

“O le Suli Va’aia o le Atua” [A Visible Heir of God]
A Trinitarian theology for the *fai’ea* identity of the
Congregational Christian Church Samoa in
Aotearoa New Zealand

Imoamua Emanuel Cluny Setefano

A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, The University of Auckland, 2017.

ABSTRACT

The *faiifeau* [ordained church minister] occupies the pre-eminent position of leadership for the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCCSANZ).¹ This position is accompanied by extreme privilege, prestige, power and authority in relation to the members of his *aiga* [family], *au-lotu* [congregation], and *tagata lautele* [the wider community]. The underpinning ethos of this reality, involves a necessity, and obligation expected of the Samoan people to *tausi* [observe/respect] the *va-tapuia* [sacred relational spaces] or what I prefer to name the *vā-sā* [holy/forbidden/sacred ‘ocean’ of relational spaces] that exist between them and the *faiifeau*, through the practice of *fa’āloālo* [maintaining correct Samoan etiquette or ‘face to face’ decorum].² Sadly, within the CCCSANZ, this cultural practice has been maintained without sensitivity to its reality and its *siosiomaga* [changing contemporary context/s] to the point where a hegemonic hierarchy of relationships has been created, by which the *faiifeau* enjoys a status of relative infallibility and

¹ This thesis acknowledges that the CCCSANZ is also commonly known as the Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa [EFKS]. However, I privilege the usage above, so as to make it clear that the *faiifeau* and the church that this thesis seeks to engage with and analyse, is the one that is grounded in, and does its ministry in Aotearoa New Zealand, cf. Danny Ioka, "Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand" (PhD, University of Otago, 1996), iii. I have also refrained not to label the CCCSANZ as the ‘Samoan Church’, which has been the preference of other recent scholars, out of respect for other Samoan migrant churches that exist in Aotearoa New Zealand, cf. Terry Pouono, "Coconut Water in a Coca Cola Bottle: In Search of an Identity: A New Zealand-Born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World" (PhD, The University of Auckland, 2016), ii.

²The Samoan word for ocean - *vasa* is used creatively in this thesis to highlight the nuanced interpretation and reality of the *va-tapuia* that exists for the *faiifeau* within the CCCSANZ. The vowels have been purposefully separated and pronunciation has been emphasised to show the two notions at the heart of this usage, which will be explained further when the methodology of this research is defined. For a detailed meaning of *vasa*, see George Pratt, *Pratt's Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 4th ed. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 336.

unapproachability. As a result, a *faiifeau* identity currently exists within the CCCSANZ that resonates with that of an authoritarian and anti-Gospel understanding of the Triune God of the Christian Church and faith.

Therefore, this thesis argued for a theological foundation of the *faiifeau* identity on two fronts. First, that it has a clear theological basis, based upon the Triune God of the Christian Church and faith; specifically, the Trinity's relational and intrinsic nature that can be understood as reciprocal love, compassion, mercy, care, concern, and respect for the Other. It was argued, that such a *faiifeau* identity is necessary for him to remain faithful to his *vala 'auina* [calling] to serve God in the *galuega o le Atua* [ministry] of the Christian Gospel. And secondly, that such a Trinitarian identity would ensure that it remained relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, its *feau* [mission], and *galuega o le Atua* to his *aiga*,³ *aulotu* and *tagata lautele*.⁴

Thus, in conducting this research, I explicated my hermeneutical position, as a *faiifeau fa'avalevatea* [an ordained church minister questioning/challenging the established/inherited

³ *aiga* – can refer to both nuclear and extended family groups. In a more broader sense it can also refer to any group of people that have a shared allegiance, or attest to agreed principles or goals. Similarly, it used of the people of the church, and expressed as *aiga o le Atua* [family of God], and *aiga lotu* [church family].

⁴ *feau* and *galuega o le Atua* are common Samoan terms used to denote the mission, work and ministry of God in and through the Church. However, by using the Samoan terminology, I wish to show that mission has always been an intrinsic part of the *faiifeau* identity, and that all 'actions', 'work', and 'ministry' associated with the *faiifeau* identity, primarily springs from the relational nature of the Triune God, and the Gospel that the Church is charged with proclaiming and bearing witness to. From here on, the shortened form *galuega*, will be used to denote the work and ministry of God.

norms]. This was a positive ‘label’ for me, because it resonated with both my own ‘lived experience’ as a *vale* [mentally-ill person], and my reality as a *faiifeau* who is a Samoan New Zealander. From this point of departure, I used my Samoan methodology, *sōsopo le vā-sā* [“to cross over the sacred/holy/forbidden ‘sea’ of relational spaces”] to engage with and analyse church documents, theological literature, the church liturgy of the CCCSANZ and relevant material written by *faiifeau*, theologians, and Pacific scholars, which I ‘label’ as *motu* [‘islands’ of established norms] that currently underpin the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ.

Therefore, this thesis addressed two questions. First: In what ways does a Trinitarian theology of the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* [A Visible Heir of God], articulate a new *faiifeau* identity, which is both faithful to the relational nature of the Triune God of the Gospel and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ?⁵ And secondly: In what ways does being a *faiifeau fa’avalevalea*, cultivate and promote a critical appreciation of a Trinitarian identity of the *faiifeau* as a *Suli Va’aia o le Atua*? As a result of addressing these key research concerns, a Trinitarian theology for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ has been articulated and is presented here that is not only faithful to the Triune God of the Gospel, and sensitive and relevant to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, but it also acknowledges the ever changing *soifuaga* [reality] of the many Samoans who know, acknowledge and declare Aotearoa New Zealand as their home.

⁵ The *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ is known through many different titles. The honorific title, *Suli Va’aia o le Atua*, is preferred in this thesis as will be explained further when discussing in detail the impact of such titles on the *faiifeau* identity.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late Father-in-law *Lemalu Leaulaea Robert Vaituu Utupo Iputau Seuseu*. A man who through his life and service to his family, work, church, and God, epitomised what it means to be a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*. Your love for me and my family will always be remembered Dad! I love you and miss you dearly!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I want to give all Glory, Honour and Praise to the Triune God; God the Father, the Creator, Provider of life and love! God the Son; My Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit; the Sustainer and Nourisher of my faith, hopes and dreams! I acknowledge that without You I am nothing! I thank You for your grace, mercy, and patience over the years that it has taken to complete this research. It is a privilege to be 'called' to Your work and ministry, and so it is with the greatest of humility that I present this thesis to You, as a 'Sacrifice of Praise' for Your continuing faithfulness and steadfastness in my life. *Ia faafoi pea le viiga, le faamanu, le faaneetaga, ma le pule aoao uma lava i Lau Afio, Le Atua Tolu-Tasi Paia e, Le Tamā, Le Alo, ma Le Agaga Paia...Amene!*

I want to acknowledge the patience, encouragement and dedication of my Primary Supervisor, Stephen Garner. Thank you Stephen for the energy, expertise and support you provided over the years. Your theological knowledge and attention to detail was invaluable to the completion of this project. Thank you for encouraging me to trust in my theological thinking, and to have confidence in my writing ability. To my cultural adviser, Dr. Melani Anae, *faafetai tele lava!* Thank you for your initial challenges in getting me to think about the purposes behind my research, in particular, the reason behind my choice in topic, and to always bear in mind the intended readership. Much love and gratitude I give to Rev. Dr. Mary Caygill, whose openness, wisdom, and pastoral care not only helped me at the 'eleventh hour' but also gave me great encouragement and self-belief, when time, resources

and resolve needed to be at a premium. May God bless you abundantly for all the time and energy you gave me in ensuring that I completed this thesis within the allocated time.

I would also like to thank Professor Elaine Wainwright, the former Head of the now non-existent School of Theology at the University of Auckland, for your kindness and generosity shown in the initial stages of my journey. Your readiness to always remind me of the level of commitment needed at the Doctorate level (PhD) will continue to resonate strongly with me in my future academic endeavours. To Dr. Nicholas Thompson, thank you for all your administrative support and advice that you gave me, right from the inception of this project, until its submission and examination. Your willingness to help and offer pathways for solutions reassured me more than once that a thesis is never completed, only submitted.

Thank you also to the School of Humanities and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Auckland, for sponsoring the two Postgraduate Writing Retreats that I attended in 2014 and 2015. It was an honour to utilise this opportunity to not only write, but also to learn and meet many of the learned students and faculty members that attended. I thank you all for the robust discussions and the ideas that were exchanged at these Retreats. I also acknowledge the assistance of the Theology Subject Librarian of The University of Auckland, Mr. Mark Hangartner, with his initial help in familiarising myself with the University's library systems and reference systems, as well as the Subject Librarian for Pacific Studies at The University of Auckland, Ms Judy McFall-McCaffery, for her ongoing support and assistance in providing resources and network links to the latest Pacific research. To this extent, I also thank Mrs. Judith Bright, and the Librarians of the John Kinder Theological Library at The College of St. John the Evangelist, for the willingness in providing a study space and access

to their wealth of theological, cultural and pastoral resources. I would also like to thank the sponsors of the Foveran Scholarship of The University of Auckland, in which my family received financial assistance in 2014 and 2015. Your gratitude enabled our children to pursue and enjoy extra-curricular activities while I studied, without the added pressure of worrying about affordability and finances. Thank you so very much!

I would also like to thank Associate Prof. Toesulusulu Damon Salesa, and the help that I received through his course I attended in 2013, on Pacific Methodologies. Thank you Damon for broadening my critical thinking around how knowledge and information is transmitted and reproduced, and for re-iterating the importance for Pacific scholars to rise up and establish our own ways of expressing our own stories, unique to our own way of thinking and doing things. May God bless you Damon in your life and work!

I also would like to pay tribute to the two former Principals of Malua Theological College, with which I had the pleasure of knowing as a student and also working under as a member of their staff, Rev. Professor Otele Perelini and Rev. Dr. Afereti Uili. Thank you Otele for believing in my ability to become a Lecturer of Malua and Afereti, for allowing me to extend further my horizons by way of staff development and completing this research. May God bless you both in all your current and future service of Him.

It is with the upmost gratitude that I acknowledge the financial assistance, spiritual support and prayers of my church, the Congregational Christian Church Samoa. A special thanks to the Board of Malua Theological College for their ongoing prayers and blessings. Thank you for endorsing my selection for further theological study, and approving the financial

assistance and funding my family and I received while on scholarship. *Lau Susuga i le Taitaifono, Sui-Taitaifono, Failautusi o le Komiti o Malua, tai nane le Paia Maualuga a outou Susuga o Tamā o le Ekalesia. Fa'amālo le tapuai, fa'afetai le taupati, fa'afetai le agalelei i ala eseese ua fa'aalia! Ia faamanuia le Atua i tofi ma tiute o feagai ai, auā le taitaiina o le tatou Ekalesia!*

To the current Principal of Malua Theological College, Rev. Ma'afala Limā, and his good lady, Lalokava Limā, my colleagues and their families in the faculty, as well as past and current students and families of Malua. Thank you all for your prayers and love! These past four and a half years have reminded me that we all share a common bond and mission to harness a vision for the future of God's Church, where as *faiifeau* and *faletua* [ministers' wives] we will honestly and actively serve Jesus and His Church, the founding philosophy of Malua. *Ia faamanuia le Atua i lana Kolisi Fa'afaiifeau!*

To my spiritual parents Rev. Alosina and Otaota Vavae, thank you! Your willingness to allow me to be used in the leadership of our *au-lotu* at Papatoetoe CCCSANZ is a testament to your desire to see your spiritual children succeed. May God continue to bless your ministry abundantly! To my *au-lotu* at Papatoetoe CCCSANZ, thank you for all your love over the years! The commitment and dedication you have shown my family over all the years continues to inspire us in our service to God, and the wider community. *Ia toe faatūtumu e le Atua mea uma ua faagaogaoina ona o lo outou silasila i le Atua ma lona finagalo. O lo outou alofa faaalia, ia tau ai e le Atua, e ala i ana faamanuiaga e tele!*

To my fellow PhD brothers and journeymen; Rev. Dr. Vaitusi Nofoaiga, Rev. Dr. Arthur Wulf, Rev. Dr. Terry Pouono, and Rev. Dr. Alesana Palaamo. Thank you very much for the robust discussions, critique and debate we had, as we endeavoured to submit our Doctorates. It was a privilege sharing this unique journey with you all. I pray that we can continue to forge an academic presence for other Malua graduates and faculty to follow and be a part of. May God bless you all, your good lady's and families in everything you do for Him.

To my dear friends, Rev. Samasoni Kupa, Rev. Neli Alo, and Ms. Grace Leulua'i, thank you very much for the countless hours of sharing, and brainstorming around what we could and should do for the future of our church, and our people here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Your ideas and passion has left an indelible mark on my heart and conscience that will continue to inspire Amelia and I in our service for God in Malua and the Church, and wherever He may call us. May God always be with you all, and your children.

To my parents, Tapusoa Setefano and Iutita Mo'a-Sili, thank you very much for your love and support. Your readiness to help with the transportation and supervision of the children was critical in ensuring that I was given enough space to complete this research. May God bless you both in your life of work and service of Him! Thank you also to my brother Steve, his wife Anina and children, my sister Kirikiriroa, her husband Tavete and children, as well as my youngest sister Sapphira and her daughter Syrai. As my siblings, your support over the years has not gone unnoticed, and I pray God's blessings over your children and families. Thank you for only being a 'text' away!

To Mum, Leū Feleni Misa Iputau Seuseu! Thank you for everything that you have done for our family. We know that it hasn't been easy with Dad's passing, but you have truly been a rock and tower of strength to lean upon. You sacrificed your time and energy to ensure that our family was always well looked after and that the kids could just focus on succeeding in their school careers. Thank you Mum, for without the things you did on a daily basis, our family life would never have run so smoothly. May God bless you with many more years to come! Thank you also to Rev. Henry and Maressa and their children; Paul and Teura and their family; Imo and Theresa and their family, Sharron and Aaron and their boys; Mika and Fa'i and their family, Uncle Tau and Aunty Nese. Thank you all for the kindness, love, and patience you have continued to show my family over the years. May God bless you all abundantly!

To my beautiful children and gifts of God; Joachim, Kesniel, Johanna, Boanerges, and Eliyanah! Thank you for allowing your Dad to pursue his career as a scholar and theologian. Thank you for being patient with me through my PhD journey, and especially when I was unwell. Your love and loyalty helped me once again realise the wholistic nature of health and wellbeing. Thank you for all the hard work you have done in keeping our family together, and for always encouraging me to stop being lazy, and go to school and finish my thesis! I love you all so dearly, more than words will ever be able to describe! May God bless you with His presence always and continue to realise all the dreams He has blessed you with!

Lastly, to the love of my life, my wife, soul-mate, confidant and best friend, Amelia Iputau Setefano! Thank you Babe for carrying our family! Your strength, resilience and tenacity to

endure and overcome the hardships and struggles we encountered will remain a living testimony to your faith in God, and your love for our family. Your constant words of wisdom, and gentle motivation kept me moving forward to the completion of this project, whilst at the same time reminded me of the importance of maintaining the values of honesty and integrity. If this research does justice to the many painstaking days that you had to work and sacrifice so that our family could survive, then this journey has all been worth its while. Thank you for always believing in me! Thank you for always being real! May God bless you always and forever more...!

GLOSSARY

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>Agaga Sā</i> | Holy Spirit |
| <i>aiga</i> | family, both immediate and extended |
| <i>aitu</i> | guardian spirits |
| <i>alagaupu</i> | proverb grounded in actual experience |
| <i>alofa</i> | love |
| <i>Ali'i</i> | Lord, also used for High Chief |
| <i>Aoga Aso Sā</i> | Sunday School |
| <i>Aotearoa</i> | New Zealand, lit. The land of the long white cloud |
| <i>Aso Sā</i> | Sunday |
| <i>Au-talavou</i> | Youth Group |
| <i>Atua</i> | Triune God |
| <i>Iesu Keriso</i> | Jesus Christ |
| <i>ie tōga</i> | fine mat |
| <i>Ueligitone Saute Pulega</i> | Wellington South Sub-District |
| <i>fa'aāloālo</i> | maintaining correct etiquette, lit. face-to-face decorum |
| <i>fa'alavelave</i> | family and cultural commitment |
| <i>fa'aSamoa</i> | Samoan way of life; customs, traditions and culture |
| <i>fa'asinomaga</i> | inheritance/heritage |
| <i>faifeau</i> | ordained church minister |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>fai feau fa 'avalevaleda</i> | ordained church minister who challenges/questions the status quo, lit. ordained church minister who is out of his mind/crazy/mentally ill |
| <i>faletua</i> | wife of High chief and/or ordained church minister |
| <i>fale o le galuega</i> | ordained minister's house |
| <i>fanua</i> | land, also can refer to womb of mother and afterbirth/placenta |
| <i>feagaiga</i> | covenant/agreement, sacred relationship sister-brother and resulting generations, sacred relationship between church/congregation and ordained church minister |
| <i>feau</i> | mission |
| <i>galuega</i> | ministry |
| <i>lauga</i> | sermon, customary speech of orator |
| <i>lalolagi</i> | earth |
| <i>Le Alo</i> | God the Son |
| <i>Le Agaga</i> | God the Spirit |
| <i>Le Tamā</i> | God the Father |
| <i>loto</i> | heart |
| <i>mafau fau</i> | mind, brain, i.e. thoughts, reasoning |
| <i>mafutaga</i> | fellowship, communion |
| <i>malo</i> | government |
| <i>Maori</i> | indigenous people of New Zealand |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>Niu Sila</i> | New Zealand, lit. Coconut tree that demands our attention |
| <i>Nu'u Sila</i> | New Zealand, lit. Place/land/village of attraction/opportunity/new beginnings |
| <i>siosiomaga</i> | changing contemporary context/s, lit. physical and immediate surroundings |
| <i>suafa</i> | polite term for name; also used to denote chief title |
| <i>sui</i> | to change; replacement |
| <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua</i> | Visible Heir of God |
| <i>Tagaloalagi</i> | Samoan Progenitor God |
| <i>tagata lautele</i> | wider community |
| <i>Tamāali'i</i> | High chief, Sacred chief |
| <i>Tangata Whenua</i> | Maori people, lit. people of the land |
| <i>tapu</i> | sacred/forbidden/holy |
| <i>tapuaiga</i> | silent worship, prayers and spiritual support |
| <i>tatalo</i> | prayer, also used for meditation |
| <i>Tau-iwi</i> | Non-maori people who live and call New Zealand home |
| <i>tōfa</i> | wisdom of the elders; wisdom through life experience |
| <i>tua'oi</i> | boundary |
| <i>tūlafale</i> | orator, talking chief |
| <i>va</i> | space between; relational space |
| <i>vasa</i> | ocean |
| <i>vā-sā</i> | holy/sacred/forbidden relational space/s separating ordained church minister from critique |

vā-tapuia

sacred relational space/s

PHRASES

“Aisea le faifeau o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa i Aotearoa Niu Sila?”

“Why the ordained church minister of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand?”

A o lei moe ua faafetai

Before I sleep, I give thanks

“E eseese o latou gagana, e eseese foi a latou tū ma āga!”

“They have a different language, as well as a different culture and behaviours!”

“E toatele e valaauina, ae toe itiiti e filifilia!”

“Many are called, but few are chosen!”

“E te fa’avalevlea? E te fia-poto?”

“Are you foolish? Are you trying to be smart?”

“E te fa’avalevlea? E te tautalaitiiti?”

“Are you stupid? Are you being cheeky?”

“E te fa’avalevlea? E leai sou mafaufau?”

“Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind?”

“E te fa’avalevlea? E te valea?”

“Are you questioning/challenging the established norms? Are you out of your mind?”

Iesu e, alofa mai...

Jesus, grant your love to...

“Ioe, o a’u o le faifeau fa’avalevlea, ou te sosopo le vā-sā!”

“Yes! I am an ordained church minister who is challenging/questioning the established norms! I am crossing over

| | |
|--|---|
| | the holy/sacred/forbidden spaces that separate us!” |
| “ <i>I sosopo le vā-sā!</i> ” | “I am crossing over the holy/sacred/forbidden ‘ocean’ of relational spaces that separate us!” |
| “ <i>O ai oe? E te valea?</i> ” | “Who do you think you are challenging/questioning the status quo? Are you out of your mind?” |
| “ <i>O a’u o le faifeau Samoa mai Aotearoa Niu Sila!</i> ” | I am a Samoan ordained church minister from Aotearoa New Zealand |
| “ <i>Ou te fa’atalofa atu!</i> ” | “I greet you with love/warmth and respect!” |
| “ <i>Ua tafa mai ata o le taeao fou!</i> ” | “Behold, the new morning is coming!” |
| “ <i>Mālie pule, le Tama e!</i> ” | “O Father! Thank you for your providence” |
| <i>Malo o le Atua</i> | Kingdom of God |
| <i>tausi le vā-tapuia</i> | maintain the sacred relational spaces |

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--|
| CCCS | Congregational Christian Church Samoa |
| CCCSANZ | Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand |
| EFKS | Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa |
| LMS | London Missionary Society |
| PICC | Pacific Island Christian Church |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------|
| ABSTRACT..... | ii |
| DEDICATION..... | v |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | vi |
| GLOSSARY | xiii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | xviii |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | xxix |
| CHAPTER ONE: “ <i>OU TE FA’ATALOFA ATU!...</i> ” [I GREET YOU WITH LOVE, WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY!...]..... | 30 |
| 1.0. Introduction..... | 30 |
| 1.1. “ <i>O a’u o le faifeau Samoa mai Aotearoa Niu Sila!</i> ” [“I am a Samoan ordained church minister from Aotearoa New Zealand!”]..... | 31 |
| 1.1.1. “ <i>Ua tafa mai ata o le taeao fou!</i> ” [“Behold, the new morning is coming!”].... | 32 |
| 1.1.2. “ <i>E eseese o latou gagana, e eseese foi a latou tū ma āga!</i> ” [“They have a different language, as well as a different culture and behaviours!”] | 33 |
| 1.1.3. “ <i>Aua ne’i galo le Atua i nu’u ese!</i> ” [“Do not forget God in foreign lands!”] ... | 35 |

| | | |
|--------|--|----|
| 1.1.4. | “ <i>E toatele e valaauina, ae toe itiiti e filifilia!</i> ” [“Many are called, but few are chosen!”] | 36 |
| 1.2. | <i>Aisea le faifeau o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa i Aotearoa Niu Sila?</i> [Why the ordained church minister of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand?] | 37 |
| 1.3. | The <i>fa’avalevlea</i> hermeneutic..... | 39 |
| 1.3.1. | “ <i>E te fa’avalevlea? E te tautalaitiiti?</i> ” [Are you stupid? Are you being cheeky?”] | 39 |
| 1.3.2. | “ <i>E te fa’avalevlea? E te fia-poto?</i> ” [“Are you foolish? Are you trying to be smart?”]41 | |
| 1.3.3. | “ <i>E te fa’avalevlea? E leai sou mafaufau?</i> ” [“Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind?”]..... | 42 |
| 1.3.4. | “ <i>E te fa’avalevlea? E te valea?</i> ” [“Are you questioning/challenging the established norms? Are you out of your mind?”] | 44 |
| 1.3.5. | <i>My faifeau fa’avalevlea</i> hermeneutic! | 46 |
| 1.4. | Methodology – Starting Point and Sources | 46 |
| 1.4.1. | Starting Point – The Autobiographical Approach of Theological Marginality and Liminal Identity..... | 46 |
| 1.4.2. | Unpublished Material..... | 47 |

| | | |
|--------|---|----|
| 1.4.3. | Recent Scholarship on the Congregational Christian Church Samoa and the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand | 49 |
| 1.5. | Research of Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand..... | 55 |
| 1.6. | The Significance of Trinitarian Theology..... | 63 |
| 1.6.1. | A <i>faiifeau</i> identity based on the Triune God..... | 63 |
| 1.6.2. | Trinitarian Theology is Contextual Theology..... | 64 |
| 1.7. | The <i>faiifeau</i> identity – An Institution..... | 65 |
| 1.7.1. | The Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCCSANZ) – A Church of Migrants and Citizens | 66 |
| 1.7.2. | A Trinitarian and Contextual Identity – <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua</i> | 69 |
| 1.8. | Research Questions | 70 |
| 1.8.1. | Primary Question | 70 |
| 1.8.2. | Secondary Question | 71 |
| 1.9. | Significance of Research..... | 72 |
| 1.9.1. | Spiritual Leadership of the CCCS in Aotearoa New Zealand | 72 |
| 1.9.2. | Future Identity Formation for <i>faiifeau</i> of the CCCS Worldwide..... | 73 |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| 1.9.3. | Fresh Insights for the Ministry of the Church..... | 74 |
| 1.9.4. | Originality and Significance of Research Summarised | 75 |
| 1.10. | Thesis Structure..... | 76 |
| 1.11. | Summary | 83 |
| CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY – “ <i>I SOSOPO LE VĀ-SĀ!</i> ” (I AM CROSSING OVER THE HOLY/SACRED/FORBIDDEN ‘OCEAN’ OF RELATIONAL SPACES THAT SEPARATE US)..... | | |
| | | 84 |
| 2.0. | Introduction..... | 84 |
| 2.1. | The <i>vā-tapuia</i> and to <i>tausi le vā-tapuia</i> | 85 |
| 2.1.1. | Aiono F. Le Tagaloa – A Traditional Samoan View | 86 |
| 2.1.2. | Albert Wendt – A Diasporic Samoan Understanding..... | 89 |
| 2.1.3. | Misi Pouena Tagaloa – A Diasporic Samoan Perspective from the United States of America | 92 |
| 2.1.4. | An appreciation and critique of the <i>va-tapuia</i> in the secular realm – Improving Pasifika Education in Aotearoa New Zealand | 94 |
| 2.2. | George Pratt – Towards an understanding of the <i>vā-tapuia</i> as <i>vā-sā</i> | 96 |
| 2.3. | The <i>vā-sā</i> that privileges the <i>faiifeau</i> identity of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand | 100 |

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
| 2.5. | “ <i>Ioe, o a’u o le faifeau fa’avalevale, ou te sosōpo le va-sa!</i> ” [“Yes! I am a <i>faifeau</i> who is challenging/questioning the established norms! I am crossing over the holy/sacred/forbidden spaces that separate us!”] - A Samoan Methodology for Research ... | 104 |
| 2.6. | Summary | 107 |
| CHAPTER THREE: “ <i>E TE TAUTALAITITI?</i> ” [“ARE YOU BEING CHEEKY?”] - THE NECESSITY FOR THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF THE <i>SIOSIOMAGA</i> AND CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE AND SENSITIVITY FOR THE <i>FAIFEAU</i> IDENTITY OF THE CCCSANZ | | |
| 3.0. | Introduction..... | 108 |
| 3.1. | Establishing the relevance of understanding theology as being inherently contextual in nature | 109 |
| 3.1.1. | The validity of Pacific and Samoan perspectives in relation to contextual theology | 113 |
| 3.2. | Understanding <i>siosiomaga</i> as changing contemporary context/s | 116 |
| 3.3. | The contours of <i>siosiomaga</i> – <i>Aiga, Au-lotu, Tagata Lautele</i> | 119 |
| 3.3.1. | <i>Aiga</i> – The primary level of relationship and responsibility..... | 120 |
| 3.3.2. | <i>Au-lotu</i> – The secondary level of relationship and responsibility..... | 127 |
| 3.3.3. | <i>Tagata Lautele</i> – The tertiary level of relationship and responsibility..... | 131 |

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| 3.4. Summary | 133 |
|--------------------|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER FOUR: “ <i>E TE FIA POTO?</i> [ARE YOU TRYING TO BE SMART?] – THE PLACE OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY IN RELATION TO THE <i>FAIFEAU</i> IDENTITY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAMOA IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND..... | 135 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| 4.0. Introduction..... | 135 |
|------------------------|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.1. The <i>faiifeau</i> identity and the Triune God in his <i>aiga</i> | 136 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.1.1. <i>Mālie pule, le Tama e!</i> [O Father! Thank you for your providence] – The thanksgiving prayer for blessings and life, sung before every meal..... | 136 |
|--|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.1.2. <i>A o lei moe ua faafetai</i> [Before I sleep, I give thanks] | 140 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.1.3. <i>Iesu e, alofa mai...</i> [Jesus, grant your love to...] | 143 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.2. The <i>faiifeau</i> identity and the Triune God in his <i>au-lotu</i> | 145 |
|--|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.2.1. Developing an awareness of the Triune God within the <i>siosiomaga</i> of the <i>au-lotu</i> | 148 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.2.2. Tracing a historical appreciation of the centrality of the <i>au-lotu</i> in relation to the <i>faiifeau</i> identity of the CCCSANZ..... | 149 |
|--|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.2.3. Breakaway from Pacific Islands Church - A Church built on <i>Aiga</i> | 150 |
|--|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.2.4. A new church – A new <i>faiifeau</i> identity? | 152 |
|---|-----|

| | | |
|---------|--|-----|
| 4.2.5. | Samoan Congregationalism - <i>Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa</i> | 153 |
| 4.2.6. | Historical roots - London Missionary Society, LMS Samoan Church | 154 |
| 4.2.7. | Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand | 155 |
| 4.2.8. | Understanding the Triune God through the structure of a typical liturgy..... | 156 |
| 4.2.9. | A closer look at the Trinitarian nature of the Hymns in the CCCSANZ..... | 163 |
| 4.2.10. | The Triune God - Statement of Doctrine of the CCCSANZ..... | 170 |
| 4.3. | The <i>faiifeau</i> identity and the Triune God in relation to <i>tagata lautele</i> | 173 |
| 4.3.1. | The arrival of the Gospel and the LMS missionaries in Samoa – a call for <i>tagata lautele</i> | 174 |
| 4.3.2. | <i>Tagata lautele</i> of <i>Niu Sila</i> , <i>Nu'u Sila</i> or <i>Aotearoa</i> ?..... | 180 |
| 4.3.3. | The significance of understanding the <i>siosiomaga</i> of <i>tagata lautele</i> literally and symbolically | 181 |
| 4.3.4. | Taking seriously the <i>siosiomaga</i> of <i>tagata lautele</i> | 183 |
| 4.3.5. | A new <i>siosiomaga</i> calls for a new understanding of <i>faiifeau</i> identity? | 184 |
| 4.3.6. | Awareness of the multi-cultural reality and bi-cultural roots | 184 |
| 4.3.7. | Embracing an openness to dialogue and critique with <i>tagata lautele</i> | 185 |

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 4.3.8. | Acceptance and encouragement of individuality in relation to tagata lautele . | 185 |
| 4.3.9. | Acceptance of Dissonance and Differences in relation to <i>tagata lautele</i> | 186 |
| 4.4. | Summary | 187 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: “ <i>E LEAI SOU MAFAUFAU?</i> ” [ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?] – THE NECESSITY OF CORRECTLY IMAGING THE TRIUNE GOD FOR THE FAIFEAU IDENTITY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH SAMOA IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND..... | | |
| 5.0. | Introduction..... | 189 |
| 5.1. | Understanding the Triune God as the God of the Christian faith and church..... | 190 |
| 5.1.1. | The influence of rote learning on faith development in the CCCSANZ | 190 |
| 5.1.2. | Faith and theology – foundations of understanding the relational nature of Triune God..... | 191 |
| 5.1.3. | Trinitarian faith is embodied faith | 193 |
| 5.1.4. | The Triune nature of God is “communion” – dynamic persons in relationship 196 | |
| 5.1.5. | Christian theology is Trinitarian theology | 201 |
| 5.2. | Trinitarian theology in the history of the Christian Church – A brief survey..... | 207 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.2.1. Faithfulness to the Triune God in Christ, and the Triune God as Spirit in the Community of the Church | 207 |
| 5.2.2. The Patristic Period and its concerns | 207 |
| 5.2.3. The Psychological turn inward, and the disemboding of theology..... | 208 |
| 5.2.4. The impact of the Missionary movement of the Church and theology..... | 209 |
| 5.2.5. Ushering in the modern era of Trinitarian theological discourse | 210 |
| 5.2.6. The Triune God of Relationship and Communion as God’s Being..... | 213 |
| 5.3. Towards a Trinitarian <i>faiifeau</i> identity for the CCCSANZ | 219 |
| 5.3.1. A Trinitarian <i>faiifeau</i> identity for the <i>aiga</i> | 220 |
| 5.3.2. A Trinitarian <i>faiifeau</i> identity for the <i>au-lotu</i> | 221 |
| 5.3.3. A Trinitarian <i>faiifeau</i> identity for <i>tagata lautele</i> | 223 |
| 5.4. Summary | 224 |
| CHAPTER SIX: “O AI OE? E TE VALEA?” [WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE CHALLENGING/QUESTIONING THE STATUS QUO? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?] –..... | 225 |
| “O LE SULI VA’AIA O LE ATUA” [A VISIBLE HEIR OF GOD]- A TRINITARIAN FAIFEAU IDENTITY FOR THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAMOA IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND..... | 225 |

| | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| 6.0. | Introduction..... | 225 |
| 6.1. | The <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua</i> as a Trinitarian <i>faiifeau</i> identity | 226 |
| 6.2. | The <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua</i> as a liminal, and hyphenated identity | 229 |
| 6.3. | The <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau tautalaitiiti!</i> | 230 |
| 6.3.1. | The <i>siosiomaga</i> of <i>aiga</i> – Prioritising prayer and meditation..... | 230 |
| 6.3.2. | The <i>siosiomaga</i> of <i>au-lotu</i> – Educating and empowering <i>au-lotu</i> | 231 |
| 6.3.3. | <i>Tautalaitiiti, tapuaiga</i> and ‘silent’ worship | 232 |
| 6.3.4. | The <i>siosiomaga</i> of <i>tagata lautele</i> – Opportunities to be active in local community | 233 |
| 6.4. | The <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau fia-poto!</i> | 233 |
| 6.4.1. | Open to alternative sources of wisdom..... | 234 |
| 6.5. | The <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau lē mafaufau!</i> | 234 |
| 6.5.1. | <i>Lē mafaufau</i> is being Spirit-filled | 235 |
| 6.5.2. | <i>Lē mafaufau</i> is having boldness and confidence to testify to the truth..... | 235 |
| 6.6. | The <i>Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau fa'avalevalea!</i> | 236 |
| 6.6.1. | <i>Fa'avalevalea</i> as ‘an alternative view’ | 236 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6.6.2. <i>Fa'avalevalea</i> as role reversal | 237 |
| 6.7. Summary | 237 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION – “ <i>UA FASA LAVA LE FAIFEAU FA'AVALEVALEA!</i> ” | |
| [I HAVE MANIFESTED AS A FOOLISH/CRAZY/STUPID/MENTALLY ILL <i>FAIFEAU!</i>] | |
| IMPLICATIONS OF THE <i>SULI VA'AIA O LE ATUA-FAIFEAU FA'AVALEVALEA</i> FOR | |
| THE FEAU AND GALUEGA OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE CHURCH | 239 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 241 |

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1 Framework of *teu le va*
- Table 2 A typical order of service for a Sunday *lotu* of the CCCSANZ
- Table 3 The Structure of the Hymnal – O Pese ma Viiga i le Atua

CHAPTER ONE: “OU TE FA’ATALOFA ATU!...” [I GREET YOU WITH LOVE, WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY!...]

1.0. Introduction

To begin this thesis with a *fa’atalofa* is to extend a traditional and customary Samoan greeting based on love, warmth and hospitality.⁶ Such a greeting invites any potential reader or audience to appreciate this research as an act of love resonating with the Triune God of the Christian Church and faith, and with the goal of achieving understanding, appreciation and fellowship. To name this introductory chapter, a *fa’atalofa*, is to also declare with humility the limitations, subjectivity, and the many prejudices and preconceptions that I bring to this research. In doing so, I start this chapter by establishing the point of departure and hermeneutical lens by which this thesis has been conducted. In this respect, I clearly situate the starting point of this thesis; by explicating the contours of my identity as a Samoan New Zealander who is a *faiifeau fa’avalevatea*.

As a *fa’atalofa*, this chapter will also state the two key research questions that frame this research, which reflect the theological, ecclesial, cultural, and social assumptions, motivations and background behind this research. In other words, the significance and primary importance of Trinitarian theology to the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ will be highlighted, along with the necessity to formulate and utilise a Samoan methodology, to

⁶ At the heart of the greeting “*Ou te fa’atalofa atu!...*”, is the Samoan word for love, *alofa*.

enable the articulation of a *faiifeau* identity that is not only faithful to the relational and loving nature of the Triune God of the Gospel and His ministry, but a *faiifeau* identity who is also relevant and sensitive to the changing *siosiomaga* of the *feau* and *galuega* of the CCCSANZ. To conclude my *fa'atalofa*, a summary of the remaining chapters will outline how this thesis seeks to address its key research questions, as well as show how I propose to follow closely my Samoan methodology of, *sosopo le vā-sā*, which is the concern and focus of the following chapter.

1.1. “O a’u o le *faiifeau Samoa mai Aotearoa Niu Sila!*” [“I am a Samoan ordained church minister from Aotearoa New Zealand!”]⁷

As a *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, who was raised in Aotearoa New Zealand, I approach and bring to this thesis, my own lived experiences. These experiences have shaped and influenced my preconceptions, pre-judgements and bias with which I conducted this research and in-turn formulated the assumptions, motivations, and critical background relevant to this research. For this reason, I must explicate and highlight key aspects of my own lived experience which will reveal the reasons behind why I decided to undertake this research at this particular stage of my *vala’auina* and as a *faiifeau* and academic theologian.⁸

⁷ *Faiifeau Samoa* is the full title given to any ordained minister of the CCCS and CCCSANZ. To minimise repetition, the shortened title *faiifeau* is used throughout the thesis.

⁸ Both *vala’au* and *vala’auina* both mean ‘calling’.

In the narrative that follows, I intend to capture the very personal nature of this investigation, and show that my theological concerns are intimately immersed with my own upbringing within the CCCSANZ. As will be revealed, such an autobiographical approach acts to provide insights of one's personal journey in becoming more aware of the existence of God, and God's *vala'au* on one's life.⁹ What will also become clear is the fact that it has been the desire to remain faithful to that *vala'au* that has provided the impetus to commence and complete this current research project, albeit with humility and a realization of one's shortcomings and unworthiness of God's grace and mercy.

1.1.1. “*Ua tafa mai ata o le taeao fou!*” [“Behold, the new morning is coming!”]¹⁰

“As a Samoan growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand, my identity was a product of decisions that had been made by others on my behalf. For instance, my father was first exposed to this exciting land of opportunity in the early 1970s, when he came to Invercargill as a scholarship

⁹ Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Jung Young Lee and Peter C. Phan, *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999); Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). These three key texts contain contextual theologies in which the authors argue for the serious consideration of their realities as Asian-American, or their autobiographical faith experiences which are places of marginality or liminality, as legitimate starting points for theological discourse. For them, marginality or liminality is a place which allows anyone who is marginalised to move from a negative place of being in-between, to a creative space of being in-beyond. In terms of theology, this means that marginality should be seen in a positive light, especially when Jesus-Christ, the people of God, and the Church, can all be seen to occupy a place of relative marginality. In other words, marginality becomes a new context, method, and content for theology for those whose reality is at the margins of society, in a new and dynamic way, especially for the pluralistic reality of the North American experience. As a Samoan New Zealander, such an autobiographical approach to contextual theological discourse is valid, because it also resonates with my own liminal faith experiences and personal narrative, as someone who has lived with the stigma and discrimination of Mental Illness.

¹⁰ This is the wording used in the Samoan Bible to designate the morning of the Resurrection; the time when the women set out for Jesus' tomb, with spices, and oils, etc. I use it here to signify the period of my life when I came to realise and acknowledge the existence of God, and the notion of His *vala'au* upon my life, that I realised at a very young age.

student to gain certified qualification as an Electrical Fitter. After serving the necessary bond to the Government of Western Samoa on his return for sponsoring his scholarship, my parents decided they saw their future with their two children in this new land that my father had been exposed to. In 1979, I left Samoa, the place of my birth, the land of my ancestors, and my inheritance and heritage, as a two year old child, an older brother of a nine month child, and a son of an Electrical Fitter, and a former Receptionist and now housewife, to seek a better future in the 'land of the long white cloud', Aotearoa Niu Sila!...¹¹

1.1.2. “E eseese o latou gagana, e eseese foi a latou tū ma āga!” [“They have a different language, as well as a different culture and behaviours!”]

Therefore, from an early age, attending Kindergarten and eventually Primary School in Hamilton, I realised that the language that the other children were speaking at school, and the way they behaved in relation to each other, and our teachers, were markedly different from what I had grown accustomed to. At home, our parents spoke to us in Samoan. When my siblings and I were old enough and able to respond, we replied back in English.¹² It was the natural way, because it was the language that populated the greater percentage of our day, even though at Sunday school, and church, we did our best to learn the rote lessons offered in Samoan; the language of my parents and ancestors that we had to learn to master and appreciate.

¹¹ Aotearoa New Zealand is the preferred term I use in this thesis due to its currency in current scholarship, and the fact that it accurately presents the bi-cultural roots of this country, even though *Aotearoa*, *Niu Sila*, and *Nu’u Sila* are used by Samoans as individual names in their own right to denote this country. Further discussion of the significance of these names to Samoan perceptions of Aotearoa New Zealand will be discussed when defining the *siosiomaga* of the *faiifeau* and the CCCSANZ.

¹² My two younger sisters were both born in Hamilton, in 1981 and 1983 respectively.

The reality was and still is, that we were not only saturated with the English language at school, but we were also products of the Television era, where a healthy ration of the daily programming of Sesame Street, Playschool, the Munch-Bunch, Curious George with Monkey Magic and What Now in the weekends, helped to keep us at bay, as our mother saw that our every need was met by holding down the household through her domestic duties. Our father on the other hand, was always working.¹³ An employee of the New Zealand Electricity Department, our initial years in Hamilton were spent living in NZED houses. So accommodation was not an issue for us as a migrant family, as it obviously is now for so many New Zealanders these days.

The reality of having to navigate between the different languages of home and school was also complemented with the differences in cultural practice around discipline. At home, instruction in the Samoan language was always positively supported by physical enforcement. Sometimes, we received the physical enforcement in conjunction with its literal explanation. In this way, we were raised with the acute knowledge of what was wrong and what was deemed acceptable by our parents. I suppose, that a lot of my childhood was spent ensuring that I never had to experience the physical enforcement of my parents rules, as it always seemed to take a lot of energy out of both enforcer and enforced when the punishment was given out.

¹³ Another reality that was seemed unique to our family, as opposed to other families in the church, was that my brother and I were raised to address our parents by a shortened form of their first names, i.e. Fano and Tita. However, when my younger sisters were born, they used the more common 'Mum' and 'Dad'.

This type of discipline ran in stark contrast with what appeared commonplace at school. There was no visible sign of physical punishment employed by the teachers, but only assertions later in High School, that there existed a corporal form of punishment for those who blatantly broke school rules. Again, a growling, or scolding I could take. But, I did everything in my power to avoid any form of corporal punishment. In many ways, the positive and proactive approach of my parents at home, had granted me a sense of 'fear' that I carried over to my school career...

1.1.3. “Aua ne’i galo le Atua i nu’u ese!” [“Do not forget God in foreign lands!”]

Like many families who migrate to Aotearoa New Zealand, my parents sought out a traditional Samoan church to worship in, and so we attended the Hamilton CCCSANZ. My father recalls that the very first Sunday he attended church the congregation were holding their election for a new faifeau. Despite a request from the lay preacher at the time, Mr. Tafaoimalo Simanu, he declined to vote, due to the fact that he felt he hadn't earned the right to vote, as he had just begun attending the church. That Sunday would be the first of many, that would see our family become active members of the Hamilton CCCSANZ, my father become a tiakono [deacon] and our family become a matāfale [contributing family] until the beginning of 1996, when we left due to a desire to seek healing for both my brother and I, who had been diagnosed with Manic Depression, or Bi-Polar Disorder. Leaving Hamilton CCCSANZ, the place of our baptisms, and initial exposure to the Gospel, the home of friends who were more like family, and relationships that had been forged through shared struggles and triumphs marked a very difficult time for our family. However, coming to Auckland, and attending Papatoetoe CCCSANZ, ushered our family through to a new era of activity and reality...

1.1.4. “E toatele e valaauina, ae toe itiiti e filifilia!” [“Many are called, but few are chosen!”]

Upon moving to Auckland in 1996, and after enjoying a brief period of courtship, I married the love of my life on February 26, 1998. When Amelia and I met, I was still very much unsettled and not completely aware about the seriousness needed to live life with a Mental Illness such as Bi-Polar Disorder. This attitude was piqued when I decide to cease taking my medication when we got married, as a sign of my commitment to Amelia, that she was all I needed to keep me well. This decision was proven to be short-sighted and premature once I became unwell, and have relapses every year while we were students at Malua Theological College. We had gone to Malua with our three young children, after I had successfully passed the entrance examinations, and the interview before the elders of the Church, known as the Board of Malua. Going to Malua was the result of acting on a vala'au from God that I believed I had received through watching a Television Evangelist preaching on Peter and Paul's missionary work. There we would train as faifeau and faletua, but I was sadly ill-equipped for the change in siosiomaga. The stringent time schedules, physical, mental, social and spiritual demands that training at Malua asks of their students and wives, is a reflection of the desire to produce well-rounded faifeau, who would be well prepared to handle any form of pressure out in the real world of the feau and galuega.

