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“Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle”

**In search of an Identity: A New Zealand-born Samoan
Christian in a Globalized World**

By Terry Pouono

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
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ABSTRACT

‘Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle’ symbolizes a human reality, that is, the search for identity of a New Zealand-born Samoan in the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS). The context of our investigation is the diaspora Samoan church in New Zealand.

In the investigation of the concept of *teu le vā*, which simply means preserving harmony within the traditional, intra-cultural understandings of relational spaces; my contention is that traditional understandings of *teu le vā* mask the concrete reality that certain spaces and relationships within the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) are suppressed.

As reflected in the title of the thesis ‘Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle,’ this thesis identifies one of the predicaments illustrated by the image, that is, the New Zealand-born generations being caught in between two socio-cultural worlds, namely, the Samoan and the Western world. By utilizing the research methodology ‘*teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutics,’ I will investigate the different responses of New Zealand-born generations to the socio-cultural dilemma of being suppressed between the *vā*, or spaces within the CCCS.

This thesis also addresses how the integration of sacred relationships associated with the Samoan cultural beliefs have been integrated into a Samoan theology that has influenced church practices and belief systems. My *teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic investigates how the preserving and perpetuating of key elements associated with the Samoan church in New Zealand, contributes to social, economic injustice within *teu le vā* relationships.

This research also examines the impact of globalization in enforcing global concepts of culture on local cultures and contextual theologies, more specifically with respect to the CCCS. My contention is that identities associated with the local theologies are becoming increasingly ambiguous as a result of intensified intercultural interactions with the global world.

This thesis is an initial exploration of the question, ‘Should the coconut water, which symbolizes the Samoan Christian identity, be preserved?’ This connects with another question: ‘Should the CCCS in New Zealand adopt a new perspective in order to be an authentic Christian witness in the global world?’ The task of seeking possible solutions to these questions leads into critical conversations for the Christian mission of the CCCS, as she strives to make the gospel message a living reality in an increasingly complex world.

DEDICATION

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
(Proverbs 3:5-6)*

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Toese and my four children, Siona-Fou, Elisapeta, Tili and Alani for giving me the inspiration to complete this project.

This project is also dedicated to my late father in-law Tili Alani, who passed away a couple of weeks before my PhD oral examination. Words cannot express the support you gave me and my family during our journey, we thank you.

A special feeling of gratitude to my late parents, Tonumailau Ioane and Elisapeta Pouono for the invaluable lessons in life that have influenced my life; notably, to trust in GOD, to show love and compassion for anyone, to be faithful in all aspects of life, and to stay humble.

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To GOD be the Glory!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
GLOSSARY OF SAMOAN WORDS AND PHRASES/ABBREVIATIONS	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: Turning points: decisive moments in my life as a pilgrim	4
1.1 My Home, my church...my comfort zones	5
1.2 The born-again phase: conscientized from the old, traditional ways.	8
1.3 Asking new questions...challenging previous beliefs.....	9
1.4 The theology education experience: corned beef with substance!	10
1.5 My ecumenical story: Bossey Ecumenical Institute (2004-2005).....	12
1.6 Our return home with a purpose	14
1.7 Social location	15
CHAPTER TWO: Research Methodology: A <i>teu le vā</i> intra-cultural hermeneutic.	18
2.1 What is hermeneutics?.....	19
2.2 Hermeneutics: interpretation of a text	20
2.3 The ‘Hermeneutical Circle’	23
2.4 Hermeneutics: from texts to a theory of human understanding.....	24
2.5 Exploring indigenous worldviews	26
2.6 <i>Teu le vā</i> : a cosmological model of interrelatedness.....	29
2.7 <i>Teu le vā</i> : an ethical relationship	32
CHAPTER THREE: Establishing the coconut identity	36
3.1 Origin and Endeavour of the London Missionary Society	38
3.2 Samoan primal religion: A cosmological identity	41
3.3 The <i>fā’aSāmoa</i> : an exclusive, enclosed identity	44
3.4 Planting of the Christian gospel	47
3.5 Forming a ‘Coconut identity’	50
3.6 Rise of the Samoan church	52
3.7 Congregationalism in the mix	54
CHAPTER FOUR: Re-establishing an identity: transplanting the coconut.	57
4.1 Exploring the ‘Land of the long white cloud’	57
4.2 Transplanting Christianity	60
4.3 Doorway of opportunity for the islanders	61
4.4 Transplanting the coconut identity	65
4.5 Replicating the village church	68
4.6 CCCS in New Zealand: embodiment of a renewed spirit	71
4.7 <i>Teu le vā</i> in New Zealand: Transplanting or Transformation?.....	72

