo lau afio, le Atua

Ua se atua ma lau afio lo matou agamasesei

(This is a fire votive to you our God. Our erring, wrongful, defiant ways are blatant before you)³⁸⁷

The use of the Samoan plural pronoun '*matou*' or we/us/our in these prayers is an emphatic indication of the natural emphasis on the corporate personality of the Samoans. Rarely found in Samoan prayers is a sense of the individual person being in contact with God even when such a spiritual leap in faith is actually made privately or personally. Rather, caring and spiritual nurturing for Samoans occur within the framework of "togetherness" and communal respect for each other within the *aiga* or family. Thus seeking God's mercy, guidance, protection and love in earnestness in the pre-Christian era in the sphere of private worship by the *matai* or the *feagaiga* or the *tama'ita'i matua* was basically for the benefit of all *aiga* members and not just for an individual.

8.1.1.1 Other Types of Samoan *Tapuaiga*

It is also pertinent to recognise thus far the fact that there are several other types of Samoan *tapuaiga*, which have been accepted as part of the Christian worship life of the

³⁸⁶ Le Tagaloa, *Tapuai*, 65-67. Le Tagaloa sadly noted that this article by Rev. James Edward Newell could no longer be found at the School of Oriental and Studies in London in her recent visit – perhaps lost or someone has removed it. Rev. Newell is one of the early LMS missionaries who worked in Samoa from 1880 – 1900. He has written many papers and letters to various individuals from Samoa during his ministry in Samoa. Most of these records are held at the School of Oriental and African Studies. For more details of Rev. Newell see <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cats/195455.htm>.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 65-67.

Samoans. Although the early missionaries and the Christian Church have frowned upon some of these as seemingly unchristian and heathenish in the context of the Christian religion, the people take these *tapuaiga* seriously as part of their own worship life. They are spiritually viable and are in the true character of worship. These include the worship services conducted at *Liutofaga* (the traditional ritual of the disinterment and reburial of the dead bodies), *Talagateu* (unveiling ritual), and at *Sama-ga-pe'a* (ritual for the completion of tattoo). These are specific cultural rituals and rites of passage in Samoan life and Samoans often would request their Church ministers or pastors to conduct worship services for these rituals. *Liutofaga*³⁸⁸ is the ancient Samoan ritual of disinterment and reburial of the remains of a deceased person in the Samoan context. Such worship is banned by the EFKS as being pagan and unworthy of Christians. Such reburial activities often occurs especially when surviving children of the deceased are keen to relocate their parents bodies at close proximity to their residences or to relocate to a better position, they would normally have to go through this cultural ritual *liutofaga*. The ritual involves opening the grave and gathering all the bones of the deceased, washing them, coating with traditional *u'u* or oil and wrapping them with a huge *siapo* or *tapa* ready for reburial at the new location. Culturally, all these activities have to be sanctioned by the worship service which is the traditional gesture of being legitimately accepted and recognised by not only the extended family but also by the village in which the family resides. Thus a worship service plays a very important part of the rite. The *matai* or the *aiga* priest conducted such traditional service within the frameworks of cultural protocols and norms. Big feasts and people's fellowship at the latter part of the ceremony are the main features of such a ritual. Sharing memories of the deceased and reflections on the family's life journey since the passings away of the ancestors are important aspects of such a ceremony.

Today the worship services are no longer the prerogative of the *matai*, though some families still maintain this practice, but all are now referred to the *faifeau*. Since the introduction of western Christianity, all matters relating to worship services within the spheres of extended families and villages have now been recognised by Samoan culture as

³⁸⁸ *Liutofaga* tradition for the Samoans is very much similar to the Jewish burial rite called *Ossilegium* that was common during the Second Temple period. The Jewish rite involves "a deliberate procedure of gathering the skeletal remains of an individual after the decay of flesh and placing them in a special container, an ossuary, while retaining tis individual burial within the family tomb to await the individual's physical resurrection", [See Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish funerary customs, practices and rites in the second temple period*, ed. John J Collins, vol. 94, *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 483]. Other Jewish writings such as the Talmud call this second burial of the deceased bones *likkut 'atzamot* or (the gathering of the bones). Similar to the practice of *ossilegium*, the bones were also gathered and placed in special receptacles called ossuary. Such second burial customs had been common especially in Palestine in the first century C.E due to the Greco-Roman influence. [See also Joseph Gutmann, *The Jewish Life cycle* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1987), 20].

falling within the jurisdiction of the *faifeau* or the village pastor. However, the EFKS, which ordains the *faifeau* has clearly stipulated in its Review of Standing Resolutions³⁸⁹ that “the pastor shall not conduct a worship service for the reburial of a relative of a family who is killed in a war, or while visiting a foreign country, and whose remains are required by their family to be brought back to their home village, if and when requested by their relatives”³⁹⁰. Moreover, in Section X (7) entitled ‘Digging up of Dead People’³⁹¹, of the Resolutions states clearly that, “the Pastors and the Church must refrain from the practice of digging up dead bodies and witchcraft and trickery”³⁹². This in fact places the faithful Samoans in an uncertain situation. While the EFKS is clearly focusing on its Christian prerogative from the western Christian perspective, it is undoubtedly clear from this instance the unappreciative attitude of early missionaries towards traditional cultural values of the Samoan people. It may be argued that in hindsight the circumstances surrounding the early Samoan Church was very different from the current Church people’s mindset with regards to these cultural rituals. I agree with such perception of the Samoan situation when the first missionaries arrived. It becomes clear that the early missionary task was basically focusing on doing away with anything to do with cultural rituals, which were considered pagan and evil in their eyes. In this case, perhaps, it was much more on the extreme right of the evil spectrum when it dealt specifically with dead bodies already buried in the ground. And this is distressing from the Samoan perspective, as they have now realised the insensitivity of the early missionaries to their ancestor’s needs at the time. Ruperake Petaia³⁹³ rightly expresses this early missionary mindset which suggests that, “those that lived before the ‘great salvation of Christianity arrived, and those who continue to believe in those heathenish traditions since, have no place at all in the eternal heaven of western Christianity.” They came with such a mentality that everything to do with, and related to, Samoan culture then was unchristian, pagan, evil, and unworthy of any reasonable consideration. Thus their main mission objective at the time was to reject all similar Samoan customs and rituals.

³⁸⁹ EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 22. This is my translation of the current Standing Resolution of the EFKS, 2003.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 24. The words ‘Digging up of Dead People’ is adapted from Ruperake Petaia, “*Liutofaga* in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ” (Bachelor of Divinity, Malua Theological College, 2005).

³⁹² This is my translation of the Church’s Resolution, which is directly related to this particular part of the Church document.

³⁹³ Petaia, “*Liutofaga* in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ” , 47.

I personally cannot see any harmful effect or negative impact of conducting a Christian worship service at a Samoan *liutofaga* ritual today when requested by the families and relatives of the deceased to do so. For Samoans, such a Christian service at a *liutofaga* is symbolic of the true spiritual nature of the integration of Christianity as a religion and Samoan cultural religious emphasis on revisiting the beloved ancestors of the past. As one informant describes:

*O le sauniga lotu e faia i se liutofaga e mafai ona fa'apea o le mafai lea ona fa'atasia o le talitonuga fa'asamoa ma le tapuaiga fa'a_kerisiano i le taua o le manatua o e sa pele i loto o aiga ma fanau, ma saga fa'amanatu pea e ala i le vi'ia o le Atua e ana mea uma na fai.*³⁹⁴

(A worship service conducted at a *liutofaga*, we can say it symbolises the integration of Samoan beliefs and Christian beliefs about the significance of remembering of the beloved ones for the families and children, and to celebrate through glorifying God the owner of everything)

It is not to resurrect the dead bodies as such, but rather a sincere attempt by the surviving children and relatives to recapture their deep-rooted connections with their ancestors with a sense of love and compassion, and to remember in faith those who were once have been part of the family and community in the past. In so doing, such cultural activities sustain continuity of family and community integrity from the past towards the future, thereby reaffirming people's sense of identity, and rekindling their faith in their culture and religion. I am not at condemning the current stance of the EFKS regarding these cultural rites. However, I would argue that an effort towards recognizing *liutofaga* as a cultural ritual that is contributing well to the identity of the Samoans as well as maintaining the continuity of such identity to the future could perhaps be reconsidered by the EFKS as a Christian Church of the twenty first century. It may not be an easy process to have this accepted and implemented by the Church, but it can be done gradually with a sense of appreciation and understanding between the Church leaders and people. In other words, the Church must be contextually sensitive in its mission.

This is what I call the contextualisation of the theological emphasis of the life of the people in order that such life becomes meaningful and worthy of living for them. Worship services for *liutofaga* can be conducted like any other Church service with a specific focus and emphasis. It is a service of thanksgiving for the survivor's remembrance of their ancestor's contribution to their family, village and the Church. Petaia suggests that failing to appreciate and recognise such a service as crucial to sustenance and continuity at least of the

³⁹⁴ Conversation with Rev. Fa'amate Fepulea'i, February 2008.

local Christianisation process results in a “westernised Christianity (which) is inflexible and continues to be an overbearing highfaluting condescending cause, heading towards its own probable downfall and demise in these islands”.³⁹⁵

Talagateu or unveiling of a gravestone is another traditional ritual, which has been playing an important role in the services of the Church for the Samoan society and particularly within the EFKS. This is the commemoration of attaining twelve months of grief and sorrow for the death of an elderly person and other family members. *Talagateu* in Samoan literally means ‘an unpacking or opening of a bouquet or garland of flowers’. This refers to the removing of the garland of flowers, wreath and circlets from the grave of the deceased family member. It is a traditional ritual that is still very popular amongst Samoans today, thus families normally request the service of the *faifeau* to preside at such family occasion. In the past such celebrations were all done by the *matai* of the *aiga* who was the traditional priest endowed with such prerogative. As a rite of passage, the celebration of the ritual has been a perfect occasion for all relatives and families from near and far to come together in fellowship and maintain the natural spiritual heritage of the family from the past ancestors. It may also become an opportunity for some families to resolve some family issues or disputes causing divisions within the *aiga* (family) or the *aigapotopoto* (extended family).

In fact *talagateu* is similar to the Jewish tradition of unveiling³⁹⁶. The differences are found in the actual practice and execution of the ritual in the respective cultures and contexts. According to Barbara and Bruce Kadden,

It is customary for the grave marker to be put in place and for an unveiling ceremony to be held after the Kaddish-period [11 months for parents and 30 days for other close relatives] is over, but no later than one year after the death... The unveiling ceremony consists of the recitation of Psalms, a very brief eulogy encapsulating the most salient characteristics of the deceased, removing the cloth covering the headstone, the *El Maleh Rahamim* [God full of compassion--a prayer], and the Mourner's *Kaddish* [a prayer in praise of God recited by mourners].³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Petaia, "Liutofaga in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ"

³⁹⁶ Barbara Binder Kadden and Bruce Kadden, "The tombstone, the unveiling and visiting the grave", in *Teaching Jewish Life Cycle: Insights and Activities* (Denver: A.R.E. Publishing, Inc, 1997); see also V. A. Barradale, *O le tala i tu ma masani ua ta'ua i le tusi paia: Jewish manners & customs* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1904), 59-61.

³⁹⁷ Kadden and Kadden, "The tombstone, the unveiling and visiting the grave".

It would appear there have been no problems with the EFKS in *faiifeau* officiating at *talagateu* services when requested by the families and community concerned. This has been the concern which has often been voiced in the gatherings of the *faiifeau* during the *Fono Tele* in recent years. However, the fact is that the EFKS has no guidelines or similar Church instructions put in place specifically for such worship services, as there are for other Church services such as funerals, marriage, and the dedication of a new Church building.³⁹⁸ Yet it is undoubtedly clear that *talagateu* one of the most frequent traditional Samoan community. On every one of these occasions there is always a Christian Church service conducted by the *faiifeau*, finally concluding with a huge feast where all the extended family, local and from abroad, come together to celebrate the occasion.

Although this service is often conducted, it seems that the EFKS as a Church is not certain as to its role in these circumstances. It is ironic that while the Church administration appears unsure with regards to this aspect of its mission, the individual *faiifeau* are at the same time involved in conducting this *talagateu* worship service. Thus there are specific implications of this practice in the Samoan Church that need to be identified and properly addressed. First it suggests that anyone is free to participate and conduct such a service within the EFKS in the absence of clear guidelines. Second, there is an implication that the individual *faiifeau* in his own right is flexible, sensitive and cognisant of the cultural protocol for these rituals and thus responds appropriately, whilst the EFKS as a Church is either ignorant or somewhat reluctant to respond to people's religious needs. This however may be an exaggeration of the attitude of the EFKS towards these circumstances. What is necessary at this point of time for the EFKS is to recognise the spiritual needs of the Samoans relating to traditional occasions such as *talagateu* and respond accordingly in an ecclesiastically informed manner. Furthermore, the EFKS needs to be sensitive to the people's traditional and spiritual needs that not only it is consistent with its mission statement but realistically alert to the ever-changing situations of the people over time. Rev. Fepulea'i suggests that:

*E tatau i le ekalesia ona amanaia lelei nisi o mana'oga fa'ale-aganu'u e pei o Talagateu ma liutofaga e avea ma vaega taua o le olaga fa'aKerisiano o tagata. O lona uiga ia faia e le Ekalesia sauniga e tatau ma talafeagai mo ia mea taua a le aganu'u e iloa ai le galulue fa'atasi o le Talalelei ma le fa'asamoa i faiga fa'akerisiano.*³⁹⁹
(The Church should recognise some of the cultural needs for *talagateu* and *liutofaga* to be part of the Christian life of the people. It means the Church should conduct appropriate

³⁹⁸ This issue was raised again by *faiifeau* at their annual gathering at the *Fono Tele* of 2005.

³⁹⁹ Conversation with Rev. Fa'amate Fepulea'i, February 2008.

worship services for these important cultural activities, which is the sign of the good relationship between the Gospel and Samoan culture.)

An urgent attempt by the EFKS to address this issue as part of its on going response to the theological praxis of its mission would certainly avoid it being ridiculed by the public and other Church denominations. On a much serious note, a standardised approach by the EFKS to deal with such Church services is a must, as is the case with other services. Thirdly, it is clear in such situation that the EFKS theological praxis up to now is very much western oriented with very little changes since the time of the early missionaries. It is also an indication of how conservative the EFKS mindset has become in the past decades. I think EFKS has a naïve, irresponsible attitude towards this issue, perhaps dangerous to the holistic spiritual growth and development of the 'body of Christ' as a whole. In fact such conservative mindset of the EFKS has been identified as one of the reasons, which contributes dramatically to the great exodus of its young and middle-aged congregants to other denominations or to other religious faiths. The report on the Samoa census of 2001⁴⁰⁰ reveals an 8 percent decrease from the 1991 census in the number of EFKS adherents compared to 2 percent and 1 percent decrease for the Methodist and the Catholics respectively.

8.1.1.2 General Impression of *Tapuaiga*

As *tapuaiga* has been the core of the spiritual life of the people since the Christian Church introduced in Samoa, preaching has become its prominent part. From my observation of one Samoan village,⁴⁰¹ this has been one of the most important aspects of the lifeworld of the villagers. Not only their normal Sunday morning and afternoon *tapuaiga*, but also peoples determination for their daily devotions in the morning and in the evening. The highlight of people's weekly work routine is their worship on Sunday. Sunday is the day for all religious

⁴⁰⁰Ministry of Finance: Government of Samoa, "Report of the census of population and housing 2001", (Apia: Ministry of Finance, 2001), 21-23.

⁴⁰¹ I am referring here to the village of Sapapali'i where I spent four weeks during my field research for observation. The village of Sapapali'i on the island of Savai'i is notable for its traditional cultural status in Samoan social organization as well as its historical and religious significance in the history of Christianity in Samoa. Sapapali'i was and still is the residing village of one of the highest chiefs of Samoa, Malietoa. Malietoa Vainu'upo Tavita of Sapapali'i was recognised as the high chief of Samoa responsible for the acceptance of Christianity from the first LMS missionaries in 1830. The village became the focal point of the LMS missionary enterprise in Samoa in terms of making it the central location where the missionaries settled and to begin their mission works. Today, the village still maintains that high profile in all sectors of the Samoan society and still commemorates the arrival of the Christian Church by hosting an annual special worship service. Some important details of Sapapali'i Congregational Church are: Membership –approximately 950 people; Matafale *lotu* (families) – 75; *Faifeau* (Church Minister) – 1, *Tiakono* (deacons) - 36; *A'oa'o fesoasoani* (lay-preachers) – 5; Village population - approximately 1000 people. The observation research data on Sapapali'i are at the possession of the author.

matters, anything other than that is out of bounds, and the *fono a le nu'u* has put in place various remedies for any odd happenings during Sunday.

Preaching is the spiritual vehicle through which the message of God is proclaimed to the faithful in the EFKS. All other parts of the normal worship service are included but it seems that preaching is the central focus of all worshippers. Thus preaching determines the quality of a service for the EFKS goers. Most often people attend *tapuaiga* when they know a good preacher is preaching on Sunday. Generally the preaching ministry of the EFKS has been relatively appealing to and effective for the people.

Preaching sometimes, however, has become the vehicle through which *faiifeau* convey their own personal messages in the pulpit to the detriment of the gospel. In my opinion, the pulpit should never be the platform for personal attacks on the faithful or for any political propaganda. One participant shares his attempt to concentrate his preaching on a particular person in the congregation. The attack was due to the brethren's expressed opinions against some Church policies. Participant A explains,

Ou te va'ai atu i autafa o le pulela'a...oute iloa tonu atu lava X la e nofo mai luma. Aua o le tasi lea tagata e nate lalaua le EFKS e tigaina. ... aua o le tasi lea tagata na aim i ai la'u lauga.