Fortunately for Amelia and I, the Principal at the time was sympathetic of my illness, and granted me leave on numerous occasions to seek medical treatment back here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Graduating in 2005, Amelia and I completed our training, and after returning home to complete Postgraduate study, we returned in 2010 to Malua, to take up a position as Lecturers of the College. It is from Malua where we returned to Aotearoa New Zealand in

2013, to continue our professional development for the sake of the future of the College, and to equip us more proficiently for the training of future *faifeau*. It is to Malua that we will return to continue to serve the Triune God whose *vala'au* for His *feau* and *galuega* we continue to respond to... ”

1.2. *Aisea le faifeau o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa i*

Aotearoa Niu Sila? [Why the ordained church minister of the

Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand?]

As intimated through the previous narrative, undertaking this thesis is a continuation of the fulfilment of my *vala'auina* as a *faifeau*. This research is also an integral part of my theological and professional development as a Lecturer of Malua. Since its inception in 1844, Malua remains the place where current and future *faifeau* of the CCCSANZ attend to complete their theological training for the *feau* and *galuega*.¹⁴ This is why, this research and investigation builds upon the challenge that was laid down in my Master's thesis, which called for the realisation of an emerging *faifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ, that would be more prophetic, and reflect a more Spirit-filled and Spirit-centred ministry.¹⁵ The critical

¹⁴ Only graduates of Malua can become *faifeau* of the CCCSANZ. However, in the past, graduates were accepted from the formerly named Bible College of New Zealand (now Laidlaw College), and St. John's Theological College due to the lack of *faifeau* available to serve in Aotearoa New Zealand at the time. Rev. Mose Atimalala, who was the *faifeau* of the Hamilton CCCSANZ from 1981 until his death in 1998, and Rev. Maligi Evile who recently retired as the *faifeau* of the Kingsland CCCSANZ, were graduates of the these two institutions respectively.

¹⁵ Imoamaua Setefano, "O Le *Faifeau* - the Servant of God (Redefining the *Faifeau* Paradigm of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand)" (MTh, The University of Auckland, 2008)., iii.

concern of this previous research was whether the contemporary paradigm of the *faiifeau* was still relevant for the context of the CCCSANZ.¹⁶

After arguing for the consideration of the different types of *faiifeau* that were produced under different administrations of Malua, from the London Missionary Society Missionaries to the most recent Samoan Principals, a case was made to understand the dilemmas of migration that beset the contemporary *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, through the use of different cultural and ecclesial models or paradigms that the *faiifeau* had inherited from Samoa, and were still using, as their ministry in the CCCSANZ had taken root in this new land. What became apparent in my Master's research was that these models in themselves, had become static identity markers and makers for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ in this new context, and that a critique of these models was necessary, to see if these models informing the *faiifeau* paradigm that had been transposed across from Samoa to Aotearoa New Zealand, was still relevant.

Due to brevity of space, and the limited scope of the study, the research concluded with a concrete example of what an emerging *faiifeau* paradigm of the CCCSANZ could look like, in the form of the late Rev. Peniamina Vai, of the East Tamaki CCCSANZ. Vai's stance of anti-smacking against children, and his condemnation especially of domestic violence in families from the pulpit, and active participation in the affairs of his local community, was identified as key elements of the fact that an emerging *faiifeau* paradigm for the CCCSANZ was possible, and indeed taking place. Therefore, in light of this previous research, this thesis is a concentrated attempt at providing and articulating a clear and comprehensive

¹⁶ Ibid.

theological foundation for what I term here a *fai feau* identity, that is not only relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, but is also faithful to the Triune God of the Gospel, and the *vala'au* to His *feau* and *galuega*.

1.3. The *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic

To provide an accurately articulated starting point for this research, I choose to 'label' this personal hermeneutical lens, the *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic. This is because as a hermeneutic it accurately captures the critical nature of this research in which I question and challenge the established/inherited norms, namely, the status quo of the *fai feau* identity of the CCCSANZ, but also, as a 'label' it resonates with my life experiences as a *fai feau* and academic theologian who lives with a Mental Illness called Bi-Polar Disorder or Manic Depression.

This part of this introductory chapter, will explain further the four different dimensions of my *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic that also points forward to the later explanation of how the different chapters of this thesis are organised, as well as the methodology by which this thesis has been conducted.

1.3.1. “*E te fa'avalevalea? E te tautalaitiiti?*” [Are you stupid? Are you being cheeky?]

The first dimension of the *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic involves the acknowledgement that one is 'cheeky' if they are seen to be challenging the lines of authority, or established hierarchy that has been in place, right from one's first experience of authority in the privacy of one's home to the public sphere of the church community and setting. To be raised in a strict Samoan environment, even in Aotearoa New Zealand as previously mentioned, is to grow up

knowing the importance of acknowledging one's parents and other adults as possessing authority and power, especially in the sense of what decisions one can make, that may have a lasting impact on one's future. The threat and perennial maintenance of order was duly enforced with the exercise of physical punishment, which acted as a deterrent to any show of dissonance and disagreement. In fact, showing a refusal to 'tow the proverbial line' was frowned upon, because simply put, as a Samoan child, I was expected to listen and obey.¹⁷ This teaching at home was complemented with the ultimate law of God, the fifth law of the Ten Commandments that was continually propagated, promoted, and funnelled through Sunday school lessons, and the *lauga* [minister's sermons] whenever chastisement and instruction of us as children needed divine justification.¹⁸

It is against such an upbringing, and historical reality, that this first dimension needs to be understood. As a rhetorical question it acts to remind the listener or the one to whom it is addressed to recall what they were taught as a young child. Namely, that authority, especially divinely sanctioned authority within the church, which for us in this research centres on the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, is not to be questioned, let alone challenged in public! Also,

¹⁷ The notion of "obedience" is also part of a relational understanding of the Trinity privileged and promoted by this researched. A Trinitarian articulation of obedience and its relevance to the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ as *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* will be expressed later in Chapter Five.

¹⁸ The Samoan word *āva* is used to denote the degree of honour and respect that one must show their parents, and by association their elders and other adults in authoritative positions like Sunday school teachers, *faiifeau* and their *faletua*. Here we can appreciate the dynamics behind the root word for this action and behaviour which is clearly, *vā*. In other words, showing honour and respect to one's parents involves keeping and respecting the *vā*. In this usage, *vā* can be appreciated as upholding a respectful distance or *va*, and knowing what type of appropriate behaviour comes with keeping that distance, e.g. *tausi le vā*. Also, for an in-depth study of how *lauga* is used in the context of the worship of the CCCSANZ and its impact on notions of authority, power and service in the church, see, Tavita Maliko, "O Le Soga'imiti: An Embodiment of God in the Samoan Male Body" (PhD, The University of Auckland, 2012).

despite the fact that this question is one that captures the mood of some parents when they scold their children for making an innocent mistake, it is clear that for the context of this research, it represents the very real response that would be expected and relayed by many Samoans in the CCCSANZ, and of Samoans in general, who place a lot of focus on blind acceptance of elder authority. Where respect is not earned, but given without question, just because one possesses an earlier birthdate than you!

1.3.2. “*E te fa’avalevaleda? E te fia-poto?*” [“Are you foolish? Are you trying to be smart?”]

The second dimension of the *fa’avalevaleda* hermeneutic involves the question which many young Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand have encountered in their lifetime, due to the fact that they were raised and educated in an environment where questioning and critical thinking was encouraged. “*E te fia-poto?*” alludes to a level of questioning that smacks of the need to conform to the accepted ways and norms of one’s *mātua* [parents], *mātua-matutua* [elders], or *aiga* and consequently the traditions, customs and values they hold precious which are all contained within the overarching term, the *fa’a-Samoa* [the Samoan way of life/doing things]. In this way, the behaviour that has arisen and been exposed by upholding such a belief, has reinforced the existence of a dynamic in Samoan parent-child relationships that provides difficult obstacles for Samoan children’s educational achievements and employment opportunities for second-generation New Zealand citizens.¹⁹ By highlighting the differences in family dynamics of Samoan migrants, with their new context, Malama

¹⁹ Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel, "Samoan Families in New Zealand: The Cultural Context of Change," in *The Family in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds. Vivienne Adair and Robyn Dixon (Auckland: Addison Wesley Longman New Zealand, 1998), 158-178.

Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel highlight the disappearance of the reality of the village politic, and communal living as a fundamental challenge for Samoans struggling to survive and adjust to the more individually-oriented reality of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Meleisea and Schoeffel's work clearly highlight the instructive and somewhat constrictive nature and reality that is encouraged by promoting the ideals behind such a question as, "*E te fa'avalevalea?*" Their research also reveals the potential weakness in discouraging a positive view and healthy appreciation of the attainment of knowledge growth of young Samoans, through discussion, dialogue and debate. In many ways, their work highlights that such innocent and customary usage of such level of questioning, can have adverse and long-lasting effects on children who are seeking to be individual thinkers and advocates of their own opinions. However, Meleisea and Schoeffel do not go as far as to critique the role of the *fai'feau* of the migrant churches, or the traditional island churches that identify with a 'mother' church back in the islands, like the CCCSANZ. In a slight oversight, Meleisea and Schoeffel underestimate the definitive impact, and the highly communal aspect of churches like the CCCSANZ, to the overall maintaining of traditional values and ways of living, held dear by Pacific island migrants like Samoans.

1.3.3. "*E te fa'avalevalea? E leai sou mafaufau?*" ["Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind?"]

A third level and dimension to the *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic, is understood through the question that many who have either experienced, or been diagnosed with a mental illness can relate to, "*E leai sou mafaufau?*" This stigmatising and discriminatory question accurately depicts the vast chasm that may exist between knowledge and ignorance for the many who

may think they know what mental illness is, but have no personal experience of its challenges and many inconveniences. In this sense, it is a question that many who may be suffering from symptoms of Psychosis, Bi-polar disorder, Schizophrenia and other Mental Illnesses live with as their reality, on a daily basis. For Samoans, even for those who have migrated to, and made Aotearoa New Zealand their home, the existence of crippling cultural assumptions about the relationship of Mental illness and traditional Samoan beliefs associated with curses, broken *tapu* [taboos] and *aitu* [guardian spirits] also give rise to such stigmatic line of questioning and eventual discrimination and alienation from society. Even a person who has studied too aggressively, without taking the necessary rest and proper precautions to ensure healthy living and has consequently begun to manifest unconventional and disruptive behaviour, will be addressed in this way.²⁰

This contrasting understanding of “*E te fa’avalevatea?*” against the balancing question of “*E leai sou mafau’afau?*” points to not only the lack of alternative Samoan language which could instead relay more sensitivity and empathy to those who have experienced and continue to suffer the debilitating effects of mental illness, but also it is a dimension that clearly highlights the lack of understanding and knowledge surrounding the potential inability of the one being questioned to give a legible and cogent response. Such an understanding of this level of the *fa’avalevatea* hermeneutic is also typical and resonant of a refusal within certain circles of Samoan society in Samoa, and in Diaspora, and so likewise, the CCCSANZ, to

²⁰ David Lui’s work and insights accurately captures the basic Samoan perspectives on the relationship of Mental Illness within the framework of a traditional understanding of Samoan spirituality, see David Lui, “Spiritual Injury: A Samoan Perspective on Spirituality’s Impact on Mental Health,” in *Penina Uliuli: Contemporary Challenges in Mental Health for Pacific Peoples*, eds. Philip Culbertson, Margaret Nelson Agee and Cabrini 'Ofa Makasiale (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 66-76.

engage in attaining a base knowledge of the attached stigma and discrimination that exists for individuals and families that are dealing with Mental illness.²¹ Sadly, there is much leadership required from not only the *faiifeau*, but also the people of the individual congregations of the CCCSANZ as a whole to show greater levels of engagement, understanding and leadership in this area, where statistics attest, should be an area of concern for any socially conscious church in Aotearoa New Zealand, engaging in relevant and dynamic ministry.²²

1.3.4. “*E te fa’avalevalea? E te valea?*” [“Are you questioning/challenging the established norms? Are you out of your mind?”]

After surveying the three initial dimensions already mentioned, it is now necessary to explicate the remaining dimension which informs the *fa’avalevalea* hermeneutic. Again, I return to the central and pivotal question at the heart of my hermeneutic, “*E te*

²¹ At the heart of understanding Pacific and Samoan notions of spirituality, and in-turn reality is allowing people to speak about their experiences on their own terms. Culbertson, Smith and Wainwright lead a group of researchers who are based in Aotearoa New Zealand, who seek to provide a forum from which Pacific people’s views on spirit possession, theology, and identity can be shared without inhibition, or fear of reprisal and judgement. Such an enterprise is an excellent template for non-Pacific and/or non-Samoan researchers seeking to engage with us, on our terms, see Philip Culbertson, Susan Smith and Elaine M. Wainwright, eds., *Spirit Possession, Theology, and Identity: A Pacific Exploration* (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2010).

²² Jemaima Tiatia-Seath’s recent research highlights the extremes that can occur if stigma and discrimination of those dealing with, or living with a Mental Illness is not addressed. Her research calls for a wholistic approach to understanding the different factors behind the causes of suicide amongst Pacific peoples, especially Pacific youth and is based on comprehensive quantitative data. Tiatia-Seath’s research is especially relevant to the *feau* and *galuega* of the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, because it is based on the *siosiomaga* of Aotearoa New Zealand, see, Jemaima Tiatia, "Cultural Diversity across the Pacific: Samoan Cultural Constructs of Emotion, New Zealand-Born Samoan Youth Suicidal Behaviours, and Culturally Competent Human Services," *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology* (2012). Also, Jemaima Tiatia-Seath, "Pacific Peoples, Mental Health Service Engagement and Suicide Prevention in Aotearoa New Zealand," *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care* 7, no. 3 (2014). And most recently, Jemaima Tiatia-Seath, Roy Lay-Yee, and Martin Von Randow, "Suicide Mortality among Pacific Peoples - (1996-2103)," *New Zealand Medical Association Journal* 130, no. 1454 (2017).

fa'avalevaea?” But this time, its translation, or more accurately, its interpretation depicts the development of context. Here, the notion of “questioning/challenging the established/inherited norms of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ” is clearly the intention and is laid out as such. Complemented by the emphatic and deeply rhetorical question, “*E te valea?*” which also resonates with the nature and risks involved with this particular research, this final dimension of the *fa'avalevaea* hermeneutic is to be appreciated more for the fact that it is a question that describes not only the manifestation of a behaviour, but also is quite condemning in its application to those who it addresses.

To the young Samoan child, growing up in the diasporic conditions of Aotearoa New Zealand, prone to making mistakes and errors, it can remind him/her of the *tuaoi* [boundaries] that they need to acknowledge and adhere to, in all areas of daily living. These *tuaoi* can reinforce lines of safety for them, and thus can be positive in that respect, but negatively *tuaoi* can also restrict the child’s development as a proactive and thinking individual who may have an opinion and point of view they would like to share.²³ Also, again, we see the resonances that such a dimension has to the sufferer of a mental episode or illness, where the line of questioning possesses the intrinsic potential to further stigmatise them, revealing the unhealthy effects of discrimination that are present in today’s society.

Therefore, “*E te fa'avalevaea?*” viewed synoptically with “*E te valea?*” captures both the inquisitive and honest spirit of a child who learns through making mistakes, with the potential

²³ For a detailed engagement with the notion of *tuaoi*, and its implications for a sense of identity and belonging for Samoans in relation to their rich heritage, family life, and faith in God, see Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, “Sufiga O Le Tuaoi: Negotiating Boundaries,” in *Address to Brigham Young University* (Laie, Hawaii.2011).

stigma and discrimination that is firmly etched in my personal narrative as I continue to live with Mental illness as well as being an accurate foil, in describing the potential for this research to at least bring to the fore some critical conversations concerning the need to address the current *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. As a direct result now of the systematic articulation and construction of the *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic, I proceed from this point on, clearly, as a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea*!

1.3.5. My *faiifeau fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic!

After the systematic exposition of my *faiifeau fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic, I can now proceed to explicate the subsequent methodology by which this thesis has been conducted, where I will *sōsopo le vā-sā* of *motu*, namely, church documents, theological literature, the church liturgy of the CCCSANZ and relevant material written by *faiifeau*, theologians, and Pacific scholars, in order to articulate and construct a *faiifeau* identity that is relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, consisting of his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*, but who is also faithful to the Triune God of the Gospel and his *vala'auina* to God's ministry.

1.4. Methodology – Starting Point and Sources

1.4.1. Starting Point – The Autobiographical Approach of Theological Marginality and Liminal Identity

Therefore, this thesis, instead of beginning with a description and analysis of the contemporary *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ as was the case in my Master's thesis, this research begins by declaring my point of departure, as a Samoan New Zealander who is a

faiifeau fa'avalevaled. This starting point, which can be understood as a 'liminal' identity, in which one's migrant experiences impact on one's identity, has been well documented through different anthropological and sociological projects, by Samoan researchers like Melani Anae, Betty Duncan, Feiloaiga Taule'alea'usumai and Jemaima Tiatia, as well as *palagi* [New Zealander of European or English descent] like Cluny Macpherson and Paul Spoonley.²⁴ The establishment of my *fa'avalevaled* hermeneutic in this way allows me to engage and dialogue with both academic theologians and *faiifeau* who have also shown the importance of explicating their positions as researchers in their own particular way. In this way, the departure point for this thesis also resonates with the autobiographical nature of theology as promoted by Jung Young Lee, Peter Phan, Sang Hyun Lee, and other Asian-American theologians as previously alluded to.

1.4.2. Unpublished Material

The following variety of unpublished material that is mentioned in this introductory chapter is only a cross-section of some of the more recent Postgraduate research that has been undertaken by *faiifeau* and to some degree *faletua* on the CCCSANZ, its life and its ministry. As can be appreciated, many of these projects have been produced not so much out of a need to address contemporary praxis and theology, but more so out of the need to either pursue a personal interest, or a desire to give greater clarity on the interface between the Gospel and

²⁴ Melani Anae, "Fofa-i-Vao-Ese: The Identity Journeys of New Zealand-Born Samoans" (PhD, University of Auckland), .; Betty K. Duncan, "Christianity: Pacific Island Traditions," in *Religions of New Zealanders*, ed. Peter Donovan (Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press, 1996), 130-43.; Feiloaiga Taule'ale'ausumai, "The Word made Flesh: A Samoan Theology of Pastoral Care." in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, ed. Philip Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997b), 161-188.; Feiloaiga Taule'ale'ausumai, "New Religions, New Identities: The Changing Contours of Religious Commitment," in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley and Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001), 181-195.

the *Fa'aSamoa*, or as a commitment to push a positive promotion of the CCCS and/or the CCCSANZ way of doing ministry. It must be remembered and acknowledged, that each project has had their own agenda, whether it is explicitly stated by the author or not.

Despite this fact, these projects remain research that has been detailed in their description and analysis of the CCCS both in Samoa and in Aotearoa New Zealand, but have largely remained unpublished.²⁵ Sadly, by remaining unpublished, valuable resources that can contribute to critical conversations, and in-turn inspire transformative praxis and change in regards to the CCCSANZ and the *faiifeau* identity, have gone largely unheard. This is an issue that I will address with the subsequent publication of my thesis, and a commitment to publication of further material, as I hope to inspire current and future *faiifeau*, as well as members of the CCCSANZ, and Samoans in general, to also write self-critically about their own perspectives on the theology, praxis and reality of the church. This research is underpinned by the belief that a concerted effort must be encouraged to ensure that critical thinking and research about the identity of the *faiifeau*, does not remain in thesis form, but is exposed to the public forum of discussion and critique.

Each of the projects that will be mentioned here, have equally promoted the need for critical awareness concerning the CCCSANZ and its ministry. However, as already mentioned, the different interests of the researchers, their topics of choice, and differing methodologies and perspectives used in researching their topics, have meant that there still remains a need for the

²⁵ The acronym CCCS refers to the EFKS 'mother' church in Samoa, to avoid confusion with the CCCSANZ which is the church to which this research is focussed on. For further clarification, and an appreciation of how the CCCS has established itself in different countries over the world, see CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 13th ed. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2011).

articulation of an identity of *faiifeau* that is both faithful to the Gospel and relevant to the Samoans and the CCCSANZ. It will be the undertaking of this current thesis and research to show that such an articulation is both necessary and crucial for the future of Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand and the CCCSANZ. In this respect, this thesis can also be understood as a conscious attempt at unifying many of the insights that have been shared and gleaned by my learned colleagues in their own fields of research.

1.4.3. Recent Scholarship on the Congregational Christian Church Samoa and the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand

To date, there has been no substantial work that has been specifically committed to addressing the challenge of articulating a faithful and relevant identity for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, despite the Samoan Church celebrating its 50th anniversary at the end of 2012.²⁶

In fact, much of the literature of the CCCS in Samoa and overseas that is reprinted and published reflects the early work of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society, and

²⁶ Current Elder of the *Ueligitone Saute Pulega* [Wellington South Sub-District] of the CCCSANZ, Rev. Elder Fa'atulituli Setu is an example of a former Lecturer of Malua who began to look for a theological rationale behind the *faiifeau*, from the perspective of a son of a *faiifeau*. Therefore his life experiences also informed his research, as he argued for an appreciation of what the *faiifeau* and his family have to deal with, through the use of biblical references and his own theological interpretation. However, his work is limited to the *faiifeau* of the CCCS in Samoa, and falls short of acknowledging the different *siosiomaga* that the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ must engage with. See, Fa'atulituli Setu, "The Theological Appreciation of the "Faifeau" in the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa: Is He Christian?" (BD, Pacific Theological College, 1986). The comprehensive historical work done by Raeburn Lange, builds upon Setu's humble beginnings. Lange insightfully sees a relationship between the *faiifeau*, the *faifekau* of Tonga, and the *Orometua* of the Cook Islands, due to the close proximity of their evangelisation. He also surveys the historical changes that the *faiifeau* institution underwent within the larger context of the burgeoning missionary enterprise of the London Missionary Society, and vividly shows how the modern-day *faiifeau* of the CCCS, is a product of missionary innovation and a local desire to preserve cultural tradition and autonomous control of their indigenous ministry. See, Raeburn Lange, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa*, ed. Bill Willmott and Ueantabo Neemia-Mackenzie, Macmillan Brown Working Paper Series (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1997). Also, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005).

is of a catechetical nature.²⁷ However, since the 1960s, when future *faiifeau* of the CCCS pursued postgraduate study at the Pacific Theological College in Fiji, projects addressing and challenging different elements of the ministry of the CCCS in both Samoa and overseas, entered the public domain.

Sadly, many of these works remain in microform or microfilm format, and remain unpublished because the natural progression for many of the authors of these theses, was to return to their island countries and teach, and eventually become *faiifeau* of local village churches, or congregations overseas. The impetus to write and forge out a career as a *faiifeau* who is also an academic theologian was not seen as important as being ‘called’ to pastor a local congregation, in Samoa or overseas. Nevertheless, such projects provided the precedence in which recent scholarship has flourished.

In this respect, recent projects by lecturers of Malua and *faiifeau* of the CCCS continue to provide critical conversations concerning the CCCS and its ministry both in Samoa and overseas. Such an enterprise shows a continuing interest of some *faiifeau* to advocate through scholarship a need to address pertinent theological and/or social issues concerning the CCCS in Samoa, as well as its concerns for Samoans in the Diaspora, which includes Aotearoa New

²⁷ For an example of this catechetical type of literature, see, CCCS, *The Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church (L.M.S.): O Mataupu Silisili O Le Faavae Faa-Le-Agaga O Le Ekalesia Samoa (L.M.S.)*, Reprint ed. (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1995); *ibid.* However, there were even smaller booklets produced that saw a focus on individual aspects of Christian doctrine, see, *O Le Malo O Le Atua/the Kingdom of God: A Commentary on the Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church - L.M.S* (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1958). Maybe, the earliest work on the *faiifeau*, with a specific focus on the *galuega*, was a small booklet authored by George Turner. It is still in circulation today, and in many ways reveals the missionary’s ethos and possibly the LMS fundamental thinking regarding the nature of the *galuega* of the *faiifeau*, and the difficulties therein of fulfilling God’s *vala’au*. Again, such a booklet is relayed in the form of instruction, see, George Turner, ed. *O Le Galuega a Le Auauna a Iesu: Pastoral Theology in the Samoan Language* (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1965).

Zealand. A survey of these *faiifeau* and their projects provide a critical backdrop into which this research seeks to further develop. My method of naming the scholar and his consequent research concerns is a deliberate one, and is reflective of and in recognition of each individual's particular research interests and focus.

Rev. Peletisara Lima, a New Zealand-raised, Samoan-born *faiifeau* of the CCCS and a former lecturer of *Malua*, focuses on exposing and understanding the reality of Samoans like himself who are 'Remigrants', namely, Samoan-born people who return to Samoa to live, work and re-settle. Lima's work highlights the corresponding difficulties that arise with one's identity and belonging, due to this flux and flow in migration. Lima uses Christology as a key of critical importance, to enable Samoans to navigate their life experiences as 'Remigrants'. Lima's study values questions of context, and offers a relevant Christology which resonates with the 'Remigrant' members of the CCCS living again in Samoa.

However, what is apparent in Lima's research is his apparent refusal to identify his position and status as a *faiifeau* of the CCCS. Rather he chooses to identify himself as a *tagata mai fafo* [person from the outside]. This lack of specific focus in his thesis on the leadership of the CCCS, and any subsequent critique of the *faiifeau* means that any potential impact and connections of Lima's Christology to the identity of the *faiifeau* is not explicitly made.²⁸

However, Lima's work remains critical to the ongoing dialogue of Samoan Diasporic identity

²⁸ Peleti Lima, "Performing a Remigrant Theology: Sons and Daughters Improvising on the Return Home" (PhD, Charles Sturt University, 2012).

in relation to Christology and its corresponding theology and praxis for the CCCS in Samoan and worldwide.

Rev. Fa'alepo Tuisuga-le-taua, is a Samoan-born and raised *faiifeau* of the CCCS and current lecturer in *Malua*. His most recent project, and Doctorate thesis focused on understanding the Samoan context of the CCCS, gathered from fieldwork data gained from the village of *Sāpapāali'i* in the island of *Savai'i* in Samoa. The village of *Sāpapāali'i* boasts of a critical place in the history of the CCCS church, for it was here where *Malietao Vainu'upo* received the 'Good News', through the LMS missionaries of John Williams, Charles Barff, a Samoan named *Fauea* and his wife *Puaseisei*, along with Tahitian and Aitutakian missionary teachers.

This research saw Tuisuga design, articulate, and formulate a Samoan hermeneutical lense for critical ministry praxis, which he saw as the paramount need for the CCCS at this time, to be able to sustain relevant and sustainable ministry. However, in discussing the reality of the *faiifeau*, he follows traditional perceptions of the *faiifeau* which is typical of an understanding that fails to acknowledge the pertinence of contextual theology. This is continued to be seen through Tuisuga's analysis of the CCCS as a unified whole, without allowing for the nuances and differences that come with changes in context. Such a method conveniently avoided the need to target the identity of the *faiifeau* in any specific way, which is a challenge specifically taken up by this current thesis.²⁹

²⁹ Fa'alepo Aveau Tuisuga-le-taua, "O Le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context" (PhD, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009).

Rev. Tavita Maliko also, is a Samoan-born and raised Lecturer of *Malua*, and is a recently ordained *faiifeau* of the CCCS. His recent work focuses on the social construction of the Samoan male body. He is acutely aware of the cultural and economic imbalances that prevail in the current *faiifeau* identity, but his research focused on and was more concerned with the role of *lauga* [sermons] in the construction of the embodiment of God and perceptions around the Samoan male body, rather than the construction of an alternative *faiifeau* identity for the CCCS in Aotearoa New Zealand.³⁰ Maliko's work is revolutionary though, in how he brings into conversation the insights of social constructionism to highlight an understanding of how Samoans construct social identity.

However, Maliko's Master's thesis, which investigated the context of the CCCSANZ in relation to the hierarchy of voice in church meetings, is even more inspirational and pioneering, because, amongst other things, it focuses and considers the CCCSANZ against its contemporary context/s. Maliko is acutely critical of the *faiifeau* and his position in the CCCSANZ, especially when an accurate understanding of Congregationalism reveals the need for a far more robust democratic process and type of governance, which appears lost to the CCCSANZ. The seeds of critique that were laid, of not only the *faiifeau* but of the forces of power and control within the CCCS, borne from Maliko's initial research on the dynamics of 'voice' within the church, and church meetings, has been a motivating factor for my continuing focus on the leadership of the ministry of the CCCS.³¹

³⁰ Maliko., ii-iii.

³¹ Tavita T. Maliko, "The Hierarchy of Voice: The Context of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in New Zealand" (MTh, The University of Auckland, 2000).

Rev. Fereti Tutuila, another Samoan-born *faiifeau* of the CCCS, focused his thesis on how *faiifeau* perceived the Samoan understanding of *tautua* [service]. Tutuila's investigation attempts to promote the indigenous Samoan understanding of *tautua* over and above the contemporary practices and views of the CCCS as a corrective, but does not provide a theological or a contextual attempt at addressing the issue of *faiifeau* identity.³² Tutuila is highly creative in the creation of indigenous models of *tautua* that if superimposed over the identity of the *faiifeau* of the CCCS, would produce a much more reflective and caring *faiifeau*, especially in regards to the *tautua* or service practices and behaviour of the people.

Tutuila is both bold and encouraging in his efforts to understand his own vocation and calling. The obvious validity of his indigenous models however remain questionable, especially to a generation of children and young people in the CCCSANZ, who will most likely struggle to engage with and relate to such models, let alone understanding the cultural language and roots that they are founded upon. In many ways, Tutuila's critique is based on an understanding of *tautua* that is alive only in the minds of the migrant parents of the generation of young Samoan New Zealanders, and those who continue to strive to relive and recycle the traditions of a romanticised yesterday on the contemporary contexts of today.

Lonise Tanielu, is a daughter of an Elder *faiifeau* and first Samoan Principal of Malua the late Rev. Mila Sapolu. She is also the wife of an Elder *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, Rev. Elder Ioritana Tanielu, who has recently retired from serving the CCCSANZ at the congregation in

³² Fereti Tutuila, "A Critical Analysis of the Meaning of Tautua (Service) in the Lives of *Faiife'au Samoa* (Samoan Ministers): Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.)" (MTh, The University of Auckland, 2009).

Grey Lynn Auckland for many years. Tanielu's experience and knowledge of the CCCS is extensive, who supported her husband as he served as the General Secretary of the CCCS in Samoa, as well as *faiifeau* of the Porirua congregation of the CCCSANZ in Wellington, before they served in Grey Lynn. Tanielu also presents pioneering and insightful work that highlights the critical role the *faiifeau* continues to play in relation to the education of the children of the CCCS, especially in regards to secular knowledge.³³

Her work on the *Aoga a le Faiifeau* [Pastor's School/s] and its continuing relevance for the ministry of the CCCSANZ as well as for Samoan children and families in general, speaks volumes of the central position that she believes the *faiifeau* and his wife or *faletua*, and the CCCSANZ still has in the life of the Samoans in Diaspora. Tanielu also unveils the reasons why education is still central to the Samoan psyche in regards to their status as migrants, and subsequent desire for many Samoans to be seen as New Zealand citizens.

1.5. Research of Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand

The aforementioned scholarship that focussed on issues of relevance pertaining to the life and ministry of the CCCS in Samoa, and Aotearoa New Zealand, can be traced back to earlier research that addressed the concerns of both Samoan-born and New Zealand-born members of the churches that were both Pacific and Samoan in origin. This work was largely spearheaded by members of the PICC, who saw the disparities between the traditions of their

³³ Lonise Sera Tanielu, "O Le A'oa'o'ina O Le Gagana, Faitautusi Ma Le Tuitusi I Le A'oga a Le Faiifeau: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (E.F.K.S.) = Literacy Education, Language, Reading and Writing in the Pastor's School : Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.)" (PhD, The University of Auckland, 2004).

forefathers and the beliefs and practices of their church. As pioneers of research into the reaction of young people to their indigenous language, beliefs and customs, these researchers speak out of their own experiences as either migrants or New Zealand-born Samoans, or who I prefer to call Samoan New Zealanders.

Addressing the Samoan church in general, which include the CCCSANZ and the Methodist churches of Samoan origin, Rev. Uesifili Unasa is critical of how the *faiifeau* of the Samoan church/es continue to privilege and utilise the *fa'a-Samoa* in their portrayal of the gospel.³⁴ Unasa questions the obvious collusion between the *fa'aSamoa* and the reality of the Samoan churches in Aotearoa New Zealand. Specifically, Unasa seeks to highlight this inseparable relationship which in his view was why the Samoan church/es were unhealthy and non-productive for the ministry in this new land. According to Unasa, the *fa'a-Samoa* is actually an enemy of the gospel, and Unasa challenges the mainline churches to be more Christian than cultural. To Unasa, such a misguided focus is at the heart of the incompatibility of these established mainline churches with the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Unasa's research, which was completed in the early 1990's can be appreciated as an attempt to warn the mainline Samoan churches of a possible mass exodus of New Zealand-born Samoans. It should also be seen to represent a prophetic call for a more socially-engaged and socially-compassionate ministry

³⁴ Uesifili Unasa, "Doing Samoan Theology and Ministry in the Context of Aotearoa New Zealand" (BD, Knox College, 1993).

Such views on the differences between the needs of the new context, as opposed to the migrant needs of the Samoans who were born in Samoa was continued and developed further through the research of Risatisone Ete, Melani Anae, Jemaima Tiatia, Feiloaiga Jeanette Taulealeausumai, amongst others.³⁵ Ete, who wrote from the perspective of a New Zealand-born Samoan, is a son of a retired *faifeau toaina* of the CCCSANZ in Wellington. His research was critical of the theological discourse that was being encouraged within the CCCSANZ, evident in regards to both the liturgy of the church and its teachings. Ete, highlights the disconnect between the New Zealand-born and the Samoan-born generations, and provides a critique that displays the need for a new understanding of theology and Christology, that resonates with the identity plight of the New Zealand-born Samoan.³⁶

Ete's work is pioneering in this regard, and his later work is the realisation of such an endeavour, in which the issue of his 'hyphenated' identity gathered traction, and explored in more detail this issue with other theologians struggling with the similar diasporic conditions and concerns.³⁷ Ete's attempt at identifying the *vale* as a Christological pointer and category,

³⁵ Cluny Macpherson, "One Trunk Sends Out Many Branches: Pacific Culture and Cultural Identities," in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley and Melani Anae (Palmerston North: The Dunmore Printing Company, 2001), 66-80.; R. L. Challis, "Immigrant Polynesians in New Zealand: Aspects of Stability in Adjusting to Change," in *Polynesian & Pakeha in New Zealand Education. Vol 1: The Sharing of Cultures*, eds. Douglas Bray and Clement Hill, 2nd ed. (Palmerston North: G. H. Bennett & Co, 1980).

³⁶ Risatisone Ben Ete, "A Bridge in My Father's House: New Zealand-Born Samoans Talk Theology" (B.Theol, University of Otago, 1996).

³⁷ Risatisone Ete, "Christ the Vale," in *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross-Cultural Theologies Down Under*, ed. Clive Pearson (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 2004a), 80-87.; Risatisone Ete, "Ugly Duckling, Quacking Swan," in *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross-Cultural Theologies Down Under*, ed. Clive Pearson (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 2004b), 43-47. To consider Ete's later work in the context of diasporic theology see, Clive Pearson and Jione Havea, eds., *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross-Cultural Theologies Down Under* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2004).

was a master-stroke in bringing to the fore the similarities between Christ's earthly experiences and ministry and what he saw were typical of what New Zealand-born Samoans experienced within their families, the Samoan church and New Zealand society in general. Ete is direct, and cogent in his depiction of the Samoan *vale*, who he acknowledges are Samoans who despite being members of an *aiga* and society endure stigma, derision and discrimination, because of the reality that such labels seek to define. Ultimately, this insight also allowed Ete to highlight the uncritical nature of the Samoan language, because everyday terms that incorporated the word *vale*, were actually encouraging the uncritical acceptance of such stigma, which again resonated strongly with Ete's dilemma of the New Zealand-born Samoan in the church.

Therefore in this research, I seek to further develop Ete's creativity in seeing the possibilities of using the *vale* as a critical tool, for establishing a platform for theological discourse. However, instead of utilising the label in a negative sense, I embrace the *vale* label positively because it not only locates my reality and point of departure for this thesis as a *faiifeau* who is also a Samoan New Zealander, but it also promotes the validity of my *fa'avalevalea* hermeneutic. In light of Ete's work, this hermeneutic allows me to *sōsopo le vā-sā* like a *vale*, for the purposes of articulating a *faiifeau* identity that is both faithful to the Triune God of the Gospel, and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ.

Anae's perspective was born out of her experiences as a member of the Newton Pacific Island Congregational Church, the first church in Aotearoa New Zealand that was primarily focussed on meeting the needs of migrant Pacific families. As a concerned member of the Samoan diaspora, Anae's work advocated for the repressed voices of Pacific youth and young

people who found themselves ostracised and alienated, despite the centrality of the Church in their lives as a place of belonging and identity.³⁸ Her research broke new ground in validating the identity journeys of New Zealand-born Samoans in relation to the *fa'aSamoa*, and the Church, and her research proceeded to signal the Church as an integral part of their future identities.³⁹ Anae's later work on *teu le vā* [nurture the sacred relational space/s] as a viable and critical framework for research in understanding the educational and health needs of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand, is invaluable to my own usage of the *vā* in this research, because her research correctly identifies the need to understand Pacific people through the inherited cultural values and forms that continue to give meaning to their contemporary worldview/s.

However, in contrast to Anae, I promote the need to acknowledge a nuanced interpretation of the *vā-tapuia* in the CCCSANZ, by which I use the term *vā-sā*, which has determined the resultant behaviours of the people as experienced through *fa'aāloālo*.⁴⁰ This move is

³⁸ Melani Anae, "Towards a New Zealand-Born Samoan Identity: Some Reflections on Labels," *Pacific Health Dialog: Journal of Community Health and Clinical Medicine for the Pacific* 4, no. 2 (1997), 128-137.

³⁹ Anae, *Fofoa-i-Vao-Ese: The Identity Journeys of New Zealand-Born Samoans*

⁴⁰ For definitions of '*va tapuia*' see Fanaafi Le Tagaloa Aiono, *O Motuga-Afa* (Apia; Samoa: Le Lamepa Press, 1996); Melani Anae, "*Fofoa-i-Vao-Ese: The Identity Journeys of New Zealand-Born Samoans*" (PhD, University of Auckland), xiii; Albert Wendt, "Afterword: Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 399-412. Tuala Sale Tagaloa, "*Va Tapuia: An Environmental Vision*," *Samoan Environment Forum*, 2000, . www.mnre.gov.ws/documents/forum/2000/2-tagaloa_3-5; Vanya Taule'alo, "*Va Tapuia: Old Traditions Define New Identities*," *Samoan Environment Forum*, 2001, 93-99. <http://www1.mnre.gov.ws/documents/forum/2001/13-Vanya.pdf>, 94; For the creative usage of the *va tapuia* as a critical foundation for the framework for research see, Airini et al., *Teu Le Va - Relationships Across Research and Policy in Pasifika Education: A Collective Approach to Knowledge Generation and Policy Development for Action Towards Pasifika Education Success* (Wellington: Ministry of Education Research Division, Auckland Uniservices,[2010]). <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika/teu-le-va-relationships-across-research-and-policy-in-pasifika-education/executive-summary>.

necessary, in order for us to critically understand and affirm the underpinning values of the *va-tapuia*, which are relevant for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, and ultimately the Gospel and the Church worldwide.⁴¹ For Anae and others, the *va-tapuia* is defined and seen to govern the socio-political and spiritual realms, whereas the *va-fealoa'i* is experienced in the tensions, negotiations and relationships that are posited and negated in the secular realm of Samoan life. However, in seeking to reflect the reality of the *faiifeau* in the CCCSANZ, I primarily focus on the *va-tapuia* for its synonymity with relationships and views governing the behaviour of Samoans and the CCCSANZ towards the Triune God, and therefore the *faiifeau*. For it will be argued, that an uncritical acceptance of the *va-tapuia* provides for an anti-Gospel privileging of the *faiifeau* which is need of radical transformation.

Such a privileging is not new where indigenous cultural references are uncritically accepted on the bases of romanticised notions of identity, without addressing how they are influencing imbalances of power, and relationships, especially in regards to Christian leadership of the Church. Leadership that at its heart and core, must be reflective of the Triune God, as proclaimed by the Christian Gospel and upheld by Christian Doctrine and belief.

Melani Anae, "Research for Better Pacific Schooling in New Zealand: Teu Le Va - A Samoan Perspective," *MAI Review* 1 (2010), 1-24; Meaola Amituanai-Toloa, "Tapuia (Space made Sacred) in Bridging Research and Relationships: Brown Culture and Commonsensical Ethics," *Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, no. 3 (2007), 200-221. <http://www.content.alternative.ac.nz/index.php/alternative/article/viewFile/80/172>.

⁴¹ Airini et al., *Teu Le Va - Relationships Across Research and Policy in Pasifika Education: A Collective Approach to Knowledge Generation and Policy Development for Action Towards Pasifika Education Success* (Wellington: Ministry of Education Research Division, Auckland Uniservices, [2010]). <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika/teu-le-va-relationships-across-research-and-policy-in-pasifika-education/executive-summary>.

Tiatia is another New Zealand-born Samoan, whose background as a member of the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church continued the critique of the Pacific churches role in the life of New Zealand-born Samoans. She posits the existence of a ‘clash of cultures’ which characterises the identity crises of the New Zealand-born Samoan, who may believe in God, but do not relate to the traditional and island-born rituals, traditions, customs and language of their parents.⁴² Tiatia’s data which is directly taken from the perspective of New Zealand-born Samoans has provided invaluable insights into their cultural mindsets, issues and struggles. Such information has enabled Tiatia to further pursue the validity of such struggles in relation to youth suicide, a perennial issue for Samoans both in Samoa and in Aotearoa New Zealand. Like Ete and Anae, Tiatia brings to the fore the need to consider the critical and dialectical relationship that exists between identity, theology and context for New Zealand-born Samoans, and the issues that must be addressed and worked through.

Taule’ale’ausumai like Unasa speaks from the perspective of one who underwent theological training within the Church. However what makes Taulea’lea’usumai’s views even more unique and pertinent, is that they are of an ordained woman of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, as a Samoan woman leader of the Church, Taule’ale’ausumai draws on cultural and ecclesiastical knowledge to delineate and declare that the migrant churches have successfully adopted and integrated their village-based hierarchical structures from the islands into the New Zealand milieu of church. Such a reality, according to Taule’alea’usumai has seen the reinforcement of rank, and an inheritance

⁴² Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught between Cultures: A New Zealand-Born Pacific Island Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998).

of ideals concerning duties within the church, that can only be described as patriarchal, paternalistic, and hegemonic.

Such an organisation and maintenance of the status quo, as it is practised in the island nations, leads her to highlight the need for authenticity which is not found in the reproduction of such structures, but in the embracing of a family based pastorate where every Samoan has an inherent value as a Pastoral carer. For Taule'alea'usumai, such a spirituality is more conducive to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, but also honours their ethnic identities as people who are communally and family oriented.⁴³

What has been made clear by the research previously cited in this latter section is our shared concern as researchers in prioritising and engaging in questions pertaining to the contexts, and social locations, in which Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand live, with particular reference to issues relating to identity and belonging as Samoan migrants and Samoan Christians in Diaspora. In contrast with the unpublished work of fellow *faiifeau*, these scholars have had their views widely critiqued and reviewed by their academic peers, enabling their work to become critical dialogue partners in varying conversations regarding Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand on a more public and broader scale.

It is therefore, the intention of this research, that in the articulation of a contextually relevant and faithfully sensitive theological identity for the *faiifeau* of the CCCS in Aotearoa New

⁴³ Feiloaiga Taulealeausumai, "New Religions, New Identities: The Changing Contours of Religious Commitment," in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley and Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Printing Company, 2001), 181-195.; Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*

Zealand, I consider critically the contours and relevant insights that they have developed and exposed. By establishing a critical background of scholarship, such research allows me to place this current research as a continuation of a commitment to providing a nuanced perspective of a New Zealand-born, or New Zealand-raised Samoan in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a particular focus on the implications of that perspective on my identity as a *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ.