4.8	Is there a need for transformation in the CCCS?.....	75
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CHAPTER FIVE: Many variations of the coconut water: the problem of identity 83

5.1	Clarifying the two socio-cultural worlds	85
5.2	Caught in between two worlds: dilemma of New Zealand-born Samoans	89
5.3	An appeal towards the Samoan socio-cultural world	92
5.4	Transition to an alternative identity	98
5.5	The CCCS: A community of divided generations.....	101
5.6	New Zealand-born generations: different needs and visions.	104

CHAPTER SIX: Indigenous language loss: The future of *gagana Sāmoa* in the diaspora 108

6.1	<i>Gagana Sāmoa</i> : central to the Samoan identity	109
6.2	<i>Gagana Sāmoa</i> : subsumed by the universal language	113
6.3	Turn on the TV! Sesame Street is on! Linguistic postcolonialism and the survival of <i>Gagana Sāmoa</i> in a diverse world.	115
6.4	Toward preserving <i>gagana Sāmoa</i>	120
6.5	The CCCS: preserving the <i>gagana Sāmoa</i> , myth or reality?	121
6.6	Oratory Language: expressions of the cultural elite	127

CHAPTER SEVEN: Coconut water: a fixed or fluid identity 131

7.1	Globalization: promoting a Coca Cola identity	131
7.2	Culture...like water flowing from the mountains	135
7.3	Integrated concepts of culture	140
7.4	Global concepts of culture	142
7.5	Integrated concepts of culture and theology	146
7.6	CCCS Christianity like an ice boulder	147
7.7	Coconut water: an authentic witness?	150
7.8	Coconut water: a fixed or fluid identity?.....	153

CHAPTER EIGHT: Out of place: the voice of a NZ-born Samoan theologian in the CCCS 157

8.1	CCCS ministry: boxed in.....	158
8.2	What is a relevant mission for the CCCS in the twenty-first century?	160
8.3	CCCS pastors: preservers of tradition or agents of change?	163
8.4	Sacrificial giving or giving wisely?	170
8.5	Global and the local	173
8.6	Renewing attitudes of <i>teu le vā</i> relations.....	178
8.7	Thy Kingdom come: Christian identity as an eschatological reality.....	180
8.8	Conclusion.....	182

BIBLIOGRAPHY 184

GLOSSARY OF SAMOAN WORDS AND PHRASES

<i>Alofa</i>	Church offering collected for the <i>faife'au</i>
<i>Atina'e</i>	Church offering collected for the operations of the church
<i>Aoga Amata</i>	Samoan pre-school
<i>Aufaipese</i>	Church choir
<i>Autalavou</i>	Youth group
<i>Autalavou lāiti</i>	Junior youth group
<i>Ekālēsia</i>	Church community
<i>Fa'aaloalo</i>	Respect
<i>Fa'alavelave</i>	Extended family commitments
<i>Fa'alogo ma usita'i</i>	Listen and obey
<i>Fa'aSāmoa</i>	Samoan traditional way of life or Samoan traditional culture
<i>Faife'au</i>	A Samoan pastor or Reverend
<i>Fiapoto</i>	A person who thinks he/she knows everything
<i>Fono a matai</i>	Village council of chiefs
<i>Gagana Sāmoa</i>	Samoan language
<i>Ie lavalava</i>	A traditional Samoan attire that looks like a skirt
<i>Kirikiti</i>	Samoan cricket
<i>Lālāga</i>	To weave
<i>Lotu</i>	Family worship or a church service
<i>Mafutaga a tamā</i>	Father's fellowship
<i>Mafutaga a tinā</i>	Mother's fellowship
<i>Mālietoa Vainu'upo</i>	High chief who accepted Christianity in 1830
<i>Matai</i>	A Samoan chief
<i>O le Faitau Pi</i>	A Samoan alphabet chart
<i>Papālagi/pālagi</i>	A person of European descent
<i>Pulotu</i>	Gateway for the spirits of the dead to enter into eternity
<i>Sa'o o le āiga</i>	Head chief of an extended family
<i>Tagaloa-a-lagi</i>	The traditional supreme god according to myths and legends
<i>Tagata Pasefika</i>	People of the Pacific
<i>Taula āitu</i>	Priests who honoured the traditional indigenous gods
<i>Tautua lē gutuā</i>	Cultural saying denoting 'service without complaint'
<i>Tautua lē pa'ō</i>	Service without making a sound
<i>Teu le vā</i>	Preserving harmonious relationships
<i>Tiākono</i>	Church deacon
<i>Umu</i>	A traditional way of heating food using stones in an earth oven
<i>Vā</i>	Relational space
<i>Vā tāpuia</i>	Relationship between humans and God