(From the side of the pulpit...I saw X sitting at the front. He was another person who rebuked the EFKS because of suffering...he was another person at whom my preaching aimed)

It is sad to see the preaching by the Church uses such an approach in proclaiming the message of God. I believe the problem has nothing to do with the EFKS as a Church but rather a weakness of personal attitude of the *faiifeau*, which needs eradication from the clergy's mindset. Another research informant shares a similar experience relating to preaching by *faiifeau* when he says,

E matuai tele lava foi lota ita experience I lota alu atu I le lotu e matua'i sasa mai lava le personal pride a le faiifeau ia ae ta'atia ese a le mea la e tataua ona deliver mai. Ae tate vaai atu a o lona ita I le tagata lea. O le mea la lena e foi ai foi manatu o tagata, e le gata ina tuli ai ma le mamoe lea e sasa iai le mea lea ae affect ai ma isi tagata.⁴⁰²

(I share the same experience when I go to Church and the *faiifeau* hammers his own personal pride leaving aside the message he was supposed to deliver. I could see that it was because of his resentment against one person. And that makes people angry and not only this particular sheep would eventually be going for good but it also affects other people.)

⁴⁰² This informant wants to remain anonymous.

In my opinion, the EFKS should re-evaluate its preaching approach and style and to make sure the faithful are well nurtured spiritually through its preaching ministry.

8.2 THE EFKS AND EDUCATION

One of the monumental contributions of the missionary enterprise in the Samoan archipelago is education— religious and secular education. Norman Goodall's⁴⁰³ record of the works of the LMS in the Pacific gives a vivid description of the foundational works and the invaluable contributions of the early missionaries in Samoa with regards to education. Although they had early negative perceptions of the so-called heathen behaviour and attitudes of the people in their early days in Samoa,⁴⁰⁴ they quickly became actively involved in educating the people, concentrating on moral and ethical conduct, but more importantly on literacy. Goodall seems to indicate that although each missionary worked diligently on his/her own area of expertise in the mission field, undoubtedly their common role and responsibility for the mission was education for the locals by whatever means they could. This seemed to be the common assumption amongst the missionaries around the Polynesia region of the Pacific. Not only that they should work harder in spreading the gospel but also should teach people how to read and write. I. C. Campbell⁴⁰⁵ confirms this conception of encouraging education as being one of the first tasks of the missionaries for the Polynesian people including Samoa in his book *A History of the Pacific Islands*. The process of civilisation as an initial step towards the Christianisation strategy of the missionaries was also part of the whole education process for the Samoans in the early nineteenth century. The arrival and establishment of the first printing press in 1839,⁴⁰⁶ called the Malua Printing Press as it still is today, accelerated the teaching of literacy. A variety of published materials were available for people to. This included Christian books on various Church doctrines and teachings. These were made

⁴⁰³ Norman Goodall, "South Seas: Samoa", in *A history of the LMS 1895 - 1945* (London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1954).

⁴⁰⁴ Charles Forman, "Foreign Missionaries in the Pacific Islands During the Twentieth Century", in *Mission Church and Sect in Oceania*, ed. James A Boutilier, Daniel T Hughes and Sharon W Tiffany, *ASAO Monograph No 6* (London: University Press of America, 1978), 43.

⁴⁰⁵ I C Campbell, *History of the Pacific Islands* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 74; see also Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* (Christchurch/Canberra: Macmillan Brown Centre For Pacific Studies and Pandanus Books, ANU, 2005), 78-101.

⁴⁰⁶ Tiffany, "The politics of denominational organization in Samoa", 430; Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 73-74.

available for the locals who were keen to learn. In hindsight, the Church was quite clear from its beginning in Samoa that education was a task to be undertaken seriously.

Education therefore, as one of the profoundly significant services of the Church since its early beginnings,⁴⁰⁷ has been of two streams, namely the religious and the secular, running parallel to each other.⁴⁰⁸ The former will be the focus of the inquiry in the following section, as it directly relates to the religious emphasis and mission of the Church then and now. Secular education in fact at its earliest stage was taken up as an 'extra-curricular' activity by the missionaries in Samoa, but it later became stronger and was soon running parallel to religious or Christian formation in the formal manner it is today.

8.2.1 Religious Education

The missionary enterprise was responsible for religious education. While education in its strict sense was not clearly evident in the early decade of the missionaries' work, their constant interactions with the local people in their worship services as well as their everyday life activities became the first medium through which they could teach and educate the Samoans. Having said that, the locals however, had had their own means of education, which worked well empirically in their own situations at the time. The missionaries established what was called 'house education'⁴⁰⁹ where the young local people performed housework, tended their plantations, and did other manual and physical labour. A few years later, the first Samoan missionaries to Southern Vanuatu were students who had undergone their education and religious formation at these house education forums⁴¹⁰. The enthusiasm of the local people for learning new things and adopting fresh ideas from the missionaries became increasingly apparent. By the year 1845 when millions of pages of useful reading materials were published and distributed amongst the followers of the Christian faith, many Samoans could already read and write to some extent.⁴¹¹ The arrival of the first printing press in 1839

⁴⁰⁷ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 59.

⁴⁰⁸ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 690.

⁴⁰⁹ Featuna'i Liua'ana, "For Jesus and His Church: Malua Theological College - A Historical Survey of 150 Years of Theological Education, 1844-1994", *The Pacific Journal of Theology* 2, no. 14 (1995), 53.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 53.

⁴¹¹ Tiffany, "The politics of denominational organization in Samoa", 430.

increased the resources available for education at the time. The most obvious evidence of educational growth and developmental progress was the establishment of Malua Theological College⁴¹² by the LMS in 1844, the second of such institutions in the Pacific region at the time. The first one was at Takamoa of Avarua in Rarotonga in 1839⁴¹³. Anybody who entered Malua at the time was looked upon as a most knowledgeable person.⁴¹⁴ The College's reputation stemmed from its being the first formal learning institution as such in Samoa and from the fact that the College teachers and people in leadership positions were European missionaries possessing western knowledge, skills, and talents. Given the fact that these teachers were also missionaries, the educational dimension of the missionary enterprise became prominent and locally demanding.⁴¹⁵ The missionaries' social status in Samoan society was practically equal to or perhaps in some cases even somewhat higher than, that of the Samoan *matai*. The local people had endowed this respectful recognition on the missionaries since the arrival of John Williams in 1830 when the Samoan *matai* Malietoa Vainu'upo who first received Christianity conferred such traditional social standing on them.⁴¹⁶ Traditionally, the Samoans have upheld that missionary status with sincerity till today. The missionary enterprise came to an end with great success when the Samoan Church became independent from the LMS control in 1962 and their legacy, ecclesiastical power and authority, have been inherited by the local Church ministers of today.

When local pastors started working in the congregations, education was already an integral part of their mission to the people, in addition to their normal routine of conducting *tapuaiga* every Sunday and other days of the week. The Church schooling was called *aoga a faifeau* or the pastor's school. These learning activities on weekdays became well recognised by the Church and it strongly urged all the *faifeau* to be diligent and to commit themselves to

⁴¹² Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*; Lange, *Island Ministers*, 84. Note that Lange mentions that the original name of the first seminary school established in 1844 was 'Samoan Mission Seminary' which was renamed Malua Theological College in a few years later and it is still known by this name; Ron Crocombe, *The South Pacific* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 2001), 238; Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 37.

⁴¹³ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, 116-118; see also Lange, *Island Ministers*, 66-69; Ron Crocombe, *The South Pacific: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Auckland, NZ: Longman Paul Ltd, 1987), 238.

⁴¹⁴ Lange, *Island Ministers*, 84.

⁴¹⁵ Liua'ana, "For Jesus and His Church: Malua Theological College - A Historical Survey of 150 Years of Theological Education, 1844-1994", 53.

⁴¹⁶ This is the traditional belief and understanding of the Samoans about how the *faifeau* or Church pastors have inherited such an elite traditional status within the social structure of the Samoan society.

educating the people.⁴¹⁷ Fundamental education begins here where all the children of a particular village must attend to learn how to read and write. The focus of such training was not only to learn foundational reading and writing skills but also to learn about the bible and Christian morals and ethics.⁴¹⁸ From my observation of Sapapali'i village in Savai'i, *aoga faifeau* was still at its best, it accommodates any children of the village who are actually attending secular schools, and school drop outs who have not married yet. This was compulsory and the Rev. Esera Auatama Esera and his wife Tamara dedicated all their time in planning and teaching village children with the help of some qualified secular teachers in the village. Rev. Esera recalls⁴¹⁹ that the majority of these children have now attending secular high schools in Apia, the capital city of Samoa whilst the rest have joined high schools in Savai'i. This is an indication of the quality of the combination of *aoga faifeau* and primary secular schools where children began their early education.

Historically, this has been the trademark for the missionary enterprise in the Samoa islands. The people treasured the missionaries' early involvement in education, and in hindsight Samoans always have fond memories of their early experience of education under the tutorship of the *faifeau*. They appreciate the positive impact of *faifeau*'s school on their lives as individuals and the content and quality of such teachings. The missionaries and local pastors invested an immense amount of time and effort in this learning process and pastors' schools continue today. Learning of memory verses was indeed difficult as some of them had to memorise a whole Psalm or almost a whole chapter of one of the gospels. Teaching materials such as paper, pen, and books for reading were scarce and the pastors had to put in extra effort in trying to teach their students with any material available at hand. Teaching methodologies were, in the past, harsh by today's standards, as the learners often had to encounter physical slapping on the chin or other parts of their bodies as a means of speeding up their learning performance. Physical beating was not uncommon as a means of both discipline and encouraging swift learning. Whether such teaching methodology was appropriate was not an issue in this early period of education in Samoa. Despite such conditions, the methods appear to have been successful, as some of the older generation still

⁴¹⁷ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 690.

⁴¹⁸ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 59.

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Rev. Esera Auatama Esera at Sapapali'I, January 2008 during my observation fieldwork research.

reminisce about those good old days of learning.⁴²⁰ In fact they even compare the teaching methods and techniques of the past favourably in relation to today's educational approaches and methodologies, acknowledging their great gain in achieving good knowledge under such learning conditions.

It is my contention that regardless of sometimes ruthless learning environment during the missionary enterprise, I still have faith in the integrity of the education ethos of the time.⁴²¹ Any comparison made of the education system of the past to that of today with a negative attitude towards the early methods of learning is unfair. The effort of the missionaries, *faiifeau*, and all those who were deeply involved with the learning processes in the past was immeasurable. They in fact did their best with sincere intentions of promoting and developing the local people's general knowledge and basic understanding about life. From the very earliest days educational achievement was such that it was possible to send Samoan missionaries to other Pacific islands such as Vanuatu as early as 1839⁴²² and Papua New Guinea towards the end of that century.

Part of religious education at the local Church today are the youth programmes, which comprise bible study, debates on religious and social issues, and Samoan culture and customs. Some of the students are spiritually motivated at these programmes and proceed to theological studies at Malua Theological College of the EFKS. Others who are very keen and talented in cultural knowledge and etiquette later become prominent cultural leaders as *matai* and make marvellous Samoan speeches in traditional Samoan ceremonial gatherings. Participant I reports,

Ao matou feagai ai ma le taligamalo i le tausaga ua mavae, e tele a matou i le ava. O tamaiti lava o le autalavou lea na feagai ai ma le ava. Ia o le mea lea ou te faafetai ai foi,

⁴²⁰ Author's conversation with Sina Tu'u'au, Leaso Moefa'auo, Maiava Vaise, November 2007.

⁴²¹ My father used to tell stories about the regular beating he received with his friends by the *faiifeau* when he could not remember his Bible memory verses for the White Sunday (Special Sunday conducted by Sunday School children), and when he prepared for *Aoga Faiifeau* (Minister's school) examinations in the past. It was such a painful experience having their bottoms struck with a thin strong stick or the *faiifeau's* wide belt. However, from such an experience he could manage to behave well, be obedient, and take education seriously at all times.

⁴²² Liua'ana, "For Jesus and His Church: Malua Theological College - A Historical Survey of 150 Years of Theological Education, 1844-1994", 53.

*e oo mai le taligamalo ua masani iai tamaiti i le faiga o le ava o le feiloaiga. Ma o lea lava e taumafai e build up le tulaga lea.*⁴²³

(When we had visitors last year, we had many *ava*. The young people of our youth group actually participated in the preparation and execution of the *ava* protocol. I was thankful that when visitors arrived we were accustomed to making the *ava* ceremony.)

From such small beginnings at *aoga faifeau* and youth programmes, education and knowledge development for Samoan young people has been progressing significantly to this day. It is also important to realise at this local level of education the healthy combination of religious education and Samoan culture and customs in the youth groups. This is in fact the evidence of the interconnection and interrelationship between gospel and culture in the EFKS from a very young age.

8.2.2 Secular Education

Secular education for Samoans was first established and developed by the LMS through the work of the missionary enterprise.⁴²⁴ As outlined above, the LMS was responsible for all types of educational activities in the early times. The missionaries realised that not all people would become pastors in the future. Some people were keen to learn more than Christian faith and practice. The missionaries began focusing on providing other educational opportunities to cater for the secular needs of the Church population at the time. The Leulumoega School was established in 1890 for such purposes under the leadership of the missionaries.⁴²⁵ The school taught subjects such as mathematics, fine art, botany, essay writing, world history, handwriting, linguistics, reading and writing in English, as well as skills and trades such as carpentry, agricultural science.⁴²⁶ Although the early development of this school was affected by cultural rivalries in Samoan society, it nevertheless became a wellspring of talented intelligent local people who later provided an invaluable human resource for leadership positions in economic, political, cultural, and sociological spheres. Other similar teaching institutions such as Papauta in 1891⁴²⁷ for women in Upolu, Atauloma

⁴²³ Interview with Participant I, February 2008. Participant H and Participant L express the same experience.

⁴²⁴ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 690; Keesing, *Modern Samoa: Its Government and Changing Life*, 414.

⁴²⁵ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 60; Crocombe, *The South Pacific*, 238-239.

⁴²⁶ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 694.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 697.

in 1900⁴²⁸ for women in Tutuila, Malua-fou in 1912,⁴²⁹ Tuasivi in 1948, Vaisigano in 1955,⁴³⁰ and Nu'uausala College, later became prominent learning foundations for the increasingly well-educated Samoans. Papauta and Atauloma were specifically established for the training of women, primarily to equip them to be pastors' wives for the ministry of the Church. Hence, all learning subjects in these two schools were basically to provide appropriate training needed for the early periods of the LMS ministry. These included sewing, cooking, introductory home economics and home maintenance, scripture training, and childcare.

While the LMS effort in encouraging the local people towards achieving better education in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was very clear, the government authorities over this time were also striving to develop a formal educational system. Felix M. Keesing⁴³¹ discusses well the effort to develop education for the Samoan people despite difficulties in their early attempts. He re-emphasizes the early mindset for education, which stipulated that "education policy should not educate the Samoan children too much in advance of their surroundings and social conditions, but should have for its object the making of good citizens".⁴³² Behind this vision was the focus on eliminating or at least minimizing the notion of 'Europeanising' the local people.⁴³³ To activate this, an attempt to curtail English from teaching was then encouraged towards the mid-1920s. Thus, given this educational framework, which the Church and the state authorities agreed upon, upper school's training was basically revolved around nurturing agricultural and handicrafts practical ability, which gradually associated with other newly emerged schools such as the Fetu, a similar organisation to the Boys Scouts.⁴³⁴

Given the dominant authority of colonial powers of Germany and New Zealand over Samoa in the twentieth century the education system was very much a 'European-type' of

⁴²⁸ American Samoa Department of Education, *History of education in American Samoa* (2008 [accessed 8 June 2008]); available from http://www.doe.as/index_files/history/index.htm.

⁴²⁹ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 697-704.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 705.

⁴³¹ Keesing, *Modern Samoa: Its Government and Changing Life*, 414-424.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 420 – 21.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 421.

education, similar to the New Zealand education system.⁴³⁵ Lalomilo Kamu comments that “we train our students for a constant migration away from village life” and regarded the school curriculum then as somewhat irrelevant to life in a village.⁴³⁶ In other words, students were trained to take up white-collar jobs, which were normally found in the city of Apia.⁴³⁷ The dichotomy between village life and city life education emerged as an inherent problem from the time this European type of education began under the colonial authorities. However, the government and its education system then aimed at sending high-performing students for advanced study overseas for the future of the nation, which was a wise decision. The fruits of such emphasis is now realised in the promising ability and know-how of the leadership personnel of the Samoan government and its public service today.

All in all, this re-evaluation and readjustment, of the education processes in Samoa from the earlier efforts of the missionaries reaffirms my concern mentioned earlier that informal education programme the LMS put in place for Samoans was not in line with the basic educational needs of the people at the time, but rather devalued their natural socio-cultural human constructs. The marked division of domestic labour between *ali'i* (men) and *tama'ita'i* (female) imposed by the missionaries was not warranted at all. There had been traditional division of labour prevailing at the time, which was workable, acceptable and meaningful to Samoans because it was part of their culture. This attempt to impose sociological systems and practices foreign to the locals at such an early stage of the mission enterprise reflects an ignorance of the missionaries regarding the likely harmful impact on the life of the local people.

The awareness by the Samoans of the negative outcome of this missionary endeavour only came to the fore at a much later period. It is my belief that if the missionaries had made an attempt first to understand and appreciate the traditions of the Samoans in the earlier periods of their contact with the locals, they would have integrated the current sociological, economic, cultural, and religious systems prevailing at the time as the most viable stepping stone towards achieving a fair and equitable approach to education during the mission enterprise. One of the regrettable aspects was the missionary misconception as to the

⁴³⁵ Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and The Christian Gospel*, 155.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 155–156.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 155.

“uncivilised and unintelligent” Samoan frame of mind. It was on this premise that they imposed such an unscrutinised education scheme on the Samoans.

Moreover, it must also be noted that the Samoans themselves have had their own philosophy of education for a long time. They believed that “*o tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o la’au ma i’a, a’o tama a le tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala*” (young birds are fed with flowers and fish whilst human child is fed with words and good counsel). It denotes their conviction that a good personality could be nurtured through in-depth exhortations, words of love and compassion, and constant instructions by the parents and community elders within the realm of the family, village, and obviously the Church. Thus, that is education for the Samoans. It is basically an empirical type of training in which all the community including parents are instructors, counsellors, teachers, and participants of the training scheme. The corporate sense of responsibility to teach and instruct the young people of Samoa within extended families, villages, and churches was vital. There were no formal education settings as such but a sort of ‘on-the-job training’ where everyone is in the process of learning while they are on their everyday chores and daily activities. The Samoan family theme, “*Ia lava le mafutaga a matua ma fanau*” (parents and children’s fellowship must be enriched and fulfilling), encompasses the general focus and belief in the significance of the role of the family life as the proper setting for learning in the Samoan milieu. The EFKS Church has acknowledged the benefits of the education systems put in place by the missionaries since the nineteenth century. However, some strong criticism of these systems has been raised and recorded either verbally or in writing by Samoans in various academic disciplines.