1.6. The Significance of Trinitarian Theology

1.6.1. A *faiifeau* identity based on the Triune God

At the heart of Christian Theology is the belief that God is Triune. God's Triune nature can be expressed in many ways, but at its core, God, as One-in-Three Persons, is a dynamic communion of mutual and reciprocating love. Such a relational nature can be understood through the Christian scriptures and the Gospel, as God is revealed as being self-sacrificial, life-affirming and oriented to the 'other'. Self-sacrificial in the sense of a God who creates and then redeems His Creation, life-affirming as one who continues to provide opportunities for life, wellbeing and prosperity to that same fallen Creation, and oriented to the 'other', in the sense that God's actions and purposes are aimed towards the betterment and benefit of everything and everyone that He comes into relationship with. In recent times, a renaissance concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity has inspired new theological insights and pursuits into its relevance for the Church and its leadership.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004), 1-5. In his introductory chapter, Grenz cites the insight of the Yale Divinity School Professor Claude Welch, in which he attributes the renewed interest in the Trinity to Karl Barth, see

1.6.2. Trinitarian Theology is Contextual Theology

These theological insights have continued to resonate with the growing awareness of the contextual nature of theology, confirming that at the heart of Trinitarian theology is a commitment not only to the contemporary context/s the Church finds itself in, but also faithfulness to the Christian Gospel in that context. Therefore, it is in light of the Trinitarian and contextual nature of theology, and the insights that it provides for the Church and its leadership, that I seek to articulate and construct an identity for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, based on a Trinitarian theology of a Samoan indigenous and cultural reference the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* [A Visible Heir of God].⁴⁵

Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1952), viii-ix. Grenz's book then proceeds to show the significant shifts and theological viewpoints since Karl Barth, that have been based on the Trinity, which in Grenz's opinion reflect the vitality and necessity of Trinitarian theology.

⁴⁵ Two things must be noted at this stage, which will be developed as the thesis progresses. First the intentional use of the Samoan indigenous reference *Suli* [Heir]. *Suli* contains connotations of association through 'blood' or family, which I will later argue is theologically consistent with salvation and what Jesus Christ has gifted to all believers and Christians through his life, death, resurrection and ascension. It is Jesus' 'blood' that has made all believers *Suli* of God. Secondly, *Suli* also best describes the role in ministry of the *faiifeau*, because *Suli* allows for the consideration of the *faiifeau* identity to be one of self-reflective service, as a heir of the Triune God, continuing God's mission to the world, enacted and fulfilled through his duties within the CCCSANZ, his *aiga* [family], and wider community. Tofaeono uses *Suli* also, see Ama'amalele Tofaeono, "Eco-Theology: Aiga – the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa" (Neuendettelsau: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Departments, 2000), 136. Maliko on the other hand uses *Sui* [Representative/Replacement], which carries the negative potential of "replacement" which is theologically problematic, and in many ways is reflective of an inflated perspective of the *faiifeau* is upheld in the CCCSANZ and with Samoans in general. It is such a perspective that this research is seeking to address, see Tavita Maliko, "O le Soga'imiti: An Embodiment of God in the Samoan Male Body" (PhD, The University of Auckland, 2012), 258.

1.7. The *faiifeau* identity – An Institution

As an institution of church leadership, the *faiifeau* was introduced to Samoa in the 19th century by the London Missionary Society missionaries, to meet the needs of their ministry in that particular time and context.⁴⁶ This elevated status in the church and Samoan society has been maintained and promulgated through the use of particular titles, or more accurately, Samoan cultural references that encourage an uncritical acceptance of the current *faiifeau* identity, such as the *Sui Va'aia o le Atua* [Visible Replacement/Representative of God], *Auauna o le Atua* [Servant of God], *Fa'afeagaiga* [Covenanted One] and *Tamā Fa'aleagaga* [Spiritual Father], amongst others.⁴⁷ This reality of undisputed authority in church leadership and status in Samoan society has seen the *faiifeau* identity in the CCCSANZ occupy an

⁴⁶ John Garrett credits the LMS missionaries with the introduction of the *faiifeau* because of their desire to infiltrate the local village power-bases of the “old-men and prophets.” However, Garrett also notes the strong Samoanisation of the ministry. In other words, contrary to the LMS missionaries’ beliefs, the Samoans maintained a level of control over any changes to the ministry, despite ecclesial leadership predominantly residing with them, see John Garrett, *To live among the stars: Christian origins in Oceania*, 2nd ed. (Suva: Oceania Printers, 1985), 123-124.

⁴⁷ In my Master’s thesis, I labelled these ‘titles’ as “models” because each ‘title’ set certain parameters of behaviour and perceptions from both the *faiifeau* and Samoans who they would come in contact with, see Imoamaua Emanuel Cluny Setefano, “*O le faiifeau*” - the Servant of God: Redefining the *faiifeau* paradigm of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand.” (MTh, University of Auckland, 2009), 27-34; On the other hand, Danny Ioka focuses on the cultural dynamics of these ‘titles’, and argues that only a correct understanding of the underpinning Samoan cultural history can explain the exalted status of the Church minister of the CCCS, see Danny Ioka, “Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand” (PhD, University of Otago, 1998), 25-35; Uesifili Unasa is critical of how the traditional Samoan churches have adopted the hierarchical structures of the *fa’aSamoa*, which has promoted the *faiifeau* to the position of a “high chief”, see Uesifili Unasa, “Doing Samoan Theology and Ministry in the Context of Aotearoa New Zealand” (BD, Knox College, 1993), 9-15; Feiloaiga Taule’alea’usumai notes the transplanting of the village structure to the migrant Samoan church, which has taken away the traditional religious roles that heads of each family played in worship and spiritual development, see Feiloaiga Taule’alea’usumai, “Pastoral Care: A Samoan Perspective,” in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, ed. Philip Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997a), 215-240.

inherited ‘sacred’ status, accompanied by a lifestyle of affluence and privilege which is heavily reliant on the people of the church. However, this ‘sacred’ status runs in stark contrast with the reality of the CCCSANZ and Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand, who do not enjoy the same level of economic freedom, and are encouraged in this new context, to be critically-minded and open to change.⁴⁸ Therefore, at the heart of this investigation then, is the desire to address how such an identity for church leadership, can be reconciled with a God who is Triune, and a Christian Gospel that balances self-sacrifice with a desire to love the other as oneself. This thesis seeks to take into account the shifts of context that the *faiifeau* has experienced over time, as the CCCSANZ has established itself in Aotearoa New Zealand. In short, the pertinence of the *faiifeau* identity to adjust to its contemporary context/s and remain faithful to the Gospel in this new context is upheld as a necessity for effective and meaningful ministry.

1.7.1. The Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCCSANZ) – A Church of Migrants and Citizens

The CCCSANZ is a church that traces its origins back to the missionary enterprises of the LMS Missionaries in Samoa, after the initial arrival of John Williams, Charles Barff, Fauea and his wife Puaseisei, and the Tahitian and Aitutakian ‘teachers’, in *Sāpapālii* in 1830. This church, despite its existence in countries outside of Samoa, is referred to in Samoan, as the

⁴⁸ Tofaeono highlights the reality of the Samoan *faiifeau* which was observed by the early historical writers of Samoa, who were largely European, British or New Zealand authors, as men of immense privilege and power. This reality remains unchanged despite the change in time and context, see Ama’amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga – the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Neuendettelsau: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Departments, 2000), 136-139.

Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS). However, the decision in this thesis to recognise separately the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ from the *faiifeau* identity in Samoa, and in-turn cast the CCCSANZ as a church in a similar light for this research, is a deliberate one, because it is underpinned by the notion that theological identity is also preceded by the need to acknowledge contextual relevance. To accept the EFKS as a name for the CCCSANZ has both historical and organisational validity, but it is argued in this thesis, that it is only when we consider the CCCSANZ as its own church, with its own unique context/s from that of Samoa, that we can begin to formulate and construct a contextually and culturally relevant *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ.

Unlike the EFKS in Samoa, which was founded by the arrival of the LMS Missionaries in the 19th century, the CCCSANZ is a church that was ‘born’ when a *matai* [chief/head of family] and his *aiga* [family] left the Pacific Islands Congregational Church (PICC).⁴⁹ The motivation behind such a move was multi-valent.⁵⁰ First, as Fuimaono Ta’ala wrote

⁴⁹ The PICC was officially established in 1947, by the Congregational Union of New Zealand (CUNZ). Primarily set up to meet the spiritual needs of Pacific migrants to the country, it also enabled them to form strong community bonds within their particular Pacific island groups, helping to alleviate the difficulties that accompany migration. Anae contends that each ethnic group, the Cook Islanders, Tokelauans, Niueans and Samoans also have their own versions or ‘myths’ about the origins of the PICC, see Melani Anae, “Fofoa-i-vaose: Identity Journeys of NZ-Born Samoans” (PhD, University of Auckland, 1998), 118-127.

⁵⁰ Ioka in his research cites the influence of a Miss Hilda Small on the founder of the CCCSANZ, Fuimaono Ta’ala. Small, a missionary herself encouraged Fuimaono to pursue a church that was uniquely Samoan, because she felt there was an innate holiness in Samoan worship, see Danny Ioka, “Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand” (PhD, University of Otago, 1998), 182-187. See also, U.P. Taimalelagi, “Migration: The Study of Western Samoan Migration and the Roles of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa” (BD, Pacific Theological College, 1980), 60. Taimalelagi argues that it was primarily for sociological reasons that the CCCSANZ was established. For an alternative perspective regarding the establishment of the CCCSANZ, which is highly critical of Fuimaono’s motives and the role of the ‘mother church’ or the EFKS in Samoa, see F.U.Nokise, “A History of the Pacific Islanders’ Congregational Church in New Zealand, 1943-1969, (MTh, University of Otago, 1978), 219-244.

extensively in his correspondence to the ‘mother church’, the Samoans wanted to govern and control their own church. They wanted to worship in their own language, and wanted to observe their own cultural practices, as expressed through the traditions and cultural customs of the *fa’aSamoa* [Samoan cultural practices/way of life] of the time. Second, Ta’ala also made it clear that the financial future of the EFKS lay in the CCCSANZ, as Aotearoa was seen as the ‘land of milk and honey’. And finally, there had existed a feeling amongst the Samoans of the PIC that the *faiifeau* from the EFKS, were not given the respect and acknowledgement they deserved, which reinforced Ta’ala’s desire to promote the set-up of the breakaway church. Basically, the Samoans wanted their own Samoan church in Aotearoa New Zealand that maintained ecclesial ties to the ‘mother church’.

In 1962, the first CCCSANZ was established and accepted in Grey Lynn Auckland by the EFKS leadership delegation from Samoa, announcing the beginning of a church that was primarily geared to meeting the spiritual needs of those who had left the PICC, namely, Samoan migrants. By the end of 2012, at the 50th Anniversary celebrations, a manifesto promoting a short history of the CCCSANZ and their intentions to provide partnership and support with the Government of New Zealand boasted that as a church they had total of 71 churches, and approximately 25,337 members. This manifesto implies that there is a united belief amongst the current leaders, who are *faiifeau toaina* [elder ministers] and the people that the CCCSANZ needs to be recognised as its own church. A church which consists of both migrants and their descendants, who because of longevity of residence, inter-racial

marriage, and birth, can now most assuredly identify themselves as citizens and people of Aotearoa New Zealand.⁵¹

The impressive growth of the CCCSANZ and its members over the past 50 years can be attributed in part, to the continued valuing of one of the founding pillars on which the church was established: to uphold and maintain the inherited values of the *fa'a-Samoa* and specifically, how it is expressed within the CCCSANZ and its ministry. The survival and continued propagation of the *fa'a-Samoa*, has been made possible due to the the upholding of a nuanced interpretation and observance of the underpinning ethos of the *fa'a-Samoa*, the *va-tapuia* as it has embedded itself into the life and work of the CCCSANZ. As the observance of the *va-tapuia* has continued to shape, and govern the relationships and behaviours between the people and the *faiifeau* within the CCCSANZ, a hegemonically exalted *faiifeau* identity has emerged. A *faiifeau* identity which enjoys a 'sacred' status and position of unbridled power and unapproachable authority due to a lack of theological critique and discourse concerning its sensitivity and relevance to the contemporary context/s of the CCCSANZ, and ultimately such and identity's faithfulness to the Gospel of a Triune God.

1.7.2. A Trinitarian and Contextual Identity – *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*

It is therefore my contention that a Trinitarian theology of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, as articulated as a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* is needed. Such an identity will not only

⁵¹ As part of the 50 year celebrations, the CCCSANZ made public a manifesto, reflecting the need to define their independent nature from the 'mother church' in Samoa, "EFKS Aotearoa Profile: Talaaga 2012", EFKS, accessed July 18, 2013, https://www.parliament.nz/resource/mi-nz/50SCES_EVI_00DBHOH_BILL11822_1_A315015/315345f0d89a6df620f83842ec453a9ef1490f6f

be sensitive to the concerns and daily struggles of his *aulotu*, his *aiga*, as well as *tagata lautele*, but will strive to remain faithful to the Gospel, because it is theologically grounded in Trinitarian theology. Such an articulation must however be made through a critical appreciation of the Samoan cultural reference, the *va-tapuia* and how it is expressed and experienced in the CCCSANZ. In order for me to conduct this investigation as a *faiifeau* or an insider, I do so as one who is *fa'avalevatea* [foolish/questioning and critiquing the norms] and 'cross over' the *va-tapuia* which has placed the *faiifeau* identity beyond critique, occupying a 'sacred' status or position synonymous with that of the Triune God. I do not assume to represent all possible views on the topic, or even that this thesis can be considered reflective of any consensus on the issues raised, but only that it be accepted as a theologically based contribution to the need for a faithful and sensitive leadership of ministry, which for the CCCSANZ, directly refers to the *faiifeau*.

1.8. Research Questions

1.8.1. Primary Question

In light of the insights that Trinitarian theology offer the *faiifeau* identity, and the need for that identity to be of a contextual nature, this research was shaped against two research questions. The first or primary research question is: In what ways does a Trinitarian theology of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* articulate an identity of *faiifeau*, which is both faithful to the relational nature of the Triune God of the Christian Gospel and sensitive and relevant to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ and Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand? As already mentioned, the primary research question reaffirms the notion that all theology is contextual. Thus, it will be argued,

that the identity of the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, must be constructed in light of Trinitarian theology, so that the identity of the *faiifeau* can indeed be faithful to the Triune God of the Christian Gospel and also remain sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ and Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand. I argue for a Trinitarian theology that is best expressed through an articulation of a Samoan honorific title for the *faiifeau*, as the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*. This honorific title, commonly used by *tulafale* [orators/talking chiefs] in addressing *faiifeau*, is a Samoan indigenous cultural reference, and as such reflects a traditional Samoan understanding of identity. In this way, this research seeks to make a new contribution to Trinitarian theology by providing authentic Samoan identity of the *faiifeau* that is not only contextually relevant for Samoans in the CCCSANZ, and in Diaspora, but also the Christian Church as a whole. In other words, as a critical necessity, this research promotes the potency and primacy of Trinitarian theology for the identity of leadership in the Church.

1.8.2. Secondary Question

In light of the primary research question, and in consideration of the underpinning Samoan ethos, and its nuanced understanding, interpretation and practice within the CCCSANZ, I posit the secondary question: In what ways does being a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea*, cultivate and promote a critical appreciation of a Trinitarian identity of the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, as a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*? As previously mentioned, the Samoan cultural reference, the *va-tapuia* is the name given to the 'sacred relational space/s' that are held, and kept in tension, between individuals, as Samoans engage with each other, their environment, and the cosmos. In other words, it is the underpinning reality that gives life to the *fa'aSamoa*, and the behavior of *fa'aaloalo*, because the principles and values of the *va-tapuia*, governs and determines the nature of relationships and interactions between Samoans and anything that may be regarded

as holy and sacred. However, for the CCCSANZ, this especially explains and describes the relationship of the church, and the Samoan people with God, and with his visible representative, the *faiifeau* and thus demands that we provide a nuanced interpretation of this ethos, which I have named the *vā-sā*.

Therefore, this secondary question argues that being a *faiifeau fa'avalevaled* is essential for the promotion and cultivation of a Trinitarian theology of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* for the identity of the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ. In essence, it is argued that being a *faiifeau fa'avalevaled* is also intrinsically contextual. Ultimately, this secondary question highlights three key assumptions or inherited givens of this research. Firstly, it highlights the cultural underpinnings that are inherent in this research that may not be immediately obvious to non-Samoans. Secondly, it captures the critical need for a Trinitarian theology of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* for the identity of the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ. Finally, it calls for a methodological tool for research that can be deemed culturally sensitive but critically rigorous in order to engage with the *fa'aSamoa* and the many cultural references that upholds its way of life.

1.9. Significance of Research

1.9.1. Spiritual Leadership of the CCCS in Aotearoa New Zealand

The significance of this research cannot be overstated. As the ordained church minister of the CCCSANZ, the *faiifeau* has a responsibility to serve God, through leading and serving the *aulotu*, his *aiga*, and *tagata lautele*, with humility, love, compassion and mutual respect. Such a

commitment to serve, is not just a vocation, but is embodied in what is sometimes understood as a personal *vala 'au* from God. Due to the nature of the One who is 'calling', it is to be fulfilled with a commitment to be faithful to the Christian Gospel, and relevant to the *siosiomaga* in which he finds himself doing God's *feau* and *galuega*. Therefore, the 'calling' to be a *faiifeau*, is one that demands an identity that endures the rigorous reshaping of the needs of the *galuega*, and the interactions and relationships that he upholds on a daily basis.

The articulation of this identity is paramount to the effectiveness of his ministry, and as such raises theological questions of identity that is both significant and relevant for the *faiifeau* and the CCCSANZ. Ultimately, this thesis attempts to fill the need to ultimately raise the self-awareness of the *faiifeau* in regards to the impact that his actions and ministry has on the people of his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, as well as *tagata lautele*, with whom he must interact and engage with. Written from the perspective of a *faiifeau*, the research itself adds another voice to diasporic theology, in that it promotes the need to understand the nuanced interpretation of the *va-tapuia* that exists in the CCCSANZ as the *vā-sā*, and what a Trinitarian theology of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* offers the Church by way of leadership in God's *feau* and *galuega*.

1.9.2. Future Identity Formation for *faiifeau* of the CCCS Worldwide

As a *faiifeau* myself, who is also a lecturer in Malua Theological College, I believe that there are insights that this research has to offer my own *vala 'auina* in the College. This research and its findings will directly influence the way I teach my students and their wives, in their preparation for the ministry. It will also enable my colleagues and I to ground our understanding of the *faiifeau* identity, in Trinitarian theology. For such a theology, will encourage and inspire the praxis of future *faiifeau* for the CCCS in Samoa, in Aotearoa New

Zealand, and the wider Diaspora of Samoan migration, to be self-critical, sensitive to the *siosiomaga*, and faithful to the relational nature of the Triune God, and His Gospel. In noting these objectives, I recognise that the foundational questions and concerns that I have brought to this research are reflective of not only by the *siosiomaga* of the *faiifeau* identity within the CCCSANZ, but also because of my lived reality, as one who is *fa'avalevalea*, and a person of cultural and therefore theological 'liminality'.⁵²

1.9.3. Fresh Insights for the Ministry of the Church

Therefore, it is my contention that this research offers not only the CCCSANZ but also the *galuega* of the Christian Church in general, innovative, fresh, and timely insights and perspectives regarding the nature of ordained church leadership, as given through an understanding of the relationship between Trinitarian theology and ministry praxis. For as a Samoan New Zealander and a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea*, I undertake the task of articulating an authentic Samoan identity for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, with a commitment to critical but culturally appreciative discourse. The pertinence of Trinitarian theology is accepted but is not uncritically assumed, as it also is the product of contextual reflection and analysis. But as the foundation of Christian identity, Trinitarian theology will be rigorously set against the need to construct an identity that reflects the *soifuaga* and *siosiomaga* of the Samoans in the CCCSANZ.

⁵² For recent work that prefers to focus on the notions of 'hybridity' and 'hyphenated identity' see, Jione Havea and Clive Pearson, eds., *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2011).; Pearson and Havea, *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross-Cultural Theologies Down Under*

I undertake this investigation seeking to contribute to the continuing discourse surrounding the Doctrine of God and the Trinity, with particular focus on its relevance and relationship to the identity and praxis of the leadership of the Christian Church. In this way, I believe that this thesis will add much needed balance to the growing research in Diasporic theology, especially regarding Samoans who initially as migrants and now as residents, and citizens have made Aotearoa New Zealand, their home. In this way, a Trinitarian theology of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* will not only be reflective of who Samoans are in Aotearoa New Zealand, but will also rejuvenate the identities of Samoan Christians in the CCCSANZ.

1.9.4. Originality and Significance of Research Summarised

The originality and significance of this research as alluded to previously, stems from the unique starting place of my personal journey of liminality and marginality that I bring to this research. As a starting place for research, I point forward to the necessity of a nuanced understanding of the *va-tapuia* in the CCCSANZ as the *vā-sā* which further develops the *siosiomaga* in which this investigation is formed. This nuanced understanding can be appreciated and successfully navigated as one who is a *faiifeau fa'avalevaleda*. This methodology allows me to engage critically with all the *motu* or sources of research at hand, in order for a new creative theology to be born, that is both culturally sensitive but critically reflective. This new creative articulation is the theology of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, which at its heart is a Trinitarian theology.

Therefore, this research endeavours to radically address a nuanced understanding of the imbalances of leadership and governance that currently exist within the CCCSANZ, with a specific focus in creating a more self-sacrificial but life-empowering identity of *faiifeau*, for

the betterment of the CCCSANZ, Samoans in Diaspora, and the Christian Church as a whole. For such an identity needs to be established to ensure that not only the CCCSANZ is indeed fulfilling its mission according to the Christian Gospel, but also and more importantly for this research that the *faiifeau* as the leader of the Church is reflective of the Triune God, who moves and is motivated by love, compassion, and mutual respect for others. A *faiifeau* identity that freely acknowledges the value of other persons that is in relation to him, but equally seeks to know and understand those he is in relation with on their terms and through their own personal struggles, is one that is desired. It is the intention and purpose of this research, that the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* will not only continue to manifest the love of God and his Triune identity in who he is, but also in what he does in the busyness of his *vala'auina* to God's *feau* and *galuega*.

1.10. Thesis Structure

As mentioned earlier, this *fa'atalofa* chapter serves to illustrate the background information relating to the motivations behind why this research was undertaken. It is both a personal and professional investigation, seeking to not only give a theological foundation and explanation to the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, but also to provide resources for the future equipping and training of *faiifeau* for the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so, I am responding to the question of whether I am *fa'avalevalea* because I am directly questioning the current identity and status of the *faiifeau* in the CCCSANZ. As an insider, the knowledge and experience I bring to the research is both privileged and subjective, which forms the background of my positive response, that yes, I am a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea* for the sole

purpose of being able to *sōsopo le vā-sā* that exists between the *faiifeau* identity and any critique, in the hope of realising the potential for a new Trinitarian-based identity faithful to the Gospel and relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. In doing so, I have created a Samoan hermeneutical lens by which this research has been conducted. The following chapter will explicate my Samoan methodology of *sosopo le vā-sā*, while the remaining chapters will follow closely the contours of my *faiifeau fa'avalevaleda* hermeneutic, as every chapter seeks to critically engage with different *motu*, for the sake of questioning and challenging the status quo of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ.

Chapter Two is titled, “*Ou te sōsopo le vā-sā*”, because as a *faiifeau fa'avalevaleda*, I will be “crossing over the sacred/holy/forbidden ocean of spaces” that continues to promote the current *faiifeau* identity beyond critique and challenge. As intimated earlier in this *fa'atalofa* chapter, this methodology resonates with my three-fold reality as a Samoan New Zealander, a person who lives with Bi-Polar Disorder, and as a *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ. This chapter will begin by highlighting the *vā-sā* that exists within the CCCSANZ, that has encouraged a corrupted practise of *fa'aāloālo*, and as a consequence elevated the *faiifeau* identity in the CCCSANZ, as the *Sui Va'aia o le Atua* [Visible Representative/Replacement of God], amongst other uncritically accepted titles. Thus, it will be made clear, that only by being a *faiifeau fa'avalevaleda* can we begin to critically analyse and assess the underpinning cultural ethos of *tausi le vā-sā* that the *faiifeau* identity is sustained and revered in within the CCCSANZ.

This chapter also identifies different *motu*, that currently inform the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, that can be gleaned from church documents, theological literature, church liturgy

and relevant work authored by *faiifeau*, and academic theologians and Pacific scholars. These *motu* set the critical content to which I can proceed with my *sōsopo le vā-sā* methodology and both question/challenge the resulting behaviour of the *fa'aāloālo*, that is due to the cultural practice of *tausi le vā*. The overarching purpose of the critical engagement with these different *motu*, is to expose strands which together, can help form a more faithful and relevant *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. Again, it must be re-iterated that I proceed with such a methodology, because I am a *faiifeau fa'avalevaled*, who through the four dimensions introduced in the beginning of this *fa'atalofa* chapter will proceed to manifest the intricacies of these dimensions in a dynamic and perichoretic way, as is fitting with Trinitarian theology in the following four chapters.

By the end of this chapter, a case will be made for a *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ that affirms the fact that theological identity must also be contextual. In other words, it will point forward to establishing a *faiifeau* identity that addresses seriously its changing contemporary context/s or what I prefer to term *siosiomaga*. Such an identity will not only be incarnation and embodied, but relevant and sensitive to the situations and struggles of the people, and therefore dynamic, understanding and fluid enough to engage seriously with the *feau* and *galuega* of the CCCSANZ that is at the heart of the *faiifeau* identity.

Chapter Three is titled: “*E te tautalaitiiti?*” To claim to know what is best for the *faiifeau* and the CCCSANZ is definitely “being cheeky”, and would without a doubt immediately garner such a response from my elders! In light of this dimension of my *faiifeau fa'avalevaled* hermeneutic, this chapter will show the importance of the *faiifeau* identity maintaining contextual relevance by fundamentally being a contextual identity! That despite

the necessity to maintain the *motu* of traditions and cultural history that is inherent in his identity, the *faiifeau* must also seek to be sensitive to the *siosiomaga*, and/or changing reality that surrounds and envelops him in the CCCSANZ. Such a contextual recognition is not to be expressed in such a way that it is to try and keep up with every fashion and latest fad, but more so that as the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, a Samoan church of both migrants and citizens, he remains active and engaging in the *siosiomaga* in which his congregation/s are living, to the point that he too recognises the need to accept and embrace change and transformation when needed.

Thus, this chapter will seek to define the contemporary context/s of the *faiifeau* in the CCCSANZ, through a Samoan understanding of the notion *siosiomaga*. *Siosiomaga* by definition, as a Samoan indigenous cultural reference places the *faiifeau* squarely in his immediate surroundings, environment, and requires of him to acknowledge the land, location, physical place, and reality of where he is placed. *Siosiomaga* also carries the sense of responsibility in which the *faiifeau* must also be respectful and considerate of the changes in time, and season, that beset his current situation. In this way, *siosiomaga* is a wholistic and relational Samoan term of understanding that best describes the contemporary context/s of the *faiifeau* in the CCCSANZ in relation to the relational nature of the Triune God.

This chapter also will show the usefulness of understanding of the *faiifeau* identity through the use of contextual models as offered by Stephan Bevans, Robert Schreiter and others, as well as survey some pioneering Samoan forays into contextual theology, from the likes of Samoan theologians such as Paulo Koria, Ama'amalele Tofaeono, and Michiko Ete-Lima. Again, as additional *motu*, and products of academic and theological scholarship they offer critical

insights for the construction of a contextual identity of *faiifeau* for the CCCSANZ. In the end, this chapter will point towards the need for a correct imaging of the Christian God, as Triune, in order to model such a contextual and Gospel-focussed identity of *faiifeau* for the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. Indeed, this chapter will show that in many ways, I am being very *tautalaitiiti!*

Chapter Four is titled: “*E te fia-poto?*” To profess what the CCCSANZ understands about the Triune God and how that relates to the *faiifeau* identity is nothing short of being smart. In light of this dimension of the *faiifeau fa’avalevalea* hermeneutic, this chapter will provide a survey of how the CCCSANZ understands the identity of the Triune God, and the implications that such perspectives have had on the *faiifeau* identity. At the conclusion of this chapter it is promoted that there is a need to attain a more Trinitarian understanding of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, in order to be more faithful to the Gospel, and relevant to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. These chapters allowed me to respond also in the affirmative. Yes! *Ou te fia poto*, in the sense of wanting to be authentically Trinitarian!

Chapter Five is titled: “*E leai sou mafaufau?*” To raise the issue of the identity of God and its relevance to the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, can be viewed by many Samoans as going crazy or being out of one’s mind! However, in light of this dimension of my *faiifeau fa’avalevalea* hermeneutic, this chapter outlines the necessity of establishing the *faiifeau* identity according to the insights from relevant Trinitarian scholarship that can provide the building blocks for a Trinitarian and therefore a Christian *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. These insights will be brought into critical conversation and dialogue with the different Samoan indigenous/cultural references, or as I *sosopo le vā-sā* in the hope of identifying any

potential they have of reflecting the relational nature of the Triune God. A nature that is life-affirming, and always seeks the betterment of others, and those He comes into relationship with. Furthermore, by using the dimensions of the *siosiomaga* of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, namely *aiga*, *aulotu*, and *tagata lautele* a greater understanding will be attained in just how a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity can be both relevant and sensitive to the these *siosiomaga*. Ultimately, this chapter will equip us with the challenge of understanding further the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, as the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ that is both faithful to the Triune God, and His calling to His *feau* and *galuega* as well as relevant and sensitive to the needs of the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. In conclusion, as in the previous chapters, I respond in the affirmative, that yes, I am being very *lē mafaufau!*

Chapter Six is titled: “*O ai oe? E te valea?*” [Who do you think you are? Are you out of your mind?] This chapter brings to climax, the culmination of all the previous chapters, by way of articulating the contours of a new identity for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ. In this chapter I promote and explicate the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, as a new *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ. As a new *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ, it at once recognises the traditional Samoan and indigenous roots of Samoan religiosity as captured through the use of a Samoan indigenous cultural reference, is relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, and above all, is an identity theologically constructed upon the relational nature of the Triune God, who at His heart moves and lives in reciprocal love, forgiveness, mercy and compassion. I will endeavour to show what this new identity may look like for the *faiifeau* identity in relation to his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele* and vice-versa, because such is the nature of a *faiifeau* identity that it is built upon the reciprocating love of the Triune

God, and His life-affirming Gospel and self-less love for all. In the end, this chapter will acknowledge the need to understand anew the Samoan indigenous/cultural references of the *faiifeau* identity presented in the previous chapter, in light of the Christian Gospel and the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, as it fulfils the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God.

The concluding chapter is titled: “*Ua fasa lava le faiifeau fa’avalevalea!...*” [“You have manifested as a foolish/crazy/stupid/mentally ill person]. Such a title is fitting in the end, as such will be the views and thinking of those who regard the *faiifeau* identity as sacrosanct, beyond critique, and therefore only fit for God’s judgement. It is an acknowledgement that I only retreat to engage further in future explorations and projects that can strengthen the shortcomings of this current research. In this final chapter, I will show how this exploration has answered the two research questions that have been at the heart of this inquiry. First, that the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua*, is a thoroughly Trinitarian identity of *faiifeau* for the CCCSANZ, that is both faithful to the Christian Gospel, and contextually relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ, and secondly, that it has only by being a *faiifeau fa’avalevalea*, in which I have been able to *sosopo le vā-sā* that uncritically privileges and promotes the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ in an authoritarian and anti-Gospel way, in order to realise such possibilities for a new way of being *faiifeau* in the 21st century, in this land that many Samoans and the CCCSANZ, now call home.

1.11. Summary

This *fa'atalofa* chapter has outlined and comprehensively illuminated the background motivations and research behind this thesis. It has revealed my *faiifeau fa'avalevaled* hermeneutic, as the departure point of this thesis, which resonates with both my liminal reality and marginal status as a Samoan New Zealander, and as a person who has lived with the stigma and discrimination attached with Mental illness. Despite the obvious negative connotations, this starting point is a positive place for me, full of theological authenticity and creativity. Such creativity led me to identify four dimensions of my *faiifeau fa'avalevaled* hermeneutic that has given rise to my Samoan methodology of *sosopo le vā-sā*. This authentically Samoan methodology allows me to “cross over the ‘ocean’ of holy/forbidden/sacred relational spaces) that has elevated the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ to a level of unapproachability and infallibility. In doing so, I also seek to critically engage with the different *motu* which gives rise to and upholds the current *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ in order to ultimately realise a *faiifeau* identity that is both faithful and relevant to the Triune God, the Christian Gospel, and the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. However, the more immediate task of the following chapter will be to explicate in more detail my Samoan methodology for this research, where I will *sosopo le vā-sā*!

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY – “I SOSOPO LE VĀ-SĀ!”

(I AM CROSSING OVER THE HOLY/SACRED/FORBIDDEN

‘OCEAN’ OF RELATIONAL SPACES THAT SEPARATE US)

2.0. Introduction

The *vā-tapuia* is the underpinning ethos that governs and mediates the way Samoans relate to each other in their *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and with *tagata lautele*.⁵³ Thus, by definition such a pervasive ethos also influences the way Samoans in the CCCSANZ relate to their *siosiomaga*, and ultimately the *faiifeau*, and the Triune God of Christian faith.⁵⁴ This reality is actioned and realised through the activity and notion to *tausi le vā-tapuia* [uphold and maintain the *vā-tapuia*], through the practise of *fa’āloālo*. In other words, the *vā-tapuia* is the fundamental and defining characteristic of what Samoans call the *fa’aSamoa*, or their way of life!

⁵³ Albert Wendt is arguably one of the first Samoan academics in diaspora that sought to define the potency of the “*Va*” in Samoan life, by discussing its significance in understanding the *tatau* [Samoan tattoo]. Albert Wendt, "Afterword: Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 399-412. Throughout this chapter, and the entire thesis, variations of the written form of the *va* are used, in acknowledgement of the different context/s that the writers are writing out of and the different purposes they had in discussing the *va*.

⁵⁴ *siosiomaga* – changing contemporary context/s. Further clarification of the relevance of using *siosiomaga* in this way will be made in the following chapter. May it be mentioned at this stage, that *siosiomaga* is a meaningful way of looking at the changing contemporary context/s which beset the *faiifeau* identity, because it calls for a serious consideration of the direct environment, place and setting in which the *faiifeau* finds himself in. It resonates with the acceptance of the intimate relationship of identity with that of geographical location, and calls therefore, for the embracing of the intricacies of the *feau* and the *galuega o le Atua*, within the CCCSANZ, in relation to his *aiga*, the *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*.

Therefore, in order to understand the nature of the relationships that such an ethos creates within the CCCSANZ, and specifically, in relation to the *faiifeau* identity, we must first provide a nuanced definition and interpretation which is reflective of this reality. Thus, this chapter begins by surveying different attempts at defining the *vā-tapuia* with the purpose of providing a foundation and resources with which to provide a nuanced definition and interpretation of the *vā-tapuia* that exists in the CCCSANZ, that I call the *vā-sā*. In turn, this definition will bring to the fore the need to explicate my Samoan methodology of “*sōsopo le vā-sā*”. Such a methodology is dynamic and fluid in nature, as it involves the action of “crossing-over” and the need to actively engage with the *motu* [inherited/established norms] that help inform and sustain the *faiifeau* identity. Ultimately, my “*sōsopo le vā-sā*” methodology is not only necessary and pertinent because of my *faiifeau fa’avalevalea* hermeneutic and its contours, but it is also relevant because it addresses the reality of the *faiifeau* identity within the CCCSANZ. Most importantly, it contains implications for the realisation of a new *faiifeau* identity that is both contextually relevant and Trinitarian at heart. Thus, by the end of this chapter, there will be a need to understand in more detail what is meant by the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ in relation to the *faiifeau* identity, and his relationships with his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*.

2.1. The *vā-tapuia* and to *tausi le vā-tapuia*

The fact that many Samoan scholars, have sought to define the *vā-tapuia*, speaks volumes about its fundamental importance and pervasiveness in understanding how Samoans maintain relationships through their unique way of life, expressed through the *fa’aSamoa*. This is

because as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference, the *vā-tapuia* is not only a theoretical framework, or underpinning philosophy, even though to understand its pervasiveness there must be an intellectual engagement of some sort to understand it. But, the *vā-tapuia*, and the desire to maintain and uphold it or to *tausi le vā-tapuia* is a ‘lived/living’ reality that is nuanced and idiosyncratic to the interpretation of the Samoans in any particular *siosiomaga* in which they exist. Therefore, there is value in appreciating differing but complimentary definitions that will shed light on this fact, and will in-turn provide the backdrop for the need to address the uniqueness of the experience of the *faiifeau* identity in the CCCSANZ, by providing a nuanced interpretation and understanding I call the *vā-sā*.

2.1.1. Aiono F. Le Tagaloa – A Traditional Samoan View

As expressed in the introduction of this chapter, the pervasiveness of the *vā-tapuia* for Samoans and the *fa’aSamoa* cannot be understated. This aspect is captured through the definition provided by one of Samoa’s first academics, the late Aiono F. Le Tagaloa,

There is the *va-tapuia* between brother and sister (the *feagaiga* relationship, the equivalent to a ‘sacred covenant’), the *va-tapuia* between the parent (especially father/mother) and offspring; there is the *va-tapuia* between male and female, there is the *va-tapuia* between host and guest, there is the *va-tapuia* between *matai*;...there is the *va-tapuia* between man and his environment – sea and sky, flora and fauna; then there is the *va-tapuia* between the created and the Creator.⁵⁵

As can be seen here in Le Tagaloa’s clear definition of the *va-tapuia*, there is a promotion of the sacredness of all things, animate or inanimate in the Samoan understanding. Her definition is also all-encompassing. Le Tagaloa begins her explanation, by sharing her

⁵⁵ Personal communication from Aiono F.L.e Tagaloa as cited in, Leanne Clayton, "Patterns and Motifs in the Va: A Samoan Concept of a Space Between" (Masters of Arts and Design, Auckland University of Technology, 2007).

understanding of how the *vā-tapuia* should be understood in the *feagaiga* relationship between a brother and his sister. It is a “sacred covenant,” as noted by Leanne Clayton, and despite not providing any further explanation as to exactly what is meant by “sacred,” there is an impression given that along with the *vā-tapuia* between “father/mother” and offspring, the “sacred” aspect of both covenants involve the maintaining of peace, harmony and right relationships within the Samoan *aiga*, the basic unit of organization within Samoan society. As later Samoan scholars would also concur, this relationship binds a brother and sister in a reciprocating relationship of respect and honour.⁵⁶ For example, the brother will tend to, look after, and guard his sister and her needs with his very life and livelihood, and the sister in return occupies a prominent place of veto in certain family discussions, but can also trust in the physical, social and moral protection of her honour and life, provided to her by brother.

This understanding of the *feagaiga* relationship has been superimposed over the relationship between the CCCSANZ, whereas the *faiifeau* is recognised as the “sister” in his relationship with the *au-lotu*, through the using of the title, *Fa’afeagaiga* [Covenanted One/One who we are in covenant with]. Such a seamless transition to an application within the church has seen this particular title evolve as a very popular way of addressing the *faiifeau* identity, because of its cultural roots, making the relationship easy to understand and identify with. However, as will be discussed further when a closer look will be taken at the impact of these titles, models, or Samoan indigenous/cultural references, the danger with identifying the *faiifeau* identity of

⁵⁶ Michiko Ete-Lima, "A Theology of the Feagaiga: A Samoan Theology of God," in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania*, eds. Lydia Johnson and Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono (Suva: South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and Institute of Pacific Studies, 2003), 24-31; Morgan A. Tuimaleali'ifano, *Samoans in Fiji: Migration, Identity and Communication* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, Fiji, Tonga, and Western Samoa Extension Centres of the University of the South Pacific, 1990).

the CCCSANZ with the “sister” in the *feagai* relationship, is that, as already alluded to, the *au-lotu* then is placed in a position of servitude, where they must sacrifice everything for the honour and security of their *fai*feau. This reality runs in direct contradiction with a Trinitarian understanding of servitude, which calls for the roles to be reversed, by where the church instead is honoured, respected, and protected by their *fai*feau through everything they say and do in the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*.

Secondly, Le Tagaloa moves from the significance of the *vā-tapuia* in the *aiga* to understanding wider relations within the *aiga potopoto* [extended family], the relationship between hosts and their guests, and ultimately, Samoans interactions with their environment and the Creator. All these references highlight different *siosiomaga* in which according to Le Tagaloa the *vā-tapuia* holds a central place of importance. By association, we are also implicitly encouraged to understand that they are all “sacred” relationships. In other words, relationships that involve the maintenance of what I deem as *motu* which preserve and attest to a particular way of understanding relationships within the corpus of *fa’*aSamoa. Therefore, such an inference carries in my estimation, a strong indication that whatever behavior is deemed acceptable against the tenets of the *vā-tapuia* relational ethic, they are to be maintained and continually observed, as long as it is deemed relevant and meaningful by Samoans who observe it. In this way, Le Tagaloa’s definition encourages the uncritical acceptance of the *vā-tapuia* in the name of cultural consistency and coherency of tradition, something which becomes problematic for the *fai*feau identity in the CCCSANZ, when the critique of hegemonic relationships is necessary in order to remain faithful to the Gospel, and the relational nature of the Triune God.

2.1.2. Albert Wendt – A Diasporic Samoan Understanding

As a Samoan writing from the perspective of the Samoan diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand, Albert Wendt is also pioneering in the sense of providing a scholarly perspective, in which his topic of interest may not have been explicitly a concern for the *Va*, but as Wendt illuminates on his perspectives on the *tatau*, Wendt sees it necessary to define the *Va* also.⁵⁷ Indeed, the notion of *Va* that Albert Wendt describes is one of the earliest descriptions published by any Samoan scholar,

Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of the *Va* or *Wa* in Maori and Japanese. *Va* is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change...⁵⁸

In Wendt's definition of *Va*, we are immediately drawn into the meaningful nature of the "space that relates." The *Va* actually gives meaning to the relationship that may exist between "separate entities or things." In other words, the existence of the *Va* and an understanding and knowledge of the reality of the *Va*, becomes the key focal point for any relationship between people. In fact, one can clearly see too, that according to Wendt's definition, the *Va* is the most important element in any relationship that may exist for Samoans. Wendt's explicit reference to "relationships/the contexts" also highlights the need to understand that the *Va* is not only to be understood as signifying a physical space, but also and just as important, it opens the possibility of the *Va* representing a philosophical,

⁵⁷ *tatau* – body tattoo of Samoans that cover most of the lower part of the body. Also known colloquially as the *pe'a* or more ceremonially as the *malofie*.

⁵⁸ Albert Wendt's definition: Wendt, *Afterword: Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body*, 399-412. Wendt chooses to write the *Va* in initialised capitals, but for ease of understanding and to avoid any confusion, I maintain the lower case type that is presented throughout this thesis.

metaphorical, and/or spiritual space. This possibility is important for the *fai'feau* identity in the CCCSANZ, because it points to the centrality of maintaining relationships that are contextually relevant, or rather, relationships with his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*, that reflect the life-affirming, and other-oriented nature of the Trinity.

Wendt also reinforces the need to be open to the changing of relationships and contexts in regards to retaining an understanding of the *Va*. As an academic, who resides in diaspora, he is acutely aware of the dynamics behind the differences between a communally based culture and one that encourages the maintenance of individualistic tendencies. He alludes to the holding together of a “Unity-that-is-All”, or “the space that is context,” and almost by default allows a definition for *Va*, that depends entirely on its own reality or value as a “spatial reality.” However, the ongoing activity of cherishing, nurturing and caring for the *Va*, or the relationships sustained within the *Va*, is the driving mechanism which also provides space for the *Va* itself to exist and survive. This is why in order to critique the *vā-tapuia* as stated by Wendt, we must *sosōpo le vā-tapuia* because of the entrenched nature of any corresponding behaviour that is encouraged through what he has clearly described above as a critical element of the *Va*.

Furthermore, in his article, Wendt continues to see the significance of how the meaning of Samoan words are changed with the addition of *Va*, as either a suffix or prefix, giving further evidence of a sacred belief in its definition, and proof of its intrinsic meaning encased in everyday common usage. Words like *manava* [stomach] *vasa* [ocean] and *vanimonimo* [space/atmosphere around the Earth] as portrayed by Wendt show that the *va* is not a space of

nothingness, but in fact, naming the *Va* as such qualifies the space itself.⁵⁹ Despite his creative renderings, Wendt believes that much of what is considered indigenous and post-colonial are actually colonial constructs, in which the Church has been a contributor. Wendt is not explicit, on exactly which church, or whether he is referring to the Christian Church in general, but his allusion supports the fact, that within the Samoan Church, or in this case, the CCCSANZ, a nuanced interpretation and observance of the *vā-tapuia* exists with a degree of uncritical acceptance.