Ekālēsia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Sāmoa
Samoan name for the CCCS

Ao o Fa'alupega Clouds of the genealogical order (referring to the *faife'au*)

'Aua le aumai ni mea fou Do not introduce anything new

'Aua le to'ia le vā One must not transgress the boundaries or invade someone's space

E alu va'ava'alua le aganu'u ma le talalelei
Samoan culture and the gospel go side by side

<i>E iloa le Sāmoa i lana tautala, tū ma lana savali</i>	The identity of a Samoan person is clearly grounded in the way one speaks, by one's moral conduct and respect for others
<i>E lē tauilo fanau o tupu</i>	Children who are well nurtured/taught by their parents are easily identified
<i>Fa'avae i le Atua Sāmoa</i>	Sāmoa is founded on God
<i>Ia moe le toa</i>	Interpreted as 'to leave for another moment, to postpone a decision, or action or for another day'
<i>O le sui va'aia o le Atua</i>	Visible representative of God (referring to the <i>faiife 'au</i>)
<i>Tulou</i>	A word that is said by the person walking, when walking in front of another who is seated
<i>Ua tofia e le Atua Sāmoa ina ia pulea e matai, auā o lona suafa ua vaelua i ai</i>	God has appointed Sāmoa to be ruled by chiefs because God's name is shared or divided by them

ABBREVIATIONS

CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
LMS	London Missionary Society
WCC	World Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis, with its reference to ‘Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle’ symbolizes a human reality, that is, the search for identity of a New Zealand-born Samoan Christian in a diverse, complex world. This search is the object of my investigation.

Coconut water, or the coconut, is an integral mineral resource within the Pacific Islands. It is perceived by the people as a source of life, with every aspect of the coconut from the tree, the husk, the shell and the richness of the interior elements (flesh and water), utilized in many ways for survival in everyday life. The coconut, therefore, can be seen as a form of identity for a Pacific Islander in a global world.

The Coca Cola bottle on the other hand, is symbolic of the complex world in two ways. Firstly, it represents the world outside Samoan culture, a world that is foreign in terms of ideals, values, and belief systems. It represents a society that is labelled ‘Western’. Secondly, the Coca Cola bottle also conveys an image of the growing influence of the phenomenon of globalization. More specifically, the imagery of the Coca Cola bottle refers to the diversity of New Zealand society and the growth of connections with the global world as challenging the authenticity of the Coconut water identity.

The picture of the ‘Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle’ reflects the dilemma in which many Samoans, who are born and raised in New Zealand, find themselves; searching for a Christian identity within the Samoan churches. This predicament is evident in the fact that the New Zealand-born Samoans are a generation trying to maintain their cultural identity as Samoans, within a complex society. More significantly, the image conveys an identity crisis as being ‘trapped in a bottle’ and continually searching for meaning in the Samoan church, in light of the external factors of a complex society and the phenomenon of globalization. This thesis is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter One is given the title ‘Turning points: decisive moments in my life as a pilgrim’. This chapter gives a brief personal account of my faith journey as a Samoan Christian. In this chapter, significant transitions in my journey that established, challenged and

reshaped my Christian identity will be discussed. From this reflection, my social location as a New Zealand-born Samoan in the CCCS is clarified in more detail.

Chapter Two addresses my research methodology, namely the '*teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic'. In order to achieve an understanding of the concept, I will briefly look at the development of hermeneutics as a process of interpreting a text moving to a generalized theory of human understanding. With this understanding of hermeneutics, the Samoan cultural paradigm- *teu le vā*, my intra-cultural hermeneutic will be presented. Initially this section looks at the development of indigenous knowledge and worldviews as opposed to Western ideologies and perspectives in academic research. This directs my focus to investigating *teu le vā* as a cosmological, ethical belief system that shapes organized systematic relationships within Samoan society.