8.3 THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education has been the trademark for missionary work in Samoa and other Pacific Islands, such as Rarotonga and Tonga. In Samoa, Malua Theological College has been the centre for such training since 1844. Theological training in this context relates specifically to the preparation of local pastors or Church ministers for the spreading of the gospel to Samoa and the rest of the world through missionary work.⁴³⁸ The contents of such important preparation focuses specifically on equipping the pastors with a broad knowledge of the scripture, the theological doctrines of the Church, Church history and the implementation of

⁴³⁸ Malua Theological College, *Malua Theological College: 2004 Handbook* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004), 3.

the ministry of the Church in the villages and other localities where the Church promotes life and the sovereignty of the Triune God. The content of theological education at Malua has been continuously reviewed over the years as time and resources permit. This is in order to recognise the ever-changing circumstances of the Samoan context, which indeed requires relevant theological insights and practice, and to facilitate the ever-changing needs of the populace when challenged by the world in all facets of life.⁴³⁹ In this regard Malua is highly regarded as a theological institution specifically for preparing well-trained pastors for the ministry of the Church and as an arena for solid academic learning. Its mission statement clearly states its aims as being,

To provide quality theological education, and to equip students with knowledge and skills necessary for an effective ministry in the Church, a ministry undertaken of course within the constraints of political, economic and cultural structures and inevitably affected by the changes occurring thereto. The College also aims at a national and international role by fostering and developing close links with other tertiary institutions, by means of staff/student interchange sharing standards of excellence in spheres of specialization.⁴⁴⁰

The emphasis of the EFKS in promoting and developing its theological education at all times is an indication of its foresight for well-balanced and well-informed followers of Christ doing its ministry on earth. Whether or not that has been achieved is an issue that has been continuously brought up by the general Samoan public in the public forums in which the Church participates. Some radical Samoan thinkers have voiced their opinions about the theological emphasis of the EFKS, as well as its future prospects. For example, Savea Sano Malifa in his editorial in the Samoa Observer once raised the issue about the EFKS shifting its focus from the spiritual matters to those of worldly affairs when it was alleged the Church was becoming a shareholder in a newly formed broadcasting business venture in Samoa.⁴⁴¹

The beginning of the degree courses of Bachelor of Divinity and Bachelor of Theology at Malua Theological College in 1997 became another milestone in the development of EFKS theological training, especially as the resources of the institution are limited. The significance given to good education for future *faifeau* is evident when it is noted that major part of its financial resources in its annual budget are allocated towards

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴¹ Savea Sano Malifa, "The idea that the C.C.C.S. is becoming a shareholder in S.Q.B. is an act of betrayal!" *Samoa Observer*, 13 June 2008.

improving education both in the secular and theological fields.⁴⁴² The establishment of the 'Aoga Tusi Paia' or the Malua Bible School in 2007 as a different stream for theological education is the 'new shoot' from the main theological venture. This is the newest development in theological education established by the EFKS. It is an attempt to accommodate the growing need of the general Samoan populace to study and to understand more about the bible and the ministry of the Church. This demand was noticeable when EFKS adherents were enrolled at other similar Bible schools in Samoa like the Rhema Bible School. In response to such a demand the EFKS agreed and passed the resolution to begin this new school under the guidance of the Elders Committee of the EFKS. "Two accreditation certificates are on offer: a Certificate of Theological Studies in recognition of successfully completing the required courses in one year, and a Diploma in Theological Studies which requires a pass on twenty subjects over 2 years".⁴⁴³ So far, this new dimension in theological education has been a success, especially in that it also accommodates theological education demands from the women of Samoa - another new direction for theological education in Samoa. Women are still not allowed into the ordained ministry of the EFKS as pastors despite discontentment from some women like Marie Ropeti when she says, "women should thus be involved in the highest calling of the church [i.e. ordination]".⁴⁴⁴ This move towards the direction of theological education for women is certainly a major step forward, and has significant implications for the EFKS and the general population.

8.4 SACRAMENTS

The EFKS is a Protestant Christian Church following closely the Reformed Evangelical traditions with major emphasis on Calvinistic heritage. Part of that heritage is the celebration of the sacraments namely, the Lords Supper or Holy Communion and Baptism⁴⁴⁵. The EFKS in its statement of doctrines⁴⁴⁶ describes sacrament as being the two perpetual

⁴⁴² CCCS, *Tusi Iugafono Fono Tele*, ed. CCCS, *Tusi Iugafono Fono Tele 2006* (Malua, Samoa: Malua Printing Press, 2006) 41-127; CCCS, *Tusi Iugafono Fono Tele*, ed. CCCS, *Tusi Iugafono Fono Tele* (Malua: Palua Printing Press, 2007), 58-137.

⁴⁴³ CCCS, *Malua Bible School* (CCCS, 2008 [accessed 15 June 2008]); available from http://www.cccs.org.ws/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6&Itemid=1.

⁴⁴⁴ Ropeti, "A Biblical Basis for the Ordination of Women in the Pacific Churches", 139.

⁴⁴⁵ EFKS, *The statement of doctrine of the Samoan church (LMS): O mataupu silisili o le fa'avae fa'a-le-agaga o le Ekalesia Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1957), 9.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

obligations of the Church instituted by Christ. “They are signs and seals of the covenant ratified in the blood of Christ. They are means of grace by which God strengthens and sustains our faith in Christ. They are also ordinances, through the observance of which the Church confesses her Lord, and is visibly distinguished from the rest of the world.”⁴⁴⁷

8.4.1 Holy Communion

The Holy Communion is normally celebrated on the first Sunday of every month as stipulated in the Church constitution⁴⁴⁸. Every congregation is obliged to follow this ecclesiastical routine, which is to be officiated only by the ordained *faifeau*. The Church can also commemorate it at other times as part of important Church gatherings where Church leaders and communicants⁴⁴⁹ may come together for special purposes. The EFKS as a Church, treasured such emphasis of the original Church of Christ in the beginning, as was taught by the early missionaries, thus continued with sincerity to celebrate the sacrament using bread and wine. However, along the Church’s spiritual journey, it has encountered from time to time several challenges from one context to another within the framework of the process of Church contextualisation, for example, what Church services constitute Church sacraments and how many sacraments the Church should celebrate.

Moreover, there has been a contemporary enthusiasm by the Church to contextualise the elements of the Holy Communion so that the participants may grasp with sincerity the authentic meaning of the death of Christ. There has been an attempt by some churches in the Pacific to substitute the Holy Communion elements of the bread and wine with local food such as *taro (dalo)* and *sua-niu* (coconut juice) respectively, which are not only easily accessible by the local people but are much more meaningful to them.⁴⁵⁰ They are part of their

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴⁸ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 13.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 6; EFKS, *O le Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, 12-13.

⁴⁵⁰ Kafoa Solomone, *Some Issues on Practical Theology in Our Sea of Islands, Oceania* [Ejournal Article] (2005 [accessed 26 April 2007]); available from http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_5/practtheol_solomone.htm. Such urge for contextualization of theology in the Pacific churches has been in practice for sometime. When I was a student of the Pacific Theological College (PTC) from 1999-2000, I actually participated in the celebration of the Holy Communion every Friday morning where contextual elements of taro and coconut juice had been used as alternatives for bread and wine respectively, at several occasions.

everyday livelihood and food nourishment for their physical strength and for sustaining life. This new theological perception regarding the element of Holy Communion by the Pacific Christian Churches, including Samoa, was triggered by a resolution of the Vatican II Council⁴⁵¹, encouraging the use of the vernacular and traditional customs in worship services. Having the sacrament of the Holy Communion moved towards this direction of adaptation and changes in terms of symbols used therein, language⁴⁵² and appropriate local terminologies required serious consideration on the part of the local churches and ecclesiastical leaders. Words used have to be relevant and they have to be somehow reflective of the embedded theological essence of the sacrament. This did not pose much of a problem to Samoans, though the older more conservative generation showed some reluctance to accept the new changes. However, this gradually faded away people realised the sacredness of God embedded in these local substitutes for the elements of the Holy Communion. The taro and the sua-niu represent the body and blood of Jesus respectively and they both constitute local dietary elements for life nourishment. Thus the commemoration of the death of Christ in the Holy Communion using local elements substitutes is simply an act of the remembrance of the great love of God as well as the continuation of humanity's glorification of that God's act of love. It is much more meaningful and acknowledged as so both by individuals personally and by the community of believers.

8.4.2 Baptism

EFKS today practises the traditional Protestant infant sprinkling baptism, around the age of one week to five years old. Baptism are done singly or in groups depending on the number of children brought to the minister to be baptised at a time. Group baptisms are mostly done at the White Sunday celebration when children lead the worship with their biblical memory verses and spiritual skits and drama. Normally at the White Sunday celebration with baptism, big feasts are organised as an after-service meal for all people in every Samoan family. Adult baptism is also practised today, but is not as common as it was in the past. In the days of the earliest missionaries baptism of adults was, of course, very

⁴⁵¹ Pope Paul VI, *CONSTITUTION ON THE SACRED LITURGY SACROSANCTUM CONCILIIUM SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS*
POPE PAUL VI
ON DECEMBER 4, 1963 (2008 [accessed 16 July 2008]); available from
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html, especially on Article 37 to Article 40 of the Constitution.

⁴⁵² Ibid.([accessed), see Article 63 of the Constitution.

common, as older people had just began to experience the impact of the love of God in their adult and mature age. In those earliest days even marriages were conducted for very mature-age couples who had already nurtured many children.

No equivalent ceremony appears to have occurred in the *fa'asamoa* on the birth of a child, perhaps because of not wanting to attract attention to the child so early in life. The placenta was burned or buried,⁴⁵³ so it would not be found by evil spirits – this was often done at home, so the child would remain close to home throughout its life. Circumcision for boys, the biblical rite of passage, did occur in the *fa'asamoa*, not in the first weeks of life but at a much later period especially when young boys were ready to enter primary school level for the first time. Another traditional male ritual signifying passage from childhood to maturity was undergoing a tattooing process (*tatau*). With his *pe'a* – waist to knee tattoo, a male could then enter the *fale o matai*. A female version, *malu*, did not have the same connotation and was not nearly so commonly undertaken, though essential for women of high rank. The missionaries initially tried to prevent Church adherents from receiving tattoos, and even today the EFKS has the policy of excommunicating its communicants who opt to receive *tatau*.

Contextualisation of the Christian baptismal practice has not occurred as yet. The child is usually dressed in white clothing when prepared for baptism. No exchange of fine mats would occur as is done in other Samoan rites of passages. However, it could perhaps be claimed that names chosen for children in EFKS families are more likely to be of traditional Samoan origin. Although many are given biblical names, this is not nearly as common as it is in some other denominations.

8.5 MISSIONARY WORK

The EFKS has been vigorously involved in missionary work in other Pacific islands such as Rotuma,⁴⁵⁴ Vanuatu,⁴⁵⁵ Phoenix Islands,⁴⁵⁶ New Caledonia,⁴⁵⁷ Sandwich Islands,⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ Carina Glanville, *The Culture of Parenting - Postnatal Journey of the World* (Natural Parenting, 2009 [accessed 5 Nov 2009]); available from <http://www.natural-birth.com.au/flex/post-partum-healing/341/the-culture-of-parenting-a-postnatal-journey-of-the-worl.cfm>; See also Filifilia Tamasese, "Samoan Custom and the Rights of Children", *Samoa Observer*, 30 September 2007; Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before.*, see Ch VI.

⁴⁵⁴ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 81-83.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 83-85.

Loyalty Islands,⁴⁵⁹ Aneityum Islands,⁴⁶⁰ Papua New Guinea,⁴⁶¹ Tuvalu, and many others since the first half of the nineteenth century. The Christian Church has excelled in her mission in those islands ever since. In the twentieth century some Samoan *faiifeau* were also on missions in other parts of the world like Jamaica, Zambia, Australia, Great Britain, American Samoa, and Fiji⁴⁶². There are many other dimensions to EFKS missionary works. For example, the EFKS is an active party in some Church organizations outside Samoa, such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) Council for World Mission (CWM), Pacific Council of Churches (PCC), South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS), Pacific Theological College (PTC), and of course, locally active in the Samoa Council of Churches (SCC)⁴⁶³, who have continuously concentrated on promoting Christian principles and practices in all walks of life for the people of the world.

Towards the end of the twentieth century the EFKS tended to focus inwardly towards its own local congregational growth, when it seemed that the gospel had spread much more widely throughout the world with the help of the well coordinated missionary work under the jurisdiction of the Council for World Missions (CWM)⁴⁶⁴. Such inward focus should, in my opinion, concentrate on the growth of the EFKS offshore in those parts of the world where the Samoan diaspora reside. This demands much more support from the ‘mother Church’ with regards to supplying both human resources and finance. In other words the EFKS must venture into ‘planting new congregations’ abroad especially in areas where Samoan people have resided permanently for some time but are without a centralised place of worship and

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 88, 119-126.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 102-104.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 115-118.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 90, 95, 112, 113.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 229-542.

⁴⁶² EFKS, "Faila o le Fono Tele 2006" (paper presented at the EFKS, Fono Tele, Malua, Samoa, May 15-26 2006), see report of *Komiti o Fa'amisionare* on pages 25-30; See also CCCS, "Faila Fono Tele 2009" (paper presented at the Fono Tele EFKS 2009, Malua, 2009) The report entitled, '*Lipoti Galuega Fa'amisionare a le EFKS Fono Tele Malua 14 Me 2009*', pages 43 -57 of the section entitled 'Komiti Fa'amisionare'.

⁴⁶³ EFKS, "Faila o le Fono Tele 2006" , See page 30 of *Ripoti Komiti Fa'amisionare*.

⁴⁶⁴ The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a worldwide community of Christian churches. The 31 members are committed to sharing their resources of money, people, skills and insights globally to carry out God's mission locally. CWM was established in 1977 in its present form.

fellowship. Another aspect of this 'internal mission' is that there has recently been a large pool of graduate theological students who have churches to go to and nothing to work for in the Church apart from helping their own village *faiifeau*. This under-utilised human resource is a challenge to the EFKS and they could contribute a lot to the life of the Church in planting more new congregations overseas. In a paper⁴⁶⁵ I presented at the *Fa'afouina Faiifeau ma A'oa'o Tausi Nu'u 2005* or EFKS Church Minister's Retreat 2005, I put forward a feasible proposal on how this task could be implemented and the Church could approach this challenge overseas. As I stated in the paper, given the underutilised graduates of Malua Theological College, as well as the need for Samoan church overseas, the EFKS should explore the idea of 'planting new churches' in various cities overseas where Samoan people reside and work. Such move would eventually provide not only church congregations for the EFKS abroad but would also create work opportunities in the ministry for the Malua graduates who are still unemployed. Despite the slow beginnings of this venture, it appears that it is certainly working well and has been successful as new congregations in Australia and New Zealand have already started under this new programme. For example, the new congregation in Perth, Australia is up and running now under the leadership of one Malua graduate who had been without a call for some time after his theological studies. The new EFKS congregation in Perth is the first and the only Samoan congregation in the city of Perth today.

⁴⁶⁵ Fa'alepo A Tuisuga-le-taui, "Galuega Fa'amisionare Fa'aauau Pea a le EFKS - Nei ma Taeao" (paper presented at the Mafutaga Fa'afouina Faiifeau & A'oa'o Tausinu'u, Malua, 22-26 Aukuso 2005).

CHAPTER NINE

HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL- THEOLOGICAL PRAXIS OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

9.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last hundred and eighty years of the history of Samoa, the churches have played a key role in Samoan society, in regard to the development of social and ethical values, based on the Christian faith, and the development of secular society through the Church school systems. Government education institutions have equally contributed to Samoa's secular progress, and Church and government systems have acknowledged their interdependence in their continuing mutual respect, which has had a positive effect on Samoan society.

By far the largest Church is the *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS), the subject of this study. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the cultural-theological praxis of such a dynamic relationship between the EFKS and Samoan society under governmental guidance, support, and leadership. I will embark on this task from the standpoint of hermeneutic-critical analysis, and focus on the dynamics of the correlation and general mutual partnership between the two and on specific points in their relationship. Basically, the emphasis here is to analyse the interactive processes established long ago and that have continued to develop between the two institutions, EFKS and the Samoan Government.

9.1 INTERFACE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

The Samoan people are proud of their nation's motto, "*Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa*" or 'Samoa is Founded on God'.⁴⁶⁶ The motto was adopted in 1962 when Samoa became an independent nation. It is the reflection of the new psychosocial and religious focus of Samoans from the arrival of the missionaries in 1830. In many ways, it demonstrates the integration of the people's aspirations of God's reign in their lives. It encompasses the

⁴⁶⁶ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 70 & 169; see also Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 303.

Samoaan understanding that everything in Samoa belongs to God as it is founded on and grounded in God. The political struggles of the past for Samoa as a nation to become independent were a task that was initiated, propagated, and executed through the power of God. In other words, the whole historical processes in the political, economic, social, and religious life of the Samoaan people have been part of God's or *Tagaloalagi's* divine plan as embedded in the Nafanua prophecy⁴⁶⁷ as previously mentioned. The Samoaan Government and the EFKS became independent at almost the same time, the Samoaan state from the New Zealand administration in 1962 and the EFKS from LMS authority in May 1961.⁴⁶⁸ Since their independence the two have been mutually working interrelatedly and interdependently on many matters, ensuring that one does not interfere with the core jurisdiction of the other.

What are the respective expectations for the fulfilment of their missions? There are various aspects of the EFKS general ministry in which there are obvious interactive activities with the government currently in progress. I will attempt to identify some of these individual activities and establish how the two have been interactively related.

An integral part of the general ministry and pastoral venture of the EFKS is to listen to the voices of the people from all levels of Samoaan society. Sometimes this may be difficult in that the EFKS obviously focuses only on its own members and thereby may appear to be partial or biased in its effort to respond to issues that might arise from Church-society interactions. One of the factors which compounds the difficulty is the fact that the majority of government decision-makers are EFKS adherents, and often in decision-making positions within the EFKS, resulting in divided loyalties.