As intimated earlier, it can also be appreciated through Wendt's rendering of the *Va* that the *vā-tapuia* is simply known as the *Va*.⁶⁰ By not qualifying or adding a descriptor to the *Va*, one immediately alludes to the intrinsic nature and importance of the *vā-tapuia* to the Samoan ethos or worldview, as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference. Also, by not adding *tapuia*, an assumption arises that the *Va*, does not need to be qualified or explained.⁶¹ Such a shortened usage can also be considered an assumption that all Samoans share an accepted definition and view of its significance, which again highlights the need to provide a nuanced interpretation, of how it is perceived and upheld, by the *faiifeau* and the Samoans in the CCCSANZ for the purpose of this research. This is due to the fact that common usage is not necessarily an indication that there is a shared and accepted definition amongst Samoans

⁵⁹ Ibid. *manava* – stomach, but lit. *mana* – power and *va* – space; *vasa* – ocean, but lit. *va* – space and *sa* – sacred/forbidden; *vanimonimo* – atmosphere around the Earth, but lit. *va* – space and *nimonimo* – that appears and disappear.

⁶⁰ This can also be seen in the writing of another Samoan scholar in diaspora in Misi Pouena Tagaloa, "Tafesilafa'i : Towards a Samoan Epistemology in the Diaspora / by Misi Pouena Tagaloa" Originally presented as the author's Ph.D thesis--Claremont School of Theology, 2008); Wendt, *Afterword: Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body*, 399-412.

⁶¹ *tapuia* – lit. that which is sacred, consecrated, and/or holy.

living in different *siosiomaga* around the world. Furthermore, by nature, for any Samoan indigenous/cultural reference, aspects of *siosiomaga*, the environment, time and spatial categories always play a key role in the formulation of its definition, understanding and eventual application.⁶²

2.1.3. Misi Pouena Tagaloa – A Diasporic Samoan Perspective from the United States of America

Another insightful diasporic perspective, this time from the USA, is that of Misi Pouena Tagaloa. As already mentioned, like Wendt, Tagaloa does not see the need to qualify the *va* with a suffix. Tagaloa is particularly direct when he confirms the underpinning ethos that he believes Samoan relationships are mediated through in the United States, by alluding to the fact that the “Samoan worldview can be summed up in one word...the *Va!*”⁶³ Similar to the previous scholars already mentioned, Tagaloa was born and raised in Samoa, but goes to great lengths to explain his personal narrative as a backdrop to his research. However, unlike Wendt, Tagaloa’s father, was a *faiifeau* of the CCCS in Samoa, and not only served as a Lecturer in Malua, but also as a *faiifeau* in the *feau* and *galuega* of the CCCS. In this respect, Tagaloa’s views are insightful for this research, because they also reflect his experiences of the *vā-tapuia* within the *siosiomaga* of the *au-lotu*, in which his parents served.

⁶² Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi, "Bio-Ethics and the Samoan Indigenous Reference," in *Su'Esu'E Manogi: In Search of Fragrance and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau M. Sualii-Sauni and others (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008), 173-188.

⁶³ Tagaloa, *Tafesilafa'i : Towards a Samoan Epistemology in the Diaspora / by Misi Pouena Tagaloa* 84.

It is this lucid knowledge, and reflective experience that Tagaloa brings to his engagement of the *va*. Tagaloa also goes on to state that the “...*va* is a multifaceted term fraught with pluriformity and multiple meanings...”⁶⁴ Tagaloa’s definition is crucial in revealing what is also an underpinning belief of this research. Any definition of the *va* is indelibly nuanced, contentious, and ultimately dependent upon one’s *siosiomaga*, as well as one’s purposes for providing such a definition. In other words, to define the *va* or *vā-tapuia* is to contribute to this plethora of possibilities, as alluded to by Aiono Tagaloa, and referenced by Wendt, who themselves have clearly portrayed slightly different aspects, but complimentary interpretations of the *vā-tapuia*, due to their own unique vantage points, personal experiences and *siosiomaga*.

Furthermore, Tagaloa’s insistence to highlight the “pluriformity” of “possible meanings” of the *vā-tapuia*, reveal that the experience of the *vā-tapuia* in Samoan diasporic communities inevitably takes up a ‘life’ of its own. Instead, of being closed off, and static as first suggested, we see that Tagaloa’s definition from his experiences in the USA invite Samoans in different *siosiomaga* to take hold of such a pervasive ethos and be encouraged that it has potential to still remain relevant, potent and meaningful for Samoans, even if the country they dwell in is as diverse, and multi-layered, and pluralistic as that of the USA. In other words, Tagaloa’s definition is the most radical of the three we have investigated, as he sees potential for the *vā-tapuia* to be modified and transformed according to the needs of the Samoans to which it will serve. To Tagaloa, Samoans need not be arrested to an inherited view,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

understanding or interpretation of the *vā-tapuia*, especially if it encourages behaviour that is irrelevant for these contemporary times.

Therefore, for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, the *vā-tapuia* and the desire to maintain its established/inherited norms as expressed through the notion of *tausi le vā-tapuia* must not encourage such potential to be abused, corrupted and used for personal status and gain.

Despite tendencies of the *vā-tapuia* that have already been expressed that may tend to expose an ideological stance that does not embrace critique or change, but rather places an emphasis on maintaining the status quo, in the name of cultural competency, consistency and coherency, we must *sosōpo* and “cross-over” in order to continue to breathe new life into the *vā-tapuia*. If understood correctly against the backdrop and *siosiomaga* of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, a nuanced interpretation and practise of the *vā-tapuia* holds great potential for maintaining contextual relevance, and faithfulness to the Gospel and a Triune God, who desires to relate to us through “spaces” of reciprocating relationship and mutual fellowship of love and care.

2.1.4. An appreciation and critique of the *va-tapuia* in the secular realm – Improving Pasifika Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

As already stated, Melani Anae’s work has been instrumental in raising the awareness surrounding the reality of the *va-tapuia* and how it has impacted on the relationships that Samoans have forged and upheld with each other in Aotearoa New Zealand. Such research has also been presented to government policy makers in an effort to inform and educate them of such a reality. Anae, along with other scholars of Pasifika descent, prefer the notion of “*teu le va*” when they address the issues facing Pasifika education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Their approach is one of a “collective” that seeks to generate knowledge with the end goal of achieving better success rates for Pasifika education.

They emphasise the “importance of relationships” and the “context behind” Pasifika people to ensure better policy making. In their opinion, to “*teu le va*” for the sake of Pasifika educational outcomes will enrich policy making because it acts on the research process. Essentially, *teu le va* involves identifying and understanding the *va* or ‘spaces’ between different stakeholders in Pasifika education research and development. Developing, cultivating and maintaining relationships consistent with the principles and understandings that underpin the widely shared Pasifika concept of *va* and to *teu le va* is advocated. This will strengthen opportunities for knowledge transfer across these spaces. They posit also six practices that *teu le va* would encourage ultimately benefiting Pasifika outcomes,⁶⁵

Table. 1. – Framework of *teu le va*

| |
|---|
| 1. Engage with stakeholders in Pasifika education research |
| 2. Collaborate in setting the research framework |
| 3. Create a coordinated and collaborative approach to Pasifika education research and policy-making |
| 4. Grow knowledge through a cumulative approach to research |
| 5. Understand the kinds of knowledge used in Pasifika education research and policy-making |
| 6. Engage with other knowledge brokers |

⁶⁵ Airini et al., “*Teu le Va*” – Relationships Across Research and Policy in Pasifika Education: A Collective Approach to Knowledge Generation and Policy Development for Action Towards Pasifika Education Success, (Wellington: Ministry of Education Research Division, Auckland Uniservices, 2010), 2ff.

Anae and her colleagues display their cultural awareness and sensitivity to the ‘lived/living’ realities in which Pasifika people in Aotearoa New Zealand uphold their relationships with each other. As can be appreciated such knowledge is critical in order to understand Pasifika from their current worldviews, in order to tailor government policy to ensure their success. However, such a secular appreciation masks the conservative and constrictive nature of the relationships shared between people, and in this case, the Samoans of the CCCSANZ. It is all very well to identify the “importance of relationships” and the “context behind” the people, but when those relationships are hegemonic, and when the context is not life-affirming and accepting of dissonance and difference, then there is very little possibility for change and transformation.

The data shared by Anae and her colleagues reveals the rather ‘romanticised’ acceptance of the *va-tapuia* by Samoans through the activity of “*teu le va*”, without fully acknowledging its limitations for any new life and growth for those who want to challenge the status quo. In short, there is little consideration for the potential of the *va-tapuia* to create an actual ‘gap/s’, division/s, or barrier/s in which meaningful interaction is impeded from taking place, and where hierarchical and imbalanced relationships become the norm.

2.2. George Pratt – Towards an understanding of the *vā-tapuia* as *vā-sā*

George Pratt, a missionary of the London Missionary Society who served in Samoa in the 19th century produced a Dictionary of the Samoan Language. The comprehensive nature in which Pratt set about to present the Samoan language in all its intricacies and nuances, as

well as the fact that the first edition was produced in 1862, accurately reflects the nuanced understandings of Samoan terms created and used by the missionaries in their rendering of the Samoan Bible and early Samoan theological literature. As a direct descendant of these pioneering missionary advancements, the CCCSANZ and the Samoan language which permeates its *feau* and *galuega*, can only be correctly understood against this project. In other words, Pratt's Dictionary remains the authoritative guide as to how the Samoan language was understood and continues to be propagated in the church. Therefore, in order to move towards a nuanced understanding and definition of the *vā-tapuia* as the *vā-sā* in the CCCSANZ, we must consider closely Pratt's work.

Pratt defines the word *va* with three possible definitions. First, as “a space between”, and proceeds to elucidate this definition by referring to the “space” that may exist between two people “*O lō lā va*” [The space between them].⁶⁶ Second, he notes that *va* can also be used to describe noise, and finally *va* can also be understood as a verb meaning “to rival.” Thus, we can appreciate through Pratt's definitions of the word *va*, that fundamentally to Pratt, the *va* points to and describes a “space” of separation, denoting a distance, gap or tension that needs to be maintained between two people, or rivals. The sense of a space that is indeed relational and unifying as proposed by Samoan scholars like Aiono, Wendt, and Tagaloa, is lost on Pratt. He is brutally clear that the *va* first and foremost denotes separation, and in that sense, a degree of demarcation and honouring of distance. As has already been intimated, the importance of Pratt's definition must not be underestimated. This is because it portrays the representative usage of the term in which the missionaries of the LMS had grown accustomed

⁶⁶ Pratt., 356

to in their work and interactions with Samoans. Therefore, Pratt's definition is borne not out of speculation, but out of the interactions of his extensive work as a missionary, translator and scholar of the Samoan language and most definitively provides an insight into the seeds of a nuanced interpretation which is still held by the CCCSANZ of today.

Furthermore, Pratt's definition for *tapu* as, "to make sacred," and "to place under restriction" reveals an insight that may also have exposed a subjectivity and bias on the part of Pratt as a LMS missionary. With clarity, Pratt advocates that *tapu* is something that has to be constructed and created, and is therefore not to be seen as an intrinsic value in itself.⁶⁷ In this respect, Pratt identifies the fact that at the heart of understanding the Samoan cultural/indigenous reference of *tapu*, is an acknowledgment that it is a notion that can be seen as the privilege of the powerful, or an inherited right for those who are able to determine what exactly in Samoan society can be made "sacred" and placed under "restriction." When considered in relation to the privileged *fai'feau* identity in the CCCSANZ, the potential for how understanding *tapu* in this way can provide exclusive access to unbridled privilege, status and power in relation to his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*, become highly probable with corruptible tendencies. So in the same way as *va* is perceived differently but similarly by the Samoan scholars already discussed, the notion of sacredness as defined by Pratt, runs in stark contrast with the notions of relationality, and objectives of maintaining peace and harmony which clearly inform the Samoan views of the *vā-tapuia*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 322.

After investigating Pratt's contributions to defining the *vā-tapuia* we are drawn to appreciate that one of the lasting legacies of the LMS missionary enterprises in Samoa, and now the CCCSANZ is the encouragement of the elevation of the *faiifeau* identity to a position of unapproachability and infallibility. For it is clear from Pratt's perspectives, which we must remember were gleaned at the very beginning of the LMS mission, that to *tausi le vā-tapuia* has always been an activity of construction in relation to the maintaining and upholding of separation and division, as it is revealed through the pre-conceived, established/inherited notions of sacredness and restriction. In other words, the underpinning ethos which governs the *fa'aSamoa* and the behavior of *fa'aāloālo* in relation to the *faiifeau* identity falls short of encouraging an ethic of mutual reciprocity, love and care. Instead, it encourages the propagation of an understanding of the *vā-tapuia* that seeks to maintain separation and division between those who lead the church, and those who are not in positions of power.

Sadly, it can also be seen as a possible motivation for why many may choose the path of wanting to become a *faiifeau*, because of the obvious benefits that lie behind setting the agenda of what exactly can be classed as "sacred" or "restricted" in relation to his *aiga*, *aulotu* and *tagata lautele!* Therefore, in order for us to *sosopo le vā-tapuia* for the sake of critical engagement, and in the hope of realizing a contextually sensitive and Gospel-oriented and Trinitarian natured *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ, there needs to be a redefining of the *vā-tapuia* that not only takes into consideration both the relational and positive elements imagined and promoted by the Samoan scholars, but also the negative elements and corruptible tendencies that Pratt's definition has revealed. This leads us to a definition of what I term, the *vā-sā*.

2.3. The *vā-sā* that privileges the *faiifeau* identity of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand

The term *vasa* as already intimated earlier in this thesis is the Samoan word for ocean. This foundational meaning is helpful in illuminating the first dimensions of my nuanced definition. That is, just like the ocean is a ‘space’ full of life, richness, wealth and abundance in the form of water, marine life, and natural minerals and resources, so too must the *vā-sā* in the CCCSANZ be understood as a life-giving and life-affirming ‘space’ which is not only innately fluid, dynamic and full of creative energy and power, but it can also be unpredictable, and sometimes very merciless in its treatment of the *motu* which it separates. For just as the ‘ocean’ can be enjoyed as a treasure of many of God’s natural gifts of life, we must never forget that it has also claimed many victims who have failed to negotiate it safely, or fallen victim to its ferocity and voracious nature. Again, these initial dimensions for a definition of *vā-sā* highlight that such a ‘space’ is one that not only separates *motu*, but is a ‘space’ that is embodied and thus is potentially hazardous to them and its inhabitants. In that respect the *vā-sā* is a ‘space’ that requires respect, knowledge, experience, confidence and courage to navigate, or in our case, to *sosopo* or “cross-over” it successfully.

Pratt’s definition here is also helpful, as he specifically states that the term *vasa* especially denotes the “space between two distant points of a journey, along an iron-bound coast, or between two islands.”⁶⁸ So immediately Pratt draws us to the sense of how the term *vasa* is to be used. As Pratt is equally aware, Samoans already have a word for the “sea” which is

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 361.

sami.⁶⁹ But *vasa* points to a “space” which actually produces or facilitates a “journey.” This “journey” could either be between “two distant points...along an iron-bound coast, or between two islands.” In other words, the *vasa* itself is a “space” that actually accommodates and facilitates for the “crossing-over” or the “crossing-between” or “crossing-through-the - *vasa*” of two distant points, or more specifically, for the purposes of this research, the *motu* which underpin and uphold the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. It is a “space” that allows for the flow of communication, ideas, dialogue and the sharing of life and resources between *motu*. In this way, the *vasa* provides the vital, necessary and key elements in which a life-affirming and life-empowering exchange can be achieved between the *motu*, through the action or activity of *sosopo le vā-sā*.

Finally, the nuanced definition of the *vā-tapuia* as the *vā-sā* can be understood through an appreciation of Pratt’s definition of the word *sā*. The LMS missionary is very clear that *sā* is most accurately understood as meaning “forbidden” or “prohibited.”⁷⁰ This is because, as Pratt continues, the word *sā* had formerly been used to mean “sacred” and “holy” and in many ways is still identified as such. However, in the CCCSANZ, it is this former understanding that appears to have been instilled from early on, as reflected by the naming of Sunday as *Aso Sā* and the addressing of the church building or chapel as the *Fale Sā*. Here the sense of sacredness and holiness associated with Sunday, and the house of worship of God needs little explanation.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 261.

Despite this obvious connection, the “forbidden” or “prohibited” nature of these two references can also be seen if we are to consider that Samoans ever since the arrival of the LMS missionaries, Samoans of the CCCS and the CCCSANZ have honoured Sunday as the day of rest from everyday chores, work and leisure. For example, Sunday *umu* [stone-ovens] are all to be prepared on the Saturday. It is considered work, when one seeks to prepare as well as cook their food on the *umu* on Sunday morning. However, changes in trading laws and the continuing influence of the Tourist industry and its objectives have seen Samoans both in Samoa and in diaspora embrace working on Sundays, and treating Sunday as just another day of the week. But those who have prevailing attitudes which hearken back to the strict observance of Sunday as a rest day, continue to make their presence felt, as such religiosity has been aligned with success, humility and greatness made popular and given much public exposure through the strict “no-play on Sunday’s” policy of All Blacks legend, and Samoan, Sir Michael Jones.

The *Fale Sā* also carries connotations of been “forbidden” or “prohibited” in the sense of the inherited form of ‘silent worship’ that characterises and identifies the worship of the CCCS in Samoa, and the CCCSANZ. The ideal of ‘silent worship’ resonates with the pre-Christian religious values and reality of Samoa, where worship was done in a very solemn and devout way, in order to allow the god of the family the ‘space’ to manifest and transmit any revelation or message to the families who were ‘silently’ waiting with eager and anticipatory hearts of devotion. The late Lalomilo Kamu writes extensively concerning this reality, and through the use of collected evidence gathered from missionary experiences, Kamu advocates for such a style of worship, as being a unique and genuine way of Samoan worship.

Even the reference to the Bible or the Scriptures as the *Tusi Sā* captures the sense which Pratt alludes to, because the Holy Bible is not so much a book that is “forbidden” or “prohibited” even though it can be viewed as a book of law, and commandments according to the will of God. But here, we appreciate, that the Samoan translation and interpretation of the words “sacred” and “holy” as adequate and accepted descriptors for the word *sā* accurately captures the fact that the Bible is Holy because its pages point to the Holy God of Creation and of all things, who as the Triune God, desires to live in fellowship, communion, and reciprocating love, with His Creation, and especially humankind, who He created in His image. The emphasis here shifts to an understanding that points to a relationship with the Triune God of the Christian faith and the Bible which is based on a positive sense of what it means to honour and respect a ‘space’ that is both “sacred” and “holy.”

In summary, we can appreciate how the *vā-sā* can be viewed both as a ‘space’ that potentially can separate people and uphold a level of demarcation between them, along the lines of defining that ‘space’ as one that forbids or prohibits any level of meaningful interaction and communication. However, we have also identified the strands of the *vā-sā* that provide us with the option of viewing it as an embodied ‘space’ that is dynamic, evolving and life-centred. This perspective does not deny its inherent sacredness because any ‘space’ that brings forth new life, and accommodates for the continuing preservation of life points back to the existence and presence of the Triune God that sustains His Creation as He continues to participate and maintain a presence in it. Rather, by appreciating the positive implications for relationship and communion between people that the *vā-sā* creates, opens up the possibility for a process which can sustain the critical openness of such an exchange. This is where the

sosopo le vā-sā becomes necessary and pertinent due to its innate relevance to maintaining the positive aspects and vitality of the *vā-sā*

2.5. “*Ioē, o a’u o le faifeau fa’avalevale, ou te sosōpo le va-sa!*” [“Yes! I am a *faifeau* who is challenging/questioning the established norms! I am crossing over the holy/sacred/forbidden spaces that separate us!”] - A Samoan Methodology for Research

As this chapter has unfolded, I have defined the underpinning reality of the *vā-tapuia* that is critical in understanding how relationships are sustained and maintained between Samoans and by association, the communities or societies in which they choose to live. A critical engagement with the *vā-tapuia* has revealed the need to provide a nuanced interpretation and understanding for the *faifeau* of the CCCSANZ and the relationships that are encouraged and exist between him and his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*. This definition has been constructed along the lines of the inherited understandings that are reflected in Pratt’s definitions of the words *vā* and *sā*.

Such an understanding I argue, is a reflection of how the LMS missionaries saw the applicability of such indigenous/cultural references, and their subsequent place in the church. What has been revealed is that if we understand the *vā-tapuia* as the *vā-sā* within the CCCSANZ, and in relation to the *faifeau* identity, then the potential for the elevation of the *faifeau* to a hegemonic position of unapproachability and infallibility becomes possible. However, defining the ‘space/s’ that separate the *faifeau* identity from his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and

tagata lautele as the *vā-sā* if critically appreciated, also offers up the possibilities for an understanding that points to the honouring and observance of such a ‘space/s’ as one that is life-affirming, life-centered, dynamic, evolving, and embracing of engagement, dialogue and openness consistent with its innate characteristic as an embodied ocean which exists for the journeying between two separated *motu*.

This leads us to the methodology with which this thesis has been conducted, which is a positive declaration, that as a *faiifeau fa’avalevaleda*, I will *sosopo le vā-sā* that separates me of the *faiifeau* identity from our *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*. In this respect, to *sosopo le vā-sā* is to embark upon the journey of bringing together the separated *motu* or the uncritically accepted inherited/established norms that make up the current *faiifeau* identity, which has seen it elevated to a place of unapproachability and infallibility. Such a position is in need of critical engagement, and this is an integral part of the mechanisms behind why the *sosopo le vā-sā* is necessary. To encroach or breach such a ‘space/s’ may be seen to taking upon a position of insensitivity and may also be viewed as an act of violence, whereby I am challenging Samoan cultural/indigenous references and understandings that are central and crucial to the *fa’aSamoa* and its uniqueness.

However, this criticism fails to appreciate that at the heart of the *sosopo le vā-sā* methodology is an acknowledgement that the *vā-sā* is not so much a space that is concretised and static, but is more so a living entity, that is embodied, dynamic and life-affirming that exists for continual journeying between two separated *motu*, for the purposes of sustaining the sacredness of the life that is central to its existence. In this way, the *vā-sā* in many ways, symbolizes and promotes the dynamism and openness of life within the Triune God which is

both outward moving, in always seeking the betterment of the ‘other’ and those in need, but is also unpredictable in its vitality and embodied nature.

As an approach to research, or research methodology, to *sosopo le vā-sā* acknowledges the need to provide a methodology that identifies with the *faiifeau* identity in relation to its reality as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference. Not only does it satisfy this need, but it also resonates with the hermeneutic with which this research has been established. For only a *faiifeau fa’avalevaleda* can *sosopo le vā-sā* because to challenge and question the established/inherited norms of the *faiifeau* identity that exist within the CCCSANZ is to promote the notion that one knows better, or has acquired the ability to see things that even the most respected members of the CCCSANZ have not been able to see!

Such a methodology then comes therefore with the awareness that such a journey ultimately may be one that others may not want to take, because they are satisfied and content with keeping the status quo, and maintaining and sustaining the *vā-sā* as a space of separation and demarcation. However, the *feau* and the *galuega* of the Triune God and the Christian Gospel calls us to do otherwise. For ultimately, at the heart and centre of the *sosopo le vā-sā* is the need to live and proclaim the Gospel as a *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, in a way that reflects the embodied and incarnational reality and life of the Triune God, whom invites us to participate, fellowship and commune with Him in this way and with others, despite the fallen and fractured nature of the world that surrounds us.

2.6. Summary

This chapter sought to explicate the methodology of how being a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea* allows me to *sosopo le va-tapuia* for the purpose of researching the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. Definitions were given for the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of *va-tapuia*, that was gleaned from the learned views of Samoan scholars both in Samoa and abroad, who provided differing but complimentary perspectives. It was then identified that in order to engage critically for the purpose of bringing forth a new identity of *faiifeau* for the CCCSANZ, there was a need for a nuanced understanding and interpretation, which produced the understanding of the *vā-tapuia* as the *vā-sā*. As a result of this interpretation, the birth of my Samoan methodology of research, to *sosopo le vā-sā* was identified as the approach which resonated with my Samoan hermeneutic as a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea*, and the implications for a new *faiifeau* identity based on the dynamism, and life-affirming relational nature of the Triune God of the Christian faith and Church. It is now the task of the following chapter to critically engage with the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, in relation to his relevance to his *siosiomaga*. This is the affirmation of the need of such an identity to be contextually relevant and sensitive to the needs of his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*, as he serves the *feau* and the *galuega* of the Triune God in the CCCSANZ.

**CHAPTER THREE: “E TE TAUTALAITIITI?” [“ARE YOU
BEING CHEEKY?”] - THE NECESSITY FOR THE SERIOUS
CONSIDERATION OF THE *SIOSIOMAGA* AND
CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE AND SENSITIVITY FOR THE
FAIFEAU IDENTITY OF THE CCCSANZ**

3.0. Introduction

To claim to know what is best for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ is to be faced with the question, “*E te tautalaitiiti?*” In light of this challenge, this chapter promotes the necessity for the serious consideration of the *siosiomaga* or changing contemporary context/s and the primal importance of contextual relevance and contextual sensitivity for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. It will be argued that such a necessity is paramount because of the inherent contextual nature of theology, and the need to be sensitive to the contours of *siosiomaga*, in relation to the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, and the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*, to which he has been called. Indeed, this chapter reinforces the fundamental notion that all theology is contextual.

In this respect, Pacific theologians have embraced the offerings of contextual theology because it has reinforced the viability of local and indigenous resources, their experiences and cultures, to the articulation and expression of their own particular theological perspectives. Thus, in the case of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, we must also be encouraged to

engage in theological thinking of a dialogical nature, by where its historical past and cultural roots are brought into conversation with its present reality, for the purpose of realizing a relevant and sensitive *faiifeau* identity. This by definition requires the need to take seriously the *siosiomaga* of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. Therefore, this chapter intimates and foreshadows a belief in the necessity for a correct imaging or understanding of the Christian God, as Triune, in order to model both a *faiifeau* identity that is both contextually relevant and reflective of the Christian Gospel, by which the *faiifeau* is to fulfill his calling in the *feau* and the *galuega o le Atua*. Indeed, this chapter will show that in many ways, I am being *tautalaitiiti*!

3.1. Establishing the relevance of understanding theology as being inherently contextual in nature

The notion that all theology is contextual validates the contemporary context/s of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ as a vital ingredient for theological reflection. However, this reality is one that is inherited and shaped by historical events and cultural experience, and so the two polarities must always be kept in tension. As Stephen Bevans contends,

Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression.⁷¹

Bevans highlights two things. First, that contextual theology is grounded both in the past and present experience/s of those seeking to articulate and express their particular theologies.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

And second, that contextual theology holds present-day experience alongside “scripture” and “tradition,” as being equally as important to the tasks of theology, especially in regards to the explicit articulation of theologies that are to be meaningful to the church or faith community in any particular context. This insight is particularly pertinent for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ because it calls for a serious consideration of its historical past, but also, and equally requires a commitment to the contemporary present of the situation that the *faiifeau* identity finds himself in the CCCSANZ. Therefore, only a *faiifeau* identity that considers both its historical origins in relation to its current predicament and relationships within its new context can truly be attentive and sensitive to the situation/s of the people of the CCCSANZ.

As previously stated, such a notion also recognises that people of any given context should actively and consciously utilize their local and in some cases, indigenous resources in order to articulate their theological thinking and expressions. In this regard, Schreiter prefers to use the term “culture” which for him holistically covers the “concrete context” in which the local church engages with the Gospel in order to be faithful in its witness. Schreiter goes further, and gives a warning that without a deep “sensitivity” to its cultural context, a church or local faith community can miss the incarnated nature of the Gospel, and its demands on the people to live out the Gospel in all its richness and diversity.⁷² This way of ‘doing theology’ where greater focus is placed on listening and being more attentive to the contemporary context/s of

⁷² Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 20-21.

a church is symptomatic of Schreiter's agenda of promoting contextual theologies as local theologies.⁷³

More recently, Schreiter's statement that, "Theology in a world shaped by the globalization finds itself between the global and local," announces the need to be aware of the different theologies that can be defined as "global theological flows," but also the assertion of local communities against these flows through certain cultural behavior, and an awareness that context in a globalized world can be defined as being "deterritorialized", "hypermultiplicated", and "hybridized."⁷⁴ To this extent, the words of one Pacific theologian, Jovili Meo, are extremely poignant, "Contextualisation cannot be avoided: it is necessary for doing mission and doing theology."⁷⁵ Such a practice as promoted by Bevans and Schreiter is a clear departure from the practice of theology that once dominated the Church, where the paternalistic tendencies of western-minded and constructed theology was taken as a given, and applied across all contexts, irrespective of their applicability to the local situations and realities of the people in their own context. To illustrate the need to be aware of this point, Kärkkäinen is particularly lucid,

⁷³ Ibid., 1-21.

⁷⁴ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 14-26. Schreiter categorises the theological movements of the modern era, i.e. Theologies of Feminism, Liberation, Ecology and Human Rights as "global theological flows", in a sense that they attempt to provide responses to issues within a global setting. Whereas in particular contexts, where the Gospel was introduced, "cultural logics" depict differing responses of indigenous communities to the Gospel, all in which contribute to a multi-valent understanding of context for this contemporary context. The multi-valent context to which Schreiter points to are prescriptive to ensure that theology engages both the "global theological flows" and the local realities which seek to articulate their own authentic theology.

⁷⁵ Jovili Meo, "How do we do Contextual Theology", *Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, Issue 27, (2002), 41.

...all theologies are contextual since they emerge out of and are shaped by their contexts. They are just differently contextual...whereas theology until the twentieth century did not acknowledge its contextuality, some current theological movements not only do that but also make the mindfulness of context a theological theme.⁷⁶

These “current theological movements” as Kärkkäinen states can clearly be seen to include the purposeful articulation of contextual theology that Bevans and Schreiter are calling for. For the people of the Pacific, where Christian theology was received through the enterprises of the 19th century Missionary Societies, such a realization it can be argued, has always been part and parcel of their awareness of discourse pertaining to the Divine, or Wholly Other. This fact can be appreciated through the ethnographic material that was written and gathered by the missionaries when they were confronted with Pacific islanders who already possessed complex systems of religious belief.⁷⁷ It can be understood therefore, that such a recognition of the contemporary context/s and its validity for theological expression is not new to the theologians of the Pacific.

In many ways, it is this prior familiarity with the practice of relating to the Divine and attempting to articulate that relationship that enabled Christianity to find common ground with the indigenous peoples of the Pacific. Therefore, the challenge for these contemporary times for any theologian of the Pacific is to endeavor to ‘do theology’ in light of the Gospel and articulate an authentic Pacific theology that celebrates not only their cultural heritage, but

⁷⁶ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, (Grand Rapids: Wm.B Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 4.

⁷⁷ An example of the complex religious systems that Samoans possessed prior to the Missionaries arrival can be appreciated through the work of, Fineaso T.S. Fa’alafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoan Methodism: 1828-1928*, (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 2005), 16-30.

also their resilience amidst the changing tides of change that have beset them, in the form of their theological articulations and expressions.

3.1.1. The validity of Pacific and Samoan perspectives in relation to contextual theology

As Paulo Koria makes clear, the advantages of allowing people to express their own theology on their terms is an imperative,

Contextual or indigenous theology is by definition oriented to the cultural context and existential circumstances of people living in a particular historical locality. A Pacific theology therefore is at liberty to utilize and appropriate all available cultural resources for expressing the message of the Gospel. What might these be? Pacific language(s) immediately comes to mind. Linguistic idioms, proverbial sayings, imagery, symbolism, metaphors and the like, are all viable means for communicating the substance of the Gospel message.⁷⁸

Koria continues in his article to mention the viability of oral traditions, customs, and philosophies amongst other indigenous resources that make up the “totality of human life” that according to Koria are all valid and necessary resources for the expression and articulation of the Christian faith from a Pacific perspective.⁷⁹ What must be appreciated here is the call to embrace not only the “cultural context” of the people but also the “existential circumstances” they find themselves in. This definition of contextual theology accurately depicts its innate advantage of trying to understand the historical past with a view of making sense of the contemporary situation and present situation. As a *faiifeau* of the

⁷⁸ Paulo Koria, “Moving Toward a Pacific Theology: Theologising With Concepts”, Pacific Journal of Theology Series II, No. 22 (1999), 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*,

CCCS, and former Lecturer of Malua, Korua embraces the freedom of expression, and the range of theological sources, that contextual or indigenous theology gives the people of the Pacific. You can almost sense in his writing that prior to this recognition, theology for the Pacific people had been in ‘shackles,’ tied to the traditions and interpretations of the missionaries who had brought the Gospel to the Pacific, and the subsequent theologies that built upon their initial contact. It is not an understatement to say that the liberating experience of articulating theology contextually is something that has been revolutionary to theological thinking for Pacific Theologians like Korua.

Another example of a theological project that looks to embrace the ‘unshackling’ of Pacific theology is that of Michiko Ete-lima, who as a *faletua* articulates a Samoan theology of God, through the lense of the *feagaiga*.⁸⁰ Ete-Lima reveals an apparent need for the revaluing of the present-day Samoan woman. Therefore, she proceeds to posit the *feagaiga* relationship as a pivotal concept for her Samoan theology. Calling for a greater awareness of this relationship, Ete-Lima projects a relational God “of all and for all.” By articulating her views through the lenses of *feagaiga*, she locates her contextual theology in the Samoan women and her everyday life. A strength of Ete-Lima’s “Samoan Theology of God” is that she enters the

⁸⁰ 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: The University of the South Pacific, 2003), 24. Ete-Lima offers more than one definition for *feagaiga* which reveals the vast applicability of the term to all covenantal relationships that Samoans may have with both living and non-living entities. However, she overlooks that it is now common for the *feagaiga* title to be used as a Samoan cultural reference that is imposed over all relationships that a Samoan male may have with any other Samoan female. In this respect, the use of the underpinning values of the *feagaiga* in forming the Samoan cultural reference *Fa’afeagaiga* in the CCCSANZ can be seen as a beginning of the usurping of this traditional usage and perspective.

hermeneutical process from the ‘world in front of the text’ or the ‘reader.’ The starting point of her approach in this sense is all-encompassing; as it relates to all Samoan women, regardless of their location, socio-economic status, or even prior knowledge of the relationship. In doing so, she highlights the shared experiences of Samoan women in general, including those of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In her analysis, Ete-Lima proceeds to present the significance of the *feagaiga* relationship in the context of everyday village life in Samoa. This method allows her to ground her theology in a setting where Christian principles and values are interwoven with traditional Samoan values and customs. Her acute cultural awareness is a feature, as she seeks parallel meanings in Samoan mythology.⁸¹ Ultimately, Ete-Lima critiques both the role and status of the brother and sister in this environment, superimposing these values to a possible relational theology of God. However, notably missing from her theological method is any engagement with scripture and church tradition.

Unlike Tofaeono who works closely with the Hebrew text of the First Testament in using the Samoan cultural reference of *aiga* to highlight the current ecological crises⁸² and Iutisone Salevao who likewise uses the Samoan cultural reference of *ele’ele/fanua* [land] against the Greek text of the Second Testament to promote and awareness of the reality of the Earth as a

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁸² Ama’amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga – the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Neuendettelsau: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Departments, 2000), 35-58

subject for theological discourse, Ete-Lima's method falls short of challenging the very patriarchal and hierarchical frameworks she desires to challenge.⁸³ Her approach clearly reveals a presumption of a homogeneous consistency, or perfect balance between the Gospel and Samoan culture. Such a presumption is an area which scholars like Lalomilo Kamu warn, is a pitfall that all Pacific theologians must be aware of.⁸⁴ In other words, Pacific theology must recognise that the Gospel was emphatically introduced into the *fa'a-Samoa*, and not a reality that was already in existence.⁸⁵ This commitment to the relevance of the contemporary context/s to Pacific and Samoan theology demands therefore that we establish a nuanced interpretation and understanding that reflects accurately the situation for the *fai'feau* identity of the CCCSANZ. This is why we move now to understand the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of *siosiomaga*.

3.2. Understanding *siosiomaga* as changing contemporary context/s

Siosiomaga is formed from taking the Samoan verb *si'o* [surround] and intensifying its meaning through repetition *si'osi'omia* [to surround], then finally making it a noun by adding

⁸³ Lutisone Salevao, "Burning the Land": An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6:7-8," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 221-23.

⁸⁴ Lalomilo Kamu, *Samoa Culture & Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 176-180.

⁸⁵ In contrast, other Samoan female scholars have chosen to be more explicit of scripture in their articulations of theology, see Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono, "A Reflection on Luke 10:38-42. Martha: Her Meneutic of His Story," in *Weavings: Doing Theology in Oceania*, ed. Lydia Johnson and Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono (Suva: The University of the South Pacific, 2003), Marie Ropeti, "A Biblical Basis for the Ordination of Women in the Pacific Churches," in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania*, ed. Lydia Johnson and Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono (Suva: The University of the South Pacific, 2003), 133-40.

the suffix *ga*.⁸⁶ Pratt uses the example of the verb *galue* [to work] and its transition to the nonu *galuega* [work] to make this point clear.⁸⁷ This common practice in the Samoan language can also be seen in the transition of the word *mafuta* [to fellowship] and *mafutaga* [fellowship], *malosi* [to be strong/powerful] and *malosiaga* [strength/power], *fiafia* [to be happy] and *fiafiaga* [a happy occasion] amongst many others. In the appreciation of such transitions, we must acknowledge that a choice here has been made not to utilise the *siosiomaga* which is also a Samoan term that is used to denote the physical surroundings of a particular location that may be in question.

Instead, I have chosen to use *siosiomaga* because of its popular meaning denoting the environment, and the implications for the valuing of the immediacy of place and location in relation to this meaning.⁸⁸ By doing so, we also maintain consistency and coherency with the nuanced interpretation and understanding of the underpinning ethos which governs the relationships and behaviour of the *faiifeau* identity within the *vā-sā*. *Siosiomaga* as environment draws direct parallels with the fluidity, dynamic and life-affirming nature of the *vā-sā*. Indeed, *siosiomaga* can be equally viewed as an overarching notion, which accommodates and facilitates for the positive appreciation of the *vā-sā* as has already been established in the previous chapter.

⁸⁶ Pratt., 275.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁸ In Samoa, the government department which administers and oversees issues concerning the environment is known as the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, which is translated as the *Matagaluega o le Siosiomaga ma Puna 'Oa*.

In other words, *siosiomaga* as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference must be understood as a relational and embodied term which promotes the need for the *fai feau* identity of the CCCSANZ to consider seriously the ‘environment’ in all its richness and dimensions. This ‘environment’ is one that demands that his theological identity and consequently the *feau* and the *galuega o le Atua*, must be birthed out of the soil in which the people of the CCCSANZ are placed and live in. It is a call to understand and negotiate a *siosiomaga* that calls for an incarnational, engaged and sensitive approach to the needs and struggles of his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*.

Understanding the changing contemporary context/s that beset the *fai feau* identity of the CCCSANZ as *siosiomaga*, requires the need to acknowledge the land, the history, customs and traditions of its indigenous people of the land, as well as the ever-changing surroundings and reality of where he is placed. Such an awareness and commitment carries the notion of responsibility and the need to be respectful and aware of these changes that will have both positive and negative impacts on the *feau* and the *galuega o le Atua*. Above all, *siosiomaga* is a wholistic and relational understanding which not only resonates with its Samoan and indigenous/cultural roots, but has potential to allow for the serious and critical appreciation of the CCCSANZ as it takes root in this country.

As a corrective to a static view of context/s, *siosiomaga* successfully bridges the generational gap that may exist between Samoan parents, those who migrated here as adults, and the *fai feau identity* and their children and descendants who consider and see Aotearoa New Zealand as their home. Ultimately, it ushers in and encourages the possibilities for a healthy and wholesome acceptance of dissonance and contrasting views as all sides are encouraged to

participate, dialogue, and share with a *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ that is as embodied and committed to maintaining harmonious and meaningful relationships, as the Gospel he preaches demands of him. In such a *siosiomaga*, to be *tautalaitiiti* will be embraced as an honest attempt at seeking answers and clarity of established/inherited norms of behaviour and belief. To embrace such a reality is a practice that must be encouraged, and may also hold the key for ensuring the greater lines of communication and deeper deposits of understanding and sensitivity are held between the generations of elders and those of whom they demand respect. These relationships begin for the *faiifeau* identity in his *aiga*, moves to his *au-lotu*, and finally *tagata lautele*. These are the contours and dimensions of the *siosiomaga* to which he is called to fulfill the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God. To understand these sometimes overlapping layers of relationships and responsibilities more closely will be the task of the next few sections of this chapter.

3.3. The contours of *siosiomaga* – *Aiga, Au-lotu, Tagata Lautele*

Now that we have established *siosiomaga* as the changing contemporary context/s with which the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ must seek to seriously engage with and consider both in terms of relationship and in regards to responsibility we must now proceed to elaborate further the contours of that *siosiomaga*. As stated in the initial chapter, the *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele* have been specifically identified in this research as the key spheres of contact and engagement which not only directly impact upon the *faiifeau* identity, but are themselves equally impacted and influenced through their interactions with the *faiifeau* identity. In that sense, they also are *motu*, in which exist in the *vā-sā* between them and the *faiifeau* identity

that we must proceed to *sosopo*, in order to critically engage, understand and bring forth new life and possibilities for future and transformative praxis. The following definitions will have implications for the following chapter's discussion around the need to correctly perceive and identify the Triune God who calls him to His *feau* and *galuega*.

3.3.1. *Aiga* – The primary level of relationship and responsibility

Samoans are born into an intricate sphere of relationships that revolve around the centrality of one's immediate and extended *aiga* [family]. Such a reality is reflected in the Samoan mode of living that is captured in the *mua gagana* [proverbial expression], "*O le tagata ma lona aiga; o le tagata ma lona faasinomaga.*" [A person and his family; a person and his inheritance/heritage]. Such an expression encapsulates and reveals the primary level of relationships for any Samoan and the expected responsibility expected to preserve and sustain one's inheritance or cultural heritage. This is because, in Samoa itself we are socially organised and oriented around our families and inheritance, which comprise of the *matai* [chiefly] titles and *fanua* [land] which intimately connect us to where we live within the *nu'u* villages, and the roles we are expected to uphold, in accordance with the ranking of one's *aiga* and *matai* in the *nu'u* structure of governance and authority.⁸⁹

In this respect, Samoans boast of the fact, that in their Samoan homeland, or landscape, all Samoans have *fanua* and an inheritance with which they can trace their ancestry and lineage.

⁸⁹ Fa'alafi is insightful in showing the relative consistency that can be drawn between the pre-Christian *nu'u* structure and today. He argues that Samoans has successfully weaved Christianity into its social organisation at this level of social and political life. See Fineaso T. S. Fa'alafi, *Carrying the Faith. Samoan Methodism: 1828-1928* (Apia: Piula Theological College, 2005), 17-30.

Such a reality has seen many Samoans who either migrated overseas or were born there, return to honour this responsibility and attempt to cultivate their inheritance by living in the *nu'u* setting. Apart from the urban capital of Apia, and its neighbouring areas which have seen the breakdown of traditional *nu'u* arrangements and life, Samoa's customs and traditions continue to be preserved and honoured in the *nu'u* on both of the main islands of Upolu and Savai'i, as well as the smaller inhabited islands of Apolima and Manono.

However, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Samoan *aiga* does not exist in such an established setting. There is no inheritance here for Samoans in the same sense that they have in Samoa, because even if a Samoan buys *fanua* here and establishes their *aiga*, they still must pay land rates to the local government and authorities. In contrast, *fanua* of *aiga* in Samoa is classed as customary land, and apart from paying for the usual utilities of power and water, *fanua* of *aiga*, largely remains beyond any government rates or levies. Samoan *aiga* do not need to pay the government for living on their own inherited *fanua*!⁹⁰ So immediately, the Samoan *aiga* in Aotearoa New Zealand takes upon a different nature and reality. Divorced from their customary inheritance, and an intimate connection to their *fanua*, Samoan *aiga* are immediately challenged to adapt and adjust to the reality of this new *siosiomaga*. A *siosiomaga* that requires one to either pay for board, rent, or a mortgage to be able to live and thrive in Aotearoa New Zealand, and a need to also view *fanua* not so much as a customary

⁹⁰ The Government of Samoa are currently reviewing the Land Registration Act 2009, which has received wide opposition due to the potential that it carries in allowing customary land to be registered under one person. Such a practice would allow for the government to treat such land as having commercial interests, which can therefore be subject to their rates and levies.

inheritance but as a commodity and entity that one must continue to pay for indefinitely, according to the demands of local and central government.

This is the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, that the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ is called to fulfill the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God and His Gospel. It is an ever changing, fluid, dynamic and evolving *siosiomaga* that is devoid of the traditional *nu'u* setting, in which much of the inherited/established norms or *motu* of the *fa'aSamoa* were applicable and relevant. For example, today it is rare to see Samoans living in open-style *fale* [houses], where open exchanges can be made between passers-by and those from within the *fale*. Even though many families in Samoa may live in European style houses, similar to the ones in Aotearoa New Zealand, *fono* [meetings] of *aiga* and *nu'u* are still conducted in the *aiga's* established *maota* [house of High chief]. Such houses are still preferred for sleeping also due to their openness to the cool evening breeze. Instead, *aiga* reside in closed dwellings which are reflective of the challenging climate of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the need to account for the extremes of both Summer and Winter weather, as well as the desire to build upon the inherited/established norms of European standards of building and living that also came with the first white settlers of this land.

Not only are the physical nature of dwellings or housing for *aiga* markedly different in this *siosiomaga*, but so too is the organisation of the *aiga* and the corresponding relationships that exist for Samoans. As a direct result of migration, and to a certain extent the non-existence of the *nu'u* setting, *aiga* here are fortunate if they are able to sustain the close extended-*aiga* connections that are taken for granted in Samoa. No longer do both Grandparents and parents live together. The daily reality of living with one's aunts, uncles and numerous cousins and

neighbours in Samoa, is reduced to a novelty when they visit, but such occasions is a far cry from the communally-oriented living which is commonplace for *aiga* in Samoa. The turn and focus, as is with most of society in Aotearoa New Zealand is on the immediate family; parent/s living with their children. Such a turn means that Samoan parent/s here take upon the responsibilities of raising their children, which would have been a more *aiga*-oriented and *nu'u*-based exercise one for their ancestors.

Growing up in the CCCSANZ my *aiga* and I frequently received visits from our surviving Grandparents, and even hosted aunties and uncles who wanted to make Aotearoa New Zealand their home. However, the brevity of such contact, and the awareness that such visits were of a fleeting nature, only sought to establish surface level relationships which required deeper attention and engagement as my siblings and I grew older, for them to attain any degree of meaning. Whereas sustained contact and shared responsibility of one's extended *aiga* to their individual members in Samoa, produces degrees of relationship that are not only meaningful but carry over and extend itself over to a popular adage, "It takes a *nu'u* to raise a child."

Clearly, what we have exposed here are just some of the stark differences with the *siosiomaga* of the *aiga* in Samoa, and the reality of life here in Aotearoa New Zealand. These differences highlight the need for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ to consider seriously, especially when their own *aiga* occupy the first sphere of relationships that they will encounter. The challenges of the new *siosiomaga* of *aiga* for the *faiifeau* identity can therefore be gleaned from the changes that we have been able to identify. Especially if the

faiifeau identity is a migrant themselves, then the level of adjustment and adaptation required is even more pronounced.

Firstly, what is needed by the *faiifeau* identity is the need to realise the obvious change in *siosiomaga* of his *aiga*. His *aiga* here has no *fanua* or customary land. Like other Samoans, and *aiga* in his *au-lotu*, as migrants they cannot inhabit the *fanua* in Aotearoa New Zealand as they customarily do in Samoa. However, they do have an option to acknowledge the indigenous *Maori* or *Tangata Whenua* who similarly view their *whenua* in an intimate and interconnected way as Samoans perceive *fanua*. By doing so, they acknowledge their presence in Aotearoa New Zealand as *Tau'iwi*, and must likewise honour and respect their roles and responsibilities in preserving and sustaining all aspects of the *whenua* as such.

In this way, even though they may be paying board, rent or a mortgage, the *faiifeau* identity will be aware of their status and fellow custodians of the *taonga* [treasures] of Aotearoa New Zealand, and see their lives in this *siosiomaga* in a more positive and meaningful way. As Samoan New Zealanders, they will be able to make meaningful contributions to the future of this *siosiomaga*, recognising that such contributions are founded on a desire to honour the *whenua* as a living entity, intimately connected with the *Tangata Whenua*. After all, this is how Samoans themselves already view their *fanua*, and its interconnectedness with life itself. In the end, the *faiifeau* identity must no longer view the *whenua* of this *siosiomaga* as just a commodity but a privilege and responsibility which they too should preserve, sustain and honour. Critically central to this behaviour and relational attitude and ethos is the acknowledgement of the nature of the Samoan *aiga* in this new *siosiomaga*.

Second, the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ must consider seriously the fact that members of his *au-lotu* are no longer situated next door! Unlike the *nu'u* setting, where people live in close vicinity, Samoans in the CCCSANZ sometimes have to commute many kilometres and have to cross many suburbs to get to church. As the development of the CCCSANZ has seen the expansion of the church all over the country, people largely maintain loyalties to the church they first attended, despite having moved away from the close quarters they once inhabited when they originally started attending that particular congregation. Growing up in the Hamilton CCCSANZ, we once had a family commute all the way from Tokoroa to attend church on Sunday, because of a desire to worship in Hamilton, even though there was also a CCCSANZ they could have attended in Tokoroa. The ease of travel enabled through the quality roading and efficiency of vehicles meant that such a journey was seen as worthwhile. Eventually, the *aiga* had to settle on attending the Tokoroa CCCSANZ, when the age of the parents no longer made the travel easy to negotiate. This example highlights the fact that the *faiifeau* identity must consider the logistical struggles that some *aiga* in his *au-lotu* will possess in making it to church and other commitments involving the *galuega*. Alternatively, such a reality also challenges the *faiifeau* identity to open up the doors of his *fale*, to receive the members of his *au-lotu* who might require assistance with accommodation, due to the distances of travel.

Finally, the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ must remember that there has been a fundamental paradigm shift in how Samoan *aiga* live and reside, when compared with the *nu'u* setting in Samoa. The responsibility of raising the children in Aotearoa New Zealand falls squarely on the parent/s. For the *faiifeau* identity, this requires the desire and commitment on his part to not relinquish his own responsibilities as a father, mentor, and

role-model of his child/ren to his wife, or any one else he may feel is worthy. Just because he is a *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, does not mean that he stops being a father to his own children. In communal settings like the *nu'u* in Samoa, many *faiifeau* and their *aiga* enjoy the presence of relatives and children of the *nu'u*, who may come over to complete the daily tasks of maintaining the upkeep of the *fale o le galuega* [house of the ministry/*faiifeau*] and end up living with them over long periods of time. It is understandable that in such a *siosiomaga*, the *faiifeau's* time and attention may be drawn away from his immediate children, but not so in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Here, the *faiifeau* and his *aiga* predominantly live in the *fale o le galuega* on their own. Unlike the *nu'u* in Samoa, where the *fale o le galuega* may be a hive of activity, here in the CCCSANZ, there is an acknowledgement that such a space is not so easily breached, as unlike the *nu'u*, *aiga* of the *au-lotu* live away from the *Fale Sā* except the *faiifeau*, so the *fale o le galuega* takes upon the identity of a retreat, or refuge for the *faiifeau* and his *aiga*, from the daily toils of the *galuega*, most usually happening only a few metres away. If seen as a place of refuge for his *aiga* and children, then the *faiifeau* identity can cultivate his *fale* to be a vibrant and positive place of interaction, dialogue and mutual understanding. It is here, in the sanctity of their *fale*, that the *faiifeau* identity can ensure that his wife and children are also partners in the *feau* and *galuega*. In essence, what can be achieved is the sharing and concerted realisation of a vision of possibilities that is based on the strengthened internal relationships within the *faiifeau's* own *aiga*, which will allow him to fulfill his calling in the *feau* and *galuega* much more efficiently, and with a much deeper sense of appreciation and fulfilment.

3.3.2. *Au-lotu* – The secondary level of relationship and responsibility

In discussing the *siosiomaga* of the *aiga* with which the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ has to be open to deal with, we exposed some overlapping issues that also involved his *au-lotu* in regards to his relationship/s with them, and his responsibility towards them. The stark differences between the relationships between the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ and his *au-lotu* can be fundamentally understood against the fact that the *nu'u* setting of Samoa is no longer the location or place in which the *au-lotu* exists. Instead, the *au-lotu* in Aotearoa New Zealand becomes the *nu'u*, where the social organisation of which mirrors that of the *nu'u* structure. Such a shift becomes problematic when the roles and privileges of the traditional Samoan *nu'u* become transposed over the *au-lotu*. For example, in the absence of a paramount chief/s of the *nu'u*, the *faiifeau* identity by default takes upon himself this paramount role. Such a position and status is imbued with power, privilege and status, with definite and obvious imbalances in terms of the ability to influence decision making processes with their own personal biases. A system or network of social relationships in Samoa, which is propped up through the inherited/established respect of *matai* titles and their status in the *nu'u*, carries dangerous and corruptive tendencies for the *faiifeau* identity in relation to his *au-lotu*, which is comprised of *aiga* and *matai* from many different *nu'u*, migrants and citizens, young and old, who in themselves may be more inclined to see the *au-lotu* as an entity where there should be more equal distribution of power, wealth and status.

To preach and proclaim a Gospel that calls for the equal recognition of individuals as members with differing abilities and roles, moving, working and living together in mutual relationships of love and care, for the betterment of the organic whole of the *au-lotu* in relation to the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God, becomes a very difficult and contradictory

enterprise in such a *siosiomaga* of *au-lotu*. The temptation to absorb the *nu'u* structure and its accompanying distributions of status and power is very real for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. An understanding of how the distribution of status and power is distributed along the lines of mutual love and reciprocity, with a view to sustaining life-affirming and life-empowering relationships, as is central in the relational nature of the Triune God, will be a critical corrective in allowing the *faiifeau* identity the ability to negotiate the *vā-sā* in a more Gospel-centred way.

Another aspect of the *siosiomaga* of the *au-lotu* that poses critical challenges to the *faiifeau* identity is that of the inevitable dissolution of the connections and responsibilities that he may to his extended *aiga*. As a result of the *feagaiga* that is made between the *faiifeau* identity and his *au-lotu*, which demands that his *au-lotu* becomes in many ways his new de-facto *aiga*, a potential is unfortunately created where the *faiifeau* identity can become non-involved in the affairs and matters pertaining to the wellbeing and future prosperity of his extended *aiga*.

Although he would no doubt be sustaining them in prayer, and be unable to stop his extended *aiga* from visiting him, and attempting to keep their relationships and his responsibility to them open, a negative implication of the *feagaiga* that is made between him and his *au-lotu* is that he may use such a relationship as a reason for not contributing to his extended *aiga* and their subsequent *fa'alavelave* [cultural obligations]. Instead of using the privileged access he has to finances and traditional markers of honour and status, such as *ie toga* [fine mats], *siapo* [tapa cloth], gained through the goodwill and *alofa* of people and the *au-lotu* as they maintain their *feagaiga* relationship with their *faiifeau* identity, he is at the same time tempted here to

turn inwards, and instead recirculate such benefits along more politically motivated lines of relationships, to see his advancement up the CCCSANZ hierarchy and leadership systems, rather than assist his extended *aiga*, and others less fortunate with their *fa'alavelave*.

What is proposed here is not a focus on how best to utilise the material benefits that the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ receives in the interests of his extended *aiga*, but rather that the *faiifeau* identity does not lose sight of maintaining valuable and intimate connections and relationships with his extended *aiga* which he doesn't cease to belong to, just because he is fulfilling the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*. In many ways, there needs to be an acknowledgement that a Trinitarian view of the *faiifeau* identity encourages the continuing engagement of one's *aiga* and heritage, which does not necessarily need to be offset or seen as competing against the *au-lotu* and his commitment to them. Indeed, an invitation to be a *faiifeau* identity in a Trinitarian way endears to sustain all life-affirming relationships for the betterment of all involved. After all, it is from the Triune God, that one was both born into his *aiga*, and called to serve his *au-lotu*. This 'calling' is also one that the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, must also embody in his relationships with *tagata lautele*, or those outside in the wider community and society.

Finally, one degree of the *siosiomaga* of the *au-lotu* that has already been hinted to that the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ has to seriously consider is the apparent differences in their socio-economic status. With the continuation of the established/inherited norm or *motu* of the *au-lotu* honouring their *feagaiga* with the *faiifeau* identity by providing for his and his

aiga's every material need, in the spirit of a brother sustaining the wellbeing of his sister, the *fai feau* identity must remain acutely aware of such a disparity. This awareness if taken seriously will assist in his decision-making processes concerning any financial commitments that might need to be made by members of his *au-lotu* concerning the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*. In fact, such awareness will inspire and encourage a reciprocal action and daily commitment of rechannelling and redirecting such financial resources back into the *au-lotu*, for the sake of achieving the Gospel-centred aspirations of the CCCSANZ, in sustaining life-affirming and life-centred relationships both within the *au-lotu*, and for the sake of the *feau* and *galuega* to *tagata lautele*.

The obvious need to see such financial assistance or gain as not a personal achievement, wage or salary of any sort, but rather, a gift of the Triune God given for the purposes of sustaining His *feau* and *galuega* for the benefit of all, and not just for the *fai feau* identity's own personal consumption or usage must be paramount. A right understanding of the goodwill and *alofa* of his *au-lotu* as something that constantly needs to be returned and reinvested in the *au-lotu*, is a necessary pre-requisite for a *fai feau* identity which is grounded and committed to reflecting the relational nature of love and care, at the heart of the Triune God of the Christian faith and Gospel. Armed with this correct and more critically appreciative perspective of the *siosiomaga* of his *au-lotu*, the *fai feau* identity will have established a platform from which they can successfully engage in spreading the Gospel, and fulfilling the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*, in relation to those who may not necessarily fall inside his normal view and daily contact, the *tagata lautele*.

3.3.3. *Tagata Lautele* – The tertiary level of relationship and responsibility

The final level of relationships and responsibility that demand a response from the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, are the *tagata lautele*. To be open to such a widening of the *faiifeau*'s sphere of relationships and responsibility is to indeed be in fulfillment of the call to 'go out into the world' and preach and proclaim the Gospel of the Triune God of the Christian faith. It is a recognition that no longer is the *au-lotu* part of the *nu'u* structure, but that in Aotearoa New Zealand the *au-lotu* is part of wider community, or network of relationships that involve people of different walks of life, ethnicities, religious persuasions, and socio-economic status. It is also reflective of a commitment to engage in the activities, issues and concerns that beset the immediate community in which the *au-lotu* may find themselves in.

In many ways, it will involve a need for the *faiifeau* identity to encourage positively and indeed lead their *au-lotu* away from just specifically thinking and focusing on providing and sustaining for the propagation of the mother Church or the CCCS in Samoa. But rather, seeking to make meaningful connections and relationships across the spectrum of the community, and by immersing themselves in activities that promote and reflect an alternative community founded on the life and love of the Triune God. Such involvement need not always be focused on significant contributions, but can be more subtle and personal, by way of seeing that immediate neighbours feel that they are always open to attend church and events of the CCCSANZ without fear of feeling out of place. To extend the warmth and familiarity of the intimate intra-relationships that are based on ethnic and cultural lines within the CCCSANZ to further engage with *tagata lautele* as fellow citizens of Aotearoa New

Zealanders and members of the community, is a way that the inclusiveness of the Gospel and life of the Triune God can be successfully proclaimed and embodied.

An obvious necessity of such a commitment to *tagata lautele* will be that the *faiifeau* identity must account for their diversity in both language and culture. By communicating in the most accessible language, the *faiifeau* identity will be able to cross cultural barriers and boundaries which may otherwise hinder the clear transmission of the Gospel and its message of hope, life and love for all. Such an ability is not beyond the *faiifeau* identity. As a graduate of Malua, he has been adequately trained in conducting services and communicating in both English and Samoan. For, right from the outset, the LMS missionary drive to establish Malua was the recognition that Malua graduates needed to be proficient in both languages in order to be equipped enough to cope with the both the *feau* and *galuega* in Samoa, and abroad. In fact, an enduring expectation from the people of the CCCSANZ is that their *faiifeau* are amongst the most well-educated of all Samoans, in both secular and spiritual matters. The *faiifeau* identity is well-equipped therefore to provide such a needed focus for the CCCSANZ in reaching out and meeting the spiritual needs of *tagata lautele*.

Ultimately, the *faiifeau* identity must seek to embody the *feau* and the *galuega* of the Triune God in relation to the needs and desires of *tagata lautele*. For many, it will require a further extension of their pre-conceived notions of the limitations of their calling. No longer should they look just to the immediate *siosiomaga* of their *aiga* and *au-lotu*, but also they must consider the Gospel imperative of the Great Commission, which plainly speaks about an outward looking and overflowing movement of love and fellowship with *tagata lautele*.

Such an imperative is Trinitarian at heart. It seeks out the lost. It accepts the differences and

nuances of the wider community, in order to share and impart a vision of community and wellbeing that is reflective of how the Triune God continues to reach out to the world in the name of love and fellowship.

This is what a more nuanced understanding of the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ can offer the *faiifeau* identity. In identifying the inner layers and contours of *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*, the *faiifeau* identity enables the possibility of sustaining meaningful and faithful relationships mediated with the notion of responsibility as a critical motivator for the fulfilment of his calling. Wholesome relationships that are mutually life-affirming and resplendent of the abundance of true prosperity and love, which through both word and deed resonates with a calling that has at its core the everlasting and overflowing love of the Triune God. A commitment to understand and operate accordingly within the sensitivities of the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ will clearly equip the *faiifeau* identity with the ability to embody and bring to life the Gospel of the Triune God in a most meaningful and compassionate way.

3.4. Summary

The approach of this chapter has been clear. As a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea*, I was acting *tautalaitiiti* in how I *sosopo the vā-sā* in addressing the need to consider seriously the inherent contextual nature of theology, and engage with various *motu* which underpins the privileging status of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCANZ. This was established by bringing into dialogue the insights of western scholarship with the experiential reflections and articulations of Pacific and Samoan theologians. The benefits of which revealed a clear need

to define and articulate a nuanced understanding and interpretation of the changing contemporary context/s of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. This was fulfilled through the description and explanation of the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of *siosiomaga*, and its resultant contours and layers as identified through *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*. These contours revealed the many *motu* that currently impact positively and negatively on the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, some of which have been explored in this chapter. What became vividly clear was that at the heart of correcting misconceptions and a refusal of the *faiifeau identity* to engage critically and appreciate both the strengths and weaknesses of these *motu*, in relation to their calling to fulfill the *feau* and *galuega* was a correct imaging of the Triune God that lies at the heart of such a calling. However, we must first attain a critical appreciation of how the Triune God is potentially viewed in the CCCSANZ in relation to the *faiifeau* identity. This challenge is the one that is taken up by the next chapter, where I will proceed to be *fiapoto* by even so much as contemplating and conducting such a critical engagement.

**CHAPTER FOUR: “E TE FIA POTO? [ARE YOU TRYING TO
BE SMART?] – THE PLACE OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY
IN RELATION TO THE FAIFEAU IDENTITY OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAMOA IN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

4.0. Introduction

To profess to have an understanding of the Trinitarian theology currently upheld by the CCCSANZ in relation to the *faiifeau* identity is to be accused of having a certain degree of knowledge and experience on the subject. Hence the critical question, “*E te fia poto?*” The purpose of this chapter is to provide a response to this question. In other words, *I sosopo le vā-sā* between the *faiifeau* identity and how the CCCSANZ may express their belief in the Triune God. As the previous chapter intimated, a correct imaging of God as being Triune in nature, ultimately allows for a correct understanding of the *faiifeau identity* in respect of his calling to the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua* and in relation to his *aiga, au-lotu, and tagata lautele*. However, we must first investigate and explore the current place of Trinitarian theology in the CCCSANZ, within the contours of *siosiomaga* already identified as *aiga, au-lotu, and tagata lautele*, in order to inevitably be able to make such an articulation, which will be the focus of the following chapter. For now, as a *faiifeau fa'avalevaea*, I will be *fia poto* in seeking to provide a critical response to the aforementioned question!

4.1. The *faiifeau* identity and the Triune God in his *aiga*

As identified in the previous chapter, there are three levels of *siosiomaga*, in which the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ is called and challenged to engage with and appreciate. The primary level or foundational contact or exposure of any *faiifeau* identity with the reality of the Triune God is in his own *aiga*. In his *aiga*, the *faiifeau* hears and sees first hand the interconnectedness of Samoan family life, and their belief and faith in God. As soon as he is able to talk, parents who are faithfully active in seeking to nurture their children in the Gospel, quickly teach their children good Christian behaviour, not only through discipline, but also through the teaching of easily memorised hymns, prayers and memory verses. This section will explore the different ways that the *faiifeau* identity will have been exposed to the reality of the Triune God.

4.1.1. *Mālie pule, le Tama e!* [O Father! Thank you for your providence] – The thanksgiving prayer for blessings and life, sung before every meal.⁹¹

For many Samoans growing up in the CCCSANZ, this hymn embodies their first exposure to and understanding of the Triune God. It is a hymn that I too was taught as a young child after countless repetition, and have consequently taught my own children through the same means. No special lessons were given, but the regularity of having to sing the hymn before any meal quickly establishes the words into one's memory. The fact that the thanksgiving hymn is not restricted or confined to denominational lines, despite being established as hymn of the

⁹¹ CCCS, *O Pese Ma Viiga I Le Atua* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1909), 315. The translations in English provided are the author's attempt at establishing greater understanding for the Non-Samoan speaking reader. It continues to display, as is central to the prevailing bi-lingual nature of this thesis, the richness, and multi-valent offerings of the Samoan language.

CCCSANZ, is a testament to the catchiness of its tune, simplicity of its words, its pervasive nature amongst all Samoans, as well as the willingness and commitment of Samoan parents and *aiga* to maintain such a practice or tradition,

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Mālie pule, Le Tamā e,</i> | O Father! Thank you for your providence, |
| <i>Ua matou maua ai, mea lelei</i> | Through whom we have received, good blessings |
| <i>O oe ia matou fiafia i ai,</i> | In You, may we delight in |
| <i>Ao tumau le ola nei...Amene.</i> | While we abide in this life...Amen. |

As already intimated, the simplicity of its format also enables easy memorisation. The first line expresses gladness and thanksgiving, acknowledging the providence of *Le Tamā* [The Father]. The second line by using the words “*ua matou*” [we have] expresses the notion, that even if one sings the hymn by themselves before a meal, they are always singing and addressing *Le Tamā ē* as part of a greater collective. Such an understanding reminded us as children, and calls listeners to learn that the blessings of life are not received as individuals, but always in relation to others. So in the same way, recognition of the interconnectedness of everyone to *Le Tamā e*, and the provision of “good blessings” is assumed and thus promoted every time the hymn is sung.

The third and final lines of the hymn expresses a clear belief that joy and delight is not to be held in the materialisation of the blessing, but in the Source of such blessing. In other words, happiness and goodness must be directed not at the fruits of provision but at *Le Tamā e* Himself. A powerful statement of faith in itself, the central theme of the hymn is pronounced: Samoans must delight in and give proper worship to *Le Tamā e* who is the Provider and Sustainer of Life. The distinct privileging of *Le Tamā e* as the source of

goodness, life and blessing reveals a rather simplistic understanding of God with which the *fai'feau identity* has been raised to identify with. For as expressed in these climactic lines, it is *Le Tamā e* that we must delight in and give praise to. It is *Le Tamā e* who is the Provider and Sustainer of life itself. Such a simplistic presentation retains a fundamental meaning, especially for young children who are just beginning to form an understanding about God, and can be appreciated in its fullness through the using of a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference that also resonates with their growing knowledge and experience of their 'earthly' fathers.

Such a clear theological statement preserved in a common hymn, acts as a continual reminder for Samoans of this belief. However, by referring to *Le Tamā e* in specific terms, instead of using *Atua e* [God], or *Le Alii e* [the Lord] which is common in the CCCSANZ Hymns, we are drawn more to acknowledge the theological notions that *Le Tamā e* is indeed the origin and beginning of life. Furthermore, the important point is not that *Atua* is *Le Tamā e* per se in His providence of life, thus privileging a gender preference of maleness for *Atua*, but that *Le Tamā e* is indeed the Source of life.

Therefore, the reference to *Le Tamā e* may be seen in two ways. First as a synonym for the Triune God of the CCCSANZ, which if so hints towards a functional subordination of the *Alo/Atalii* [Son] and *Agaga* [Spirit], and opens an understanding that might entertain the possibility of the existence of a *vā-sā* in the Godhead which attributes the role of providing blessings and life solely to *Le Tamā e*. But also, and most significantly for the eventual

appreciation of the relational nature of the Triune God, the use of the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference which resonates with the notion of ‘fatherhood’ allows for the possibilities of recognizing a deep, intimate and mutually reciprocating relationship between the *Alo/Atalii* with the *Le Tamā e* and ultimately *Le Agaga* [the Spirit] when a greater understanding is attained of the Triune God over time in one’s natural growth and spiritual development within one’s *aiga*.

Such usage in this instance shows how the potential influence of gender references in relation to understanding *Le Tamā e* and *Le Alo/Atalii*, for the Samoan people, and the *faiifeau* identity in growing up in his *aiga*, is one that has to be imported into any further interpretation of the Godhead. Quite simply, *Le Tamā e*, should be and is more clearly appreciated in the daily *siosiomaga* of the *aiga*, as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference that points to maintaining a proper heart or posture of thanksgiving and worship, as He is celebrated as the Source and Provider of life. In this way, those who sing the hymn are by definition children not because of their age, but because of their faith and belief in *Le Tamā e* as their benevolent benefactor, in whom they can enjoy an intimate and closeness of relationship. Such is the enduring relevance of the thanksgiving hymn life and blessings sung before every meal, for the *faiifeau* identity and Samoans and their *aiga*, regardless whatever age they may be.

4.1.2. *A o lei moe ua faafetai* [Before I sleep, I give thanks]⁹²

The following hymn by definition, much like the hymn sung before a meal, crosses over denominational barriers despite its place in the CCCSANZ hymn book. So much so, that many Samoans either conclude their evening services, or go to bed, singing this hymn.

Again, it is the simplicity of its format and words, which make it easy to memorise,

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>A o lei moe ua faafetai</i> | Before I sleep, I give thanks |
| <i>Ia Iesu ua aumai</i> | To Jesus, who provided |
| <i>Mea lelei i le aso.</i> | Good things in this day. |
| | |
| <i>Lo'u Alii e, o lo'u Faaola,</i> | My Lord, who is my Saviour |
| <i>Tausi mai ia ou aao</i> | Protect me or us in your arms |
| <i>I le po lenei atoa...Amene.</i> | Through the entire night...Amen |

The first line introduces the concept of thanksgiving, setting it as a foundation for any requests that follow. In this way, the bedtime hymn, takes upon a unique position of being not only a song of praise and thanksgiving, but also proceeds to be a prayer of petition and supplication as well. For Samoans, the notion to be grateful first before asking for something is a fundamental part of their life of worship, and is central to the preservation of relationships that the faifeau identity needs always be aware of within his *aiga*, and in the greater *siosiomaga*, of his *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*.

Unlike the hymn before a meal, this hymn focuses on the Second Person of the Trinity, *Iesu* [Jesus]. *Iesu*, for this bed-time hymn is the Provider of the good things that have been received and experienced in the day. Such a shift in terms of reference is insightful. *Iesu* here is addressed by name, reflecting the personal nature of the relationship between the singer/s and their *Alii* [Lord] and *Fa'aola* [Saviour]. There is certainty, closeness and

⁹² *Ibid.*, 394-935.

confidence when one's Provider can be named and known on a personal level. Immediate connections can be made with the Gospel call of *Iesu* and his declaration that He is with his followers, believers, and Church, even to the end of the age. The same *Iesu* that said all authority on heaven and earth is now His.⁹³ The *Iesu* as presented by the Gospels and the Book of Acts, who said he would return in due time.⁹⁴ Indeed, the first verse leaves us without a doubt that not only is *Iesu* one's personal Provider of life and things that are good, but that he is more importantly and continues to be a living reality in one's life, despite his physical absence on Earth.

The second verse proceeds to introduce recognisable theological language to further establish *Iesu's* identity. He is *Iesu, Lo'u Alii* [my Lord] and *Lo'u Fa'aola* [my Saviour]. The use of personal pronouns is deliberate. The affection that is imbued with the use of such language has a purpose. Only a personal Lord and a personal Saviour will heed a prayer for protection. For only a personal God who cares enough, will surely protect and defend those that love Him. Here, clearly, the notion of 'person' is expressed through relationship. It is only through the personal relationship that is shared between the believer and Jesus, that both sides are 'persons' in their own right. It is their realities as 'persons' and their personal relationship that precedes the openness, love and dependency that is mutually relayed in the final verse of this hymn:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>A mavae lenei olaga,</i> | When this life comes to an end, |
| <i>Ia ou mau ma Iesu</i> | May I rest and be with Jesus |
| <i>I aso e fa'avavau</i> | All the days of eternity |

⁹³ Matt. 28:16-20.

⁹⁴ Acts 1:8ff

The Samoan indigenous/cultural references of *Lo'u Alii* and *Lo'u Fa'aola* also carry with them meanings that resonate with everyday Samoan life. *Matai* are divided into two main categories. The *Ali'i*, is regarded as the High Chief, or non-speaking Chief. Other scholars have classed them as Sacred Chiefs and relate this sacredness back to pre-Christian times when they were in many ways attributed divine powers of authority and presence.⁹⁵ These are the *matai* that take up the prominent positions in the traditional seating of a Samoan fale, as opposed to the *tūlafale* [orators] who are responsible for conducting the proceedings through their oratory and powers of persuasion. They are non-speaking, because as a 'Sacred Chief' they only need to speak when there is cause for him/her to do so. For example, if there is a dispute that may arise within a discussion of the aiga, then only then, will the *Ali'i* voice his opinion, and give his advice, or pass his judgement or verdict on proceedings.

In many ways, his 'sacredness' can be attested to the fact, that he is expected to be meditating, and praying for the success of the deliberations and future prosperity of the aiga. Through this example, we can appreciate the value of silence and meditation in upholding peaceful and harmonious relationships. Silence does not necessarily mean that one has nothing to say or contribute, but rather that one is choosing their time or point of entry carefully. They are aware of the *siosiomaga*, and thus wait for the right time. Even if they eventually don't speak, their silence is laden with deep meaning, and identified with the disposition of prayerful support and meditation. Such an experience of the *Ali'i* in both

⁹⁵ Malama Meleisea, "To Whom Gods and Men Crowded: Chieftainship and Hierarchy in Ancient Samoa," in *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*, ed. Judith Huntsman (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1995). Meleisea's study is helpful in seeing the preservation of the Alii, as a Sacred Chief and the corresponding sacredness that can still be seen in the way they carry themselves, and are respected, and honoured in the aiga, and the au-lotu.

everyday and customary Samoan life can be seen to also carry implications regarding a fuller understanding of the relationship that one has with *Iesu*. *Iesu* is indeed silent, in his physical absence, but like the *Ali'i*, shows his sacredness in many ways, through the Gospel which portrayed the centrality of prayer to *Iesu's* feau and galuega, as well as the theological belief that *Iesu* is now at the right hand of the Father, mediating with God the Father in the heavenly realm on our behalf.

An understanding of *Lo'u Fa'aola* and the implications it has for a deeper appreciation of the presence of Trinitarian theology in the siosiomaga of the aiga, can be gained through the meaning of the causative prefix, *fa'a*. This immediately calls for a perspective that can promote *Iesu* as the one who 'leans toward' *ola* [life]. Therefore, it is *Iesu* who carries the key for Samoans to appreciate not only the meaning of their lives, but also the obvious centrality of *Iesu's* feau and galuega to the Triune God's plan of salvation, as proclaimed in His Gospel. *Iesu* is *Lo'u Fa'aola* because only He has brought about the Triune God's will for His fallen Creation, because He 'leans towards' the *ola* of God that He embodied in His *feau* and *galuega*, which he displayed in His obedience, humility and perseverance he showed in doing, and accepting the Father's will. In many ways, *Iesu* as *Lo'u Fa'aola* provides an archetypal model of true altruism, compassion and mercy, in which the *fai'feau* identity is constantly exposed to, as he sings the goodnight prayer or hymn of thanksgiving as part of a bedtime ritual.

4.1.3. *Iesu e, alofa mai...*[Jesus, grant your love to...]

Along with the bedtime hymn of thanksgiving and praise that we have just explored, is necessity to still voice a prayer. Such a prayer may consist of a small memory verse, asking

Iesu for his continuing love and protection through the night, as well as eternal or everlasting blessings. An example of this, is the one that my late maternal Grandmother Olive Momoiseā taught my siblings and I on one of her visits from Samoa, “*Iesu e, alofa mai, ia Sapphira, Kiri, Stevie, Imoa, Tita and Setefano, ma le lalolagi atoa, ae moe nei po...Amene.*” As can be appreciated from the simplistic style of the prayer, and the directness of its content, it didn’t take long to memorise. This is because there are three main parts to learn, which all flow logically and seamlessly after another.

The first part is the acknowledgement, just like the previous two hymns, that *Iesu*, the Second Person of the Trinity can be addressed directly in prayer, as a source of divine love, protection, care and eternal blessings. Second, the names of my family are listed from youngest to oldest, climaxing with the references to my parents. Notice that when I learnt the prayer, the references to my parents reflect the upbringing already mentioned where my brother and I used their first names. For us, these names retain the same intimacy as the more common. And finally, the prayer concludes with a prayer for the *lalolagi atoa* [entire world]. Again, reflecting an awareness and belief that one is not so much an individual before God, but is always an individual-in-relationship, which in the *siosiomaga* of this prayer alludes to an element of intercessory prayer and plants the seed of a future appreciation of the *faifeau* identity of his *au-lotu, tagata lautele* and the *lalolagi atoa*.

The fundamentally important and foundational hymns and prayer explored in this section have enabled us to gauge an understanding of how the Triune God has been experienced by the *faifeau* identity, in the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*. Through the initial exposure as a young child, through to adulthood, he is at first nurtured, and then continually sustained with the simplistic

references to the Triune God as reflected in the Samoan indigenous/cultural references of *Le Tamā e*, *Lo'u Ali'i*, *Lo'u Fa'aola*, and of course, *Iesu*. Such an understanding points to the prioritising of establishing the language in which he can speak of God's nature as a triune being. When measured against his daily experience and interactions with 'fatherhood', 'life' and knowledge of the Gospel, the potential for further enlightenment regarding the Triune God's relational nature is firmly grounded, setting a platform by where continual exposure to more complex notions of a theological nature experienced in the *siosiomaga* of his *au-lotu* can be developed and established. What also can be appreciated is that if the *faiifeau* identity chooses to uphold the ritualistic nature of these *motu* as the spiritual leader within his *aiga*, as pre-established by these hymns and prayer, further opportunities for theological development and understanding is created as he can offer greater clarification on how each Samoan indigenous/cultural reference relates to everyday life, and faith development of those under his care and immediate *siosiomaga* of *aiga*.

4.2. The *faiifeau* identity and the Triune God in his *au-lotu*

The secondary *siosiomaga* that is upheld by this research and was identified in the previous chapter, is the *au-lotu* to which the *faiifeau* identity is called to serve and fulfil his calling, namely, the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*, or the mission and ministry of the Triune God. In fact, as pointed out earlier, this sphere of potential relationships for many *faiifeau* may actually be in their eyes their primary and only *siosiomaga* of concern. Such a view can be based on an interpretation of his calling, as a move to be 'set apart' from his *aiga*, and *tagata lautele*, and to primarily be involved in the ecclesial and spiritual matters that are specifically limited to this *siosiomaga*. The genesis of such thinking and belief is no more prominent

than in the prescriptive instructions of the Ordination ceremony for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, and in one of the questions that we are asked to respond to,

Pe tou te folafola atu 'ea tou te faia la outou galuega i le faamaoni, tou te tala'i atu le Afioga a le Atua, tou te tausī sakaremeta ma fai ma leoleo o le lafu mamoe, tou te ola i le olaga faale-Atua ma saga faamatagofieina a'oa'oga a le Atua lo tatou Faaola i mea uma lava?

[Do you declare that you will do your work with honesty and integrity, proclaim the Word of God, keep the sacraments and be a shepherd to the flock, that you will live a Godly life and continually uphold the highest standards of God our Saviour's teachings in all things?]⁹⁶

As can be appreciated with the direct line of questioning, the *faiifeau* identity's "work" is centered on the *au-lotu*. The proclamation of the Word of God in the form of *lauga* [sermons] is listed as his first priority. Indeed, this first priority is understandable on a couple of fronts. On the one hand, there is the historical fact that the CCCSANZ is the institutional outcome of the LMS missionaries work in Samoa, and its eventual migration to countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the USA, as Samoans migrated with their social and cultural preferences to worship in their own language, upholding their own way of life, the *fa'aSamoa*.⁹⁷ And on the other, when we consider the intrinsic meaning of the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of the *faiifeau*, as the "one who does the work" or "messenger,"

⁹⁶ CCCS, *Ia Viia Lou Suafa: Sauniga Lotu Ma Tatalo O Le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa*, 3rd ed. (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1986), 102. This book literally translated, [May Your Name Be Praised: Worship Services and Prayers of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa], contains prayers, and liturgical guides concerning the different services and ceremonies that the *faiifeau* identity in the CCCSANZ are charged to preside over. Apart from the foreword, which is bi-lingual in nature, the book's language is Samoan and continues to be faithfully used as a 'guide' for liturgical practice since its first edition in 1975.

⁹⁷ Ioka., 117-167. Ioka argues quite clearly that the expansion of the CCCS overseas was an integral part of the Samoan commitment to preserving their preferences for worship and church organisation on the grounds of the responsibility to preserve their culture in the wake of searching for a better life.

then the proactive role of proclaiming and preaching the Gospel becomes a significant role and task for the *faiifeau* identity to become proficient in.⁹⁸

The second is the order to keep the sacraments, which for the CCCSANZ is the *Papatisoga* [Baptism], and the *Fa'amanatuga* [Rememberance Service/Holy Communion]. Thirdly, the need to be a “*leoleo o le lafu mamoe*,” is a biblically-inspired image not only resonant with *Iesu*, the *Leoleo Mamoe Lelei* [Good Shepherd],⁹⁹ but also the Triune God, who as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was also seen as the Shepherd of His people.¹⁰⁰ However, as is clear by the conclusion of this question, there is a wholistic understanding of a commitment to Godly living and maintaining high moral standards which as a sweeping summary is pregnant with the potential to radically open up the *faiifeau* identity's perspective of the *siosiomaga* of the *au-lotu*.

To the extent that, once ordained, the *faiifeau* identity and his commitment to God's *feau* and *galuega* supercedes any barriers of social organisation, and limitations of a negative understanding of the *vā-sā* that may have been inferred from the first part of this particular declaration. In the end, this theological key and somewhat dormant possibility for a more richer appreciation of the inherent relationality of the *faiifeau* identity and his ordained status, is also alluded to in the response that is asked to be made, “*I le fesoasoani mai o le Atua, o lea lava*.” [With the help of God, I will]. With this critical awareness in mind, we begin this

⁹⁸ Pratt., 127.

⁹⁹ John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4.

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 23, Psalm 34:9,10; 80,1; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11, 12;

section by looking at the Trinitarian theology that can potentially impact on the *faiifeau* identity by tracing the different demarcations that can be traced from a progressive picture of how a Samoan child develops their awareness of God in the CCCSANZ

4.2.1. Developing an awareness of the Triune God within the *siosiomaga* of the *au-lotu*

For many Christians, to state the the Triune God is the God of the Christian faith and church is to state the obvious. However, it is one thing to make a statement that one may have attained through indoctrination and the careful learning and memorizing of bible verses and catechetical lessons as a young child, and it is another to come to making such a declaration through one's experience of the reality of the Triune God in one's everyday life. For Samoans in the CCCSANZ, such a process may begin in one's *aiga* as already discussed, or through an engagement and participation in the daily, and weekly activities of church life and congregational community.

In the *au-lotu*, this is achieved typically through the *Aoga Aso Sā* [Sunday School], *Autalavou* [Youth Group], *Aufaipese* [Choir] and ultimately becomes solidified through becoming a *Tiakono* [Deacon], *A'oa'o* [Theological Student/Lay Preacher], *faletua* or *faiifeau*. The focus on rote learning from a young age in the CCCSANZ enables the progressive acquisition of biblical knowledge. However, such ability as harnessed in the *Aoga Aso Sā* system of the CCCSANZ becomes problematic when it is muddied with Samoan pride that encourages

competition in order to gain prizes as well as recognition from both parents and other members of the church as being a ‘smart’ child.¹⁰¹

4.2.2. Tracing a historical appreciation of the centrality of the *au-lotu* in relation to the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ

The increasing migration of Pacific Islanders to New Zealand in the 1940s saw the Congregational Union of New Zealand take a crucial step in accommodating for the migrants ‘spiritual needs’ and preferences by creating the Pacific Islanders Congregational Church, as well as recruiting Pacific Islander ministers to conduct worship in their languages.¹⁰² Such a move, reflected the need to recognise the long standing relationship that the London Missionary Society had already established with the island nations of Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands in years gone by. This recognition would pave the way forward for the PIC church to continue the central role that the churches had played back in the Islands. However, with the absence of the village settings, the churches became not only centres of religious activity, but by default they would satisfy the communal needs of the migrants to show social and cultural solidarity along the lines of their shared pacific origins. In short, the

¹⁰¹ Derek Freeman, *The Social Structure of a Samoan Village Community*, ed. Peter Hempenstall (Canberra: Target Oceania, 2006). Peter Hempenstall constructs an interesting book based on Freeman’s manuscripts that came into his possession. In his presentation of some of Freeman’s unpublished work and findings, is the overarching belief that at the heart of the vitality of a Samoan Village Community, as well as the *au-lotu* is a competitive spirit inherent in the Samoan way of service that permeates across all areas of life, despite sometimes having a negative impact of the maintenance of peace and harmony between *au-lotu* of different villages.

¹⁰² Allan K. Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 3rd ed. (Wellington: Education for Ministry, 2004), 162.-163.

move to create the PIC church would provide a pre-cursor for a stronger desire for autonomy and leadership amongst the individual Island nation groups.

The set-up of the PIC church would also provide a critical mass in which strong personalities could indeed convince their own island communities that the more preferred and inevitable course would be to set up their own church independent of the PIC. The split of 1963, gave the Samoan members of the PICC the ammunition in which to propose such a church. The CCCS was established by a break-away group, citing the desire to worship in their Samoan language, to foster stronger ties with Samoa, as well as to have an opportunity to govern their own church affairs and finances. The split revealed the strong nationalistic tendencies, familial factions, and varying motivations which underpinned the Samoan membership to the PIC. According to Danny Ioka, Fuimaono Ta'ala and his family were very sincere in their desire for church autonomy. Despite the impact that such a split would have had on the PIC congregation of the time, those who did leave were able to successfully lobby the support of the EFKS in Samoa to send a delegation to endorse their establishment.¹⁰³

4.2.3. Breakaway from Pacific Islands Church - A Church built on *Aiga*¹⁰⁴

The breakaway from the PIC church and the eventual establishment by the Samoans that left and endorsement of the CCCS marked a critical stage in the development of how the establishment of churches were to be perceived. As previously stated, the set-up of the PIC

¹⁰³ Ioka., 168-187.

church was the result of a commitment taken by the Congregational Union recognising a need to continue the long-standing relationship that was established by the LMS in the past with the island nations. The decision was made at the Assembly level, and reflected a mindset that decisions concerning church establishment were to be made from the top down. However, as the breakaway from the PIC reveals, the Samoans who left had different views.

It is obvious from the breakaway group that as Samoans their perceptions of church establishment largely revolved around the notion or reality of *aiga*. As *aiga* Samoans came to Aotearoa New Zealand in the pursuit of a more prosperous life. Indeed, it was in the name of their *aiga* in Samoa that many braved the unknown elements of migration so that the benefits of the new context could be shared and relayed with members of the *aiga* back home. Such a behavior and culture is still alive and well today by way of remittances, and the sending of countless food and cargo to support and foster families in Samoa. So, it is only understandable that as they worshipped as *aiga* in the PIC that any split from the established church would come in the form of a split of *aiga*. But, again, with the absence of such a reality in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is the *aiga* that has taken up this critical role. In essence, in the view of many Samoans, the church at its centre is built up, sustained by the strength and support of the *aiga* that attend.

Therefore, if the *aiga* in Aotearoa New Zealand is the basic unit of existence to which Samoans attest to in this new *siosiomaga*, and is the basic unit to which the CCCSANZ was established, then it is clear that the *aiga* and the sustaining of the life of the *aiga*, is a

paramount concern for Samoans in the CCCS. Thus, any *faiifeau* identity that is called to serve in the CCCSANZ must be prepared to acknowledge the importance of this fundamental relationship, and conduct their ministry accordingly. This is not to say that the *aiga* is to become the primary purpose for the existence of the church as already mentioned. Rather, it is to more to highlight that without maintaining the vitality and life of the *aiga*, in nourishing its many needs in this *siosiomaga*, the *faiifeau* identity will be guilty of spearheading a church whose *feau* and *galuega* creates imbalances in which resources, finances and time are starved from the *aiga* to the peril of a sustainable future for the church itself. Indeed, it is clear, that the *faiifeau* that acknowledges the need to balance the welfare of the church against the health of the *aiga*, will no doubt succeed in promoting a more relational and loving Gospel, reflective of the intrinsically relational and loving Triune God at the heart of its message.