The issue of social justice and peace in Samoa has been to the forefront of policymaking decisions in both government and Church spheres. Occasionally, some villages undergo rifts and conflicts amongst their people when new Church denominations emerge within villages. This is because some villages have had a traditional policy of '*e tasi le lotu*' or 'one-denomination Church village' since the arrival of the missionaries. This, as a tradition, was accepted, but in the last thirty years a number of new religious groups have appeared, as a result of migration and of globalisation generally. To introduce another

⁴⁶⁷ Tuisuga-le-taau, "The Nafanua Prophecy: An Earlier Version of the One Word for 'Setting the Scene' of Samoa's Religious and Political Formation", 105-124.

⁴⁶⁸ 4; Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 168.

religious belief into a village undoubtedly disrupts the equilibrium amongst the local people. When conflicts and divisions amongst the populace result, not only the Church but also the community generally is affected.

However to disallow new religious sects or denominations in the village situation is a breach of the human rights guarantee of freedom of religion in the Constitution of Samoa. Unfortunately, this issue has been a battle point between traditional conservative locals and the adherents of 'new' beliefs (or perhaps a mainstream belief that is new to that village) in a number of villages. When these differences could not be settled by the traditional cultural powers of the *Ali'i ma Faipule* or the traditional leaders of the village the matter will be taken to the Land and Titles Court, or even ultimately to the Supreme Court. When the decisions of these institutions are sought with regards to these religious issues, the Church could be regarded as having failed in its role as a spiritual mediator between the groups, and perhaps as the cause of the split. Many villages have undergone this process of seeking the help of the court due to these religious differences.⁴⁶⁹ Ironically, the *Ali'i ma Faipule* who make the decisions to evict their village comrades are Christians, mostly affiliated to one of the mainline denominations, the EFKS, Roman Catholicism or Methodism.

9.2 FONO A EKALEZIA SO'O FA'ATASI (SAMOA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES)

Unfortunately, there have been inevitable differences amongst Christian Church denominations in Samoa as is usual in the Church history of many countries in the world.

⁴⁶⁹ *Tapu Ae'au Lafai'ali'i vs Attorney General & Auva'a Paulo & Others*, (2003), *Lemoa Silivelio & Others vs Taofinu'u Fuatai* (ALC P.4 - P.6), (2002), *A'analelaolao Siaki & Others vs Nonumalo Leulumoega Sofara* (LC 10429/10429 P1/P2), (2002); *Lemoa Silivelio & Others vs Silialaei Titi & Others* (ALC 4140 P.4 - P.6), (2001), *Silialaei Titi & Others vs Nauma Seumanutafa & Others* (ALC 4140 P.4 - P.6), (2000); *Taofinu'u Fa'ata'i & Others vs Nauma Seumanutafa & Others* (ALC 4140 P.2, P.3), (2000).

The Land & Titles Court of Samoa heard the various court cases from 1987 to 2003 (see court cases cited above) between the *Ali'i & Faipule* of the village of Falealupo and a few village families regarding a new Church being established by these families within the village geographical boundaries. The village traditional policy disallowed any other new Church beliefs to be established therein. For those villagers who wished to do so may travel to other village and places where their religious affiliations are allowed. The initial decision by the Land & Titles Court favoured the village's leader's decision. However, the decision by the Court of Appeal revoked the initial decision and favoured the rebel families and their constitutional human rights to their own religious beliefs. The village authority was totally disappointed about the decision and the concerned villagers were banished from the village indefinitely. The concerned families disregard of the village's traditional one-Church policy was looked upon by the *Ali'i ma Faipule* (traditional village leaders) as a social insult to their traditional powers and authority. A similar case also occurred at the village of Sale'imoa in 2002. Again, the courts ruled in favour of the few village families who challenged the power and the authority of the village in court. There have been various similar cases, which have gone through the courts system of Samoa in the last thirty years or so. Sadly, human lives had been lost due to these social differences at other villages.

This however did not preclude the good initiative among Church leaders of the mainline churches in Samoa to establish a corporate body of Christian churches. The leaders of the three denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church of Samoa, and the *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa* (EFKS), began negotiations for the formation of the Samoa National Council of Churches. Eventually they established the *Mafutaga a Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa* (MEKS) and it was inaugurated on the 12 September 1971⁴⁷⁰, later changing its name to *Fono a Ekalesia i Samoa* (FES) or the Samoa Council of Churches (SCC).⁴⁷¹ According to Oka Fauolo who is the incumbent chairperson of the FES, “*o le fa'amoemoe maualuga lava o le FES, ia maua le galulue fa'atasi o Ekalesia mo le manuia o le atunu'u aoao, ma le viiga o le Atua*” (the main hope of the SCC is that all churches must work together for the good of the whole nation, and for the glory of God)⁴⁷². The concerted effort of these Church leaders in pursuing such a vision was an enormous challenge. While they were committing themselves to this task, new Christian beliefs and denominations kept coming into the country at a fast pace. Simultaneously more conflicts emerged between the mainline churches and the new religious denominations⁴⁷³ as the proponents of these new beliefs were regarded as ‘sheep stealers’ by the mainline churches. The arrival in Samoa of these new religious beliefs was perceived by some to threaten not only the solidarity of the nation as a political institution but also Samoan culture as a whole.⁴⁷⁴ Some claimed it would destabilize the cohesiveness of family structures and dynamics; and cause discontinuity of the unity of the religious ethos and philosophy of the Samoans. In this disturbed context, the establishment of the FES was a timely solution, though it took a long time for the churches to grasp the value of such a collaborative religious institution for the Samoan people. Despite the invaluable effort by FES to fulfil its prescribed obligations there have been areas of its

⁴⁷⁰ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 176. Ernst quotes 1969 as the effective date for the establishment of the SCC. This is somewhat contradictory to Oka Fauolo's date in his book, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*. It is clear from Fauolo's record that the initial negotiations for the establishment of the SCC commenced in 1961 after the Pacific Council of Churches meeting at Malua Theological College. Such negotiations continued gradually until the SCC official inauguration at a huge national ceremony at *Tiafau*, the official home for Samoa Parliament, on 12 September 1971; see also Oka Fauolo, "SCC never called NCC", *Sunday Samoan Observer*, 29 November 2009.

⁴⁷¹ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 773-775; see also Fauolo, "SCC never called NCC",

⁴⁷² Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 774. The English translation is the author's rendition.

⁴⁷³ Samoa, "Report of the census of population and housing 2001", ;Statistics, *Samoa: Population and Housing Census Report 2006* ([accessed], 13-14. The Census Report reveals that there are six so called main line or 'major denominations' and seventeen 'other churches' or the new denominations. The report also highlights the decrease of members of the mainline denominations and an increase for other sects since 2001 census. It is an indication of some people switching faith allegiance from mainline denominations to other sects.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with Participant F, February 2008; see also Kolia, "The Church and Development", 138-139; see also Va'a, "The *Fa'asamoa*", 135.

mission, which it still clearly needs to address in the near future. For example, there are still some more religious groups that are yet to become registered members. Achieving this will be another significant step towards accomplishing true unity of the Church in Samoa.

In order for the two institutions, Church and state, to work collaboratively, and be complementary to each other, the FES has become their point of formal contact. The basic role of the FES in this relationship has been advocacy through constant dialogue and its 'prophetic voice'. It suggests to the Samoan Government recommendations and solutions to some of the national internal welfare issues and advises on spiritually-related matters from time to time. It also works as a 'watchdog' identifying various facets of the government administration where review is possibly needed and a redirection of its resources for the better welfare of the people. Moreover, it is also occasionally critical of some government decisions. Occasionally the government also seeks the opinion of all Christian churches in Samoa when new legislation is at an early stage of formulation or a review of legislation.⁴⁷⁵ Every year the government allocates financial grants to all non-government organisations (NGO) and charities, including each Christian denomination, a contribution to the support of schools and educational facilities operated by the churches. The government also offers scholarships for outstanding students of Church schools to go for further studies abroad. There tends to be a continual reciprocal exchange of ideas, arising from the warm relationship existing between the churches and the Samoan government, which is much to the benefit of the Samoan people.

It is important to recognise the fact that the two institutions have totally different philosophical emphases. The Samoans have always taken the sort of Cartesian⁴⁷⁶ dualist understanding that the Church is basically for the '*mea fa'ale-agaga*' or 'spiritual things' and it has no regards for the '*mea fa'ale-tino*' or 'bodily matters' and the secular content of life. Thus politics, economics, and other spheres of life outside the realm of the Church are regarded as the jurisdiction of the government. This perception of the demarcation of responsibilities is still evident at times both in the mindset of Church leaders in their deliberations as well as in the attitude of government politicians of today. As Participant F explains:

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with the General Secretary of FES on 21 February 2008.

⁴⁷⁶ Robert H Wozniak, *Mind and Body: Rene Descartes to William James* (Bryn Mawr College, Dec 1996 1992 [accessed Jan 2009]); available from <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/Mind/Table.html>.

*E le aia le ekalesia i le faiga o polokiki i totonu o le atunu'u, e le aia foi le malo i totonu o le Ekalesia ma lana galuega fa'aola ma le galuega folafola. Pau a le mea o le fe-tautua'ai- o le demarcation la lena o loo taoto ai le working hand in hand o le auali'i lea.*⁴⁷⁷

(Church does not interfere with government politics in Samoa; state politics also does not meddle with the Church and its salvation work and its preaching ministry. All they should do is to have an inter-service understanding between them – that is the demarcation which ensures that both are working hand in hand)

Such a differentiation in emphasis and goals may possibly create barriers between the two institutions causing disharmony at times. In this post-modern era, the demarcation of emphasis and focus between the Church and the state has been deconstructed to such an extent that the Church has adopted an 'open-arms approach' in its far-reaching mission which not only nurtures the spiritual dimension of people's lives but also encompasses the physical and the material.

The state government on the other hand has an 'open-door approach' to dealing with its subjects through constant dialoguing and a collaborative effort with the Church to meet the needs of the people. While that has been the approach currently operating in Samoa by these institutions, there are indeed clear-cut boundaries between the two, of which both are aware and so are constantly striving to sustain at all times.

Moreover, the credibility of the combined effort by the Church and Samoan society depends very much on the quality and calibre of their leadership. One of the important aspects of leadership in this regard is that the leaders of the state government may also become leaders of the Church at a certain level, as stipulated by the Church Constitution. A deacon is eligible to become the Chairperson of the Church or the EFKS, and also eligible to become a leader in the village as *matai* - the same person could well be a high-level public servant or a politician. The combination of these roles within one person can be of considerable benefit to both institutions, or can create divisions and conflicts of interest, depending on the calibre and attitudes of the person involved.

9.2.1 Culture as an Effective Tool for Ecumenism

Ecumenism had been part of the evangelical ministry of the Church since Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 16 – 20, in the hope that the gospel would reach all the

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Participant F, February 2008.

inhabitants of the universe. Those Christians believed that for the Church to fulfil that enormous responsibility, the ever-present Holy Spirit, the third persona of the Trinity, would assist. That in fact is still being the unceasing task of the Church and the state government today and in the future. However, that task could not be carried out in other contexts. Thus, such situations demonstrated the reality that there were times that the gospel and the Church could not bring people together at all, because of cultural, sociological, economic, political, and religious reasons. However, I understand from my own personal experience as well as from the insights of other people, that there are powers and authorities other than the Church's influence that could easily persuade people to come together as one unit for a specific purpose, or even for the purpose of forming a Church. The government is another authoritative power that could work together with the Church. In addition, the most effective authority I have experienced which has had a positive impact on this strive for ecumenism by the Church is the Samoan culture. In this regard, I agree with Participant G when he made a comment about this issue with regards to the Samoan context. Participant G categorically suggested that if the Church could not unite people together as such, the Samoan culture could. In his own words, Participant G said,

I believe that the culture is the key to the Ecumenical Movement. If the Church cannot carry out its responsibility of uniting the people of different families and different denominations, the culture will come in instead. Looking at the importance of the culture here, it sometimes is more ecumenical than the Church. That is the fact if we take for example the Council of chiefs, if the Council of chiefs will say; "OK lets go and do this *faalavelave* [a village obligation such as hosting visitors]," Everyone will go. No one will stay.⁴⁷⁸

Given the fact that 'unity' is one of the broad objectives of the ecumenical movement, Participant G expressed his own personal reflection as to the best way of achieving that unity for the Church. Despite the perpetual teaching and preaching by the Church promoting the preference for unity of the people of God in the world, Samoan people might not fully acknowledge such concerns of the Church in some instances until the village council steps in and reinforces the Church stance. Once the village council intervenes, the village people, irrespective of their religious faith and affiliations, would then listen to and obey their traditional leaders. They would then take things seriously under the banner of Samoan traditions and culture. Obviously Samoan cultural engagement in this regard demonstrates its significant contribution not only to the work of the Church at all levels of the community but also with regards to the ecumenical spirit and focus of the Church as a whole. In other words,

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with Participant G, February 2008. Rev. Fa'amate Fepulea'i also shares the same opinion in a personal discussion with the author, January 2008.

the Samoan culture was the ecumenical tool used by the Church in Samoa to help in promoting the ecumenical spirit in the Samoan setting. Culture in this regard was much more effective than the Church itself. The question was: was it not the Holy Spirit working through the culture of the people, which made the work of the gospel in the Samoan contexts much easier and acceptable, even to the point of death when the Church had no solution at all? I believe that it was the Trinitarian power of God rigorously working in the lives of the people of a culture that ensured God's will was done on earth. It is my opinion that culture was metaphorically the hand of God, and that it must be continuously revised and refined in such a way that it eventually fully conforms to the gospel and be used by the Church at any time for the building of the kingdom of God on earth. This is why Christianity in Samoa is unique.

9.3 HERMENEUTICAL IMPRESSION OF CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONSHIP

The relevant issue that needs to be analysed in this inquiry is the fact that the general population of Samoa is confused as to the roles and responsibilities of the Church within Samoa as a nation. Often the dualistic philosophical belief about the nature of human existence (the spiritual and the physical) seems to be the generic prevailing understanding in Samoa. Thus, the people tend to pragmatically apply this to their life situations at all times. This indeed creates confusion when the Church integrates the spiritual and the physical, through its preaching, in an effort to bring peace, love, justice, and righteousness to the world. Unfortunately, some people may use such a dualism as a ploy in trying to achieve their own political agenda both in the spheres of the Church and the society. Such dualism is a dilemma that the Samoans need to grapple with seriously using a critical hermeneutical approach in order to unfold the dynamics of the relationship between Church and society. Having established this would eventually identify specific aspects of the Church and state relationship where the hermeneutical analysis of the cultural theological praxis of the EFKS must focus.

When the *faiifeau* in his sermon maintains that poverty and drug use are partly caused by the government and its poor social and economic policies, the government turns around and accuses the *faiifeau* concerned of preaching politics rather than the gospel. The implications of such comments for the Church are that the *faiifeau* should not meddle with political matters but focus on the spiritual and the divine. In other words, the Church should leave the field of politics to the politicians. Thus the *faiifeau* should not speak like an opposition politician, for his concerns should only be within the confines of spiritual matters.

I believe that part of this confusion of the population is due to the earlier teachings of the Church and their emphasis on this dualism of the spiritual and the physical/material. Part of the impact of this dualistic understanding is quite evident at the local *aulotu* or congregational level where the *nu'u* or village and its authority are focused on the everyday practicalities of living. On the other hand, the spiritual nurturing of people's lives is solely attributed to the *faifeau*. In that way the *nu'u* has usually completely ignored any input from the *faifeau* in their deliberations, especially in very serious matters. Culturally, this is the norm and anything other than that is unacceptable. Sadly, this norm has created unnecessary conflicts between the Church and the *nu'u* as well as the state government.

Moreover, such norms definitely contradict conventional theological teachings, which is holistic and focused on the generic needs of the population at all times. Fortunately, some *nu'u* and *aulotu* have deviated from that sort of *nu'u* administration today, and are now working together with the *faifeau* in all their deliberations in ways acceptable to both parties and for the benefit of the people. One of the avenues of deliberations they have used is to seek the opinion of the *faifeau* indirectly through informal talks outside the normal 'fono ale *nu'u*' or the meeting of the village council. In this process, the *nu'u* and the Church would finally come to recognise each other in one of the Samoan cultural philosophical statements: '*E maua le tasi ina ua Soalaupule*' or a 'consensus is attained when authorities are shared'.⁴⁷⁹ *Soalaupule*⁴⁸⁰ is the pinnacle of all negotiation methodologies in the Samoan tradition. In this process, deliberations and discussions are to be carried out in a dialogical fashion where two or more people exchange ideas in an open conversational style. A participant in such a dialogue is free to contribute to the conversation by sharing his or her authority, inherited as a free Samoan citizen, without any hesitation.

All state services and ceremonial gatherings are officially commenced by a worship service conducted by a village Church minister appointed by the government office concerned or by the FES. These services include the Independence Day Celebration, Opening of the Samoan Parliament, and the Head of State's Birthday celebration. In effect, these are indications of the government's effort of moulding together the spiritual and the material living of the citizens as well as the recognition by the government of the significant role of the Church in its growth and development. More importantly it reflects the continuing praxis of

⁴⁷⁹ Author's translation.

⁴⁸⁰ This term is defined in Chapter One of the thesis.

tapuaiga from the historical Samoa and the genuine recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the two institutions, the Church and the traditional cultural government or the state government of today. I would argue that one of the significant roles of the hermeneutical critical analysis of this praxis of the Samoan context today is to bring to the fore of Samoan community consciousness the intrinsic nature of the interconnectedness of the two institutions. The ‘fusion of the two horizons’⁴⁸¹ of the past cultural-religious practices and the emphasis of the praxis of Church-state relationship today is a worthy endeavour for both. So long as there is a clear sense of understanding of the focus and the contents of such praxis, the fusion of horizons will prevail.