4.2.4. A new church – A new *faiifeau* identity?

The reality of this relatively new church the CCCSANZ, as a church of the *aiga*, calls for a new *faiifeau* identity. This identity acknowledges that the *aiga* is to be appreciated as occupying the central position of the church and its ministry in this new context. The implications of this reality are critical for the *faiifeau* identity because as the potential benefactor of the *aiga* resources and goodwill, they possess the status, power and ability to redirect the resources, or at least re-educate *aiga* on their priorities in this new *siosiomaga*. Such an acute awareness will begin with the realisation that unlike the village setting, it is no longer the geographic centre of people's living. For example, the reality for Samoans living in urban areas is that the church complex is very much divorced from their close proximity, unless you are the *faiifeau* yourself, who in many cases have their houses on the church

property. So people must make the effort to leave their homes to attend church, and be a part of the life and activities of the church. It is much easier for people to be absent than it is in a *nu'u* setting, for example, due to the lack of finances funding their transportation costs.

These details also reveal the reality that the church or the church grounds are no longer the centre of activity for the *au-lotu*. Rather, the local school, shopping centre, bus depot, library, or gym and sports fields, have taken over that privileged place, as *aiga* work out and align their membership in relation to the *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele*, on a daily basis. With this notable substitution in geography has come the watering down of the church's impact to be a visual part and presence in the lives of the *au-lotu*, and so the *faiifeau* must not remain isolated in his premises, but is encouraged to frequent the same places of interaction in order to show that the Gospel calls him to meet the *tagata lautele* on their terms and places of engagement. Indeed, this type of activity encourages a much more robust and active type of ministry as opposed to one that the *faiifeau* may be accustomed to in Samoa. Maintaining a visible and active presence in the lives of *tagata lautele*, and in the lives of the *aiga* of his *au-lotu* reflects a commitment by the *faiifeau* to sustaining their long-term wellbeing in their social context and social spheres of life.

4.2.5. Samoan Congregationalism - *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*

As already mentioned, the roots of the CCCSANZ go back to the LMS missionaries and the pioneering work of John Williams in 1830. Historically upheld as the first officially recognised landing of Christian missionaries, the LMS remained a critical part of the EFKS

right up until its relinquishing of any ecclesiastical control in the early 1960s. The dawn of the independent, totally Samoan owned and governed church, the EFKS, quickly began to recognise the independence of Samoans overseas, from the authority of other churches. Deeply interwoven within the fabric of *fa'aSamoa* the EFKS has become a lasting institution boasting of an indigenous way of worshipping and administering the Gospel and its mission. In Samoa, the EFKS remains firmly attached to the pre-established structures of the village and the *fa'aSamoa*, but in overseas countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, the village concept has been propagated by the set up of congregations, totally dependent upon the support and strength of individual *aiga*.

4.2.6. Historical roots - London Missionary Society, LMS Samoan Church

The London Missionary Society was established in 1795. It was non-denominational, meaning that its primary focus in entering the mission field was not so much to evangelise the 'heathen' and establish churches, but more so to just preach the Gospel of Christ, and allow for the indigenous peoples' of the lands to which they would go, the opportunity to choose for themselves, the type and form of church government and ecclesiology they would prefer. Such a policy reflected their inability to foresee the potential differences in perspective that the indigenous people would already have surrounding ideas and practices of religion and spirituality. To commit to such policy, opened them up to the obvious potential for a Christian ministry that did not reflect the original packaging in which they went with. In the case of Samoa, it would require firm and assertive pressure from *fai'feau*, to force the LMS missionaries of the time to recognise that their time had indeed come for parity in leadership and sacramental duty. Eventually such forcefulness, armed with the cultural integration that

had taken place of the corresponding years, ensured that the LMS Samoan Church would become the EFKS by the end of 1962.

4.2.7. Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand

The establishment of the CCCS in Aotearoa New Zealand is reflective of the move to independence which was taking place in Samoa at the time. Unlike the Samoan situation, the call of independence from the PIC was not so much a reflection of the wider political scene and its impact on the church, but as already raised, it was a direct consequence of a determined front on the part of particular *aiga* in the PIC to align themselves with the EFKS in Samoa, and a belief that this alignment would ensure that their language, customs, and way of worshipping would be preserved for future generations. Such details point towards a realisation that the initial establishment of the church was a decision made by the parents and elders of the time, in their estimation as to what was best for their *aiga* at the time.

Therefore, a key ingredient for a continuing relevance of the church would be the ability of the parents and elders, in partnership with the *faiifeau* identity and his *galuega*, to educate the children to ensure that the Samoan language, customs and traditions that were cited as reasons for its formation, were kept at the forefront of both *aiga* and church activity. In so much, that it would not be enough that the maintenance of such practices were to continue, but that there would need to be a constant commitment to ensure that the generation to follow would be equipped with enough skill and understanding to continue to uphold their ideals and objectives of preservation. In order for the *faiifeau* identity to be effective in this role, he would need to understand the daily struggles and environment of this younger generation. To the extent, that even a commitment to upskill himself in vocational skills that would ensure

that he can continue to relate to them on a personal level, would be a welcome addition to his acquired biblical and theological knowledge.

4.2.8. Understanding the Triune God through the structure of a typical liturgy

A typical *lotu* [Sunday Service] for the CCCSANZ would start around 11am on a Sunday morning. The reason for this is because the *Aoga Aso Sā* gathers at 9am, and so a time around 11am is suitable to allow for the *Faiaoga Aso Sā* [Sunday School Teachers] to fulfil their syllabus and programmes. It is anticipated, that generally by 10:30am, the *Aoga Aso Sā* would have finished, to allow time for the worshipping community or congregation to all be seated for the beginning of the *lotu*. Apart from *Folafolaga* and *Upu a le Ta'ita'i*, this order of service is the order that is currently been upheld in Malua Theological College, as a basis or foundational order for the students to continue to develop in consultation with the liturgy guide, *Ia Viia Lou Suafa* when they graduate and became *faifeau* themselves.¹⁰⁵

Table 2: A typical order of service for a Sunday *lotu* of the CCCSANZ

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Valaau Tapuai</i> | Call to worship |
| <i>Amata Lotu</i> | Beginning hymn – A summons to worship |

¹⁰⁵ Hemidemisemiquaver Faaefaleupolu, "The Relevance of E.F.K.S. Worship Today" (BD, Malua Theological College, 2004)., 10ff. Faaefaleupolu's research is a rarity in the Malua Library, in that it deals critically with the contemporary form of the EFKS Worship. Using historical analysis, Faaefaleupolu traces the origins of the EFKS worship structure back to the Puritans, and eventually to the Westminster standards, in the hope of inspiring new, innovative ways of conducting worship in a traditionally conservative church like the EFKS which attempts to synthesise Samoan indigenous/cultural references and the western wrappings of the Gospel, as received through the LMS missionaries.

| | |
|---|--|
| | usually sung standing up; in many ways a type of anthem to prepare people for worship |
| <i>Upu mai le Tusi Paia</i> | Scripture Reading, e.g. based on the theme of the day/Psalm |
| <i>Tatalo mo le Agaga Paia</i> | Prayer of Invocation, i.e. Holy Spirit |
| <i>Pese #1</i> | First Hymn – Usually a Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving, or alternatively, a Hymn of Invocation which focuses on calling upon the Holy Spirit for His leadership and presence in the worship. |
| <i>Faitauina o le Tusi Paia/O Afioga Paia a le Atua</i> | Reading of the Holy Scriptures/His Holy Word |
| <i>Pese #2</i> | Second Hymn – Usually a Hymn about the Scriptures or adversely the Holy Spirit also |
| <i>Tatalo</i> | Prayer – Divided into a Triune structure, i.e. Thanksgiving, Confession and Intercession. |
| <i>Pese#3</i> | Third Hymn – Usually a Hymn about Prayer/the Holy Spirit/preparation for the Word of God – Sermon |
| <i>Lauga</i> | Sermon – or more accurately, a homily of around 20mins. It is announced by the worship leader/ <i>faiifeau</i> identity at the beginning that his sermon is being proclaimed/preached in the Name of the <i>Atua Le Tamā, Le Alo, ma Le Agaga Paia</i> [God the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit]. |
| <i>Pese #4</i> | Fourth Hymn – This Hymn should reflect the theme of the day, or at least anticipate an |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>element of the theme in which the congregation should be encouraged to continue to meditate on.</p> |
| <i>Folafolaga</i> | <p>Church notices – It is the place of the Secretary of the church, to address the congregation. In many cases, the Secretary must be a matai, and almost exclusively a <i>tūlafale</i>. He first will thank the <i>faiifeau</i> for his ‘work’, and will extend the congregations blessings upon him and his family. Then he will remind the church of any important notices for the coming week and extend blessings also to any visitors and the congregation as well. Many churches will have a Treasurer who will also address the congregation regarding their offerings, or money given. Larger congregations may utilise Committees, and different <i>tiakono</i> [deacons] will be responsible for the collection of monies for the Church. In all cases, the names of the congregation according to <i>matāfale</i> [family groupings, usually grouped under a <i>matai</i> title], are read out and accompanied by their corresponding monetary amounts.</p> |
| <i>Upu a le Ta’ita’i</i> | <p>Worship Leader’s words – this is an opportunity for the <i>faiifeau</i> to add any other notices that he may want to particularly emphasise for that week. He also uses this opportunity to thank the congregation for their <i>alofa</i> [love offering/gifts] that him and his family may have received over the past week. This can also be used by the <i>faiifeau</i> as a time to tell a joke or two to leave a light-hearted impression upon the congregation, before he blesses them also and bids them well, before the final prayer of Benediction.</p> |
| <i>Tatalo Fa’ai’u/Tatalo Fa’amanuia</i> | <p>Prayer of Benediction – Prayed exclusively by the <i>faiifeau</i>, and is explicitly Trinitarian in nature. The <i>Agaga Paia</i> here continues to be</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | acknowledged as the Third Person of the Trinity, following a traditional formula where the Father and Son are stated before Him in that order. This is a standard practice in the CCCSANZ and clearly follows a Trinitarian formula. |
|--|--|

From the typical outline of the Sunday *lotu* provided, we can determine the Trinitarian theology that is sustained and preserved on a weekly basis through the regular worship life of the *au-lotu* of the CCCSANZ, under the leadership of the *faiifeau* identity. Right from the outset, there is an attempt to sustain a balance between the *faiifeau* identity and the worshipping community or congregation as they gather. This is because such an order of worship has to also be considered against the physical seatings and set-up of the actual place of worship. The *faiifeau* identity will rise at the front of the church facing the *au-lotu* from an elevated position on the *pulela'a* [pulpit]. The Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of *pulela'a* is comprised of two words, *pule* and *la'a*. *Pule* symbolises the authority of the position and status in which the *faiifeau* identity is leading the worship, and *la'a* points to the fact that one has to 'step onto' or 'up to' such a point of prestige and command.¹⁰⁶ The entire arrangement of the *pulela'a* in relation to the lowered status of the rest of the *au-lotu* sets the scene where the *faiifeau* identity is to be revered as the one who will be sharing and teaching the 'higher knowledge' that he has been trained and equipped to perform. Such a set-up does not allow for closer engagement with the *au-lotu*, or even an 'open' style of *lauga* that would see the *faiifeau* identity come down and walk around the church, and down the aisles. Instead, it is from such a fixed, and established *motu*, which the *lotu* will be conducted, and especially

¹⁰⁶ Pratt., 257 and 164 respectively.

where God's *finagalo* [Will] be preached and proclaimed. Understood and appreciated in this way, the set-up of the *pulela'a* facing the *au-lotu* from an elevated position, where he is unable to actively engage with the *au-lotu* by way of moving around and closer to them, reflects a Samoan preference and motu that reflects the rising of a *tūlafale* when they rise above seated people, to deliver his Samoan oratory.

After the *faiifeau* rises to call the *au-lotu* to worship, then they respond by standing to sing a response in the form of a hymn which is intended to prepare them spiritually and mentally for the worship experience that has begun. After the call to worship is read by the *faiifeau*, then the *au-lotu* promptly seat themselves when the *faiifeau* completes the first prayer of the *lotu*, the prayer of invocation as the final part of the call to worship. The *tatalo mo le Agaga Paia* can be literally translated as the prayer for the Holy Spirit, and in this way is merely a more descriptive term than what can be understood from the word invocation. However, the *Agaga Paia* is prayed to in the context that the *Agaga Paia* originates from *Le Atua, Le Tamā* [God the Father]. This is very intentional and is reflective of the privileging of the *Le Atua, Le Tamā* within the CCCSANZ as being the Source of all life and blessings. In other words, the *faiifeau* identity leads the *au-lotu* to pray for the presence and *papatisoga* of the *Agaga Paia* which originates from *Le Atua, Le Tamā*. The *tatalo* concludes with the reference to *Iesu Keriso*, in whose name all *tatalo* are made. Therefore, we see that at the very first instance there is a Trinitarian formula to the order of worship, and an underpinning theological preference that is exposed. The danger in such a *tatalo*, is always that the *Agaga Paia*, is not seen as a 'Person' in His own right, and instead seen as an invisible 'Power' or 'Force.' Care has to always be taken in the wording of the *tatalo* to reflect the understanding

that the *Agaga Paia* too is just as much a ‘Person’ in the Triune God, as the *Tamā* and *Alo* and that it is only because as ‘Persons’ they have different roles in embodying in how the *au-lotu* and *faiifeau* identity come into relationship with a God, who is a relational Triunity by nature.

As can be seen from the Table 2, even the four hymns that are sung in the *lotu*, demarcate certain sections of the service, and are also selected on the grounds of such relevance, so that the experience of the *lotu* in the CCCSANZ is a wholistic one. The first hymn either reiterates the need to emphasise the dependence on the *Agaga Paia* to lead and bless the *lotu*, or a hymn of praise and thanksgiving is prepared to reflect the joyous confidence that has been gained through the expectation that the *Agaga Paia* is now amongst the *au-lotu*. The second hymn, because it follows the *Tusi Paia* [Bible] reading, again, either reinforces the critical and crucial importance of the Scriptures to the *au-lotu* and the spiritual walk, or another hymn is selected which focuses on spiritual renewal, preparing the *au-lotu* for the *tatalo* that follows. After the *tatalo*, the third hymn will either remind the *au-lotu* about the value of maintaining a healthy prayer life, or else will call for a need for the *Agaga Paia* to prepare both the *faiifeau* identity and the *au-lotu* for the *lauga*. At the conclusion of the *lauga*, is the fourth hymn, which is geared to reinforce the Gospel teachings and message that was preached and shared in the *lauga*. Then, after the notices, and a final word from the *faiifeau* identity, the *Tatalo Fa’amanuia* is prayed by the *faiifeau* identity,

Ia tumau mai i o matou luga, ma luga o lau fanau uma i le lalolagi atoa, le manuia ma le filemu o Lau Afio Lo matou Tamā, Le alofa silisili ese o Iesu Keriso, lo matou Alii, ma lo matou Fa’aola, i le ma le mafutaga vāvā lalata ma Lau Afio Agaga Paia e, nei seia o’o i le fa’avavau, fa’avavau lava...Amene.

[May it rest upon us, and all your children in the world, your blessing and peace, o Most High, our Father, the most supreme love of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and the close fellowship and communion with your Highness the Holy Spirit, today and forever more...Amen].

By closing the *lotu* off with a traditional Benediction, we can actually see the possibilities of appreciating an alternative framework, in which the order of service can function as Trinity. First, the *tatalo mo le Agaga Paia*, sets the scene and shows that the CCCSANZ itself is participating in a dynamic movement, by which the *Agaga Paia* is central to the offering up of worship to the Triune God or *Le Tamā, Le Alo, ma Le Agaga Paia*. Secondly, the main prayer, which occupies the central place of the order of service, is not only itself of a Tripartite nature, but also reinforces the dependency of the *au-lotu* on the *Agaga Paia* to be able to communicate effectively and offer up faithful worship. Finally, the Benediction concludes the service, with an emphatic statement of hope, and faith, which recognises and acknowledges the ever-presence of the *Agaga Paia* in the *au-lotu*, and reminds them, that the gift of salvation, and fellowship with *Le Atua*, is indeed Trinitarian at heart. *Le Tamā* is the origin of peace and blessing, *Iesu Keriso* has made such a new life possible, and it is the *Agaga Paia*, that is we are in communion and fellowship with in an intimate and personal way, that will ensure that our joy will not be temporary, but an everlasting reality, recognised in the eternity of life with the Triune God.

However, the most likely way that the *au-lotu* will view the entire *lotu* is that its separate parts are all interconnected and are designed to prepare the *faifeau* identity and the *au-lotu* for the climax of the *lotu*, and in many ways the centre of the worship service in the CCCSANZ, the *lauga*. Such a prominence to the *lauga* has already been intimated in the elevated

pulela'a that is the accepted format of all CCCSANZ, because of the symbolism attached to the proclaiming and receiving of the *Upu o le Atua* [Word of God]. The *Upu o le Atua* that seeks to grow the faith of the *au-lotu*, and speak to all their life situations, issues and problems they may be experiencing.

4.2.9. A closer look at the Trinitarian nature of the Hymns in the CCCSANZ

The structure of the Hymnal for the CCCSANZ has 19 main divisions. The first four divisions specifically focus on the Trinity, and there is even a section that is deemed specifically for *faiifeau*. However, on closer inspection, the reference for *faiifeau* is an abbreviation for hymns that would be appropriate for the use in the Ordination ceremony. These divisions reflect not only the prioritising of the belief in the Triune God, but also a commitment to present and focus hymns around particular themes or topics.

As to be expected there are specific themes designated for the festive seasons of the Church calendar, such as Easter and Christmas. But note must also be taken of the fact that there is also a focus on specifying hymns that should be used in the *Lotu i le Aiga* [Family Evening Services] and ones that focus on specific ceremonies, such as the ordination of new *faiifeau*, *Papatisoga* and *Fa'amanatuga*. Even preferred hymns for the children or for school are given, as well as a section committed to the presentation of Psalms for the use in private and communal worship too. The first column of the table below provides the Samoan title given to the main sections of the Hymn Book. The second column is my translation of those sections, and the final column gives the corresponding Hymn numbers to each section.

Table 3. The Structure of the Hymnal – O Pese ma Viiga i le Atua¹⁰⁷

| <i>O upu o pese/O uiga o pese</i> ¹⁰⁸ | The words of the Hymns/The meaning of the Hymns. | Hymn Numbers. |
|---|---|----------------------|
| <i>O le Atua Le Tama - O Viiga Ia te Ia</i> | God The Father – Praises Unto Him | 1-23 |
| <i>O Le Atua Le Alo - O Le Togiola na ia faia</i> | God The Son - The Atonement He made | 24-37 |
| <i>O Le Agaga Paia</i> | The Holy Spirit | 99-116 |
| <i>O le Ola Faaleagaga - O le Valaau Alofa</i> | The Spiritual Life – The Call of Love | 117-132 |
| <i>Mo Faapotopotoga Lotu</i> | For Congregational Worship | 188-295 |
| <i>Mo Lotu i le Aiga</i> | For Worship in Families | 296-321 |
| <i>Mo le Ekalesia</i> | For the Church | 322-328 |
| <i>Mo le Faaiipoipoga</i> | For Weddings | 329-332 |

¹⁰⁷ This is the full title of the Hymnal which is dated November 1909.

¹⁰⁸ It is interesting to note, that this list originally begins on pp 495 under the title, “*O upu o pese*”, but then on the following page, concludes with the title, “*O uiga o pese.*” The synonymous use of these titles point to the central importance of the wording of the hymns, and the relationship they have with the intended meanings that are to be upheld in the CCCS.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| | | |
| <i>Mo le Papatisoga</i> | For Baptism | 333-338 |
| <i>Mo Faifeau</i> | For the Church Minister | 339-340 |
| <i>Mo le Faaulufalega o Falesa</i> | For the Committance of a New Church | 341-344 |
| <i>Mo le Kerisimasi</i> | For Christmas | 345-347 |
| <i>Mo le Eseta</i> | For Easter | 348-351 ¹⁰⁹ |
| <i>Mo le Tausaga Fou</i> | For the New Year | 348-351 |
| <i>Mo le Talosia ai le Nuū Moni</i> | For praying for the True Country | 352-356 |
| <i>Mo Aoga</i> | For Schools | 357-394 |
| <i>O Salamo</i> | Psalms | 393-425 |

In this sub-section, we look at two popular hymns that not only specifically mention the Trinity in its lyrics, but also contain implicit notions of Trinitarian thought and theology. The first is a common, and well-known hymn by all Samoans, again, regardless of denominational lines,

¹⁰⁹ This section is listed in the summary of sections at the back of the Hymnal, but does not actually exist. It is not clear why a section on Easter songs would be listed, but none included as is the case here. This is why the New Year songs occupy the same Hymn numbers in the summary above.

*Faafetai i le Atua – Pese #92*¹¹⁰

*Faafetai i le Atua,
Le na tatou tupu ai,
Ina ua na alofa fua
Ia te i tatou uma nei.
Ia pepese,
Aleluia, faafetai.*

Thanks be to God,
From whom we have come from,
Because of his freely-given love
That has been given to us all.
Sing now!
Hallelujah, Thank-you.

*Faafetai i lona Alo,
Le na afio mai luga,
Le ua fai ma faapaolo
Ai le puapuaga.
Ia pepese,
Aleluia, faafetai.*

Thanks be to His Son,
Whom came from above,
Whom has become a shelter
From the suffering,
Sing now!
Hallelujah, Thank-you

*Faafetai i le Agaga,
Le fesoasoani mai,
E manuia ai talosaga,
Atoa uma mea e fai.
Ia pepese,
Aleluia, faafetai.*

Thanks be to the Spirit,
The One who is helping us,
Through whom our prayers are blessed
As well as everything we do.
Sing now!
Hallelujah, Thank-you.¹¹¹

What is clear from the beginning of the Hymn is that it is a Hymn of thanksgiving and praise. A popular hymn at any service, its trinomial structure is obvious and encouraging. The first verse or stanza offers up an holistic approach to the appreciation of God the Father. Here, the Samoan idea is very clear, that *Le Atua* [God the Father] is indeed to be worshipped primarily as the Creator God, the giver of life, and the origin of our very beings. Such a position is to be shared by everyone who will give voice to the Hymn, and is a resounding statement and declaration of faith, for all who may not share the same belief, but are able to hear and understand the clarity and succinct nature of the words. The association with singing, giving

¹¹⁰ CCCS, *O Pese Ma Viiga I Le Atua.*, 89.

¹¹¹ Author's translation.

praise, in the spirit of thanksgiving, climaxes the first verse and sets the tone for the rest of the Hymn.

The second verse moves to give thanks to the Second Person of the Trinity, the *Alo*. What must be noted here, is that the *Alo* is not just a Son, but is described as His Son. The relationship between the Father and the Son is offered more than a metaphorical or symbolic rendering of the Trinity, but indeed a personal relationship and connection is upheld here through the particular wording and arrangement of the Samoan words. Again, in this hymn, The Son is God the Father's Son. The third and final verse of the Hymn proceeds to give thanks to the Spirit. The *Agaga*'s role that is emphasised here is the one of the Helper, but also the one whom our prayers are blessed through, and it is the *Agaga* that in some way holds the key to all our blessings. The *Agaga* here is firstly treated as the Third Person of the Trinity in His own right. By doing so, the Holy Spirit of the Triune God, is recognised and acknowledged through personal categories. He is more than a mere force, more than an extension of the Father and/or the Son, but the Spirit's role in the Trinity is presented here, as the unifying link and connector for the faithful and for future blessings. In other words, the Spirit's presence in the lives of believers, and the Church, expressly opens them up to the divine life of the Trinity, which is the only way to receive blessings. In this way, the blessings that are received in life, are not only given a divine origin, but also a scriptural precedence, in that it is the Spirit the engages, energises and empowers the Church to be everything they can be.

The following hymn is sung at the burial site after the deceased has been lowered into the grave, and just before the Benediction or closing prayer. There are six verses in total to the hymn, but it is customary practice to only sing the first two verses. These two verses interplay notions of sleep, the night, rest, work, and calling offering up a rich insight into Samoan beliefs of the nature of physical death, and the underpinning hope of the new life after death:

Talofa, uso e, tofaina oe – Pese #268¹¹²

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Talofa, uso e, tofaina oe!</i> | O dear, brother/sister, you are asleep! |
| <i>Ua sau le itupo e malolo;</i> | The part of the night has come, to rest; |
| <i>E ala oe pe a mavae le po.</i> | You will awake, when the night has passed. |
| <i>Tofa! Tofa! Tofa!</i> | Good Night! Good Night! Good Night! |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Ni popotuu ea o lou nei folau,</i> | Is this the appointed time for your death, |
| <i>Fa ita ua le uma au feau?</i> | I thought your work was not complete? |
| <i>O lou Matai o loo ua valaau.</i> | It is your <i>Matai</i> that is calling |
| <i>Tofa! Tofa! Tofa!</i> | Good Night! Good Night! Good Night! |

What is immediately striking about this hymn is the fact that it is directly addressing the deceased. Almost unconsciously, and without explanation, there is a united and assumed belief that the dead is cognisant of such an address. This faith laden practice builds upon the spirit of hope that pervades the shortened version of the hymn. There is no mention of death as a parting of sorrow, or a time of immense despair. In contrast, the language describes death as sleep or rest, and appeals to its natural occurrence. There is nothing to fear. Death itself is part of a natural order of events. There is an air of contentment relayed in the lyrics as death is seen as just an inevitable part of life.

¹¹² CCCS, *O Pese Ma Viiga I Le Atua.*, 261.

Against this backdrop, the mourners are defiant that their beloved brother/sister will awake in due time. Just as it is natural for the night to pass in this life, so too will it be in the dawn of the new. As the title of the tune suggests, the Christian faith is exemplified in the assertive exclamation of Good Night! The message is clear: the resurrection of the deceased in the new life after death is assured. The night will pass. A new day will come.

The second verse is more subtle in its theology. The deceased now is addressed as a servant, or *tautua*. God is the *Matai* who calls them into the new life. The *Matai's* call is life empowering in regards to the faithful. As a *matai's* word is respected and obeyed in the social context of Samoan relations, so too is the *Matai's* call effective in not only this life but also the next. The mourners may question the timeliness of the *Matai's* will and purposes, by questioning whether the deceased's works are complete, but any misunderstanding is quickly dispelled, as faith envelops any doubt, when the hymn is sung, as it climaxes to proclaim that the *Matai* himself is behind the death of the beloved. Death is a divine calling, a call from life to life. The insistence of the CCCSANZ in utilizing Samoan indigenous/cultural references to understand the Triune God as the *Matai* allows for a Unitarian belief to be superimposed over the identity of God. Thus, the *fai'feau* identity as the *tautua* of the God-*Matai*, is seen not as a servant that must embody the Triune God's relationality in life, and proclaim the Gospel, but rather he is perceived as an uncritical servant, who serves his *Matai* without question, and must 'earn' the respect and adoration of his *Matai* through his faithful obedience, and patient suffering.

4.2.10. The Triune God - Statement of Doctrine of the CCCSANZ

A final siosiomaga of the *au-lotu* that we will survey, that is crucial to an understanding of the relationship between the Trinitarian understanding in the CCCSANZ and the *faiifeau* identity is the Statement of Doctrine of the CCCSANZ. In the General Assembly meeting held at Malua Theological College in May 1957, the Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church was unanimously approved.¹¹³ Known as the *Ekalesia Samoa* [Samoan Church] at the time, such a declaration of the doctrinal beliefs of the CCCSANZ at the time was the result of a five year consultation conducted by the Commission that was established to enquire into the Life and Word of the Church. The consultation process was extensive and comprehensive.

The Statement of Doctrine was read out in every *nu'u* and/or *au-lotu*, and revisions and amendments were received from the *Matagaluega* [Districts], *Au Toeaina* [Committee of Elders] as well as the *Au Matutua* [Directors of the Samoan Church in London].¹¹⁴ Despite

¹¹³ *The Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church (L.M.S.): O Mataupu Silisili O Le Faavae Faa-Le-Agaga O Le Ekalesia Samoa (L.M.S.)*, 2. The General Assembly of the CCCS is held every year for two weeks in the beginning of May. The first week involves the meeting of church's sub-committees before the General Assembly meets in the second week to deliberate over any matters of concern brought forward from the various committee meetings. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, General Secretary and Treasurer of the Church are members of all the sub-committees and also preside over the General Assembly. It is at the General Assembly that the Deputy Chairpersons are elected at the end of every General Assembly, as the previous Deputy automatically becomes the Chairperson after one year. In 1990, two critical amendments were made impacting directly on the nature of the relationship between the *faiifeau* identity and the rest of the church. Firstly, it was ratified, that only *faiifeau* can be voted as Deputy Chairpersons, and secondly that the retirement age of the *faiifeau* would now be 70 years old.

¹¹⁴ The church at this time was still administered by the LMS in London. It wasn't until five years later when the church became independent, that the church came under the full control of the Samoans. For a detailed history of the period leading up to the independence of the both the Ekalesia Samoa and the country, and the

the fact that the Statement of Doctrine dates back to the period prior to when full Samoan independence from the LMS in London had been achieved, the reprinting in 1995, and the continual issuing to *a'oa'o* [theological students] of the Statement of Doctrine as part of their theological training, such a thoroughly well prepared document has stood the test of time and reflects the church's belief in its continuing relevance and applicability. Indeed, as expressed by the Commission who were charged with leading the consultation process, "it has been not by one man, but by the whole Church, in order to set forth the Christian Doctrine which it teaches."¹¹⁵

The tenth topic, clause or faith statement, of the Statement of Doctrine reveals the understanding of the Holy Trinity that was agreed upon, after the extensive consultation process,

In response to the Revelation of God in Christ (in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily), we worship God in the unity of the Godhead and the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three eternal persons of the same substance, equal in power.¹¹⁶

intertwining of both ecclesial and political factors, see Featuna'i Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence 1900 - 1962* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004).

¹¹⁵ CCCS, *The Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church (L.M.S.): O Mataupu Silisili O Le Faavae Faa-Le-Agaga O Le Ekalesia Samoa (L.M.S.)*, 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

The Doctrine of the Trinity for the CCCSANZ is succinct and accurate, but visibly lacks any scriptural references to support its content.¹¹⁷ It is in Christ that God has revealed Himself. In Christ, dwelt the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. Thus, the worship of God in the CCCSANZ takes into consideration the “unity of the Godhead” and the “mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” However, an assumption is made that there is a clear understanding already shared by all potential readers, the *faiifeau* identity, his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele* in regards to the notion of “three eternal persons of the same substance, equal in power.” Due to the bi-lingual nature of the document, a closer reading of the Samoan reveals the potential meaning and nuanced understanding intended, “*o peresona faavavau e tolu o le Atua, e tasi lo latou uiga ma ua tutusa lelei lava i le pule ma le mana.*”

First, we see that there is no clear definition given for “persons” in the Samoan rendering of the doctrine. The word has merely been transliterated, which reveals that the Samoan version is actually a ‘translation’ of the English. This likelihood is understandable, especially if the LMS were still in charge of the Ekalesia Samoa at the time. So a possible meaning is only attained through a consideration of the latter part of the sentence, which seeks to describe the nature of the “three eternal persons.” The Samoan phrase given for the “same substance,” is translated as “*e tasi lo latou uiga.*” The word *uiga* according to Pratt has two possible meanings. The first being “an explanation, the meaning of anything,” and the second is, “manner, way of acting.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Unlike the Samoan version of the Westminster Confession which contains a detailed page on the Doctrine of the Trinity, complete with biblical references which act as supporting evidence and justification, see *The Presbyterian Church, O le Faatuatuga Faakerisiano: Westminster Confession of Faith into Samoan*, (Gisborne, Westminster Standard, 2000), 7.

¹¹⁸ Pratt., 64.

From the context of the sentence we can critically discern that a more accurate reading would utilize the second meaning and thus we can translate the Samoan to mean that the “three eternal persons have the same manner, way of acting.” This translation immediately points to a Samoan understanding of the nature of the “same substance” as pertaining to the actions, activity or functions of the Triune God. Second, the “persons” have the same nature of *pule* and *mana* [authority and power]. Again, we see that the individual “persons” in this definition are highlighted not for their relational value, but more so for the uniformity that they produce. In other words, the focus is on the fact that either “eternal persons” can be equally classed as God, and therefore their shared divinity is the primary and defining character. Such a declaration lacks a biblical consideration of the dynamic, and relational nature of the Triune God, that not only exists within the Godhead, but also is the more faithful rendering of how the Triune God in Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit both creates new life, and ultimately sets out redeem life itself.

4.3. The *fai feau* identity and the Triune God in relation to *tagata lautele*

The final *siosiomaga* of the *fai feau* identity that we must examine for its Trinitarian content is in relation to *tagata lautele*. Indeed, to gauge an understanding of this *siosiomaga*, we can look at the arrival of the LMS missionaries and critically appreciate how the arrival of the Gospel and the call to fulfil the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God by the *fai feau* identity, and whether at its heart, is a call to engage and deal intimately and with purpose with *tagata lautele*.

4.3.1. The arrival of the Gospel and the LMS missionaries in Samoa – a call for *tagata lautele*

The LMS missionaries are the historical fore-bearers of the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ.

Despite the fact that prior to their arrival, Samoans had their own religious system in which certain individuals had specific roles concerning contact with the Divine and communication with the after-life and spirits, it is because of the unique Christological and salvific nature of the Gospel message that sets the *faiifeau* apart.¹¹⁹ Instead of the *faiifeau* identity occupying the apex of the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and in relation to *tagata lautele*, it were the *matai*, who also acted as *ositaulaga* [priests] along with their *feagaiga* [sisters] who were largely responsible for discerning the divine will of their *aitu* [gods].¹²⁰

As Tzerkezoff declares, it was part and parcel of the acceptance of ‘Jehovah’ that saw the elevation of the ‘pastor’ to such a level. The new god obviously did not come alone. There were his messengers, in this case the Protestant pastors from the London Missionary Society, who made their way from eastern Polynesia (Tahiti) westwards, arriving in Samoa in 1830. In a certain fashion, the *faiifeau* identity as pastor became synonymous with his God: he was immediately promoted to level 1, just as Jehovah took the place of *Tagaloa*. But he could not pre-empt the spot previously occupied by the traditional priest. The traditional priest was the

¹¹⁹ Lalomilo Kamu, *Samoan Culture & Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 27-29.

¹²⁰ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 24-35; 52-60. Meleisea’s short history combines the best of western scholarship, and oral traditions to provide a contrast of pre-Christian times and the arrival of the first missionaries to Samoa. The later pages referenced here specifically deal with the CCCS, and highlight the relative speed with which the Samoans received the LMS missionaries and the Gospel that they brought with them.

matai himself.¹²¹ Tzerkezoff's use of levels alludes to a pre-existent hierarchical structure in the Samoan cosmological worldview, with *Tagaloa* occupying the supreme level as God or The Unbounded and Limitless One.¹²²

In essence, such a structure points to a definite complexity in the pre-Christian perceptions that Samoans had of the notion of divinity, and its apparent relationship with everyday life. Tavita Maliko also presents a similar view of this hierarchy, and similarly identifies the relatively 'new' position that the pastor was promoted to as a result of the recognition afforded to him by the receiving paramount chief or *matai Malietoa Vaiinupo*,

The teachers of knowledge (missionaries and ministers) are the only possessors of this Godly wisdom who are qualified to interpret the Bible about the will of God and about moral behaviour. This text elevates ministers to a status above other teaching professionals, who teach what is often referred to in Samoan as *poto salalau* (scattered wisdom) or *poto fa'a-le-lalolagi* (worldly wisdom) as opposed to this divine wisdom.¹²³

Such a description reinforces the benevolent nature in which the first LMS missionaries of John Williams and Charles Barff were received by the paramount chief *Malietoa Vaiinupo* at Sapapaalii in 1830. But Tzerkezoff's view avoids the fact that Williams and Barff were accompanied on that maiden encounter by a *matai* named *Fauea* and his wife *Puaseisei*, as

¹²¹ Serge Tcherkezoff, "Culture, Nation, Society: Secondary change and fundamental transformations in Western Samoa. Towards a model for the study of cultural dynamics," in *The Changing South Pacific: Identities and Transformations*, ed. Serge Tcherkezoff and Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005), 271.

¹²² Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa, *Tapuai: Samoan Worship* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003). Aiono-Le Tagaloa's research identifies the centrality of the belief in Tagaloalagi with the entire honoric system, social structure and religious beliefs of pre-Christian Samoa. She argues that in many ways, the churches that retain these elements of fa'aSamoa continue to carry both systems in Christian garb.

¹²³ Maliko., 262.

well as six *Ma'ohi* (Tahitian) and two *Aitutakian* (Cook Island) teachers, their families and children. Such a presence made communication possible, but also granted the Samoans valuable insight as to how “they, as the indigenous people, could” continue on the work of the LMS Missionaries in their own way. In this sense, Lange is adamant of the pervading influence of the Island teachers,

Until resident British missionaries arrived in 1836, the LMS teachers from eastern Polynesia were the Samoans’ main models for Christian ministry. The Mission managed to break free of *Malietao*’s restrictions on the teacher’s movements, and for many decades the *Ma'ohi* and Cook Islander missionaries continued to arrive and work in different parts of Samoa. After the coming of Europeans to take control of the mission, the Polynesian teachers were valuable and experienced assistants, often supervising Samoan helpers or even taking charge of stations.¹²⁴

It is clear from Lange’s assertion that the foundational model for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ was not initially that of the LMS missionary, but of the Island teachers that accompanied them. They were the ones who were charged with the learning of the Samoan language, adjusting to the Samoan cultural norms, but also and more importantly, the first expositors of the Christian Gospel and theology to the Samoan people. Lange also suggests that under *Malietao* the teachers were initially restricted in their movements, highlighting a possible political motivation and understanding of their presence on the part of *Malietao*.

However, this point also reinforces the ideal, that just like John Williams, the teachers were to be ‘itinerant’ preachers, ready and willing to go from village to village to teach and preach to the people. It is not clear whether John Williams’ desire for the teachers to disperse and be mobilised has any resonances with the Wesleyan tradition, but what is clear is that Williams

¹²⁴ Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity*, 80.

call for such mobility was not quickly granted by *Malietao*, as upon his return, Williams still found the Island teachers based where he had left them.¹²⁵ In many ways, the initial activities of the Island teachers were an adequate reflection of their understanding of the fundamental principle that the LMS attested to; their purpose was not so much to preach a particular style of church or ecclesiology, but was to simply convey the Gospel. As Andrew Walls shares, the altruistic nature of the principle was clear and concise,

The LMS stated its “fundamental principle” in the following terms: Our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government...but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen.¹²⁶

So the Island teachers were in many ways acting from a very superior position, both socially and spiritually. This superiority planted the seeds that in both social and religious spheres, to which the creation of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ would continue to accommodate in Samoa. However, according to Garrett, the intention of the LMS missionaries was to replace the “older holy men and prophets of the village” with the *faiifeau* who would be the figure of Christian leadership that would influence and eventually infiltrate the traditional social order of the villages.

¹²⁵ Liuaana., 1-36. Liuaana provides an informed and integrated history of the first 50 years of the LMS mission, to highlight the interwoven relationship between the Samoans ecclesial and political ambitions and how they set the tone for eventual independence in 1962. In many ways, Malietao’s reluctance to distribute the island teachers was a reflection of the already well established political system of pre-Christian Samoa that was already in place, where ‘new knowledge’ was heavily guarded because of its status elevation and benefits.

¹²⁶ Quoted by Walls in, David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 10th ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 330.

However, the LMS missionaries would discover quickly that the *faiifeau* would become very powerful in their own right, as the *faiifeau* successfully rallied for ordination, and campaigned for a yearly donation to be solely committed to their financial welfare, all on the back of support from the people. Despite Garret's historical accuracy, his view is somewhat incomplete. In suggesting that the LMS missionaries were solely responsible for the creation of the *faiifeau*, Garrett fails to recognise just how pro-active the Samoans were in establishing and propagating the LMS ministry and village pastorate.

Taking a more holistic view of the historical situation, and consistent with the ebbs and flows of the LMS ministry of the time, Raeburn Lange posits that the *faiifeau* and his subsequent identity, was more the result of a evolution and marriage between the fading notions of traditional, Samoan spiritual and religious leadership, and the missionary objectives of the LMS missionaries,

As a "teacher" and "pastor" the faife'au was an innovation in Samoan society. But his duties as worship leader, even without the ritual acts of the sacramental celebrant, were comparable with some roles in traditional religion, and although the priestly functions of "pagan" times fell formally into abeyance, they were to a considerable degree transferred by the Samoans to their new religious leaders. The faife'au was no priest in the eyes of the LMS, but to his flock he was the main point of contact between individuals and God, and the one who mediated between the village community and the divine giver of all life's blessings. Some of these preceptions are implicit in one of the titles still given to the pastor today: the sui (representative) of God.¹²⁷

Lange's insights accentuates the obvious differences between how the Samoans perceived the *faiifeau* and his subsequent identity, and what exactly the LMS intended when they pursued

¹²⁷ Lange, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa*, 23.

such an innovative creation. In fact, Lange goes further, and correctly hints towards the successful maintenance of these 19th century Samoan perspectives right up to this contemporary time, with the fact that the *faiifeau* continuing in his pivotal role as mediator between the people and God, as well as the channel or pivot-point, through which God's blessings for life are realised. The title *sui* [representative] of God implies that such a view was reflective of that of the Samoan people in the early formation of the *faiifeau* identity. Honoured, revered, and to a certain degree 'worshipped' by Samoans and the church community, the *faiifeau* is addressed and known by many 'titles'.¹²⁸ In turn, these 'titles' reflect the degree of respect that the institution has acquired over time. The *faiifeau* are known as the *Auauna o le Atua* [The Servant of God], *Tamā Fa'aleagaga* [Spiritual Father] and *Ta'ita'i o le Ekalesia* [Leader of the Church] amongst others, reveals the religious and cultural privilege and power that pervades the *faiifeau* identity.¹²⁹

This status and position is characterized by an undisputed position of authority in matters relating to church leadership and governance, and also promotes a life of luxury, material wealth and prestige, which runs in stark contrast with the reality of Samoans and the CCCSANZ. After quickly surveying the impact that the early LMS missionaries may have had on the future formation of the *faiifeau* identity in relation to *tagata lautele*, we will

¹²⁸ Ioka., 25-35. Ioka's pioneering foray into explaining the different 'cultural titles' attributed to the *faiifeau* identity reveal a deep relationship of these titles with the *motu* or *siosiomaga* of Samoa. However, one of the underlying arguments in this thesis, is that such 'cultural titles' or what I prefer to term Samoan indigenous/cultural references always need to be re-interpreted anew. Especially in relation to the *faiifeau* identity, because it must not only embody and be relevant to the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele* that he has been called to serve, but also it should be faithful to the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua*, and the relational and dynamic nature of the Triune God.

proceed to identify the key contours of *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele*, in which the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ must seriously consider.

4.3.2. *Tagata lautele* of *Niu Sila*, *Nu'u Sila* or *Aotearoa*?

Understanding the social location of *tagata lautele* in relation to the different ways Samoans have come to label and know Aotearoa New Zealand helps us to see the potential impact it may have on the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, and how they could perceive their role in such a *siosiomaga*. There are three ways of referring to Aotearoa New Zealand used by Samoans. The first term *Niu Sila* merely looks at making a phonetical rendering or transliteration of the word New Zealand. At first glance, this transliteration of the words poses little significance. But on closer examination, there is a greater potential for the term to provide a definition of context based on the activity of migration, and the 'pull' or 'attraction' of the *Niu* (coconut tree) that symbolically represents this new land. This is a valid definition when it is understood that the Samoan word for *Sila* can also point to the action of 'focussing one's attention' or 'looking intently on a particular thing/event etc'. So according to this definition, *Niu Sila*, refers to a 'coconut tree that demands our attention'.

Building upon this first definition, is the second term: *Nu'u Sila*. In my experience, it is the most popular and perhaps in that sense, the most correct rendering for the word New Zealand. This is most likely because this translation allows for the consideration of the country as an actual physical place or land, because the Samoan word for *Nu'u* signifies a particular village/place/land. So by incorporating what we already know from the meaning of the word *Sila*, then *Nu'u Sila* easily becomes, 'place/land/village of attraction/opportunity/new beginnings.' Such a translation and belief serves to subtly incorporate New Zealand into the

language of villages, thus opening the possibility of viewing this country as a mere outpost of Samoa. In other words, 'a place which answers to or is responsible to Samoa' is an obvious possibility of meaning. What also becomes apparent if the word *Nu'u* is used, is that the reference is not only limited to the land, but also encapsulates the reality of the people who inhabit the land.

The third, and probably the most obvious reference to New Zealand is *Aotearoa*. It is customarily heard at official gatherings and ceremonies, in which orators and matai reside over. By using this indigenous reference, Samoans acknowledge the indigenous foundations of this land, and to an extent, actively acknowledge the status of the Maori people as *Tangata Whenua* (indigenous custodians/people of this land). Such usage not only reinforces the value of knowing one's indigenous roots, values, histories, and traditions, but it also highlights an awareness of a shared Polynesian lineage regarding the intertwining of origins and genealogies of the Maori and Samoan people.

4.3.3. The significance of understanding the *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele* literally and symbolically

It is made clear by these three different ways of referring to Aotearoa New Zealand that such definitions carry with them different implications for understanding the context. If we are to take seriously the first definition of *Niu Sila*, then two factors can not be taken for granted.

First, the symbolic representation of the land posed by the *Niu* is problematic. This is because the *Niu* as a tree of sustenance and life can not grow in this country's harsh weather and environmental conditions. Secondly, this reference is primarily used to provide a

transliteration, so therefore any attempt to define it symbolically is not an actual part of why people choose to use this particular term. Any symbolic meaning therefore, is totally assumed and must be deemed as subconscious at best.

However, the term *Nu'u Sila* carries connotations which clearly can influence how people perceive and relate to this new land and country. By definition, we have seen that such a term carries the potential for people to perceive this new country as another village of Samoa. Such a seamless way of defining Aotearoa New Zealand, has the potential for Samoans to disregard the differences in context that encounter them on a regular basis. Assumptions can be made that Samoa is still the centre to which they must continue to support, and a lack of resources and commitment is given to their contemporary context here. Underlying this notion will be an awareness that this land is not 'really' another village of Samoa, but to narrowly view it through this lense still allows for Samoans to feel that they can travel freely between the two countries, without any strong conviction for this new place.

After considering the other two alternative and closely literal translations or more correctly interpretations of the terms used to label Aotearoa New Zealand, we must be compelled to accept that the most preferred term in which Samoans who are committed to this new context, must embrace and actively use is *Aotearoa*. This is the one term which speaks to their shared links with the *Maori* people. It also acknowledges their status as *Tangata Whenua*. It is a term that will encourage Samoan participation in the affairs of this new land; socially, politically, economically and spiritually. The indigenous term of reference *Aotearoa* allows Samoans a space in which they can consider this new land, through its pre-colonial roots, and thus allow themselves the ability to identify and stand in solidarity with similar experiences

that they share with the *Maori* people. Symbolically, the ‘land of the long white cloud’ for the Samoan migrant is indeed, the land of opportunity and hope, because Samoans will know that white clouds foretell good weather and ‘friendly skies’. Such symbolism encourages Samoans to be active participants in this new land, and will also put into perspective their place here as not the people of the land, but as highly esteemed guests, who have the privilege of making this land, their home also.

4.3.4. Taking seriously the *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele*

The discussion of the previous section was necessary on many fronts. It displayed, that even through a simple appreciation of the term for Aotearoa New Zealand, for Samoans at least, it can affect the way they can perceive this new land. To others, it can be seen as a land of new beginnings and opportunity, whereas to others, New Zealand is a mere outpost of Samoa, to which they can live but not fully feel like they belong. The conclusion from the previous section is clear. Only a commitment to honouring the indigenous roots of this country, can Samoans truly begin to appreciate their place in this new *fanua*. Thus, such a reality immediately demands a response in relation to the nature of this study. If indeed, Samoans and the CCCSANZ are to acknowledge the reality, potential and possibilities of this new land, isn't it obvious that there will also be a need for a new *faiifeau* identity? Such a *faiifeau* identity will consider seriously this new *siosiomaga* of Aotearoa New Zealand on all levels. They would first and foremost appreciate that basically this new land is not Samoa! Despite the simplicity of this statement, such sentiments need to be held at the forefront of the *faiifeau* identity.

4.3.5. A new *siosiomaga* calls for a new understanding of *faiifeau* identity?

Thus, once the realization and acknowledgement of this new *siosiomaga* is upheld and believed in, then the *faiifeau* identity can begin to realise the importance of understanding his identity through his appreciation of this new *siosiomaga* in relation to *tagata lautele* of Aotearoa New Zealand. Unlike Samoa, it is a country built upon Bi-cultural roots, where the indigenous people of this *siosiomaga* *Maori* went into agreement with the British Empire of the time to ensure that their status as *Tangata Whenua* remained intact, and that their *taonga* might have a chance of being preserved for future generations. It is beyond the scope of this research to go into detail about the Treaty of Waitangi and its ramifications for people who decide to make this *siosiomaga* their home. But, may it be mentioned that once the *faiifeau* acknowledges the Treaty, then they will become aware that written within this agreement, is the facility in which Samoans are to be received into this new *siosiomaga*, and enjoy the privileges in which they can benefit from.

4.3.6. Awareness of the multi-cultural reality and bi-cultural roots

The *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele* of Aotearoa New Zealand is multi-cultural. But such a multi-cultural reality is also built on bi-cultural roots. This is a reality that must be acknowledged and recognised by the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. Such a realisation will allow him to appreciate the differences of the *siosiomaga* between Samoa and here. Beginning with the wider *siosiomaga* of the country itself, it will challenge the *faiifeau* identity to consider that the people of his congregation live in a continually multi-cultural context. They do not live together in a *nu'u* setting. There is no *pulega a nu'u ma faipule* [village council] to oversee the CCCSANZ and its activities in relation to *tagata lautele*.

4.3.7. Embracing an openness to dialogue and critique with *tagata lautele*

In this new *siosiomaga*, the *faiifeau* identity is no longer the sole possessor of religious and secular knowledge. Unlike his predecessor in historical times, the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ is constantly faced with critique because such is the reality in which he faces in Aotearoa New Zealand. His congregation are not only educated to the point where they will question and challenge his decision-making, but also they have the confidence to openly disagree with his beliefs and views in a public forum. Such a setting requires an openness of the *faiifeau* identity to not only dialogue with the people of his *aiga*, and *au-lotu*, but also any *tagata lautele* who may have different views from his own. It also calls on the *faiifeau* identity to understand the value of maintaining such open lines of communication and open debate. Indeed, the *faiifeau* identity will find that not all of his congregation, especially the younger, educated and more liberal minded generation, may propose such openness with a forcefulness that he may not be accustomed to, or further still be equipped to accommodate.

4.3.8. Acceptance and encouragement of individuality in relation to *tagata lautele*

Again, this is a fact of this *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele* that the *faiifeau* must adjust to and be prepared to navigate. Whereas in Samoa, with the structures of the village council and established norms of engagement somewhat restricting the encouragement of individual thinking, the *faiifeau* identity does not have a similar structure to fall back on for support. All he has is the actual structure of the *au-lotu*, which in many ways marginalises the voices of the young and opinionated because they are already represented by their parents or heads of their families in the church decision making processes. So for the *faiifeau* identity such a set-up does not leave him many options. If he is to align with the status quo, or the *motu* which

encourages the negative aspects of the *vā-sā* to thrive, and only heed the voices of the parents then he runs the risk of not encouraging the value of individual views. On the other hand, if he allows for the consideration of individual voices, such a practice may be viewed by the older generation as lacking in respect, especially when they are the ones who are primarily supplying for his livelihood by way of financial gifts and seeing to their every material need.

4.3.9. Acceptance of Dissonance and Differences in relation to *tagata lautele*

The acceptance of dissonance and differences is a positive acceptance of the *siosiomaga* of the *tagata lautele* that goes hand in hand with the elevation of education and the presence of critical thinking amongst the congregation. Indeed, the *faiifeau* identity in many ways in the past and still in Samoa today, can be seen wielding an authoritative type of church governance, that has little time and room for dissonance and difference. Cabrini Makasiale has identified this need in the traditional outlooks of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand, and calls for the ability to ‘individuate’ one’s opinions. Such an acceptance requires not only respect, but also maturity and certain level of humility,

We need to learn to individuate because only the strong individual can make a strong community. The individual makes the community strong and the community invites and assists the individual to contribute back to it to make it stronger...Conventional uniformity creates mass hysteria, and exaggerated individualism creates neurotic anxiety. Individuation is the path between the two: finding one’s own authoritative self, while staying connected to the group.¹³⁰

The notion of ‘individuation’ is one that is not only helpful for Pacific communities in general, but clearly is an ideal ingredient for any church wanting to maintain a strong unity

¹³⁰ Cabrini Makasiale, “Making Culture “God” Is Driving our People Crazy, in Philip Culbertson, Margaret Nelson Agee and Cabrini Ofa Makasiale, eds., *Penina Uliuli* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

built upon active and engaging individuals, who are conscious about their faith, but also about the need for establishing a sustainable congregation that recognises the needs and impulses of the *tagata lautele*.

4.4. Summary

As a *faiifeau fa'avalevatea* I sought to sosopo le *vā-sā* that currently upholds the motu of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, through an appreciation of how the Triune God is expressed through interactions and relationships within his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*. What we discovered is that from a young age, the *faiifeau* identity is exposed to an understanding of God that is highly simplistic which resonates with the child-father relationship. But, after tracing the potential faith development in his *au-lotu* to a more relational understanding of God as the Trinity, we exposed hierarchical and hegemonic structures within the *au-lotu*, partly due to its historical roots, but also due to the superimposition of many Samoan indigenous/cultural references into the Christian religious spheres of liturgy and life that are accepted and adopted without further critical engagement.

A turn to acknowledging the possibilities of recognising the CCCSANZ as an *aiga*-based church was made. An attempt was also made to trace a concern for *tagata lautele* right back to the initial contacts with the LMS missionaries, and it was discovered that because it was the island teachers that were the first example of the *faiifeau* identity, the missionary movement, and eventually the institutionalised church quickly became part of the Samoan cultural milieu. This is where it has remained, and because the *faiifeau identity* has been called to the *feau* and *galuega* o le Atua, we must turn now to imaging a critical

understanding of the Triune God, to ultimately lead us to articulate a more relevant and faithful *faiifeau* identity for the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. To do so, I must be “*lē mafaufau*”, or nothing short of being out of my mind!

**CHAPTER FIVE: “E LEAI SOU MAFAUFAU?” [ARE YOU
OUT OF YOUR MIND?] – THE NECESSITY OF CORRECTLY
IMAGING THE TRIUNE GOD FOR THE FAIFEAU
IDENTITY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN
CHURCH SAMOA IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

5.0. Introduction

To claim the need for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ to correctly image the Triune God of the Christian faith and Church, can be viewed by many Samoans as going crazy or being out of one’s mind! Hence the pivotal question at the heart of this chapter, “*E leai sou mafaukau?*” Such a critical question is consistent with my *faiifeau fa’avalevatea* hermeneutic, as I *sosopo le vā-sā* between the *motu* of Trinitarian scholarship, and the different Samoan indigenous/cultural references, against the backdrop of the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele* in the hope of identifying any potential in the *faiifeau* identity of reflecting the relational nature of the Triune God.

As the chapter unfolds, this potential is recognised through the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference known as the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* [A Visible Heir of God]. A fuller description of this Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity is the purpose of the next chapter, but for now, I proceed to be *lē mafaukau* by highlighting how my fluid interaction, and dynamic dialogue between

Trinitarian theology, the Samoan indigenous/cultural references and the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*, ultimately allow the *faiifeau* identity to fulfill his calling in the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God.

5.1. Understanding the Triune God as the God of the Christian faith and church

5.1.1. The influence of rote learning on faith development in the CCCSANZ

Very early on in one's Christian upbringing, the focus from obtaining knowledge about the Christian God, and the Scriptures shifts to a drive for approval and acceptance from members of one's *aiga* and *au-lotu*, and the expected adoration that accompanies it. Such a process becomes harder to re-focus back on attaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Scriptures because by the time one joins the *Aufaipese* and *Autalavou*, the focus again shifts on attending practices and church, and participating in various cultural and youth events that rarely involve a commitment to engage critically and deeply with the Christian faith and theology.

The young people are called the *malosi o le nu'u* [the strength of the village/church] as well as the *lumana'i* [future], and so much of their learnings at this intermediate stage of faith development involve getting involved in fundraising activities and church events which are to prepare them for the *lumana'i* when they will hopefully one day take over the *feau* and *galuega o le Atua!* Clearly, in surveying such a process, identifying with the Trinitarian nature of the Christian God only comes through rote learning and the occasional references

that one may hear the *faiifeau* identity utter in leading the Sunday worship service. The *motu* of focusing more on what he is supposed to do for God, than learning more about the nature of God, and how He relates to one's *aiga*, the *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele* goes heinously wanting.

Members of the CCCSANZ who want to become *faiifeau*, have to attend Malua Theological College for four years. However, not all theological graduands from Malua Theological College go on to become *faiifeau*. This is because after the four years that one spends in Malua, there still is a two year service period that needs to be fulfilled before ordination. Without ordination, the Malua graduand remains an *a'oa'o* [student], until he can acquire two years continuous service to the church, whether it be after pastoring a congregation for two years, or serving the central office, or one of the church's schools or institutions for the same period of time. It is at this stage, that the *faiifeau* identity becomes aware of the different levels and types of "work" that can lead to ordination, which is a continuation of multi-faceted, wholistic training and education that was received in Malua.

5.1.2. Faith and theology – foundations of understanding the relational nature of Triune God

But gaining an understanding of the Triune nature of the Christian God is actually the result of the Christian practice of reconciling "faith and theology." As Daniel L. Migliore contends,

Christian faith and theology do not speak of God in a general and indefinite way; they speak of God concretely and specifically. Christians affirm their faith in God as the sovereign Lord of all creation who has done a new and gracious work in Jesus Christ

and who continues to be active in the world through the power of the Spirit...God is “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”¹³¹

Migliore clarifies that articulating a theology of the Christian God, involves reflecting upon God’s Triune nature, as has been revealed by the Christian scriptures and Gospel. Sadly, this is the reflection and reconciling of “faith and theology” that is lacking in the CCCSANZ and is part and parcel of the challenge facing the *feau* and the *galuega* of the *faiifeau* identity.

Migliore’s summary is also insightful, because it leads to the fact that the relationship between the Christian faith and theology does not come through any acquisition of special knowledge, but through a willingness to reflect upon the Scriptures and biblical witness not as just verses which need to be memorized and celebrated as an achievement, but more faithfully as concrete evidence of real-life experiences and interactions with the explicit and relational reality of the Triune God in the history of Creation and humanity and especially in relation to His *feau* and *galuega*, to which the *faiifeau* identity and the CCCSANZ is called to embody.

What is immediately apparent also is that Migliore explicitly refers to the Triune God inevitably supporting not only the Christian belief in the current activity of the Spirit in the world, but also of the Spirit’s coherency with Jesus Christ, the One who came to fulfill the will of the “Lord of all creation.” In other words, Christian terms of reference are freely interchanged by Migliore confirming again an understanding of God’s Triune nature, as being the core of Christian faith and theology. Again, such a clear articulation is lost to many

¹³¹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding : An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2014)., 68-69.

Samoans in the CCCSANZ due to the abdicating of the responsibility to study deeply the Scriptures and Christian faith exclusively to the *faiifeau* identity, and the activity and programme-centred focus of the *motu* currently elevating him to such a privileged status.¹³²

5.1.3. Trinitarian faith is embodied faith

Migliore's insights continue to be helpful in challenging the theological foundations of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ by commenting on the relevance of acknowledging the Christian belief in the Triune God, as a vital tool in understanding the calling of the Gospel on the church, "...doctrine of the Trinity is the church's effort to give coherent expression to this mystery of God's free grace announced in the gospel and experienced in Christian faith."¹³³ Thus, if it is a result of the church's effort then it must be an imperative of the *faiifeau* identity in fulfilling his calling as God's minister and servant in the CCCSANZ and to do so faithfully and coherently according to the "mystery of God's free grace announced in the gospel and experienced in Christian faith." Migliore raises some interesting and relevant points. First, that "God's free grace" is actually a "mystery." Migliore doesn't clarify what he means by "mystery" but we can anticipate safely that he is referring to the notion that "God's free grace" is beyond our full comprehension, as both mortal beings and sinners. As Alister McGrath concurs in his attempt to define "mystery" through an understanding of Martin Luther's 'theology of the cross,'

¹³² Tanielu. Tanielu's groundbreaking research highlights the centrality of the *faiifeau* identity and the pedagogical aims of the CCCSANZ in setting up early childhood centres which mirror the original *Aoga a le faiifeau* that had been established in Samoa.

¹³³ Migliore., 69.

God gives human intellect and reason, which are not contrary to revelation; yet they cannot apprehend all the mysteries of faith and must learn to accept the limitations under which they are obliged to operate.¹³⁴

Clearly, McGrath maintains that at the heart of Christian faith is the need to accept our limitations in comprehending the fullness of the “mysteries of faith.” Understanding “God’s free grace” in its fullness falls under such a category, and is a reality that encourages the *fai-feau* identity to be brutally honest about matters of faith, and a complete understanding of the nature of God, because they don’t have all the answers, and shouldn’t expect it of themselves.

Secondly, Migliore makes it clear that such a “gift” and “mystery” was “announced” in the gospel. In other words, in Migliore’s view, the gospel is primarily a story/ies that need to be broadcasted, and shared both publicly and privately. The centrality of the proclamation of the gospel and the belief that theology begins with God’s self-revelation can be traced back to the renaissance of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity in the twentieth century that was spearheaded by Karl Barth, in advocating that our understanding of the Triune God needed to be based on God’s self-revelation as Revealer, Revelation and Revealedness. For Barth also, as human beings, we are not capable of peering into the mystery of God, but instead, the God of the Bible has spoken to humanity in his own unique way, which is intrinsically Trinitarian in

¹³⁴ Alister E. McGrath, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Evangelical Reflection," in *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*, ed. Timothy George (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 23. McGrath’s evangelical reflection on the Trinity is grounded on a need for humility, and an acceptance of the “mystery” of God whom we can never fully articulate, no matter how cogent it may seem. He promotes a need to love the Trinity, instead of focusing too much on the speculative aspects of recent scholarship. Such a response, according to McGrath however requires conversion and a transformation of one’s direction in life.

nature.¹³⁵ Barth received widespread criticism for a Trinitarian theology along the lines of modalism.¹³⁶ However, Barth's turn to a Christocentric based understanding of the Trinity returned the doctrine to the centrality of theological discourse and critique.

Furthermore, Migliore hints to the fact that such a "mystery" is actually experienced in Christian faith. By stating that Christian faith is an "experience" reminds us that it is more than just calling oneself a Christian, or seeking to do so much in recognition of one's salvation, but Christian faith is an "experience" and therefore is an embodied faith. Yes, it involves actions, but actions in a sense that they successfully reflect and resonate with the presence of Christ in one's everyday life. Such a focus is critical for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, because it can act as a firm reminder that a key aspect of his *feau* and *galuega* is to actually embody the Christian faith in his daily experiences. The turn to the validation of the experiential is a reminder that the Gospel and its incarnational nature, must always align with the proclamation and preaching that accompanies it. In other words, the *faiifeau* identity based on a Triune understanding of God, is called to embody that relational reality in respect of his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*, in all its richness.

¹³⁵ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. T. H. L. Parker and others, vol. I/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 295ff

¹³⁶ For a discussion on the origin of Modalism, or Monarchianism dating back to the Patristic Fathers as an attempt to stress the unity of God, see John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 225-227.

5.1.4. The Triune nature of God is “communion” – dynamic persons in relationship

Migliore’s definition opens up further questions on the nature of the Triune God, and calls for further discussion of how we can understand further the relations between the persons of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Suffice it to say that God’s Triune nature has been expressed by theologians and the Church in many ways, but central to the articulation privileged by this research is the assertion that God, as One-in-Three Persons, is a dynamic communion of mutual love. As Colin Gunton so succinctly describes,

God is no more than what Father, Son and Spirit give to and receive from each other in the inseparable communion that is the outcome of their love. Communion is the *meaning* of the word: there is no ‘being’ of God other than this dynamic of persons in relation.¹³⁷

Gunton here highlights that at the heart of the Triune God is the willingness, commitment and love of the Father, Son, and Spirit to “give to and receive from each other.” This activity described by Gunton implies that such dynamism and outpouring of love is captured in the notion of “Communion.” I would go further and state that such a “Communion” is by design, origin and association a Holy Communion and thus relates to an invitation of sorts, just like

¹³⁷ Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 2003). Critical of the path that Western theology has taken in following an understanding of St. Augustine’s turn ‘inwards’ in regards to the Trinity and its focus on the unity of the nature of the Triune God as the Immanent Trinity, Gunton’s theology resonates more with the Eastern Orthodox prevailing beliefs, inherited from the Cappadocian Fathers, which at its centre values the relational and communal identity of the Trinity, and its offerings for a western society that continues to focus on the idealism of individuality. Gunton advocates for the need of theology of creation in order to justify one’s Trinitarian theology. In this respect, he builds upon the Church Father Irenaeus, and his maxim, that the Son and the Spirit can be appreciated in the sense that they are God the Father’s ‘hands’ to fulfill God’s creative, redemptive, and sanctification purposes. For more on Gunton’s research, see other works like, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

the Sacrament we celebrate today in the CCCSANZ is an invitation to accept what Jesus Christ has done for the sinful world, and testify with our brothers and sisters in Christ, that our salvation is complete and that one's partaking in Holy Communion is an invitation to be motivated by love in encouraging a culture or lifestyle that reflects the loving responsibility and mutual reciprocity that is at the heart of the Triune God.

Furthermore, Gunton's words offer much for the *fai-feau* identity, in relation to the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*, because of the encouragement of understanding relationship and/or communion is fundamentally about the dynamism, or fluid and moving nature of the Divine "persons" of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as being "persons in relation." Such a relational nature can be understood through the Christian scriptures and the Gospel, as God is revealed as being both self-sacrificial and life embracing. Self-sacrificial in a sense of God who creates and then redeems His Creation, and life embracing as one who continues to provide life to that same fallen Creation. Again, the *fai-feau* identity of the CCCSANZ can benefit greatly from a serious consideration, and critical reflection on the renaissance concerning the doctrine of the Trinity that has inspired new theological insights and pursuits into its relevance for the Church and its leadership.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004). Grenz traces the renaissance of the refocusing on the Trinity in contemporary times back to Karl Barth and Karl Rahner respectively. He proceeds to show the richness in Trinitarian scholarship that has been brought forth through their leadership. However, Grenz in his own theological articulations develops from his working under the tutelage of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gordon Lewis, and their focus on the importance of a personal encounter with God in Christ, its necessity for Christian living, and the orientation of the 'kingdom of God' to the future. Grenz theological agenda also called to consider Christian faith within the context of God's central priority or program for creation – the establishment of

As intimated earlier, Gunton's understanding of the "communion" at the heart of God's being as "dynamic persons in relation" is a development of the foundational work of the Cappadocian Fathers.¹³⁹ Christian history notes their dissatisfaction with the implicit tendencies of modalism in the notion of *prosopon* [mask, person] used to describe the personhood existent in the Trinity and so they re-interpreted the word *hypostasis* [persons] and gave it relational import, thus altering Athanasius' previous association of *hypostasis* with *ousia* [substance]. Such a change brought about a revolution in theological thinking creating a clear understanding of the distinction between the substance or *ousia* in God, and the *hypostases* of the three persons, "each of the divine *hypostases* is the *ousia* or essence of Godhead determined by its appropriate particularizing characteristic."¹⁴⁰ For Basil of Caesarea, these particular characteristics were paternity, sonship and sanctifying power, whereas for Gregory of Nazianzus, the Father was "being ingenerate", the Son by "being

community. Grenz theology of community is insightful, in that he upholds that the original design of community that God intended in the beginning of His Creation, sets the blueprint for the salvation story, and eventual climax into the Cosmic community of God that history is moving towards. In this way, Grenz shows an acknowledgment of both the place of individuality and community in His Trinitarian theology, see *Theology for the Community of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994); "Anticipating God's New Community: Theological Foundations for Women in Ministry," *Journal-Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995); *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997); *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*, *The Matrix of Christian Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

¹³⁹ Adalbert Hamman, *How to Read the Church Fathers*, trans. John Bowden and Margaret Lydamore (London: SCM Press, 1993), 76-84. Hamman provides illuminating biographical highlights as well as an introductory note on the theological contributions of the Cappadocian Fathers to the Patristic Period; namely Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Such an account displays the interconnectedness and reflective nature of the Cappadocian Fathers actual lifestyles and experiences to the theology that they produced, which is a point of relevance also upheld by this project.

¹⁴⁰ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), 265.

generate” and the Spirit by “being sent.”¹⁴¹ The key and relevant point for this research taken from this historical turn in theological thinking is the Cappadocian turn towards a relational understanding of God. In opposition to the Western emphasis of the time on the unity, or oneness of God, we find the Cappadocians reiterating a belief that the unity of God is to be found in the *person* of the Father, and not so much in the indivisible nature of God.¹⁴²

Graham Buxton aptly notes what such a distinction has offered not only Trinitarian theology, but also the Christian Church and faith as a whole,

For the Cappadocian Fathers, therefore, the concept of person was not individualistic, but relational. God is actually God by virtue of the loving relationships that exist within the divine life: *it is the relations between the divine persons which constitute the unity of God*. Father, Son and Spirit are united in such perichoretic union that it is impossible to imagine any one person existing without the others. The being of each person of the Trinity lies in the fact that each exists for the other, which is the antithesis of individualism. Each person of the Trinity is thus free to relate to the other two, not by necessity of the divine nature as exemplified in classical Greek thought, but out of self-giving love within the divine communion.¹⁴³

Implicit in Buxton’s summary is the notion of *perichoresis*, which describes the dynamic and interpenetrating and reciprocating way that the divine persons relate to each other. This notion is unique to God, but calls for an understanding of relationships and community in

¹⁴¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2011), 250. McGrath writes that such distinctions can at face value appear to reflect tritheism, but upon deeper analysis they must be understood that the particular differences characterises and points towards the unique personhood of Father, Son and Spirit.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁴³ Graham Buxton, *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 109. Buxton’s theological project is centred on the correct imaging of God as a perichoretic God. Through this approach he shows what such a belief in the Trinity has to offer both science, academic theology and pastoral ministry.

which there is at its heart, self-giving love, mutual respect and service, that is needed to be embraced, practiced and lived out by the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ, if they are to participate fully in the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God.¹⁴⁴ In other words, in continuity with, and in the interests of maintaining loving relationships, that both honour the particularity of individuals in his *aiga* the *aulotu*, and *tagata lautele*, the *faiifeau* identity is encouraged here to not hesitate to *sosopo le vā-sā* when such a reality is threatened. Such a commitment to solidarity and action is consistent with what a belief in the “perichoretic union of the divine persons” offers and invites the *faiifeau* identity to take up.

In the case of obedience, as it was highlighted earlier in the first chapter, unbridled obedience to parental authority was part and parcel of one’s upbringing. Such life experiences can create a blueprint with which adulthood is seen to mimick and uncritically follow. In the mind of the *faiifeau* identity, unbridled obedience from his *aiga*, *aulotu* and *tagata lautele* could become an expected norm. However, as has already been shown, the need to establish the understanding that relationships and communion are fundamentally loving and freely given, as it is perfectly enjoyed within the perichoretic and Triune nature of God, offers a much needed guide as to what Christian obedience entails. In this way, obedience is seen as not blindly following the status quo, and accepted norms, but following Christ in the way he “emptied himself” in his obedience to the Father’s will, by the power of the Spirit that

¹⁴⁴ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 209. Volf proposes and reveals what the Church should embrace through what *perichoresis* can offer its identity through his definition, but keeping in mind that such a reality is unique in God, “In every divine person as a subject, the other persons also indwell; all mutually permeate one another, though in so doing they do not cease to be distinct persons.”

continues to encourage and empower his Church.¹⁴⁵ As such an understanding of the Triune nature of God centers on relationships, it must therefore be remembered that such a difference in the Father, Son and Spirit are not to be equated with ontological subordination, but rather with the allowance of a subordination of purpose, or a functional subordination that maintains biblical and theological cogency.

5.1.5. Christian theology is Trinitarian theology

Therefore, Christian theology is Trinitarian theology. This statement can be discerned if one is to appreciate the significance of the Biblical witness, the Holy Bible, or the Scriptures, to Christian theology.¹⁴⁶ It is in the Scriptures where Christian theology establishes its foundations, and where a synonymous understanding of Christian and Trinitarian, or at least its interchangeability as a descriptor for theology, is made clear. For in recognizing and acknowledging this reality, we appreciate the relationship of the self-revelation of God in Christ Jesus as a human being, as part of the greater narrative of the Gospel or good news of God that began in the dawning of the Created Order itself.

Christian Theology therefore, is grounded on the willingness of the God of Creation, who according to Scripture has chosen to reveal Himself, and to come into relationship with His

¹⁴⁵ McGrath., 293-294. McGrath surveys these kenotic approaches as it was developed from the early seventeenth century through to the work of Gotfried Thomasius in the nineteenth century. The idea of kenosis [emptying oneself] is most prominent in Paul's Letter to the Philippians 2:1-11, also known as the Christological Hymn.

¹⁴⁶ Here I refer to the Bible in a general sense, regarding its import and significance for the Christian Church as well as for Christian Theology.

Created Order. He is the God of the Old and New Testaments, the One who is the object of Christian faith, and whom the New Testament writers are able to declare as, “the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:18-19).¹⁴⁷ Despite this explicit reference to the Trinity in the Gospel writings, which is presented by the author of the gospel according to Matthew, as a direct quote from Jesus Himself, such evidence is not to be assumed as being the only evidence that supports the idea of God’s Triune nature. As Allen Coppedge argues,

...the Trinitarian data of the New Testament include all the exceedingly numerous texts that speak of the relationship between Jesus and the Father, between Jesus and the Spirit, between the Father and Spirit, and among the Father, Jesus and the Spirit.¹⁴⁸

The Old Testament’s understanding of God can be discerned through an appreciation of the Shema of the people of Israel, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.”¹⁴⁹ In this translation, the New Revised Standard Version does not explicitly reveal a tendency to think of God as being One being, but rather sees the declaration of God’s unique position of being One as rather more descriptive of the belief, that only the Lord, who is Israel’s God, can be Lord alone. The New International Version, another widely accepted, used and authoritative version of the Holy Bible, privileges an alternative reading of the NRSV, and

¹⁴⁷ Other explicit biblical references include, 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 2 Cor. 13:14 and 1 Peter 1:2 and others.

¹⁴⁸ Alan Coppedge in Peter C. Phan, "Developments of the Doctrine of the Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Phan traces the multitude of insights that the developments of the doctrine of the Trinity currently offer theological discourse and its future.

¹⁴⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4, The New Revised Standard Version, also offers up other possibilities for the wording of the same verse, “*The Lord our God is one Lord*”, or “*The Lord our God, the Lord is one*”, or “*The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.*”

translates the same verse as, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Interestingly, the Samoan Bible translates the same verse,

Isaraelu e, faalogologo mai ia, o le ALII lo tatou Atua, o le ALII e toatasi lava ia.

Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God, is the LORD alone.¹⁵⁰

Clearly, the Samoan translation resembles that of the NRSV, and contains similar potential in realising that even in the Shema of the people of Israel, the covenanted people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there is the inherent ability for further theological development towards a Trinitarian understanding of God, that becomes a reality in the New Testament witness. Without going too much into the different strengths and foci of the two different translations, what is clear is that the NRSV translation, does not explicitly point towards a monotheistic notion of God, as much as the NIV translation. In other words, the NRSV opens up the possibility of elaboration or later transformation which is marked with the Apostle Paul’s usage in his salutation to the Corinthian Church, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”¹⁵¹ Here, Paul clearly builds upon Israel’s Shema, and shows that in Jesus Christ, the Lordship of Israel’s God continues, through not only love, but also through the communion that is now

¹⁵⁰ A literal translation that I have formed from the rendering in the Samoan Bible that is prioritised in both the training of the *faifeau* identity in Malua Theological College, as well as used as the authoritative text in the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ. Unlike its English counterparts, the Samoan Bible does not include a preface or introduction, specifying the original manuscripts that it privileges. The only information that is clear to readers is that it is a Revised version, created in 1969, produced under the guidance of the Bible Society of the South Pacific. However, there is a prevailing belief that the Samoan Bible was created from a combination of the original Hebrew and Greek texts, with the assistance also of the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible. The research into such anecdotal evidence remains to be completed.

¹⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 13:13.

ever-present through the coming of the Holy Spirit of God. Instead of saying a totally different thing, and introducing a totally different foreign concept, Paul is actually giving further clarity as to how Jesus Christ indeed continues to fulfil Israel's declaration of faith in the One God, or in the primacy of their One God as Lord.

Therefore, understanding Christian theology as being fundamentally Trinitarian is crucial for the construction of a faithful and relevant identity for the *faiifeau* of the CCCSANZ. This is because, at the heart of the Christian faith and Christian theology, is a God who is Trinitarian in nature.¹⁵² The Christian belief that God exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is not so much a scientific or mathematical problem to be solved, but more so an opportunity in which to engage, and embrace in the very life of God. This life includes God's purposes for all of His Creation, that run the full gamut of what God has done, is doing, and will do, in relation to His Creation.

In this way, the Scriptures operate to inform Trinitarian theology, in a way that opens up our theological imaginations, to think more about a God who is at the core of his being, a community of relationships, or a fellowship of persons, who despite being unique in themselves, are also intrinsically a part of, and involved in each other, in that their individuality or personhood is defined through their being in relationship with one another. In this way, being made in His image, takes upon a whole new vista of possibilities that have

¹⁵² I actively interchange the words Trinitarian, Trinity and Triune, which I use synonymously to describe the Christian God.

been available to us through understanding God's self-revelation in Christ, as being central in not only showing us God the Father, but also pointing forward to God the Holy Spirit.

Maintaining the centrality of Christ, encourages us to call for the theological articulation of a *fai feau* identity of the CCCSANZ that points beyond Ortho-praxis, which describes the primary objective for Christians to live according to orthodox or widely accepted Christian beliefs, or to Christo-praxis, which entails living like Christ, and endeavouring to base one's life decisions on what Christ would do, to instead be actively engaged in Trinity-praxis, in which we see Christian identity critically poised and made clear in the life and purposes of the Triune God, as shown through the Scriptures, and or in other words, as expressed through His *feau* and *galuega*!¹⁵³

As has been shown, upholding the importance of the Trinitarian core to Christian theology, promotes a life-empowering, and outward-looking appreciation of what it means to be a *fai feau* identity in the CCCSANZ. For once God's nature and being is better understood as not one comprised of three individual and divided persons, but as a communion of persons in relationship, who are committed to each other, who act in mutual and reciprocating love with

¹⁵³ The notion of recognising the need to shift from Ortho-praxis to Christo-praxis is one that was called for by the Latin American theologians, who advocated for the consideration, that God, and Jesus desired community that liberated the poor, marginalised and oppressed of society. Those who were victims of the corruptive collusion between the multi-national companies interested in plundering Latin America of its natural resources in the name of 'development' and the Christian Church, who as the first 'invaders' of Latin America continued to accommodate for such injustices through their refusal to bring about the 'conscientisation' of the people for the realisation of a better future. For more on Liberation theology see, Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 1974). Leonardo Boff's offerings for Liberation theology are based on a Trinitarian perception of human society, and its offerings for the realisation of more community-oriented vision of life. See, Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 2nd ed., Theology and Liberation Series (Wellwood, Kent: Burns and Oates Press, 1988).

each other, who respect, and honour each other, and who live with, for and unto each other, then the Created order, humanity, and the Church, have in many ways, a clear reality, blueprint, and possible foundation in which to realise a view for Trinitarian based community.

However, the path to such a realisation in Christian theology, was not forged in a matter of days, but involved centuries of toiling on the part of the Church, in its attempts to understand the self-revelation of God in Christ, and what it meant for their immediate life as the Church, and their mission and purposes to which they came together. Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of this research, and the need to focus now on a Trinitarian understanding of the faifeau identity of the CCCSANZ, it is not possible to discuss in detail the historical landscape of Trinitarian theological discourse, both in the Church, and the academy.

However, suffice it to say, that its continuing fluctuation from the centre to the margins of theological agendas of theologians and the Church alike, is another emphatic reason why the faifeau of the CCCSANZ must take seriously the critical offerings in order to realise the contextual, and theological relevance of a Trinitarian identity, for the *siosiomaga* of the *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*. What follows is but a brief attempt at identifying some of the key shifts in theological discourse that contain strands of meaning and applicability relevant to this research.

5.2. Trinitarian theology in the history of the Christian Church – A brief survey

5.2.1. Faithfulness to the Triune God in Christ, and the Triune God as Spirit in the Community of the Church

The need to define the nature of God appears to have come to a head, after the death of the last apostle, and the need for the Gospel to explain itself more critically in the wake of the new contexts in which the Gospel found itself in. With the absence of eye-witnesses, and the creation of written accounts which in themselves contained their own theological perspectives and agendas, the Gospel had to speak faithfully about God who was revealed in Christ, and experienced in the community of the Spirit, but also relevantly to the people that it sort to both save, inform and transform.¹⁵⁴

5.2.2. The Patristic Period and its concerns

The significance of the early debates that engulfed the Church in what is known as the Patristic period cannot be underestimated also. The findings of the Councils are integral to the advancement of orthodox Christian belief. In essence, they were attempts at ensuring the authenticity of the Christian faith, amidst the challenges in which the Church found itself in. To describe it another way, would be to state that the Councils came to a consensus on behalf of the Church as a whole, for the sole purpose of putting into contemporary language, a response to the contextual nuances of the time. The Creeds were the direct result of the

¹⁵⁴ For an appreciation of this historical period, and the challenges that the Early Church underwent, which forms the backdrop to the Patristic Period, see Veselin Kesich, *Formation and Struggles: The Birth of the Church, Ad 33-200* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007).

numerous Councils that were formed and held. Some were more important than others, because to create or solidify their faith in the form of a Creed, would help in ensuring confusion amongst the ever widening borders of the Church.¹⁵⁵

5.2.3. The Psychological turn inward, and the disemboding of theology

The psychological turn inward which is accredited by many scholars to Augustine, and then Aquinas saw western theology become more disembodied, and thus by default saw the displacement of Trinitarian theology from a pride of place in the Christian corpus. Even the much touted Father of Modern theology, Frederick Schleiermacher, appears to have relegated the importance of the Trinitarian to an appendix status in his treatise on Christian theology. However, the Reformers naturally saw to oppose the Roman Catholic's focus on scholasticism, and an intellectual approach to theology, which appeared to make theology a science and abstract enterprise. The turn back to Scriptural roots, can be appreciated in Calvin pre-eminently announcing the importance of the Trinity in the beginning of his *Christian Institutes*.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵For the impact of the Creeds and Councils to the direction of the Church and its theological focus, see Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012).

¹⁵⁶ For an appreciation of the foundational texts that characterized such monumental shifts in theology, see Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

5.2.4. The impact of the Missionary movement of the Church and theology

The implications of an absence of consciousness regarding Trinitarian theology and thought produced a missionary movement modelled very much on individual responses of LMS missionaries to the Samoan context they faced. For an appreciation of the motivations, and methods of the Missionary movement as both a Biblical phenomenon and reality that was shaped by colonial dreams of Empire, and Utopian ideals, Bosch's work is most pertinent.¹⁵⁷ However, the modern embrace of Trinitarian theology is more concerned with seeking to answer the dying and depletion of the Church in the West. As the Church has found new ground and new life in Asia, Africa and the Pacific, these centres are now the new centres of the Church, as the old polarities of the Christian faith fade away.¹⁵⁸ The repositioning of Trinitarian theology has seen the resurgence of questions regarding Christian identity. Identity is best understood as something that is fluid, and never constant, but always in movement, always open to change, and in many ways never neutral, but consistently dynamic. Identity has its own agendas, according to the power of their interpreters.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Bosch, 287ff.

¹⁵⁸ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985). Schreiter identified in this work the need to acknowledge local customs, traditions and the nuances of local contextualisation for the sake of realising local theologies. *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*, 7th ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004). Here, in a later work, Schreiter recognises the imposing forces of Globalisation on Religious identity, and calls for a consideration of both global theological flows and local tendencies. Schreiter poignantly identifies the impact of the collapse of a polarised view of the world, where the Christian Church has drastically moved its centre south of the equator.

¹⁵⁹ The question of theological identity is especially pertinent when one takes seriously the pluralistic nature of the world. For more see, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed. *The Trinity in a Pluarilistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids, Michigan Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997).

5.2.5. Ushering in the modern era of Trinitarian theological discourse

Karl Rahner, as a Roman Catholic theologian sought to bring the practical implications of a theology of the Immanent Trinity, in line with the theory itself. Here, Rahner is famous for positing the maxim: “the Immanent Trinity is the Economic Trinity. The Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity.” He builds on Karl Barth’s efforts to bring back to the centre of theological dialogue and exploration, the Trinity, as he talks about the Word as He has chosen to express Himself.¹⁶⁰ Jurgen Moltmann is accredited with establishing a Social Trinity, with a view to the relevance of Trinitarian theology to the social and political contexts of the 20th century. Moltmann’s insistence that the Cross was a Trinitarian event challenged the Church to rethink its belief in a God that was impassable, and unable to feel emotion as well as undergo transformation. In the opinion of many scholars, Moltmann has successfully refocused systematic theology, along with Pannenberg, and to a certain degree others, to a historical appreciation of the Trinity, as he ‘socially’ revealed himself within the Scriptures.¹⁶¹

As a forerunner of what has become known as Social Trinitarianism, Moltmann is critical of both Barth and Rahner. He argues that neither considered the history that was being played out on the cross between ‘Abba’ the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Spirit. In other words,

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 162-192.

¹⁶¹ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Moltmann also writes with his wife on the need for a Spirit theology that challenges and breaks down the barriers offered up by traditional foundations of theology. See also, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Our Body - Our Self," in *I Am My Body* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994); Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit - a Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

Moltmann's approach sought to integrate an understanding of salvation history firmly grounded in a theological belief in the Triune God. Remembering all the while that for Moltmann history has an eschatological goal filled with the consummation of God's unconditional love which is full of hope. So the Cross for believers becomes a focal point for this process of being caught up into the life of God himself, "the Trinity is no self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open for men on earth, which stems from the cross of Christ."¹⁶² For Moltmann, the Cross is central and pivotal and is therefore a Trinitarian event. It is on the Cross that all three persons of God can be clearly seen to be in action. The Father suffers grief as the Son undergoes the suffering of abandonment and death, while the Spirit suffers as Jesus' strength in weakness at Gethsemane and Golgotha.¹⁶³ Moltmann offers the *fai-feau* identity a revolutionary understanding of the Cross, as not so much an archetypal way of promoting Christian service, giving and sacrifice, but rather a clear display of what Godly power can be understood, in the light of a Trinitarian understanding of the Cross, the Resurrection as we progress towards the culmination of history with hope.

¹⁶² *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1976), 249.

¹⁶³ Buxton., 113-115. Buxton argues that unlike Barth and Rahner whose Trinitarian theologies implicitly maintained a sense of *mystery*, Moltmann's approach has been accused of being antimonotheistic in its robust emphasis on mutual and dynamic relationality. Despite Moltmann using doxology to distinguish between the immanent and transcendent Trinity, his critics say that he has promoted a social Trinity at the expense of divine unity. However, according to Buxton, Moltmann's major contribution to Trinitarian theology is 'openness', which proposes an understanding of a God who desires 'responsive relationship' with his creatures. In other words, the relationship between the Triune God and human creatures is dynamic, interactive, risky give-and-take!

Catherine LaCugna is another theologian who contributed to the ushering in of Trinitarian thought at the end of the 20th century. For LaCugna, God's *mystery* is the *mystery* of persons in communion as revealed in salvation history,

The possibility of a *deus absconditus* (hidden God) who lurks behind *deus revelatus* is banished once and for all. There is no God who might turn out to be different from the God of salvation history, even if God's mystery remains absolute.¹⁶⁴

LaCugna clearly shows here that she seeks to set aside any debate about the metaphysical or inner life of the Trinity, but follows the Cappadocians definition of understanding the concept of person in terms of relationship, and focuses on God's communion with 'ourselves' in regards to soteriology. She sees that God's way of being in relationship "with us," is a perfect expression of God's being as God. In other words, "God for us is who God is as God."¹⁶⁵ In this way, LaCugna collapses the previous way of talking about God as being immanent and economic into one, prioritising instead her turn to theology's inseparability with soteriology.¹⁶⁶ Such an approach allows LaCugna to posit the notion that the doctrine of the Trinity is essentially about God's *being with us*, instead of being isolated from his creation. Such a reality means that our lives are Trinitarian in nature also, and LaCugna cites Jesus' words in John 17:20-21 as showing that a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is a call to participate practically in the life of God through *theosis* realised through the activity of the

¹⁶⁴ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us : The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 211.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁷ Like Moltmann, LaCugna's shift to focus on the potential life that is at hand when one sees that God is with us, is encouraging to the *faiifeau* identity, in his relationships with his *aiga*, *aulotu* and *tagata lautele*. Indeed, if God is *with us*, in the interests of freedom and communion, then so too should the *faiifeau* identity *be with* all those that he has called by the Triune God to serve and vice versa.

5.2.6. The Triune God of Relationship and Communion as God's Being

Colin Gunton writing at the cusp of the 21st century is clear that the identity of the Triune God as One in Three Persons reinforces the fact that we exist as persons in relation with each other.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, Gunton is not the first theologian to assert this, but the fact that he reiterates this fact in these post-modern times says something about its importance for this research. For if we are only persons, because we are in relationship with each other, then the value of such a relationship, must also be a mutual concern of these persons who are in relationship. This value is characterised by love of the other in the Triune God, and it is my contention that such a love must exist between the *faiifeau* and the 'others' that he comes into contact with on a daily basis.