The fusion will possibly be a difficult endeavour as some of the old Samoan traditions relating to religious practices may not be acceptable to the Church today. However, the fundamental significance of this fusion lies in the intercourse of the two traditions – indigenous Samoan religious mindset and the Christian gospel – causing continuity of divine intercession of God in the life of the individual as well as in the life of the Samoan community. The pre-Christian perceptions of God and the spiritual worlds of the indigenous Samoan religions harmonised well with the holistic aspirations and hopes of the Christian Church of today. The actual pragmatic dynamics of the indigenous religions matters less in this fusion and thus assumes the new focus and means of celebrating religious worship as in the contemporary Christian Church. Integration of the two horizons through ‘inculturation’⁴⁸² and contextualisation of the Christian religion has been the implicit norm for the Church in Samoa ever since the early missionaries arrived in 1830. Simultaneously Samoan society has become acquainted with this enculturation process and thus organised itself in such a way that it takes on board the positive aspects of fusion for the benefit of the people at large.

9.3.1 Sensitivity to Social and Cultural Changes

Social change and development are social phenomena, which all human life contexts in the world have to confront. They are unavoidable, and, in this age of globalisation, appear to be occurring much more rapidly than in the past. They have had positive and negative

⁴⁸¹ I am echoing the Gadamerian phrase here. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*; also see *Fusion of Horizons* (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Oct 2008 [accessed 26/02 2009]); available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusion_of_horizons.

⁴⁸² Philip Gibbs, *Pearls in the Deep: Inculturation and Ecclesia in Oceania* (Australian E Journal of Theology, 2004 [accessed 25 Feb 2009]); available from http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_3/Gibbs.html.

impacts on the life of the Samoan society at large. Changes and development to the social life of the populace is evident within the *aiga*, the *nu'u*, the *ekalesia* (Church), and the nation as a whole. These changes and developments are found in all spheres of life: social, economic, political, and religious. In acknowledging these aspects of life it was imperative that Samoan culture needed to be sensitive to these and vice versa. Fortunately this had been realised in Samoa to this day to a considerable degree, varying from one situation to another. I would argue that it was the sensitivity of the Samoan culture to the penetration of social change and development into the life of the people at all stages of its journey as a democratic nation that has given rise to the present peaceful condition of Samoan society. Va'a also expresses the same opinion in another way when he says,

Samoa's pursuit of development objectives, policymakers on sustainable livelihoods should always be sensitive to the nuances of cultural aims and objectives of the Samoan people because it is by incorporating their cultural needs and aspirations that government will be more likely to succeed in its development strategies.⁴⁸³

Furthermore he says, "Today, there is a fine, stable balance between the requirements of law and tradition and this has contributed significantly to the development of a peaceful society in Samoa".⁴⁸⁴

At the same time one has to be critical and identify what has been labelled as positive change and what not. Sadly, the Church, the EFKS in particular, and the state government as integral institutions continuously impacting on the wellbeing of the Samoans, seem not to have been responding well to these changes. The Church in particular remains incessantly conservative and relatively insensitive to the intrinsic changes that are urgently needed for it to be more meaningful and relevant to the life of its adherents. Thus it can become a 'burden' to its adherents at times, causing frustration and confusion on the part of its followers, which leads to people to search for a better faith affiliation elsewhere.⁴⁸⁵ Again it is essential that the Church needs to be sensitive to the changing tides of ideology, cultural change, new technologies, globalisation, and environmental needs of the context in which it operates.

⁴⁸³ Va'a, "The Fa'asamoa", 133.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁸⁵ The issue of EFKS adherents shifting their allegiance to other denominations has been a long-standing problem facing the EFKS for years now, despite various initiatives by the Church as a whole, to implement several remedial programmes. The Malua Theological College (MTC) played an important role in this area of the Church's ministry by way of trying to identify reasons for the people's exodus and to formulate appropriate and relevant programmes to rectify the problems. One effective programme initiated by the MTC specifically for this purpose was called, '*O le Mataupu Silisili Fa'alautele*' (Theology by Extension) from 2000 – 2004. The programme covered local congregations and also those in New Zealand.

Likewise the government should also react to these changes accordingly under the spiritual guidance of the Church. Church people have been critical about the role and the performance of the Church in the Samoan society from time to time, and especially so today. Social issues emerge as challenges to the Church, which unfortunately has failed either to respond sufficiently early or remains totally mute when the people and the government desperately need her theological stance and input in their search for help.

Participant C's insights about the insensitivity of the Church to the various social issues arising from within its ministry were remarkable. He said,

The EFKS is not only about building and collecting money, but it's the mission work that needs to enlarge in order for the people to live a normal life. And also to enrich what we are preaching about the love of God to the lives of the people. Maybe that is the part of the question, what do we need to achieve? We need to fulfil our social service by reaching out to the people in desperate need for food, clothing, shelter and everything to maintain their good health... I think the EFKS should lead the way for enriching this service of helping people by establishing a lot of charity organizations so the people should have anywhere to go and seek help.⁴⁸⁶

This was an indication of the lack of focus and the insensitivity of the Church towards the reality in which the people of God exist. No matter what, it must be remembered that the Church ought to act intelligently and responsibly in accordance with the needs of the people. Such actions must be based on faith and understanding about the will of God for his people. Stephen Bevan⁴⁸⁷ says that the 'praxis model of contextual theology' recognises that "theology [is] a process of faith seeking intelligent actions".⁴⁸⁸ I would argue that the EFKS as a Church must be responsible for undertaking these intelligent actions and be responsible for their consequences. These actions ought to be relevant, appropriate, and performable by the people of God. I consider that such actions should include being sensitive to the changes and developments of the social context whatever the circumstances might be; and be sensitive to the needs of the people trapped in various life crises. What needs to be remembered is that the Church is not an organisation contending to accumulate financial gain from the society at large. It should also not be an organisation focusing primarily on constructing huge buildings as the EFKS had recently done. Rather the Church is a spiritual institution comprised of religious people with strong faith convictions. It primarily deals with people and their material

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Participant C, February 2008.

⁴⁸⁷ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 66-67.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 66-67.

and spiritual growth, their special needs, and more importantly with the critically nurturing of their faith in God through *koinonia* and prayers. Whatever monetary offerings the Church might be able to collect in the course of its ministry have to be used wisely for the proliferation of the ministry of Christ in the world.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

10.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter an attempt is made to sum up the findings of this study and evaluate the Samoan philosophical hermeneutical model, '*O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*' proposed in this research and its contribution to the Samoan context through the Samoan Church, the Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS), or the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS).

The study was premised on the search for sensible and practical answers to the major thesis question, '*How can we understand the Samoan Church as a contextual indigenous church of the twenty first century?*' It was divided into four parts.

The First Part comprised Chapters One and Two focused on identifying the research problem in detail and establishing the research methodology appropriate and relevant for this study. Chapter One expressed the thesis statement in detail and explained the aim and objectives the study expected to achieve. In doing so it also identified the envisaged limitations of the study as well as the contributions the research could advance not only for the Samoan Christian community but also for the Pacific region, and for the discipline of contextual theology in the wider academic world. Three important concepts for this thesis namely, *cultural-theological praxis*, *praxis*, and *text* were defined and discussed. Moreover, various significant Samoan concepts were identified and clearly defined.

Chapter Two discussed the research methodology used for the inquiry, in this case, the 'qualitative research methodology'. In addition to the consultation of literature and archival records in the public domain, there was also the fieldwork research carried out. The fieldwork involved interviewing of the twelve randomly selected participants, and an observation component of the research, which was focused on the selected village of Sapapali'i, on the island of Savai'i.

Part Two contains Chapter Three and Chapter Four. It explored the hermeneutical framework within which this study could be understood. Furthermore, the proposed philosophical hermeneutical paradigm relevant to the Samoan context was established and formulated for use in the EFKS. Chapter Three discussed the exposition of the study's approach as to how to answer the research question through the use of philosophical hermeneutics. The study therefore perceived from the outset that the answer to the research question could be possibly achieved using a philosophical hermeneutical approach that is relevant to and practicable for the Samoans. Thus, the notion of 'Samoan context as text' was prominent as the study therefore required a hermeneutical approach to unravel the meanings of various aspects of the context. The interpretation of such context gradually unfolds through deeper understanding of the nuances of the Samoan milieu. Some of Hans-Georg Gadamer's invaluable hermeneutical concepts such as the *horizon*, *fusion of horizons*, *effective history*, *prejudices*, *pre-understanding*, *pre-knowledge*, and *hermeneutical circle* were carefully considered and adopted with care where necessary and applicable in the study.

Chapter Four was an attempt to articulate and apply the Samoan philosophical hermeneutical model, *Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, proposed by this study into three different areas of the praxis and ministry of the EFKS. These areas are church government and leadership, church services, and the church and society, all of which are contributing to the spiritual growth and development of the people of Samoa as a nation. Three main stages of the *Tofa Liliu a Samoa* hermeneutical model were discussed. Firstly, *O le fuata ma lona lou* which is the psychological stimulus phase driving the EFKS to seriously relook at its ministry at various periods of her faith journey, evaluate and analyse it thoroughly in such a way that she could proceed with change or modification to its ministry to sustain its mission in the world. Secondly was *Soalaupule*, the actual analysis and evaluation process through sincere dialogue and deliberations by members of the EFKS. Thirdly, *Ua tasi le tofa*, which was the stage of making decisions when consensus is reached amongst Church members concerned. The fundamental component of consideration throughout this whole philosophical hermeneutical model was the critical utilisation of cultural norms and dynamics of negotiation and contemplation as the standard approach to achieving any objective in mind. Flexibility and sensitivity towards the circumstances surrounding the issues concerned were the key elements towards contemplating options and alternatives if resolutions were difficult to achieve.

Part Three was an attempt to rediscover the historical and the traditional cultural nature of the Samoan context both in the pre-Christian era and the post-Christian period. This

part of the study contains Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Chapter Five focused on the early periods of Samoan history which was heavily relied on myths and oral stories. Myths and legends the vehicles through which the indigenous traditions and cultures of Samoa were passed on from one generation to another. These were the best means through which the generations of today could obtain a real sense of reality of Samoa in the past. The polytheistic religious nature of the ancient Samoans was re-established and the seemingly centralised god *Tagaloalagi* of the past was revisited. Much of the Samoan traditional thinking and philosophical approach to life *per se* were the prominent features of this chapter. The profound Samoan concept *fa'asinomaga* was revisited and elaborated on, with religion added as the fourth pillar of being a Samoan in the twenty-first century. Thus the four pillars of the Samoan identity were the *matai* title to which one belongs, the *fanua*, the *gagana Samoa*, and the *tapuaiga/lotu* or religion to which one is affiliated.

Chapter Six canvassed the Christian Samoan context and one of the fundamental concepts of this study, the *cultural-theological praxis* of the EFKS. There was a clear distinction between the ancient Samoan traditions prior to Christianity and those of Christian origin. Samoa realised that the early LMS missionaries abolished some of their so-called heathen cultures and values, as they were non-conforming to Christian traditions, values, and practices. Emulation and superimposition had been the predominant integration processes existing between Samoan culture and Christianity that enabled the Christian transformations in the lifeworlds of the Samoan context. More importantly was the significant shift in the philosophical and religious mindset of the Samoans when the Christian mission commenced. Samoan concepts such as *feagaiga* and *tautua* became prominent in the Christian ministry. The *feagaiga* concept was conferred onto the *faifeau* when he was inducted into his new congregation symbolising the village continuous obligation of caring for and protecting him at all times, similar to the dynamics of the relationship between the Samoan brother and his sister in the *fa'asamoa*. Likewise the *Tautua* that was traditionally rendered to the *matai* is now extended to include those rendered for God through his Samoan Church, the EFKS. The ministry of the EFKS has been vigorously shaped and conditioned by the ongoing integration of the Gospel and the Samoan culture in all facets of the EFKS ministry.

Finally Part Four comprises Chapter Seven to Chapter Ten. This part of the research concentrated on the hermeneutical analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS in the Samoan context; and the conclusions of the Study. Three major dimensions of the ministry of the EFKS, namely Church government and leadership, Church services, and

finally the Church and state relationship were critically evaluated. Insights and themes from the fieldwork research were seriously recognised and utilised in this analysis. Chapter Seven looked into the aspects of church governance and leadership in the EFKS. The Church structure and its general leadership at three levels, the *Aulotu* (local Church), the *Pulega* (sub-district), and the *Matagaluega* (district) were investigated. The general impression of these levels of the Church government and leadership was that there were significant issues needing to be addressed at the national level through the *Fono Tele* and the *Komiti Au Toeaina* in order to avoid confusion, misinterpretation, and frustration amongst Church members and the ordained ministry.

Chapter Eight dealt with the hermeneutical analysis of what I termed ‘Church service’, an important aspect of the praxis of the EFKS. Church services in this respect enveloped all services rendered by the church in its mission of salvation to the faithful people of God in Samoa and the world. One was the *tapua’iga* or worship, which played a vital role in the life of the faithful. Other types of traditional *tapuaiga*, namely *liutofaga* and *talagateu*, were identified and critically analysed. Despite the EFKS’s restrictions on the participation of *faiifeau* in these worship services, I argued strongly in this study, after careful hermeneutical exploration of these traditional rites of passages, that they should be recognised within the sphere of Christian worship. Other services, such as education – secular and theological – sacraments, and missionary expeditions also exert significant impact on the life of the faithful Christians. Church services are the means through which the hand of God could reach out to His people in their own contexts and their life realities. The revitalisation of Christian unity, Christian *koinonia* and the coming together in fellowship of the faithful within their own natural environment and context should be nurtured within the EFKS at all times.

Chapter Nine embarked on the hermeneutical analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of Church and Society for the EFKS. EFKS had been actively involved in very close relationship with the Samoan society at large through the Samoan government. The formation of the *Fa’alapopotoga Ekalesia So’ofa’atasi* (FES) or Samoa Council of Churches (SCC) enabled serious negotiations and discussions between EFKS and the government at the political level. The theme of trust in each other in this relationship has been recognised and embraced. This has ensured the continuity of friendship, support, and development between the two institutions. EFKS needs government support in areas such as education, health, and the infrastructure. In return, the Church concentrates on the spiritual nurturing of the nation to enhance people’s morals, values, and ethical living. Spiritual guidance by the Churches,

including the EFKS, for the government is vital at all times. Various social issues arising from time to time have been handled together by the authorities concerned with the support of the Church through SCC or its individual members where necessary. All in all, the visionary nature and the prophetic role of the EFKS could not have been more effective if it were not for the Samoan Government support. Similarly, without the spiritual blessings of the Church on the works and visions of its Government and Public Service, Samoa would not have been in the situation it is now – at peace, with hope in faith.

Below are the conclusions I have drawn from this study. The implications of these conclusions, and the contribution this research offers to the EFKS, and perhaps to other Churches, are summarised separately.

- The research has shown that, after the critical evaluation and analysis of the Samoan context, in order to understand fully the distinctive nature of this Samoan Church, the EFKS, as a contextual indigenous Church of the twenty-first century, a philosophical hermeneutical analysis of the cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS is essential. Such an approach has to be contextually framed, recognising with respect and sensitivity the authenticity of the Samoan lifeways and the richness of the historical cultural heritage. Therefore this study has presented the meaningful and performable philosophical hermeneutical paradigm *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, which would ensure a continuous critical analysis of the ministry of the EFKS. The availability of such a method of theological reflection for the EFKS would provide a ‘launching pad’ to enable the Church to identify and coordinate relevant responses to various challenges emerging, and yet to emerge, throughout its faith journey.

- This study also confirms the conviction of the Samoan people, ‘*e va’ava’alua le Talalelei ma le aganu’u*’ – that the gospel and culture always go hand in hand, in the execution of the cultural-theological praxis of the EFKS. The gospel and Christianity in the Samoan context have always interwoven with Samoan traditions and culture, one duly respecting the other at all times. Despite the particular essential character of each, they both interrelate and are interdependent, and from this has evolved a unique Samoan context enriched with the continuous creative and re-creative power of God through formation and reformation of people and environment. The EFKS integrates a wealth of Samoan traditions, cultural beliefs and practices with its praxis, so that it is difficult for anyone observing the

Church from outside to comprehend and appreciate the essence and the dynamics of the cultural-theological activities of the EFKS today.

- The cultural theological praxis of the EFKS from the past to this day is different from other missionary Churches, in Samoa, or in other parts of the world. There are various Samoan cultural and customary elements all knitted together with the theological ministry of Christianity in such a way that they have become a coherent unit in solidarity.

The study also concludes that there is considerable consensus among its members for the need for the EFKS to acknowledge other Samoan customs which are of great significance for the works of the gospel in Samoa, yet are merely on the periphery of its ministry. These customs and rituals need to be revisited with sincerity of mind to establish God's purposes for them to be part of the EFKS context. Having achieved that, moves could be made to implement changes and modifications. Theologically sanctifying these customary events, which reflect God's dynamic spiritual relationship with the Samoan people, so that they may be incorporated into EFKS procedure, would be of immense benefit to the Church and its members. Notable examples are the Samoan rituals of *Liutofaga* or the re-entombment of the dead, and *Tatalagateu* or unveiling. On the other hand, the EFKS should recognise that some of their own traditions do not fall within the theological scope of the Christian Church of the twenty-first century, and need to be seriously reconsidered. This aspect is referred to later in this chapter.

- The research also highlighted the fact that the EFKS and its ministry have encountered problems, which need to be addressed openly and with discernment. Congregationalism was its original theoretical ethos and governance blueprint, but in leadership terms EFKS could be seen as now practicing Presbyterianism in its cultural-theological praxis. This lack of clarity has caused confusion at times for its adherents. This has raised much criticism, especially from the academics of the Church, thus creating unnecessary conflict within the Church leadership. This needs to be investigated further in the future. As it is, I see the EFKS as a hybrid type of Church emerging from both the conscious and unconscious merging of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism into one. I therefore conclude that the current EFKS Church should maintain at all costs its original Congregational ethos and practice. It is culturally sensitive and very much democratically oriented. Its cultural components shall also be maintained in harmony with the theological

dimension of the Church. Such a return to and revival of Congregationalism could also accommodate without much trouble the young generation's outcry for recognition in the Church. Furthermore, it is vital that such move towards revitalising Congregationalism for the EFKS be made with much alertness and caution. This would provide a promising outlook for the EFKS in the twenty first century and beyond. This study confirmed that as part of the contextualisation of Christianity in the EFKS, Church government and leadership systems have been aligned very closely with the *fa'asamoa*, the Samoan social structure, and the Samoan worldview of governance and leadership. The critical analysis and recognition of some significant Samoan concepts and philosophies such as the *fa'amatai*, *feagaiga*, *tautua*, *o le ala i le pule o le tautua*, *e fesili muli mai ia mua mai*, *tofa saili*, *tofa loloto*, and so forth by the Church have finally made this integration much smoother and without major difficulties. This indeed ensures the collaborative effort between the two to be successful in their endeavour to bring the 'light of Christ' to the Samoan people and setting.

- It has been established from the research that there is a somewhat naïve attitude amongst some Church members in considering their theological stance, and a certain reluctance to participate seriously in Church deliberations and meetings at the congregational level. The cultural dynamics, which normally prevail in Church discussions, have discouraged these people, especially the younger generations, from contributing in these meetings. They seem to believe that there is no place for them in the EFKS Church systems, thus do not bother to contribute, and consider that as long as their parents and heads of their families are involved that is sufficient.

- There is an inherent problem with contextualisation from Samoan culture in that the keynote of almost anything is 'caution and carefulness' – they are worthy attributes in the old customary context but not so much today. These are some of the marked weaknesses of the *Soalaupule* process of deliberations in the Church which need careful reconsideration. They are indeed very positive elements in the old customary context but the contemporary scene is different, especially when young people feel unheard and there are a large number of attractive Church alternatives around, and all old sanctions to stop them from changing churches are gone. The conventional human rights emphasis in all facets of Samoan life, including the Church, has become prominent. Furthermore, the significance of the time factor in all Church deliberations must be taken into account. Thus it is important that while there is such an important emphasis on contextualisation in these aspects of the life of the EFKS, the

Church must also recognise and sensitise itself to the significance of making quick and informed decisions.

10.1 IMPLICATIONS AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

The EFKS as a Church, and its ministry, needs to encourage a continuous monitoring of its praxis in its faith journey. How this could be implemented effectively is obviously an unceasing challenge for the Church. Theological reflection by its members is important in so far as this provides concrete foundations for evaluation and critical analysis of the Church and its mission. In so doing the principles of democracy and equality of all Church members, which are deeply imbedded in Congregationalism, would be nurtured and promoted within the EFKS. The Samoan philosophical hermeneutical model formulated in this study should provide a practical framework of analysis of its cultural-theological praxis and would encourage new insights into the mission of the Church. The often conservative attitude of the EFKS should be relaxed at appropriate times for the sake of listening to the ‘small voice’ of God proclaiming His will for his people. Participan C starkly suggests,

I think we really need to look especially at our own conservativeness in the ministry, the role of the minister in the ministry; I reckon we need to pick up and press them out. They take the church backward.⁴⁸⁹

This study would raise the awareness of the EFKS as a Church at all levels and how important it is to monitor its own ministry and services for the people constantly, using its own traditional philosophical hermeneutical tools.

While culture is without doubt an integral component of the ministry of the EFKS, it is also imperative that it should be thoroughly scrutinised and utilised appropriately for the proclamation of the kingdom of God in the world. The propensity of culture to override the theological emphasis of the gospel in crucial areas of its ministry such as Church governance and leadership has been established in Chapter Seven of this research. To recognise the *fa’asamoa* in areas of governance and leadership at the expense of normal democratic forms of governance as exemplified in Congregational ethos, is unacceptable and must not be condoned. *Fa’asamoa*, I believe, must act as a ‘helping hand’ for the Church in its quest for bringing people together in harmony and in accordance with their customary norms so that they could experience the presence of God in their lives within the framework of the EFKS as

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with participant C, February 2008.

a Christian Church. However, in my opinion, the *fa'asamoa* sometimes is used inconsistently by the Church, hence causing confusion and frustration for Church members. Equality is rarely entertained in some Church spheres, and favouritism in leadership seems to creep in, hence giving preference to 'who you know and not what you know'. It is therefore important for the EFKS to make sure democracy is honoured consistently in all Church discussions and deliberations.

The uniqueness of the praxis and ministry of the EFKS is not the most important aspect of its life, which is to make sure the elements of this are not only meaningful and well understood by its adherents, but it is relevant to the theological emphasis of the Church of God and its mission to the world. Contextualisation is recognised at almost all levels, as revealed and discussed in Chapters Seven to Chapter Nine. Also the Church has had to develop its contextual orientation so that its life as a true Christian Church continues, so that it is acknowledged by the global Church as such, and so that it can flourish as a true image of the 'body of Christ' in the world. To achieve that, the EFKS needs to encourage a certain transformation in people's attitudes and mindsets in all quarters of its ministry.⁴⁹⁰ An open-minded approach is vital for each individual member. As a Christian institution, EFKS needs to be sensitive towards the contemporary trends of theological ideologies and practices, demonstrating that it appreciates the evolving nature of Christ's Church. Furthermore, a sense of flexibility to changes at all times is mandatory, although the Church must have the discernment to recognise that not all change is beneficial.

Some indigenous scholars and anthropologists have argued that Christianity and the Church have been and still are the manipulators⁴⁹¹ of people's cultures and customs in their process of civilising and Christianising of indigenous peoples. These sharp criticisms of the Christian Church and its missionaries seem to me to be somewhat unfair, as they are being judged by today's prevailing standards. I believe the missionaries did the best they could to bring 'the light' to Samoa and other Island nations of Oceania. They did not set out deliberately to denigrate or annihilate local cultures. To them acceptance of Christianity

⁴⁹⁰ Discussion with the informant who wants to remain anonymous, February 2008.

⁴⁹¹ 'Manipulators' in this instance refer to the early missionaries who attempted to change or abolish some authentic cultural traditions of the Samoans that were non-conforming to the Christian principles and practices of the time. It was not that they discriminated against the indigenous people and their cultures as such but rather viewed their actions a necessity at the time as part of their task as missionaries in order to make the Gospel meaningful and consistent with the teachings of the Bible.

inevitably involved acceptance or rejection of some cultural and customary practices and concepts. Over the years, some customs have been modified and refashioned so that they could render a sense of conformity to the essence and practice of Christianity. Today these indigenous contexts are going further into revitalising some previously rejected customs in the process of contextualisation of the Christian Church. While some of these customs are keenly relevant for the ministry of the Church, there is still a need to scrutinise these continually as part of the continuous critical theological reflections of the Church.

Moreover, although some traditional customs of Samoa have been abolished, or eroded through apparent lack of relevancy, the process of Christianisation and the ministry of the Church has been the means by which other customs have been maintained and nurtured in such a way that the young people of the Church can see, hear, and experience the essence of their own culture. This may not otherwise have occurred. Thus the 'cultural-theological praxis' of the Church is integral to the life of the Church and its individual members. In other words, the Church must also be recognised in this post-modern period as a significant bearer and the protector of people's culture and customs. A classic example of this notion for the Samoan people is their language. If it were not for the Church, many features of the Samoan language may have been lost, with vocabulary items and grammatical structures becoming redundant or changing from their original renditions. However, from the time of the printing of the first Samoan Christian Bible in 1845⁴⁹², it has been the guiding beacon for the Samoan language. It is therefore essential that the Samoan Bible as the crucial component of the Church be well maintained and that the Church be conscious of its vital role of maintaining and supporting the Samoan language as part of its literacy educational mission. It is also most important that some original words currently used in the Bible which cannot be comprehended by young people of today, should be changed to new forms and renditions whilst maintaining the good sense of the text. This would avoid confusion and encourage the young people of the Church to engage in reading the Samoan Bible.

This study has shown that syncretism of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism within the EFKS needs to be consciously addressed by the leaders of the Church. As mentioned in Chapter Seven, there have been times when aspects of the two have conflicted in Church government and procedure, which has tended to create mistrust in the EFKS. Local control of the affairs of the local congregation, a fundamental principle of congregationalism,

⁴⁹² Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 75.

is not being practised to its full potential at the local EFKS Church level. While the local congregation are engaging in the organization and implementation of the day-to-day activities under the leadership of the *faifeau*, there are higher authorities, which scrutinise their various other ecclesiastical obligations, which in the end are all subject to the approval of the *Fono Tele*. The *Pulega* (sub-district) and *Matagaluega* (district level) sometimes become stumbling blocks in the progress of local congregations, preventing them from moving forward with action on matters, which need urgent implementation.⁴⁹³ This amongst many other issues would certainly call for an urgent reconsideration by the leadership level of the EFKS of the need to be faithful to one of the two Church polities – Congregationalism or Presbyterianism – rather than an unclear and ill-defined simultaneous mix. If at any stage the leadership agrees to entertain a mixture of the two in the administration and control of the EFKS as it is now, this has to be made categorically clear in the Church Constitution. Guidelines should be clear, intelligible and precise. A case could perhaps be argued, if Presbyterian principles of organisation are to be overtly adopted by EFKS continually, that this should be reflected in the name of the Church. The proposed hermeneutical method in this study would be a wise tool to use in ascertaining the appropriate position of the Church in such issue.

Democracy and equality have always been the intrinsic concepts within Samoan society in the spheres of politics, law, economics, sociology, ecology, and more importantly in religion. Given the cultural nature of the Samoan community, it has become clear at times that these notions seem to have been, trivialised in, or even totally absent from, the religious fabric of the Samoan context. As Asofou So'o rightly states,

Although parish decisions follow closely the democratic principle of majority rule, arguments presented and individuals presenting those views are dominated by *matai* who hold ranked village titles. There is also a general cultural expectation that only the more senior members of the parish in terms of age and held titles are the proper people to make decisions for the parish. It would be a good practice to involve more junior parish members (non-title holders and holders of titles of lesser rank) in parish decisions.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ A concern of one local congregation was once raised for the EFKS to reconsider the heavy burden of the *fa'asamoa* on families and congregations when they are involved in funerals, weddings, and other similar rites of passages. The cost to the family can be immense. This congregation argued that too much emphasis on the *fa'asamoa* had left the concerned families with unbearable debts and traumatic stress. The congregation appealed through the *Pulega* for the Church to reconsider this and perhaps lessen the burden or totally eradicate it by making a Church public statement to that effect. However, the *Toeaina* of the *Pulega* denied this local congregation's request on the grounds that such *fa'asamoa* has nothing to do with the Church, but exemplified the unnecessarily 'show-off attitude' of the families concerned. Such a remark by the *Toeaina* of the *Pulega* in question brought sadness to not only the congregation concerned but also all other congregations within the *Pulega*.

⁴⁹⁴ So'o, "Governance and Rendered Services", 165.

Regarding equality in the Church, the issue of women's ordination raised in Chapter Seven has been a concern for a very long time but little progress has been realised thus far. The great interest shown by Samoan women in theological studies in the last decade is concrete evidence of their interest in participation in formal ministry. But simply because they are women and not men, they are therefore ineligible to be ordained as *faiifeau* in the EFKS. This study contends that it is now time for the EFKS to reconsider its long-standing Church policy of not permitting women to be *faiifeau*. Furthermore, such a policy contradicts its own Constitution, which states that all people "are equally free to approach God, and everyone is called to continue this work of Christ in the world. Also there is neither person nor way which can exclude any member of the Church from this true calling, as it is the work of the Saints of the whole Church comprising all the Faithful."⁴⁹⁵ The most common argument against women's ordination in EFKS is culturally oriented, and such cultural mindset should be critically reviewed according to the Christian principles and practices of equality and democracy. This study is a reminder for the EFKS to reconsider its position on this issue. The study believes that since there is a genuine concern for women to be ordained and such concern is both culturally and biblically based, and in line with the Church's constitution, a fair reconsideration of the issue is proper and imminent. Perhaps a cautious approach for its beginnings is appropriate and a continuous review and assessment of its operation through people's theological reflections and insights would bring more understanding and hope to its implementation.

There has been a recent revival of the missionary work dimension of the EFKS ministry specially focusing on the 'Church-planting' mission outside Samoa as indicated in Chapter Eight. While this may be a promising direction of the EFKS missionary campaign, it is also important to bear in mind the fact that the EFKS needs to continue its inward focus on how to utilize efficiently its human resources who have attained theological qualifications and experience. In particular there are numerous theological graduates of Malua Theological College who are not being employed wisely by the Church in any useful capacity for the development of the Church as a whole. Lack of financial allocations to employ these people may be the problem. If so, I would argue therefore that the EFKS should re-evaluate its financial obligations and make sure these valuable human resources are put at their highest and best use for the Church. Some of current Church building projects already in the pipeline

⁴⁹⁵ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)*, 9.

could be temporarily delayed and such money redirected to employ these people for the benefit of the Church. Investment in human resources, in this case people trained and willing to serve, are essential for the future of the Church.

This study points to a necessary change in the thought processes of the EFKS in its attempt to know and understand its own cultural-theological praxis within the wider scope of universal hermeneutical thinking. Epistemologically the EFKS and its ecclesiastical practices are sometimes too difficult to comprehend. Some people have blamed the EFKS as a Church for being too traditional, conservative, and exclusive in its ministry. Thus misinterpretation, misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the praxis of the EFKS have occurred. In such a scenario, a philosophical hermeneutical approach to understanding the EFKS and its cultural-theological praxis is a necessity. The critical revitalisation of cultural concepts and ideologies of the *fa'asamoa* indicated by this study makes it possible to articulate and formulate a hermeneutical paradigm that is not only contextual, but also relevant, and practically viable. It also provides direction for the Church's response to the challenges in its ministry in this twenty-first century. This study's recommendations and proposals, together with other previous studies on the EFKS, would establish a solid foundation for a more extensive review of the EFKS.

In this way, the EFKS will continue to preserve its identity as a Samoan Church. Because of the infusion of the *fa'asamoa* into its faith and practice from its earliest times, it emerged as a post-colonial church well grounded in the ethos of the new independent state. The EFKS did not have to scramble to assume a new synthetic 'Samoanness' – it had always ensured it was genuinely Samoan. In these times of rapid globalisation it is this that will enable it to go forward into the future as an institution with an indigenous integrity and strength. However, globalisation has brought with it attitudes and attributes that the EFKS could benefit from considering further. Contemporary Samoa is well aware of the principles of good governance, individual human rights, especially those of women and young people, and of the attraction of the new forms of technology, many of which can be used to good effect in worship services and other Church activities. It is not a matter of throwing out all the 'old ways': indeed, it is the contention of this thesis that some other of these could be employed to good effect within Church practice. However it is critical that the EFKS recognise and accept that significant changes are occurring in the wider society and make modifications to accommodate these.

Locally, the implications of this study also have bearing on other Church denominations in Samoa that may have a similar correlation to the EFKS in the relationship with the Samoan culture. Albeit there are differences in theological emphasises and ecclesiastical focus, but no Church in Samoa could escape the influence and the impact of Samoan culture in one form or another. This I believe is a continuing challenge for them in the years to come. Thus, this study and its revitalisation of the *Tofa Liliu a Samoa* philosophical hermeneutical model would strengthen their resolve to make sense of their own cultural-theological praxis.

Theological studies have recently developed rapidly in new areas. Contextual theology is notable in this regard. This is so, in particular in the Oceanic region, where Pacific scholars have been researching and writing in their quest to make sense of the gospel and its theology in the eyes and ears of Pacific peoples.⁴⁹⁶ These scholars include Ilaitia Sevatia Tuwere, Bishop Leslie Boseto, Bishop Patelesio Finau, Lalomilo Kamu, Pothin Wete, Ama'amalele Tofaeono, Sione Amanaki Havea, Peniamina Leota, and Taipisia Leilua. This study is a contribution to the same quest.

The *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa*, the philosophical hermeneutical paradigm formulated in this study ensures that challenges for the Church today and in the twenty first century could be dealt with, with understanding, courage, justice, and hope through faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁹⁶ Charles W Forman, *Finding Our Own Voice: The Reinterpreting of Christianity by Oceanian Theologians* (July 2005 [accessed 7 April 2009]); available from http://65.55.85.55/att/GetAttachment.aspx?file=ba30e964-63d0-4fee-a700-0c324b3ad0a5.html&ct=dGV4dC9odG1s&name=Z29saWF0aC5odG1s&inline=0&rfc=0&empty=False&imgsrc=&hm__login=faalepo&hm__domain=hotmail.com&ip=10.13.6.8&d=d7197&mf=2&hm__ts=Tue%2c%2007%20Apr%202009%2003%3a04%3a57%20GMT&hm__ha=01_5926aff40d442f8f2453423097969d6035bbb7a4926aa8a527108bb25cbd287c&oneredir=1.