Such an assertion is also mirrored in the work of Zizioulas, where instead of focussing on understanding the ontology of the Triune God as individuals, or persons, he posits a

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 296-300.

¹⁶⁸ Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology.*, 83-96.

commitment to Being itself as Communion.¹⁶⁹ This again is an example of the contextual nature of Trinitarian theology, as Zizioulas unlike Gunton writes out of an Eastern Orthodox context, where he wrestles with questions of orthodoxy and ecumenicity. In other words, Zizioulas' intentions are clear from the outset, as he seeks to find a harmonious understanding of "Being," that might be acceptable across the doctrinal divide of the Eastern and Western sides of the Christian Church. In relation to this research, Zizioulas' insights reinforce the commitment to harmonious human relationships that are not only symptomatic of Trinitarian theology, but also of the Triune God Himself.

In Stephen Pickard's work on "Collaborative Ministry", he is clear that it is the perichoretic life of God which forms the deepest foundation for such a shift in thinking about pastoral ministry.¹⁷⁰ This 'life of God' is symptomatic with the collaborative spirit that is required in today's ministry. Gaining inspiration from Rublev's icon, Pickard calls for a move into a 'mode of togetherness' in which the Holy Trinity encapsulates so well, as the members of the Trinity are constituted as person by virtue of their relation to the 'other'. They are pre-eminently "members of one another", but are also embraced in an invitational gesture to the world, which are aspects of the divine communion that Pickard develops further in relation to church ministry. However, Pickard is aware of the current pitfalls that ecclesial hierarchies and history play in any effective implementation of collaborative ministry. His belief in the

¹⁶⁹ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

¹⁷⁰ Stephen Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry*, ed. Leslie J. Francis and Jeff Astley, *Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 4ff.

fundamental importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for a turn towards a more collaborative ministry between the laity and clergy, is reflected in his lamenting for a deeper engagement with the doctrine and what it has to offer, as well as a consideration of both the theological and historical features of the Christian tradition of ministry. Pickards work offers possibilities for the *faiifeau* identity to begin to see how Christian ministry can be understood as a collaborative affair involving his *aiga*, *aulotu* and *tagata lautele*, with even wider implications for relationships to be fostered and sustained across the ecclesial divide of Christian denominations and traditions.

Stephen Seamands' work shows just how fundamental Trinitarian thinking and theology can be if it is purposefully used to direct and language the life and ministry of the Christian pastor, or in the case of this research, the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. Seamands makes it very clear, that as *faiifeau* we need to be acutely aware of the fact that the ministry is Trinitarian in nature, "Of Jesus Christ, to the Father, through the Holy Spirit – this, then, is the ministry in the image of God to which we have been called...Ministry beckons us to enter into the triune life and to be conformed to it."¹⁷¹ To Seamands ministry is not just a vocation, and more than just a calling. Rather, it is the culmination of a choice to enter into the life of the Triune God with a view that such a life is what is necessary for a *faiifeau* or any Christian pastor.

Seamands breaks down his Trinitarian ministry into seven characteristics which to him mirror

¹⁷¹ Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 30.

the reality of the life of the Trinity.¹⁷² His call is that they become working principles in the ministry because they are wholistic across all areas ranging from preaching to church planting and ministering crossculturally. In essence, Seamands proposes that adhering to these principles is what constitutes the Trinitarian shape of Christian service, because it is based on the inner life of the Trinity itself, which is the life every Christian pastor or *faiifeau* has been called to live. Such a call is both challenging and liberating for the *faiifeau* identity, because it calls for an openness and a willingness to be transformed, but also a readiness to conform to the life of the Trinity.

As examples among many, Barth, Rahner, Moltmann, LaCugna, Gunton, Zizioulas, Pickard and Seamands show the creativity and poignancy of Trinitarian theology and the insights to the identity of the *faiifeau* that has been discussed and critiqued in this research. Again, confirming the importance of understanding the contextual nature of Trinitarian theology and also the contextual nature of its investigation and its implications. However, we must also at this stage acknowledge the contributions of Pacific scholars to this body of research and theology. Sevati Tuwere believed in the centrality of the Trinity for his theological explorations, specifically in highlighting the importance of land for Fiji and its indigeneous people for the formulation of a theology of place,

[T]his study seeks to respond to the meaning of the Holy Trinity as perceived socially, using language from the historico-cultural experience of the people. It believes the Trinitarian community of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit is the only basis upon

¹⁷² Ibid., 18-19. The seven categories of the "life-together" of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit according to Seamands are "Relational Personhood", "Joyful Intimacy", "Glad Surrender", "Complex Simplicity", "Gracious Self-Acceptance", "Mutual Indwelling" and "Passion Mission."

which a Christian idea of community can be built. The orthodox interpretation of this doctrine, however, has often been couched in high-sounding metaphysical terms too remote from man's attempt to build his community where he can live joyfully and in responsible stewardship with the rest of creation.¹⁷³

Tuwere places the Trinity at the centre of his theological enterprise because he views theology as a "response" to how the Trinity is viewed socially, but experienced through the historico-cultural experiences of the Fijian people. His aim is for a theological foundation of community that is not only Trinitarian but is also deeply reflective of how Fijians want to live in joyful community and responsible stewardship, in solidarity with the rest of creation. From the outset Tuwere is clear that his intention is not to focus on the abstract or speculative nature of Trinitarian theology, but on its practical application and relevance, or its contextual pertinence to the needs of his community. As intimated above, Tuwere's Trinitarian theology is closely related to a Trinitarian understanding of Creation, whereby God's nature of freedom, love and communion are seen to give rise to the correct responses of praise and adoration from the people, which in action are to be shown through care and respect of the environment.¹⁷⁴ Such a focus reflects Tuwere's intentions to maintain the intimate relationship between the Biblical text, namely the Creation story/ies and the Psalms with his understanding of the Holy Trinity.

¹⁷³ Ilaitia S. Tuwere, *Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place* (Suva, Fiji. Auckland, New Zealand: University of the South Pacific. Institute of Pacific Studies. College of St. John the Evangelist, 2002)., 11.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 89-91.

Winston Halapua on the other hand, creatively promotes a *Moana* theology, which expresses the intimate connection that the people of the Pacific or Oceania have with the ocean.¹⁷⁵ In fact, he opens up *moana* to have more than one definition, and in doing so, *moana* becomes not only a concept in which he grounds his theology, but it is also the methodology in which such a theology is achieved.¹⁷⁶ Halapua goes further, and posits what he calls, *Theomoana* as a new way of doing theology in dialogue with other theologies. A deeply relational way of doing theology, Halapua relates it to the experiences of the ancestors of the Oceanic peoples as they journeyed across the oceans, with the acknowledgement that it is also as diverse as the oceans of the world themselves, embracing complexity, mystery and diversity. In creating his *Theomoana*, Halapua is displaying the interconnectedness, diversity in unity, and dynamic nature inherent also in the Trinity. It symbolises movement, and life, and for the *faiifeau*, such a theology encourages him to see the richness and diversity of other views and perspectives, as they engage in *talanoa* [telling stories/listening to different voices]. For at the heart of the *Theomoana*, and the *moana* methodology, is the commitment to engage in *talanoa*.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Winston Halapua, *Waves of God's Embrace: Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean* (London: Canterbury Press, 2008).

¹⁷⁶ "Moana Methodology: Promoting Dynamic Leadership," in *Talanoa Ripples: Across Borders, Cultures, Disciplines...* ed. Jione Havea (Wellington: Office of the Directorate Pasifika@Massey, 2010), 132-148.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

A Samoan contribution to Trinitarian theology can be appreciated through the work of Methodist minister and theologian, Rev. Upolu Luma Vaai.¹⁷⁸ A former lecturer of Piula Theological College in Samoa, and current lecturer at the Pacific Theological College in Suva, Vaai's Doctorate thesis looked to reconstruct a relational Trinitarian way of life for the Methodist church in Samoa, modelled on the love and life shared by the Father, Son, and Spirit. Integral to Vaai's thesis is the notion that the Trinity is a living faith and one that is already embodied in the relational life of the people. Ultimately, Vaai's attempt is to show that a life modelled on the Trinity is one that is more reciprocal, self-giving, and other-oriented for the Samoan Methodist Church and Samoan society. Vaai's project remains in thesis form, and it is hoped that if published such insights can be seen as both relevant and pertinent for the dilemma which besets the Samoan Methodist Church, Samoan society, and so by association, the CCCSANZ and the *faiifeau* identity. It is now that we turn to understanding the Trinitarian possibilities of the Samoan indigenous/cultural references within the *faiifeau identity* of the CCCSANZ. We will use the *siosiomaga of aiga, au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*, to categorise the Samoan indigenous/cultural references accordingly.

5.3. Towards a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ

In the previous chapters we established the platform for the validity, importance and potency of the *siosiomaga of aiga, au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele*, to the need for contextual relevance and sensitivity concerning the *faiifeau* identity. We have also established the primacy of an understanding of the relationality of the Triune God, and what it can also contribute to the

¹⁷⁸ Upolu Luma Vaai, "Faaaloalo: A Theological Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Trinity from a Samoan Perspective" (PhD, Griffith University, 2006).

articulation of a *faifeau* identity which is faithful to the Gospel. Now, we proceed to identify the necessary strands of a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference that will satisfy the theological agenda and objectives of this research.

5.3.1. A Trinitarian *faifeau* identity for the *aiga*

A Trinitarian *faifeau* identity for the *aiga*, must first and foremost accept that part of his calling for the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God includes serving his *aiga*. He must be prepared to give his wife and children his time and attention, over and above the time they spend together in the *siosiomaga* of the *au-lotu*. Intimate knowledge of each other, and harnessing a culture of mutual care and love is critical for creating an environment where open dialogue and honest feelings are shared. Especially with the knowledge that faith formation in the CCCSANZ is largely kept at the rote level, even for adults, a Trinitarian *faifeau* identity for the *aiga*, will see that part of his responsibilities will be to ensure that the reality of the Triune God permeates their everyday lives.

That the Triune God is not seen as some abstract concept or puzzle to be solved, but rather The Reality that needs to be embraced, received and embodied through faithful and meaningful discipleship and worship. Prayer should be at the centre of his *aiga*. Theological and spiritual conversations need to be encouraged, so that God's presence and activity is sought in everything that the *aiga* does, but also so that deep meditation and reflection can take place after the family services in the morning and evenings to ensure spiritual maturity goes hand in hand with physical and social maturity. In this way, a Trinitarian *faifeau*

identity for *aiga* encourages the fruitful exchange of faith and theology, and the acknowledgement of family members as dynamic persons in relationship, for the sake of maintaining *aiga* that can contribute positively to the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God.

5.3.2. A Trinitarian *fai-feau* identity for the *au-lotu*

As the secondary sphere of relationships identified in this thesis, the *au-lotu* in the *siosiomaga* of the CCCSANZ naturally takes the *fai-feau* identity's time and commitment, because it is the *au-lotu* that originally 'calls' him to be their *Tamā Fa'aleagaga* [Spiritual Father] or *Fa'afeagaiga* [One whom we have covenanted with, i.e. sister in sister-brother relationship]. These two titles reveal that the *fai-feau* identity in the *siosiomaga* of his *au-lotu* is primarily involved with the 'spiritual' wellbeing of his *au-lotu*, and at the same time, the *au-lotu* tend to his and his family 'physical' wellbeing because of the *feagaiga* they made before God to look after the *fai-feau* identity as if him and his family were their 'sister.' Sadly, these two Samoan indigenous/cultural references appear to have become so concretised and ingrained that the reciprocity of roles and flow of care, love and support is corrupted. For example, the *Tamā Fa'aleagaga* is not open for 'spiritual renewal' or 'spiritual feeding' in many ways, because he has been chosen by God to serve that very purpose in the *siosiomaga* of his *au-lotu*. Such a reality is also supported by the fact that only the *fai-feau* identity is addressed as the *Auauna o le Atua* [Servant of God]. Obviously, the implications are damaging if the individual abuses such a title for their own personal gain and prestige. Similarly, it is time, for the *Au-lotu* instead to be seen, heard and known as the *Auauna o le Atua*.

But the current reality ensures that the *au-lotu* in return do not expect and very much reject any attempt by the *faiifeau* identity to reciprocate anything ‘physical’ that can contribute to their wellbeing, because they are enacting the role of the brother in the *feagaiga* relationship. The sister is sacred, and is just supposed to pray for her brother’s wellbeing and prosperity, while the brother is the one that serves and sacrifices his all for his sister. Clearly, if a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity of the *au-lotu* is to be articulated it needs to address a reversal in these roles, so that mutual reciprocity, love, care, and support for both physical and spiritual needs can be made. In this regard, I propose that the *au-lotu* also take up a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference as *Au-lotu Fa’aleagaga*, and instead of the *faiifeau* identity being referred to as the *Fa’afeagaiga*, it should be the *Au-lotu Fa’aleagaga* who should be treated as the ‘sister’ in their relationship with the *faiifeau* identity. That way, the *faiifeau* identity will serve the *Au-lotu Fa’aleagaga* as their *Tamā Fa’aleagaga*, and so on an even relational plain, they can mutually reciprocate ‘spiritual wellbeing’.

As for the ‘physical care’ of the *Au-lotu* as the *Fa’afeagaiga*, they will not stop looking after the *faiifeau* identity, because hospitality is a central part of the *fa’aSamoa*, but such a perspective will open up the possibility of the *faiifeau* identity to see that it is also his responsibility to see that he ‘physically’ looks after his *Au-lotu Fa’aleagaga*’s and their vulnerability to the *siosiomaga* of Aotearoa New Zealand, and its many imbalances regarding financial access and stability, and the scarcity of good housing, health, education and employment opportunities as migrants and second-generation Samoan New Zealanders. Ultimately, a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity of the *au-lotu* needs to usurp the current mismatch,

and encourage a reciprocal flow of both physical and spiritual wellbeing for the benefit of all involved, individual and collective.

5.3.3. A Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity for *tagata lautele*

As the tertiary level of exposure for the *faiifeau* identity, *tagata lautele* will need to see the centrality of communion, and fellowship in the *faiifeau*'s *aiga*, and *au-lotu*, as an invitation to become a believer to embody the Gospel and not necessarily an invitation to become one of the *au-lotu*. Such an invitation will reveal a vision for society and community based on the acknowledgement of people's individual dignities and their individual life journeys as a critical part of the faith community journey, as the people of God. A Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity for *tagata lautele* will openly look to engage with neighbours, and with the local community. They will get involved in addressing issues that are inhumane and are reflective of a denial of the purposes of God in building wholesome *au-lotu*, for the purposes of community. The *faiifeau* identity in this way, opens up the *feau* and *galuega* which he has become content with in doing ministry within the confines of the conservative lines of a village-church mindframe imported from Samoa, at the expense of actually doing meaningful mission to the lost, and all who are in the world who are suffering and in need of the Gospel. In this way, as the *Feoi o le Tala Lelei* [Inheritor of the Gospel], *Failotu* [Worship leader], and *Ao o Fa'alupega* [Apex of Samoan honorific system], as Samoan indigenous/cultural references need to be radically transformed and lived out with the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God, at the forefront of their missionary goals. After all, the *feau* and *galuega* of the *faiifeau* identity is merely a continuance and extension of the *feau* and the *galuega* of the Triune God that calls *aiga*, *au-lotu* and even *tagata lautele* to live, and

embody the Gospel. This is why we need to turn to understand more deeply the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, because as visible heirs of God, we must be open to God's dynamic presence in the world, and His ultimate freedom to do whatever He pleases.

5.4. Summary

As a *faiifeau fa'avalevaleda*, I was *lē mafaufau* when I *sosopo le vā-sā* as I critically engaged with the *motu* of Trinitarian scholarship and a brief survey of its history in the church and academia, as well as moving to consider the relevance of Samoan indigenous/cultural references to a realisation of a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ. What was discovered is that a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ must take seriously the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*. Even if it means, balancing out one's time so that one never forgets their wife and children, as well as being open to the mutual reciprocity and the even flow of both physical and spiritual blessings, and engaging in wider society and the community. We concluded that a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ needed to fulfil the ability to be able to carry on the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God that is called for by the Gospel and necessitated by the *siosiomaga*. *O le Suli Va'aia o le Atua* is the concern of the next chapter where the theological articulation of this Samoan indigenous/cultural reference for the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ will be brought to life.

**CHAPTER SIX: “O AI OE? E TE VALEA?” [WHO DO YOU
THINK YOU ARE CHALLENGING/QUESTIONING THE
STATUS QUO? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?]-
“O LE SULI VA’AIA O LE ATUA” [A VISIBLE HEIR OF GOD]-
A TRINITARIAN FAIFEAU IDENTITY FOR THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAMOA IN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

6.0. Introduction

To want to articulate the contours of a Trinitarian *faifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ is to run the risk of being asked the critical questions, “*O ai oe? E te valea?*” However, to provide a response, is to answer the primary and secondary concerns of this research. First, that this thesis will promote and explicate the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua*, as a Trinitarian *faifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ. And secondly, that the *faifeau fa’avalevalea* hermeneutic, will allow us to critically appreciate the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference for the *faifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. Therefore, in this chapter, I will continue *sosopo le vā-sā* that discourages a critical appreciation and detailed articulation of the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference, the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* as a Trinitarian *faifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ, in the hope of realising its potential to be both faithful to the relational nature of the Triune God and relevant and sensitive to the *siosiomaga* of his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata*

lautele. In the end, this chapter will acknowledge the need to recognise the wider implications of this Trinitarian *fai feau* identity of the CCCSANZ, as he fulfils his calling in the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God. In other words, I answer the critical questions of this chapter by saying, Yes! As the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, I am *fa'avalevalea*!

6.1. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* as a Trinitarian *fai feau* identity

As already identified in previous chapters, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* is the Samoan indigenous/reference that resonates most with the relational nature of the Triune God. This is because first, it points to the *fai feau* identity acknowledging his calling to be an “heir of God.” To be an “heir” is to take up one’s inheritance or heritage, but can also be seen as accepting or receiving a responsibility to embody or represent someone in their ‘physical’ absence. The onus and crucial focus of this responsibility is that you are expected to reflect the values of the one you are embodying. In relation therefore to the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, we can understand that it is the privilege, honour and calling of the Triune God for the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, to faithfully represent and embody His *feau* and *galuega*. In other words, it is a call to live out the presence and reality of the relational nature of the Triune God on a daily basis, with the knowledge that He may be ‘physically’ absent. Specifically, as the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, we are called to embody in the different *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*, the relational nature of the Triune God.

A relational nature that is life-affirming and at its heart is the Gospel, and an ethic of Godly love, which desires individuals to exist in relationship or communion with others through

mutual reciprocity of love, care and concern. It is a call to proclaim and preach, and embody an alternative way of living and being. It is also a call to challenge/question and ultimately, transform any *motu* that has become so entrenched that it has eventually become hostile against the outward moving dynamic of altruism, compassion, and mercy as well as the fluidity of the relationality of the Triune God. It is a call which is pressing for immediate expression, but also looks ahead for its eschatological completion. Furthermore to be a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* as a *faiifeau* identity in the CCCSANZ is a responsibility that every *faiifeau* must be encouraged to accept, as a faithful and humble response to God's grace who has called us to His *feau* and *galuega*.

In other words, to become a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* as a *faiifeau* identity in the CCCSANZ is only possible after deep meditation and reflection, and a confession and profession of one's inability and unworthiness to receive God's overflowing and everlasting grace. God's grace that is embodied in the Gospel imperative and story as it "crosses over" divisions and demarcations that separate people and gives rest, peace and healing to people's hearts and lives as it is told, re-told and re-packaged, not only in preaching and proclamation, but also in the daily interactions, activities and engagement the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* may have with his *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and also *tagata lautele*. This is the Gospel for all nations and peoples that at its centre is the grace, mercy and compassion of the Triune God for His fallen but redeemed Creation. The Gospel which in light of a nuanced understanding of the relational nature of the Triune God, is the story of God the Father who loves unconditionally God the Son, and all who come to have faith in Him, through the everlasting and ever-flowing Spirit of life and love that permeates everything that the Triune God is and does. A life that as faithful

followers we are free to participate in, despite our sinful nature, because through repentance filled with joyful hearts, we can declare our unworthiness, by acknowledging the need for God's grace for our very existence, which is also the mystery of God for our lives.

Therefore, as the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* as the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, that always involves maintaining a relevance and sensitivity regarding the contours of the *siosiomaga* in his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele* and faithfulness to the relational nature of the Triune God.

However, the potential for the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* to be seen differently is also present if an incorrect understanding of God is the basis of one being the *Suli Va'aia*! For example, if one views God as an all-powerful, distant and transcendent God that does not have a desire to be in fellowship or communion then a very different type of *Suli Va'aia* is encouraged.

Likewise if one is called to consider being a *faiifeau* identity through an understanding of a "visible heir" as the product of an uncritically accepted understanding of a paramount *matai*, or elder, or parent, or any other position which may display a hegemonic privileging of power and status, who requires the upmost obedience and service without any opportunity for voicing one's view, then that's when being a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* becomes problematic.

This is because a "visible heir" of such an image of God will no doubt follow suit in mirroring any of the negative connotations attached with such positions of authority, and in some cases, relationships that have caused deep trauma and suffering.

As has already been presented, the relational nature of the Triune God is a living, dynamic, moving and flowing reality of love, fellowship and communion, where individuals or persons exist in communion with each other in deep, engaging, reciprocating and meaningful relationships. Thus, when viewed against the Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*, we are now able to appreciate it critically and recognise that there are both positive and negative implications. Even though we may confess and clearly see that at the heart of the love ethic in the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* is the desire to put others before oneself, and to acknowledge the value and contributions of everyone, regardless of the prejudices of human judgement and culture, but because it is a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference with its own weaknesses, it can just as equally encourage a *faiifeau* identity that is exactly the opposite due to a totally different understanding of God. Therefore, what is needed is a complementary reference that can transform the negative failings of the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* as a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference and act as a balance. As this thesis has unfolded, and as a result of the desire to provide a critical but nuanced understanding and interpretation of the *faiifeau* identity as the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* we turn now to the contours of my *fa'avalevatea* hermeneutic which will provide the necessary critical tools and licence to give the balance needed.

6.2. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* as a liminal, and hyphenated identity

From the outset of this thesis, a point was made that it was an exploration on how I as a *faiifeau* identity who is a Samoan New Zealander, and as someone who lives with the Mental illness of Bi-Polar Disorder, can carefully construct and articulate a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity that embraces my liminal identity, and transform such a departure point of marginalisation into a

creative space. To achieve this, I have *sosopo le vā-sā* that privileges and elevates the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ by engaging in a critical appreciation of the many *motu* that exist in the *siosiomaga* of *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*. It is understandable then, that the contours of the Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity that I propose also embrace a type of hyphenated identity, an identity that is content to flow and fluctuate ‘between’ the two Samoan indigenous/cultural references for the purposes of going ‘beyond’ and creating a new identity in the process.

6.3. The *Suli Va’aia o le Atua-faiifeau tautalaitiiti!*

We have already identified when discussing the significance of developing an understanding of the *siosiomaga* of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ the threat of being labelled *tautalaitiiti!* But, now we turn to provide another nuanced understanding that will enable a positive application of such a label in the interests of showing how the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* can be sustained as a Trinitarian identity of *faiifeau* in the *siosiomaga* of his *aiga*.

6.3.1. The *siosiomaga* of *aiga* – Prioritising prayer and meditation

The Samoan indigenous/cultural reference of *faiifeau tautalaitiiti* can also be understood as a *faiifeau* identity that “speaks little.” This is when we consider the two words that have combined to form *tautalaitiiti*; *tautala* [speak] and *itiiti* [little]. To “speak little” for the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* seems at first very challenging. How can there be an expectation for the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* to “speak little,” when at the forefront and centre of their *feau* and *galuega* is the need to communicate effectively, proclaim and preach the Gospel of God to everyone

they come into contact with? Such a question finds its answer when we are encouraged to understand “speak little” in the sense of a preferred turn, or paradigm shift, to a *feau* and *galuega* within our *aiga*, that allows for others to speak first, or speak loudest while we give them time and respect to voice and share their opinions and views. In other words, in order to allow for the opinions of their *aiga* to be heard and respected, the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* has to be *tautalaitiiti* and give them that opportunity. By being a *faiifeau tautalaitiiti*, he can encourage a healthy culture of communication, and sharing as both parents and children feel empowered to share their views and open themselves for critique and feedback. For as the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* who is also a *faiifeau tautalaitiiti* he will be reflecting the Triune God’s nature of allowing everyone the power and opportunity to voice their concerns to Him through prayer, meditation and fasting.

6.3.2. The *siosiomaga* of *au-lotu* – Educating and empowering *au-lotu*

In the *siosiomaga* of his *au-lotu*, the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua-faiifeau tautalaitiiti* can educate and empower his *au-lotu* by highlighting an understanding of the typical Sunday liturgy that focuses more on the centrality of prayer and meditation, rather than on the current focus on the preaching, singing, and proclamation of the Word of God. Indeed the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua-faiifeau tautalaitiiti* will be able to encourage all members, right from the *fanau* of the *Aoga Aso Sā*, to the youth of the *Au-talavou* to the adult and mature members who have *matāfale* in making prayer and meditation the central aspect of their life and faith. Such a practise is Trinitarian to the core because it encourages waiting on God’s Spirit for direction and guidance, a culture the Jesus Christ embodied while he was on Earth, and is the actual

disposition of the Cosmic Jesus as he is at the ‘right hand’ of God the Father, mediating for all believers.

6.3.3. *Tautalaititi, tapuaiga* and ‘silent’ worship

For both the siosiomaga of *aiga*, and *au-lotu*, the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua-faifeau tautalaititi* is also deeply Samoan. It resonates with the tapuiaga of pre-Christian Samoa, where the *feagaiga* or *ositaulaga* of the *aiga* would wait in ‘silence’ to experience a manifestation of their atua or aitu in response to the ‘prayers’ of the *aiga*.¹⁷⁹ It also gives illumination to the practices of ‘silent worship’ when matua support their fanau by praying for their protection and success, when villages wait in ‘silence’ while they wait for their fishermen to bring a bountiful catch of fish, and also when *kilikiti* [traditional Samoan cricket] or any other sport is played, where Samoan supporters will ‘support in silence’ praying that their teams are victorious. Such a reality is captured in the Samoan proverb, “*O le faiva tapuia, o le faiva manuia lena*” [An activity/sport/journey that is supported in silent worship will always be successful/bring blessing].

¹⁷⁹ Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa, *Tapuai: Samoan Worship* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003). Le Tagaloa discusses a Samoan understanding of tapuai in detail, especially in relation to pre-Christian practises and belief. See also Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, "Bio-Ethics and the Samoan Indigenous Reference," in *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau M. Sualii-Sauni, et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008). Central to Efi's articulations of what he terms as the Samoan Indigenous Reference are nuanced interpretations of the *va-tapuia*, *tofa* and *moe* [sleep talk with the ancestors], and *tuaoi* [boundaries] amongst other Samoan cultural references that provide interesting and equally potent views, against the backdrop of a historically charged argument for a belief in a Samoan understanding of God as Tagaloalagi, a Progenitor God. Efi argues that the Tagaloalagi is synonymous with the God of Christianity, but lacks the need to acknowledge His Triune nature, and the implications that have on further clarifying his privileged, historical musings.

6.3.4. The *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele* – Opportunities to be active in local community

In the *siosiomaga* of *tagata lautele*, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau tautalaitiiti* offers the opportunity to be active in the local community and affairs that directly impact on the neighbourhood in which he lives. This is because to “speak little” means that he should be compelled to instead listen more attentively, and carry less pre-conceived ideas and prejudices to the conversations he may have with others in the wider community he may come in contact with. Indeed, to “speak little” means that he should also then have the motivation and desire to engage openly with others, by giving others the ability to share what they may in need of and desire from him as a *faifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau tautalaitiiti* in this respect, becomes more open to dissonance and difference because he is willing to receive other’s perspectives, before he settles on making judgements and assessments that will ensure that he continues to embody the relational values of the Triune God who is always seeking out the lost, and those in need of love, care and compassion the most. Those in society who may not only be poor in spirit, but who are also abused, forsaken, oppressed and marginalised by society in general.

6.4. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fia-poto!*

As the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fia-poto*, the *faifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ can be considered as one who is trying to be smart, but now can also be seriously viewed as a *faifeau* who is *fia* [wants to/desires] to be *poto* [wise]. Such a positive re-interpretation and nuancing allows for the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fia-poto*, to seek wisdom by opening himself up to accept alternative sources of wisdom that people in his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele* may possess.

6.4.1. Open to alternative sources of wisdom

This again, is crucial to the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God and is consistent with a belief that all wisdom, and knowledge originates from Him. As a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference it will not only open up the mindset of the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ, in relation to wisdom, viewpoints, perspectives and knowledge that are sourced from other non-traditional sources that he might be used to. But it also gives him an open mind to also consider critically both the motu of traditional knowledge that he has received through experience and learning growing up as a Samoan, and will grant him the ability to identify both the weaknesses and strengths of all wisdom against the relational nature of the Triune God that he will attempt to embody on a daily basis. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau fia-poto* Samoan indigenous/cultural reference is an acknowledgement of the need to be flexible enough to change and be transformed if clarification is given through non-traditional sources of wisdom that they may not necessarily be accustomed to.

6.5. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau lē mafaufau!*

A *faiifeau* who is *lē mafaufau* can negatively be seen, as has already been intimated earlier, as one who is “out of their mind.” Such a label is discriminatory and proceeds to stigmatise a person, if they dwell upon and receive the negative implications seriously. However, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau lē mafaufau* is positive and full of hope, because it encourages the *faiifeau* identity to be *lē* [not motivated/dictated] *mafaufau* [by their minds/thoughts].

6.5.1. *Lē mafaufau* is being Spirit-filled

This means that they in-turn will open themselves up to a Spirit-centred, Spirit-empowered and Spirit-filled *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God! In other words, they will not let their ‘thoughts’ dictate the way they react to anything that they come across in the *siosiomaga* of their *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*. Instead, they will seek God’s Spirit for His guidance and protection. This can easily and narrowly be understood as again, inspiring a life of prayer and intimate communion with the Triune God, but here to be *lē mafaufau* points more to an awareness that God’s Spirit is leading, speaking to him, comforting him, teaching him, and reminding him of the fact that His presence brings not confusion, chaos or strife, but rather, peace, contentment, but also a boldness and strength to speak up for himself and for others who may not have the same privileged position and status.

6.5.2. *Lē mafaufau* is having boldness and confidence to testify to the truth

Indeed, to be the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua-faifeau lē mafaufau* is to not be a worrier, but a warrior in the sense of having a boldness, and confidence to testify to the values of truth, honesty and integrity in all that the *faifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ. It is a confidence however built not on forcefulness or violence, but on a boldness built on the relational nature of the Triune God, which allowed Jesus Christ to testify in boldness even to the Cross of his identity as the Son of God. Indeed, to be a *Suli-Va’aia o le Atua-faifeau lē mafaufau* is to embrace the prophetic calling of the *faifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ to stand up and speak out against injustices that may be existent in his *aiga*, *au-lotu* and *tagata lautele*. In other words, it is another paradigm shift, where one is able to respectfully disagree with other people’s opinions, even if it means to be the only who appears to do so, as is the tradition of

the Prophet's of the Old Testament, John the Baptist, and of course, Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was born of the Spirit, moved and depended on the Spirit's presence and power, and finally gave His Spirit to His disciples to enable them to go forth into all nations, preaching and proclaiming and embodying the Gospel of God in all that they did.

6.6. The *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fa'avalevaea!*

Finally, to be called *fa'avalevaea* is the ultimate attack on one's character and person. This is because it diminishes one's sense of dignity, and assumes that they are not able to engage and survive in society, due to their apparent craziness and mental state. However, in light of the relational nature of the Triune God as being love and compassion, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fa'avalevaea* calls upon the *faifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ to live a life in solidarity with those who are equally stigmatised in society and in life.

6.6.1. *Fa'avalevaea* as 'an alternative view'

For to be *fa'avalevaea* in this instance is to be able to see and envision 'an alternative view' and be willing to voice that view, even if it means challenging/questioning the status quo. In that respect, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fa'avalevaea* in his *aiga* will open himself to judgement, critique and persecution in mirroring what many people experience in life as their reality. In his *au-lotu*, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fa'avalevaea* will not get too offended if his status and views are critiqued and challenged because he knows that he doesn't have all the answers. In many respects, as can be appreciated, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faifeau fa'avalevaea* will inspire a heart of humility, and a resolve of a great magnitude

as he acknowledges the complexity of every *siosiomaga* he may find himself in. For to see things from another person's lower status in Samoan society will be to his advantage, as he no longer desires to maintain the *vā-sā* that give him the potential to enjoy unbridled power, unrestrained behaviour, and a tendency to believe in his infallibility because of the attached motu of respect, honour and privilege that comes with being the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ.

6.6.2. *Fa'avalevalea* as role reversal

Ultimately, the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau fa'avalevalea* is a total reversal of his current state, in that as a leader he serves, as a Servant he leads, as a Father he becomes like a child, and like a matai he acts like a tuatua, all because his identity is assured and defined by the loving grace of the Triune God, who despite being the Almighty, All-powerful, omnipotent and everlasting God, He is also the God that is closer to us, than ourselves.

6.7. Summary

In this chapter, as a *faiifeau fa'avalevalea* I proceeded to *sosopo le vā-sā* that separated the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ and the possibility of recognising a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity which is a Samoan indigenous/cultural reference, known as the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua*. Once it was identified that a crucial part of understanding the implications of such an identity, was the need to make sure that a correct understanding of the relational nature of the Triune God, and its interconnectedness with the Gospel for all, then it was discovered that the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* needed a balance. This balance was granted through a liminal combination

of identities that places the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua* alongside the *faiifeau fa'avalevatea*. What was produced was an open way of living and being the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ that encourages communication, sharing of knowledge and power, and a definite commitment to centre one's life around God's Spirit, prayer and the realisation that in Jesus Christ, God's Son, we have received the perfection of the relational nature of the Triune God in all His fullness. As the *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau fa'avalevatea*, we also allow for the mystery of the Triune God, and His everlasting grace and benevolent will for our lives, our *aiga*, our *aulotu*, and our relationships with *tagata lautele* to permeate in and through us, and out of us, overflowing to others around us, for their betterment, enrichment and edification which is at the heart of the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION – “UA FASA LAVA LE
FAIFEAU FA’AVALEVALEA!” [I HAVE MANIFESTED AS A
FOOLISH/CRAZY/STUPID/MENTALLY ILL FAIFEAU!]
IMPLICATIONS OF THE *SULI VA’AIA O LE ATUA-FAIFEAU
FA’AVALEVALEA* FOR THE FEAU AND GALUEGA OF THE
TRIUNE GOD IN THE CHURCH**

At the beginning of this research, it was stated that it was seen as a necessary and timely investigation in which to attempt to articulate a new *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ. This investigation was framed against two critical questions. First, how can a *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ as the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua* be both faithful to the Gospel and the Triune God of the Christian Church and faith, as well as relevant and sensitive to the contemporary context/s of the CCSANZ. And second, how does being a *faiifeau fa’avalevalea* allow for a critical appreciation of the *Suli Va’aia o le Atua*. After articulating my hermeneutic as a *faiifeau fa’avalevalea*, and my methodological approach as one that would require me to *sosopo le vā-sā* that has elevated the *faiifeau* identity of the CCCSANZ to a position of unapproachability and infallibility, I conducted the investigation by providing a nuanced interpretation and understanding of the contemporary context/s as *siosiomaga* with its contours or levels of responsibility as *aiga*, *au-lotu*, and *tagata lautele* as well as identifying the need for a Christian identity to be Trinitarian in nature. This allowed me as a *faiifeau fa’avalevalea* to formulate a Trinitarian *faiifeau* identity as a *Suli Va’aia o le Atua-faiifeau*

fa'avalevalea that is both grounded in the relational nature of the Triune God and born from the soil of the CCCSANZ.

This new *faiifeau* identity for the CCCSANZ has wider implications for the *feau* and *galuega* of the church as a whole. If the *faiifeau* identity is understood as a *Suli Va'aia o le Atua-faiifeau fa'avalevalea*, what does that mean for the rest of the *au-lotu*? How should their theological identity be perceived? What new directions in ecclesiology does the *Suli Va'aia-faiifeau fa'avalevalea* encourage? What does such a identity offer the CCCSANZ by way of a theology of the *feau* and *galuega* of the Triune God? How can such an identity of church leadership inspire and impact on the Christian church worldwide? These are just some of the more questions that this research can be seen to have inspired. No doubt, a task that is one that should be taken up by all theologians, scholars and other *faiifeau fa'avalevalea*, who are interested in ensuring that theological identity continues to be both Trinitarian and contextual in nature, and in its expression.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All biblical references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, unless otherwise stated.

Aiono-Le Tagaloa, Fanaafi. *Tapuai: Samoan Worship*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003.

Barth, Karl. *The Doctrine of God*. Translated by T. H. L. Parker and others. Vol. I/1, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957.

Bettenson, Henry, and Chris Maunder, eds. *Documents of the Christian Church*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Boff, Leonardo. *Trinity and Society*. Theology and Liberation Series. 2nd ed. Wellwood, Kent: Burns and Oates Press, 1988.

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 10th ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996.

Buxton, Graham. *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006.

CCCS. *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*. 13th ed. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2011.

———. *Ia Viia Lou Suafa: Sauniga Lotu Ma Tatalo O Le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa*. 3rd ed. Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1986.

- . *O Le Malo O Le Atua/the Kingdom of God: A Commentary on the Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church - L.M.S.* Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1958.
- . *O Pese Ma Viiga I Le Atua.* Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1909.
- . *The Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church (L.M.S.): O Mataupu Silisili O Le Faavae Faa-Le-Agaga O Le Ekalesia Samoa (L.M.S.).* Reprint ed. Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1995.
- Davidson, Allan K. *Christianity in Aotearoa.* 3rd ed. Wellington: Education for Ministry, 2004.
- Duncan, Betty K. "Christianity: Pacific Island Traditions." In *Religions of New Zealanders*, edited by Peter Donovan, 130-43. Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press, 1996.
- Efi, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi. "Bio-Ethics and the Samoan Indigenous Reference." In *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, edited by Tamasailau M. Sualii-Sauni, I'uogafa Tuagalu, Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai and Naomi Fuamatu, 173-88. Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008.
- . "Sufiga O Le Tuaoi: Negotiating Boundaries." In *Address to Brigham Young University*, 1-17. Laie, Hawaii., 2011.
- Ete, Risatisone Ben. "A Bridge in My Father's House: New Zealand-Born Samoans Talk Theology." B.Theol, University of Otago, 1996.
- Fa'alafi, Fineaso T. S. *Carrying the Faith. Samoan Methodism: 1828-1928.* Apia: Piula Theological College, 2005.

Faaeafalepolu, Hemidemisemiqaaver. "The Relevance of E.F.K.S. Worship Today." BD, Malua Theological College, 2004.

Freeman, Derek. *The Social Structure of a Samoan Village Community*. Edited by Peter Hempenstall Canberra: Target Oceania, 2006.

Grenz, Stanley J. "Anticipating God's New Community: Theological Foundations for Women in Ministry." *Journal-Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 595-611.

———. *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997.

———. *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*. The Matrix of Christian Theology. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

———. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004.

———. *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

———. *Theology for the Community of God*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994.

Gunton, Colin E. *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

- . *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.
- . *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- . *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. 2nd ed. London: T & T Clark, 2003.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. London: SCM Press, 1974.
- Halapua, Winston. "Moana Methodology: Promoting Dynamic Leadership." In *Talanoa Ripples: Across Borders, Cultures, Disciplines...* edited by Jione Havea, 132-48. Wellington: Office of the Directorate Pasifika@Massey, 2010.
- . *Waves of God's Embrace: Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean* London: Canterbury Press, 2008.
- Hamman, Adalbert. *How to Read the Church Fathers*. Translated by John Bowden and Margaret Lydamore. London: SCM Press, 1993.
- Ioka, Danny. "Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand." PhD, University of Otago, 1996.
- Kamu, Lalomilo. *Samoan Culture & Christian Gospel*. Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965.

Kesich, Veselin. *Formation and Struggles: The Birth of the Church, Ad 33-200*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us : The Trinity and Christian Life* San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991.

Lange, Raeburn. *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005.

———. *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa*. Macmillan Brown Working Paper Series. Edited by Bill Willmott and Ueantabo Neemia-Mackenzie Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1997.

Lee, Jung Young. *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Lee, Jung Young, and Peter C. Phan. *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Lee, Sang Hyun. *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Lima, Peleti. "Performing a Remigrant Theology: Sons and Daughters Improvising on the Return Home." PhD, Charles Sturt University, 2012.

Liuaana, Featuna'i *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence 1900 - 1962*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004.

Maliko, Tavita. "O Le Soga'imiti: An Embodiment of God in the Samoan Male Body." PhD, The University of Auckland, 2012.

Maliko, Tavita T. "The Hierarchy of Voice: The Context of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in New Zealand." MTh, The University of Auckland, 2000.

Marsh, Thomas. *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study*. Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 5th ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2011.

———. "The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Evangelical Reflection." In *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*, edited by Timothy George, 17-36. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007.

McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

Meleisea, Malama. *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*. Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987.

———. "To Whom Gods and Men Crowded: Chieftainship and Hierarchy in Ancient Samoa." In *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*, edited by Judith Huntsman, 19-34. Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1995.

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding : An Introduction to Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2014.

Moltmann-Wendel, Elisabeth. "Our Body - Our Self." In *I Am My Body*, 1-34. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994.

Moltmann, Jurgen. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit - a Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

———. *The Crucified God*. Translated by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1976.

———. *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Noll, Mark A. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012.

Phan, Peter C. "Developments of the Doctrine of the Trinity." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, edited by Peter C. Phan, 3-12. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Pickard, Stephen. *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry*. Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology. Edited by Leslie J. Francis and Jeff Astley Surrey: Ashgate, 2009.

Pouono, Terry. "Coconut Water in a Coca Cola Bottle: In Search of an Identity: A New Zealand-Born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World." PhD, The University of Auckland, 2016.

- Pratt, George. *Pratt's Dictionary of the Samoan Language*. 4th ed. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977.
- Schreiter, Robert J. *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985.
- . *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*. 7th ed. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Seamands, Stephen. *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Setefano, Imoama. "O Le *Faifeau* - the Servant of God (Redefining the *Faifeau* Paradigm of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand)." MTh, The University of Auckland, 2008.
- Setu, Fa'atulituli. "The Theological Appreciation of the "Faifeau" in the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa: Is He Christian?" BD, Pacific Theological College, 1986.
- Tagaloa, Fanaafi Aiono-Le. *Tapuai: Samoan Worship*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003.
- Tanielu, Lonise Sera. "O Le A'oa'oina O Le Gagana, Faitautusi Ma Le Tusitusi I Le A'oga a Le Faifeau: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (E.F.K.S.) = Literacy Education, Language, Reading and Writing in the Pastor's School : Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.)." PhD, The University of Auckland, 2004.

- Tiatia-Seath, Jemaima. "Pacific Peoples, Mental Health Service Engagement and Suicide Prevention in Aotearoa New Zealand." *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care* 7, no. 3 (2014): 111-21.
- Tiatia-Seath, Jemaima, Roy Lay-Yee, and Martin Von Randow. "Suicide Mortality among Pacific Peoples - (1996-2103)." *New Zealand Medical Association Journal* 130, no. 1454 (2017): 21-29.
- Tiatia, Jemaima. "Cultural Diversity across the Pacific: Samoan Cultural Constructs of Emotion, New Zealand-Born Samoan Youth Suicidal Behaviours, and Culturally Competent Human Services." *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology* (2012): 1-5.
- Tuisuga-le-tauu, Fa'alepo Aveau. "O Le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context." PhD, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009.
- Turner, George, ed. *O Le Galuega a Le Auauna a Iesu: Pastoral Theology in the Samoan Language*. Edited by K.T. Faletose. Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1965.
- Tutuila, Fereti. "A Critical Analysis of the Meaning of Tautua (Service) in the Lives of *Faife'au Samoa* (Samoan Ministers): Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.)." MTh, The University of Auckland, 2009.
- Tuwere, Ilaitia S. *Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place*. Suva, Fiji. Auckland, New Zealand: University of the South Pacific. Institute of Pacific Studies. College of St. John the Evangelist, 2002.

Unasa, Uesifili. "Doing Samoan Theology and Ministry in the Context of Aotearoa New Zealand." BD, Knox College, 1993.

Vaai, Upolu Luma. "Faaaloalo: A Theological Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Trinity from a Samoan Perspective." PhD, Griffith University, 2006.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., ed. *The Trinity in a Pluarilistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion*. Grand Rapids, Michigan Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.

Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.

Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.