APPENDICES

Appendix i

GLOSSARY

SAMOAN WORDS, PHRASES AND SAYINGS

<i>Aganu'u ma le Agaifanua</i>	cultural and social practices
<i>ali'i taua</i>	paramount chief
<i>Ao o fa'alupega</i>	another title for church minister or salutation for church minister
<i>ati ma le lau</i>	a traditional form of punishment
<i>aua e te tautua fia matai</i>	do not serve in order to be a chief
<i>aulape a le nu'u</i>	village prohibitions and penalties
<i>Aulape a Samoa</i>	Samoa traditional punishment
<i>E fesili muli mai ia mua mai</i>	late-comer should seek advice from, or listen to, the one who came earlier
<i>E Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa</i>	Samoa is founded on God
<i>E maua le tasi ina ua Soalaupule</i>	consensus can be achieved through dialogue
<i>E va'ava'alua le Talalelei ma le Aganu'u</i>	Gospel and Culture go hand in hand
<i>fa'asavali ma le nu'u</i>	traditional punishment where one is asked to leave the village
<i>fa'autautaga atamai</i>	wisdom or practical wisdom
<i>Faletua ma Tausi</i>	wives of village chiefs
<i>Fanaafi o Fa'amalama</i>	old Samoan religion or worship
<i>fanau lalovaoa</i>	young children
<i>fe'ese'esea'iga i pulega a le nu'u</i>	differences in village governance
<i>fono a le ekalesia</i>	church meeting
<i>fono a le nu'u</i>	village meeting
<i>Fuata ma lona lou</i>	breadfruit season and the stick for collecting breadfruit or a new season and its new ideas
<i>gagana fa'aaloalo</i>	formal and respectful language
<i>gagana tautala o aso uma</i>	everyday conversational language
<i>Le Atua Kerisiano</i>	God of Christianity
<i>le itu-i-fafo o le galuega a le Atua</i>	material side of God's ministry
<i>Malietoa, ia tali i lagi se ao o lou malo</i>	Malietoa awaits the head of your government from heaven
<i>Matua Faale-Agaga</i>	spiritual parents
<i>mea fa'ale-agaga</i>	spiritual things
<i>moe le toa</i>	to postpone to another time or day
<i>O fa'amanuiaga mai le Atua</i>	God's blessings
<i>O le Fafa o Sauali'i</i>	a place where spirits of the dead reside
<i>O le fuata ma lona lou</i>	a season and its new affairs
<i>O le ala i le pule o le tautua</i>	the way to authority is through service
<i>o le tagata ma lona tupuaga o le tagata foi ma lona fa'asinomaga</i>	

pulega a ali'i ma faipule
saisai ma fa'ala

Sa'o o le aiga or Sa'o
soloa-ile-aufuefue

sua-fa'atamali'i
tausia ole vatapuia
tala o le vavau
tautua i le Atua ma lona finagalo
tautua matavela
tautua pa'o
tautua toto

tautua tuaupua
tautua tuavae

ua liuliu fa'ala'au mamafa le tofa saili a Samoa

tofa ua tasi or ua tasi le tofa
ua tasi le tofa
ua tasi le fa'atofala'iga

a Samoan and his/her identity reference
in family and village
village council of chiefs
tied up and put in the sun – a Samoan
form of punishment
paramount chief of a family
total eviction from a village – a form of
punishment
speak like an honorary chief
caring for the relationships
myths and legends
serving God and his will
good service to a chief or family
poor service to a chief or family
'bloody' service or service with total
commitment
a form of poor service to a family
a form of good service to a chief and
family
family deliberations are like an effort to
turn over a heavy log
a consensus is reached and achieved
consensus is reached
an agreement is reached

SAMOAN WORDS

A'oa'o Fesoasoani
aga
agaga
aganu'u
agasala
aiga
aiga potopoto
aitu
aitu fafine
Ali'i
Ali'i ma Faipule
alofisa
amio-le-pulea
anapogi
aoga Aso Sa
aoga faifeau
aoga Tusi Paia
Aso
Atua
Au Fa'atonu
Au Matutua
aualuma

lay preacher
habit and behaviour
spirit
culture
sin, wrongful act
family
extended family
evil spirit
female evil spirit
High chief
Village chiefs' council
chiefs' meeting
bad manners
fasting
Sunday school
church minister's school
Bible study
day
God
Elder Directors of LMS church
Church Elders of LMS church
village maidens

<i>auauna a le Atua</i>	servant of God
<i>Aulotu</i>	Congregation
<i>aumaga</i>	untitled village men
<i>ava</i>	kava
<i>ava-taulele'a</i>	wives of untitled men
<i>e tasi le lotu</i>	one church
<i>Ekalesia</i>	Ecclesia or church
<i>ele'ele</i>	dirt or land
<i>fa'aaloalo</i>	respect
<i>fa'afaletui</i>	meeting or gathering for discussion
<i>fa'aipoipoga</i>	wedding
<i>fa'alupega</i>	honorific address
<i>fa'amanuiaga</i>	blessings
<i>fa'amaoni</i>	integrity
<i>fa'amaseia'auga</i>	Samoa virginity testing process
<i>fa'amatai</i>	<i>matai</i> system or Samoan chiefly system
<i>fa'ao'olima</i>	assault
<i>fa'asalaga</i>	penalty
<i>fa'asamoa</i>	Samoa way of doing things
<i>fa'asinomaga</i>	Samoa indigenous personal reference
<i>fa'asoa</i>	distribute
<i>fafine nofo tane</i>	wife residing at her husbands family
<i>Faifeau</i>	church minister or pastor
<i>faigalotu</i>	worship service
<i>Fai-lotu</i>	church minister or pastor
<i>Faipule</i>	Member of Parliament
<i>fale</i>	house
<i>fale tele</i>	big house
<i>faletua</i>	high chief's wife or minister's wife
<i>fanua</i>	land
<i>fasioti tagata</i>	murderer
<i>feagaiga</i>	sister or covenant between two parties
<i>filifiliga</i>	church deliberations
<i>foa'i</i>	church giving
<i>fono</i>	meeting or deliberations
<i>Fono Tele</i>	EFKS General Assembly
<i>fuata-ulu</i>	breadfruit season
<i>gagana</i>	language
<i>gaoi</i>	thief
<i>ietoga</i>	Samoa fine mat
<i>ifoga</i>	Samoa reconciliation rite of passage
<i>Itumalo</i>	district
<i>Komiti Au-Toeaina</i>	Elders' Committee of EFKS
<i>Komiti Fa'atunu</i>	Senior Elders' Committee of EFKS
<i>lagi</i>	sky or heaven
<i>laoa</i>	residence of an orator or talking chief
<i>lauga-tali</i>	responding speech by a Samoa chief
<i>lauga-usu</i>	welcoming speech by a Samoa chief
<i>liuliu</i>	to turn something over and over
<i>liutofaga</i>	Samoa ritual of disinterment
<i>lotu</i>	church or worship
<i>Lotu Au Leoleo</i>	Watcher's Prayer Union worship

<i>lou</i>	breadfruit collecting stick
<i>lou koko</i>	cocoa collecting stick
<i>Mafutaga a Tina</i>	EFKS Women's Fellowship
<i>maga</i>	x-shape end of the breadfruit collecting stick
<i>magalafu</i>	fireplace
<i>malosi o le nu'u</i>	salutation for untitled men
<i>malumalu</i>	church or church building
<i>mamalu</i>	honour and dignity
<i>manuia</i>	blessing
<i>maota</i>	<i>Faifeau</i> or high chief's house
<i>Matafale lotu</i>	registered family of a local church
<i>Matagaluega</i>	a District of EFKS
<i>matai</i>	Samoan chief
<i>matou</i>	plural pronoun 'we, us, our'
<i>mea fa'ale-tino</i>	worldly or material things
<i>mea fou</i>	new things
<i>moetolo</i>	sleep-crawling
<i>mu le foaga</i>	traditional form of punishment
<i>nafa</i>	roles and responsibilities
<i>nu'u</i>	village
<i>ola</i>	life or alive
<i>osiga-feagaiga</i>	covenantal oath between a congregation and church minister
<i>palapala</i>	earth or dirt
<i>Papalagi</i>	a white person
<i>potopoto</i>	gather or come together at one place
<i>pou</i>	post of Samoan house
<i>pulega</i>	governance
<i>pulenu'u</i>	village mayor
<i>Pulotu</i>	name of the very end of the Samoan islands
<i>sama-ga-pe'a</i>	ritual of dedication of a completed tattoo
<i>saofa'iga</i>	a respectful way addressing a group of people
<i>soalaupule</i>	dialogue, deliberate, discuss, negotiate
<i>soga'imiti</i>	Samoan tattooed man
<i>solitofaga</i>	sleep-crawling on to a sleeping place
<i>sua-niu</i>	coconut juice
<i>sui va'aia</i>	representative
<i>suli</i>	heir(s)
<i>ta'ita'i</i>	to lead or a leader
<i>ta'ita'iga</i>	leadership and governance
<i>Tagalo-a-lagi</i>	Samoan traditional god
<i>tagata ekalesia</i>	church congregant
<i>tagata ese</i>	a stranger
<i>tagata lilo</i>	the hidden inner person
<i>tala tu'u</i>	myths and legends
<i>talagateu</i>	unveiling
<i>tama'ita'i</i>	authentic women of the village
<i>tama'ita'i matua</i>	an elderly woman
<i>tamali'i</i>	high chief

<i>tapua'i</i>	worship or well-wishers
<i>tapua'iga</i>	worship
<i>tatau</i>	tattoo
<i>taulaga</i>	church offering
<i>taula-itu</i>	family priest or shaman
<i>taule'ale'a</i>	untitled man
<i>tautua</i>	service to a chief or family
<i>tiakono</i>	deacon
<i>tino</i>	body
<i>Toeaina</i>	Elder minister of EFKS
<i>tofa liuliu</i>	process of seeking wisdom and understanding
<i>tofa loloto</i>	deep wisdom and knowledge
<i>tofa ma le moe</i>	wisdom and knowledge
<i>tofa saili</i>	principle of seeking wisdom and understanding
<i>toto</i>	blood
<i>tulafale</i>	Samoan orator
<i>tulafale taua</i>	important Samoan orator
<i>tunoa</i>	outside Samoan kitchen
<i>tupu'aga</i>	origin
<i>ula afi</i>	blowing fire
<i>'ulu</i>	breadfruit tree
<i>umukuka</i>	kitchen or outside kitchen
<i>va</i>	space between two people or things
<i>vatapuia</i>	sacred relationship between two or more people

Appendix ii¹

Table 3.3a: Population 5+ by denominations, 2006

Denominations	Total	Percentage%
Congregational Christian Church (EFKS)	52664	33.8
Catholic	30499	19.6
Methodist	22384	14.3
Later Day Saints	20788	13.3
Assembly Of God	10840	6.9
Seven Day Adventists	5482	3.5
Worship Centre	1914	1.2
Jehovah's Witnesses	1247	0.8
Full Gospel	792	0.5
Christian Community	721	0.5
Bahai	658	0.4
CCCJ Samoa	657	0.4
Voice of Christ	603	0.4
Church of Nazarene	574	0.4
Aoga Tusi Paia	513	0.3
Pentecost	441	0.3
Baptist	379	0.2
Peace Chapel	313	0.2
Samoa Evangelism	285	0.2
Protestants	276	0.2
Anglican Church	200	0.1
Elim Church	110	0.1
Christian Fellowship	109	0.1
Others	433	0.3
Not stated	3122	2.0
Total	156004	100.0

Table 3.3b: Population 5+ by major denominations 2001 and 2006

Denominations	Census 2006	%	Census 2001	%	Difference in 2006	Percent change (%) in 2006
EFKS	52664	33.8	52787	35.0	-123	-0.2
Catholic	30499	19.6	29726	19.7	+773	+2.5
Methodist	22384	14.3	22572	15.0	-188	-0.8
Later Day Saints	20788	13.3	18822	12.5	+1966	+9.5
Assembly o God	10840	6.9	9898	6.6	+942	+8.7
Seven Day Adventists	5482	3.5	5232	3.5	+250	+4.6
Others	10225	6.6	11453	7.6	-1228	-12.0
Not stated	3122		2.0		192	0.1
Total	156,004		100		150,682	100

¹ Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics, *Samoa: Population and Housing Census Report 2006* (Government of Samoa, 2008 [accessed 30 Oct 2009]); available from <http://www.sbs.gov.ws/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=xZE7Ip3423g%3d&tabid=3615&language=en-US>

Appendix iii

GENERAL SAMOAN HISTORICAL EVENTS and LMS/EFKS CHURCH EVENTS from 1830

- 1830 John Williams and Charles Barff, from the London Missionary Society (LMS), arrived in Samoa with six Tahitian and two Aitutakian missionary teachers
- 1834 Missionaries established Samoan orthography
- 1838 Samoan treaty with the U.S
- 1839 First 12 Samoan missionaries left for work in Melanesia (continued until 1975)
- 1839 First printing press in Samoa by LMS missionaries set up at Malua
- 1844 Establishment of Malua Theological College
- 1847 British Consulate opened
- 1848-1873 Intra-Samoan wars for supremacy between rival chiefly families
- 1851 U.S. Consulate opened
- 1857 J.C. Godeffroy and Son (of Hamburg) opened depot in Apia, which resulted in Samoa becoming a very busy Pacific trading post
- 1861 Hamburg (subsequently German) Consulate opened
- 1875 Samoan Constitution passed as an attempt to form a national government
- 1879 Municipality of Apia established, with its own court and revenue, supervised by the Consuls
- 1884 German troops landed to restore law and order
- 1889 U.S. troops landed to protect U.S. citizens in the war situation
- 1889 Hurricane battered Apia Harbour, two US and two German warships were destroyed, with much loss of life, British ship *Calliope* escaped
- 1889 Treaty of Berlin; U.S., Britain and Germany recognized Samoan independence
- 1894 Author Robert Louis Stevenson died in Samoa, having lived there since 1889
- 1899 U.S. forces landed to intervene in the Samoan wars
- 1899 Samoa partitioned according to the Treaty of Berlin; Germany received larger western section, U.S. the much smaller eastern area
- 1900 Germany declared protectorate over German Samoa; huge copra plantations established
- 1908 Mau a Pule peaceful resistance movement established
- 1914 Early in WW I, German Western Samoa was occupied by New Zealand forces with no

- resistance by Germany, though it refused officially to surrender it
- 1918 World influenza epidemic reached Samoa from inadequate quarantine by the Administration of a visiting ship, killing many Samoans
- 1920 League of Nations granted Western Samoa as mandate to New Zealand
- 1929 Mau a Pule peaceful demonstration resulted in the deaths of 11 members of the Mau by NZ police firing into the crowd, including High Chief Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III
- 1942 -5 U.S. troops stationed on Western Samoa
- 1946 U.N. granted Trusteeship over Western Samoa to New Zealand
- 1947 Assembly and Council of State created as a basis for subsequent self government
- 1954 Constitutional Convention adopted a draft Constitution opted for independence; this reflected the *fa'asamoa* in a number of respects, such as the creation of the highest title of Head of State *O le Ao o le Malo*, Head of State, and conferral of this title on the two leading *Tama a 'Aiga*, heads of traditional leading families, to hold office for life; eligibility to vote and for election to Parliament to be limited to *matai* title-holders; 83% of land inalienable under customary system of chiefs; local government throughout the country in the hands of councils of village *matai*.
- 1956 Appointment of Rev Dr John Bradshaw as Principal of Malua Theological College
- 1959 High Chief Fiamē Mata'afa Faumuina Mulinu'u II elected leader of Government Business; NZ supported Mata'afa's request to the UN for Samoa to become independent
- 1961 Plebiscite of Samoan chiefs adopted a final Constitution
- 1962 Independence of Western Samoa
- 1962 Samoa (LMS) Church independence, as *Ekalesia Fa'apopopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa* (EFKS)
- 1963 Death of one Head of State, Tupua Tamasese Mea'ole
- 1970 Samoa joined British Commonwealth
- 1976 Samoa joined the U.N.
- 1991 Universal suffrage introduced
- 1997 "Western" dropped, country now officially known as "Samoa"
- 2007 Death of Malietoa Tanumafili II, after 45 years as Head of State
- 2007 Former Prime Minister Tupuola Taisi Tufuga Efi elected unopposed by Parliament as Head of State

Appendix iv

EFKS STATISTICS NUMBER OF LOCAL CHURCHES, SUB-DISTRICTS AND DISTRICTS

	MATAGALUEGA	PULEGA	AULOTU
	(District)	(Sub-district)	Congregations
1.	Apia i Sasa'e	4	29
2.	Apia i Sisifo	3	20
3.	Faleata	2	17
4.	Malua	2	12
5.	A'ana	4	30
6.	Falealili i Sisifo	2	21
7.	Falealili i Sasa'e	2	12
8.	Fa'asalele'aga	4	34
9.	Itu o tane	3	27
10.	Aukilani	3	23
11.	Manukau	2	15
12.	Niu Sila i Saute	3	25
13.	Kuiniselani	3	18
14.	Niusauelese	3	21
15.	Vitoria	3	15
16.	Amerika	4	20
17.	Hawai'i	2	7
	Amerika Samoa		1
TOTAL	17	49	347

NB: Amerika Samoa is not a *Matagaluega* (District) yet, only a single congregation.

Source: Data from the EFKS Central Office Tamaligi, Apia on 10 September 2009

Appendix v

RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDES

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INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT A

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS Single / Married

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS:

1. WHEN STARTED WORKING IN THE
VILLAGE.....
2. LENGTH OF SERVICE AS
FAIFEAU.....
3. WHEN GRADUATED FROM THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGE.....
4. STATUS IN CHURCH.....

- Non-ordained Faifeau ☐
- Ordained faifeau ☐
- Elder ☐
- Other
specify.....
....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. How important is the role of Samoan culture and *fa'a-Samoa* in the work of the Christian church in Samoa?
2. Are there any areas of the ministry of the church where no or very little Samoan culture is involved?
3. Do you think the integration of the gospel and culture in the church's ministry in Samoa is a success or not? If yes, how and why? If no, why?
4. What is your understanding of the Samoan saying '*e va'ava'alua le aganu'u ma le Talalelei*'? (Culture and gospel always go hand in hand)
5. Do you think that the work of the gospel and the ministry of the EFKS would be possible in Samoa without the support of Samoan culture and the *fa'a-Samoa*?
6. Are there any areas of the ministry of the EFKS where the cultural contribution is in excess, thus causing confusion, contradictions, and/or conflicts in the message of the gospel?
7. How do you lead the EFKS in your role as the Chairman of the EFKS with regards to the Samoan culture?
8. Were there any problems with the ministry of the Samoan church in relation to the Samoan culture during your service as a church minister and as the chairman of the EFKS? If yes, explain?
9. How do you use the Samoan culture in your ministry?
10. Do you think the Samoan people have been Christianised? If yes, please describe how? If no, why and what needs to be done further in order to achieve the mission of the gospel and the church as such?
11. What are some of the obstacles to the progress of the ministry of the church in the Samoan context?
12. Have you ever had any conflicts with the *fa'a-Samoa* in your ministry? If yes describe? If no, why not?
13. How objective and/or subjective can you be in carrying out your chairmanship role, knowing that you are also the minister for a local congregation?
14. Have you ever encountered any conflict of interest in carrying out your responsibilities as both the minister of a local congregation and as the Chairman of the EFKS?

15. Do you think the ministers of the EFKS are giving faithful service to the church?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT 'B'

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

5. WHEN STARTED WORKING IN THE
VILLAGE.....

6. LENGTH OF SERVICE AS
FAIFEAU.....

7. WHEN GRADUATED FROM THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGE.....

8. STATUS IN CHURCH

- Non-ordained *Faifeau* ☐
- Ordained *Faifeau* ☐
- Other
specify.....
....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

16. How important are the roles of the *aganu'u* (Samoan culture) and *fa'a-Samoa* (Samoan way of doing things) in the work of the Christian church in Samoa?
17. How long have you been a *faiifeau* (church minister) of the EFKS?
18. How important is the work of the *faiifeau* in the ministry of the church in Samoa?
19. Being a senior *faiifeau* of the EFKS, have you ever encountered serious problems with your ministry in your local congregation? If yes, explain. If no, what do think EFKS are the reasons that serious problems have not arisen?
20. Is the ministry of the EFKS satisfactorily carried out in accordance with the mission of the Christian church as such? If yes, comment on some evidence of such work by the church. If no, please comment.
21. Have you had any problems with the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* in the course of your ministry? If yes, identify the major ones, and discuss.
22. How would you attempt to solve such problems?
23. Have you experienced any difference in the relationship between the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the church ministry today and in the past? If yes, identify the major ones, and discuss.
24. Do you think the current relationship between the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the EFKS ministry will be beneficial for the Samoan people and the EFKS?
25. What is the role of the *faiifeau* in this relationship?
26. Has there been a time when the EFKS ministry dominated the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* or vice versa? If yes, please explain with examples? If no, why.
27. Please give your own point of view with regards to this relationship?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: **PARTICIPANT ‘C’**

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS Single / Married

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

9. LENGTH OF SERVICE AS
FAIFEAU.....

10. LENGTH OF SERVICE AS A LECTURER.....

11. WHEN GRADUATED FROM THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE.....

12. STATUS IN CHURCH.....

- Non-ordained *Faifeau* ☐
 ■ Ordained *Faifeau* ☐
 ■ Elder ☐
 ■ Other
 specify.....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

Basic Questions

1. What is your area of theological specialisation? (Systematic, Contextual, Practical, etc)
2. How can you describe the relationship between the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the church ministry?
3. How important is the role of the Samoan culture and *fa'a-Samoa* in the work of the Christian church in Samoa?
4. Are there any areas of the ministry of the church where no or very little Samoan culture is involved?
5. Do you think the integration of the gospel and culture in the church's ministry in Samoa is a success or not? If yes, how and why, If no, why.
6. What is your understanding of the Samoan saying '*e va'ava'alua le aganu'u ma le Talalelei*'? (Culture and gospel always go hand in hand)
7. Do you think that the work of the gospel and the ministry of the EFKS would be possible in Samoa without the support of the Samoan culture and the *fa'a-Samoa*? EFKS
8. Are there any areas of the ministry of the EFKS where the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* contribution is in excess thus causing confusion, contradictions, and/or conflicts in the message of the gospel?
9. Do you think the Samoan people have been Christianised? If yes, please describe how? If no, why, and what needs to be done further in order to achieve the mission of the gospel and the church as such?
10. What are some of the obstacles to the progress of the ministry of the church in the Samoan context?
11. Is the ministry of the EFKS satisfactorily carried out in accordance with the mission of the Christian church as such? If yes, comment on some evidence of such work by the church. If no, comment.
12. Do you think the current relationship between the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the EFKS ministry will be beneficial for the Samoan people and the EFKS?
13. What is the role of the *fai'feau* in this relationship?
14. Has there been a time when the EFKS ministry dominated the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa*, or vice versa? If yes, please explain with examples. If no, why?
15. Please give your own point of view with regards to this relationship.

16. What do you think, has the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* been Christianized or has Christianity been Samoanised?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT ‘D’

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Laywoman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Matai*
- *Tamaita’i* (untitled woman)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

1. OCCUPATION.....
...

2. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION (S).....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. What is your role in your church?
2. How often do you attend church?
3. Do you have any problem attending church?
4. Do you participate in any church activity? If yes name them.
5. Does your gender preclude you from participation in other areas/activities of the church life?
6. Do you want to participate more in the church?
7. If so what other activities you would want to be part of?
8. What do you think of the relationship between the Samoan culture and the gospel in the church?
9. How strong is the Samoan culture in your church?
10. Does your church encounter any problem with the relationship between the gospel and the Samoan culture?
11. If problems arise how does your church handle such problems?
12. Do you think the Samoan culture sometime supersedes or overpowers the role of the gospel on the life of the people?
13. If so, why?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT ‘E’

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Layman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Matai*
- *Taule’ale’a* (untitled man)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

3. OCCUPATION.....
...

4. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION (S).....

Basic Questions

14. What is your role in your church?
15. How often do you attend church?
16. Do you have any problem attending church?
17. Do you participate in any church activity? If yes, name them
18. Does your gender preclude you from participation in other areas/activities of church life?
19. Do you want to participate more in the church?
20. If so what other activities you would want to be part of?
21. What do you think of the relationship between the Samoan culture and the gospel in the church?
22. How strong is the Samoan culture in your church?
23. Does your church encounter any problem with the relationship between the gospel and the Samoan culture?
24. If problems arise, how does your church handle such problems?
25. Do you think the Samoan culture sometime supersedes or overpowers the role of the gospel on the life of the people?
26. If so, why?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: **PARTICIPANT ‘F’**

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Laywoman
- Layman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Matai*
- *Taule'ale'a* (untitled man)
- *Tamaita'i* (untitled woman)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

5. CURRENT
OCCUPATION.....
.....

6. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION (S).....

3. LENGTH OF TIME OF INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. Describe your political involvement
2. Are you involved with the EFKS church ministry in any form? If yes, what is the nature of your involvement?
3. Being a faithful Christian in the EFKS, what makes you so?
4. What proportion of your time is dedicated to your service in the church in relation to your other obligations?
5. Are there any *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* activities in your congregation? If yes, name them and explain.
6. Have you been involved in any of these or all of these activities? If yes, in what capacity?
7. Can you explain your experience of the relationship between *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the church ministry in your congregation?
8. What is your understanding of the Samoan saying '*e va'ava'alua le aganu'u ma le Talalelei*'? (Culture and gospel always go hand in hand)
9. Do you think that the work of the gospel and the ministry of the EFKS would be possible in Samoa without the support of the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa*?
10. Are there any areas of the ministry of the EFKS where the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* contribution is in excess, thus causing confusion, contradictions, and/or conflicts in the message of the gospel?
11. Do you think the church must work together with the state (government) for the development of the Samoan nation and the spiritual formation of the people, just as with the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa*? If yes, how can that be done? If no, why.
12. Do you think the governance and leadership of the church institution should imitate and resemble that of the state political institution? If yes, explain why and how. If no, explain why.
13. Do you think the church and church pastors should be involved with state politics?
14. If yes, how far should the church be involved in political matters?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT G

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS Single / Married

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

13. LENGTH OF SERVICE AS
FAIFEAU.....

14. LENGTH OF SERVICE AS AN ECUMENICAL
LEADER.....

15. WHEN GRADUATED FROM THEOLOGICAL
COLLEGE.....

16. STATUS IN CHURCH.....

- Non-ordained *Faifeau* ☐
- Ordained *Faifeau* ☐
- Elder ☐
- Other
specify.....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. How ecumenical are you?
2. Do you have any strong feelings about other religions or denominations?
Comment please
3. Do you think your church is more ecumenical now than in the past? Comment please
4. Why was it not ecumenical in the past and now if still not?
5. What factors do you think contribute to any progress or delay in the ecumenical movement in Samoa?
6. Do you think that Samoan culture and its role in the church contributes to the promotion of ecumenism in Samoa? Comment please.
7. How important is the role of Samoan culture in the ministry of the church?
8. What is your understanding about the Samoan saying, “*e va’ava’alua le aganu’u ma le Talalelei*”
9. How important is Samoan culture in your work as a leader of the ecumenical movement in Samoa?
10. What areas of the ecumenical movement in Samoa you would like to improve in order to sustain its growth in the future?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICPANT ‘H’

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Laywoman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher
- Church Minister

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Matai
- Tamaita’i (untitled woman)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

7. CURRENT
OCCUPATION.....
...

8. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION(S)
.....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. How do you like your church?
2. Have you attended any special church activity? If yes, what?
3. Do you attend church often?
4. Do you attend church youth programmes?
5. How do you find your church youth programmes?
6. What sort of activities do you encounter in these youth programmes?
7. Do you have any cultural activities in these programmes? How do you find these cultural activities as being part of your church youth programmes?
8. Have you encountered any problems in these cultural and theological activities in your church?
9. Do you think the youths of your church have enough participation in church growth and development?
10. What do you wish your church could provide more of for the youths in the future?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT 'I'

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Layman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher
- Church Minister

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Matai*
- *Taule'ale'a* (untitled man)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

9. CURRENT
OCCUPATION.....
.....

10. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION(S)
.....

EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

11. How do you like your church?
12. Have you attended any church activity of your church? If yes, what?
13. Do you attend church often?
14. Do you attend church youth programmes?
15. How do you find your church youth programmes?
16. What sort of activities do you encounter in these youth programmes?
17. Do you have any cultural activities in these programmes? How do you find these cultural activities as being part of your church youth programmes?
18. Have you encountered any problems in these cultural and theological activities in your church?
19. Do you think the youths of your church have enough participation in your church growth and development?
20. What do you wish your church could provide more of for the youths in the future?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTICIPANT ‘J’

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Laywoman
- Layman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher
- Church Minister

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Matai*

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

11. CURRENT
OCCUPATION.....
...

2. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION
(S).....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. Are you a Samoan *matai* (chief)?
2. What type of *matai* title do you have – *ali'i* (honorary chief) or *tulafale* (orator or talking chief)?
3. How long have you been a *matai*?
4. Are you a *matai* of the village where you are staying now?
5. How many *matai* titles do you have?
6. Are you a member of the EFKS? If yes, for how long?
7. Do you have any *tofi* (special post) within the CCCS? If yes, name them
8. In that *tofi*, do you have any significant input into the decision making of your local congregation?
9. Do you participate in the local congregational activities and decision-making processes In your capacity as a *matai* or because you are one of the church leaders like *tiakono* (deacon), *a'oa'o* (lay preacher) or *tagata ekalesia* (communicant)?
10. If you are involved in your local congregation deliberations as a *matai*, why is this so, as this is a church meeting not a village meeting?
11. If so, how do you handle that situation knowing well that you are speaking in your capacity as a *matai* in the context of the church institution?
12. How do you apply your dualistic roles *matai* and *tiakono*- in each of the two institutions?
13. Being the 'guardian' of the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* as a *matai*, have you ever come to a situation where it could seem you might compromise your church position in order to carry out your Samoan traditional responsibilities satisfactorily, and vice versa?
14. If yes, how would you deal with such a dilemma?
15. How important is the role of the Samoan culture and *fa'a-Samoa* in the work of the Christian church in Samoa? Please comment
16. Are there any areas of the ministry of the church where no or very little *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* is involved?

17. Do you think the integration of the gospel and culture in the church's ministry in Samoa is a success or not? If yes, how and why? If no, why?
18. What is your understanding of the Samoan saying '*e va'ava'alua le aganu'u ma le Talalelei*'? (Culture and gospel always go hand in hand)
19. Do you think that the work of the gospel and the ministry of the CCCS would be possible in Samoa without the support of the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa*?
20. Are there any areas of the ministry of the CCCS where the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* contribution is in excess, thus causing confusion, contradictions, and/or conflicts in the message of the gospel?
21. Do you think the Samoan people have been Christianised? If yes, please describe how. If no, why and what needs to be done further in order to achieve the mission of the gospel and the church as such?
22. What are some of the obstacles to the progress of the ministry of the church in the Samoan context?
23. Is the ministry of the CCCS satisfactorily carried out in accordance with the mission of the Christian church as such? If yes, comment on some evidence of such work by the church. If no, please comment.
24. Do you think the current dynamics of the relationship between the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the CCCS ministry will be beneficial for the Samoan people and the CCCS in the future?
25. What is the role of the *faifeau* in this relationship?
26. What is the role of the *matai* in this relationship?
27. Has there been a time when the CCCS ministry dominated the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* or vice versa? If yes, please explain with examples. If no, why?
28. Please give your own point of view with regards to the relationship between the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* and the church ministry.
29. What do you think, has the *aganu'u/fa'a-Samoa* been Christianised or has Christianity has been Samoanised?
30. Do you think the existing harmonious relationship between gospel and culture will continue in the future for a very long time? If yes, comment. If no, state why.
31. If your answer in question #30 above is no, please explain your expectation of a new form of relationship that may emerged in the future.

INTERVIEW GUIDE: **PARTICIPANT ‘K’**

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Layman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher
- Church Minister

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Taule'ale'a* (untitled man)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

12. CURRENT
OCCUPATION.....

13. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION
(S).....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

1. How do you find your role as a *taule'ale'a* in the church?
2. What church positions do you hold in the church as a *taule'ale'a*?
3. Does your status as a *taule'ale'a* preclude you from participating in church activities? If yes, explain.
4. Do you want to be a *Matai* or chief in the future? If yes, why?
5. Can you be part of the church decision making process while being a *taule'ale'a*?
6. How often do you express your opinions in the church meetings and its decision-making process?
7. Do you think that for you to become a *Matai* in the immediate future would enhance your chance of having more power to speak both in the church and in the village *fono* (meeting)? Please explain.
8. Do you think that a *taule'ale'a* has his specific role in the church as in the village *fono*?
9. Does your church recognise such a role today?
10. Do you like being a *taule'ale'a* in the church?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: **PARTICIPANT ‘L’**

DATE OF INTERVIEW.....

VENUE.....

VILLAGE.....

TIME.....

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME.....
(first name) (last name)

AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: Single / Married

CHURCH STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- Laywoman
- Communicant
- Non-communicant
- Deacon
- Lay Preacher
- Church Minister

SOCIAL/CULTURAL STATUS: (circle the appropriate detail)

- *Tamaita'i* (untitled woman)

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

14. CURRENT
OCCUPATION.....
...

15. PREVIOUS OCCUPATION
(S).....

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Basic Questions

11. How do you find your role as a *tama'ita'i* in the church?
12. What church positions do you hold in the church as a *tama'ita'i*?
13. Does your status as a *tama'ita'i* preclude you from participating in some church activities? If yes, explain.
14. Do you want to be a *Matai* or chief in the future? If yes, why?
15. Can you be part of the church decision-making process while being a *tama'ita'i*?
16. How often do you express your opinions in the church meetings and its decision-making process?
17. Do you think that for you to become a *Matai* in the immediate future would enhance your chance of having more power to speak in both the church and in the village *fono* (meeting)? Please explain?
18. Do you think that a *tama'ita'i* has her specific role in the church as in the village *fono*?
19. Does your church recognise such a role today?
20. Do you like being a *tama'ita'i* in the church?

Appendix vi

MAPS OF SAMOA

- 1. Map 1: THE SAMOAN ARCHIPELAGO**
- 2. Map 2: THE NAMES OF PLACES**
- 3. Map 3: SAMOA IN THE PACIFIC**

SOURCES:

1. *Samoa Archipelago (Map 1)* and *Samoa in the Pacific (Map 3)*,
From the collection of Dr Guy Powles, Monash University, Melbourne
2. *Place Names and Localities (Map 2)*,
James W. Fox and Kenneth B. Cumberland, editors, *Western Samoa: Land, Life and Agriculture*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch 1962, fig.64

Appendix vii

PHOTOS OF SAPAPALI'I CHURCH IN SAVAI'I

SOURCES:

1. Sapapali'i Village:
<http://www.samoa.pictures-pacific.com/savaii-island/east-church.html>
2. Sapapali'i EFKS Church, Savai'i :
<http://www.sapapaliiandawn.org/frontofchurch.jpg>

Photo 1: Sapapali'i Village, Savai'i

Source: <http://www.sapapaliiandawn.org/frontofchurch.jpg>

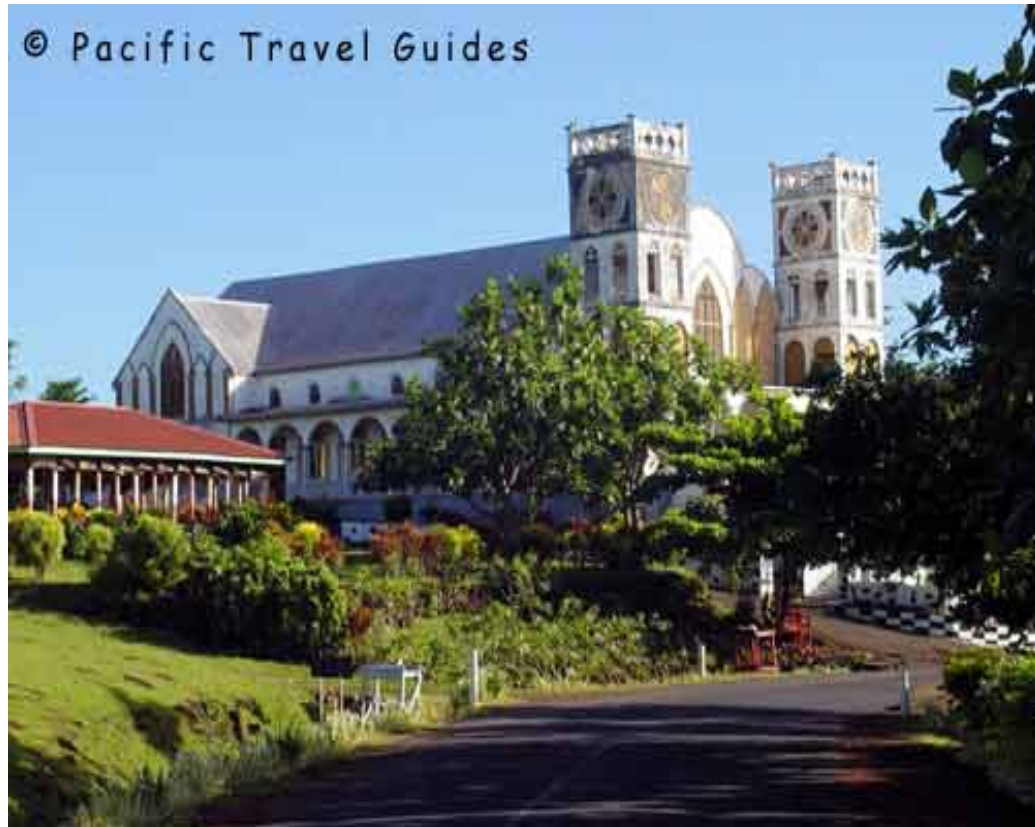


Photo 2: Sapapali'i EFKS Church, Savai'i

Source: <http://www.sapapalianewdawn.org/frontofchurch.jpg>



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