Chapter Three is titled 'Establishing the coconut identity'. This chapter serves several purposes. It will present historical accounts with regards to the development of Samoan Christianity and the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS). Firstly, the chapter will introduce briefly the relationship between the London Missionary Society and the Samoan people during their contact in the nineteenth century, and then the significance of the process of adaptation and its effects on Samoan society is discussed. The result of the interaction between the gospel and the indigenous culture of Samoa is vital for the search of a Samoan Christian identity.

Chapter Four is titled 'Re-establishing an identity: transplanting the coconut.' This chapter addresses the CCCS as a transplanted faith community in New Zealand, and its significance in re-establishing, or rather reaffirming a Samoan Christian identity. The study highlights the development of the CCCS beyond the shores of the homeland, and the difficulties faced by New Zealand-born Samoans as a generation exposed to the Western world. The challenges to the Samoan Christian identity are further enhanced by the influences of globalization, which makes the problem of identity even more complex.

The title of Chapter Five is ‘Many variations of the coconut water: the problem of identity.’ The title conveys the core message of the chapter, that is, the concept of culture and traditional elements associated with the coconut identity become more complex in a diverse world. As a consequence, different nuances of the Samoan Christian identity have emerged in the diaspora CCCS. This chapter will address what I call the ‘in between’ dilemma of a New Zealand-born Samoan in the CCCS.

Chapter Six is entitled ‘Indigenous language loss: The future of *gagana Sāmoa* in the diaspora’. This section of the thesis looks at the general decline of the Samoan language in New Zealand. The penetrating domination of the English language contributes to the language problem by infusing values and ideas into the hearts and minds of New Zealand-born Samoans. In addition, I debate the traditional understanding of the CCCS as a core language nest for teaching the Samoan language. I will also address the effects of the CCCS ministry in neglecting bilingualism in worship and teaching programmes.

Chapter Seven is headed ‘Coconut water: A fixed or fluid identity?’ It looks at the challenges of the church ministry in a globalized world from the perspective of ecumenical theology. The objective of this chapter is to clarify the interrelatedness of gospel and culture, and to demonstrate how the concept of culture is continually changing in a globalized world. I will examine how this affects my view of church tradition and Christian identity.

Chapter Eight is entitled ‘Out of place: the voice of a New Zealand-born Samoan theologian in the CCCS.’ As the title suggests, the chapter is a personal reflection of some of the issues that I feel need to be addressed by the CCCS. The core argument of the chapter challenges the CCCS to be faithful to the Word of God and to the Samoan people. For this concluding chapter, I have proposed some practical perspectives for the church ministry of the CCCS in New Zealand.

CHAPTER ONE

Turning points: decisive moments in my life as a pilgrim

In this chapter there are two goals. My first task involves giving a personal account of my faith journey as a Samoan Christian. From this profile, I hope to convey some of the significant moments that have shaped my life as a believer of the Christian faith. My second goal links to the first one. With a clear picture of my faith journey, I will attempt to identify my social location as the author of this research project. This is important for identifying the frame of reference or perspective of my writing and the development of this view.

Church historian Mark A. Noll wrote a book called ‘Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity.’¹ The content of the book gives selective, but significant accounts of decisive moments and prominent people in the history of the Christian church. It could be argued that this approach may not give an extensive viewpoint of the church, but by tracing key turning points and making key connections, Noll presents a historical framework in a coherent and comprehensive manner. Using a similar approach, I will present a brief account of my journey as a New Zealand-born Samoan in the Samoan church, by exploring key turning points or significant shifts in my faith journey as a Samoan Christian.

There are three particular turning points that are worth noting, which I have called ‘signposts’. Signposts are decisive moments in my life that have directed my path to new, different insights and challenges in my faith journey. In saying that, as well as looking towards new, unexpected challenges, it is just as important to note that signposts designate a transition from previous experiences that need to be acknowledged. As a symbolic representation, a signpost indicates pointing towards a new direction though it may also presuppose a point of convergence with a previous direction.

¹Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

Before I address the new transition in my faith journey, it is necessary to look at where my journey started. These signposts are:

1. The born-again phase: conscientized from the traditional ways
2. The Theology academic experience: corned beef with substance!
3. Our return home with a purpose.

‘The born-again phase: conscientized from the traditional ways’ is a signpost that marks a transition from the early stages entrenched in family life and commitment to my church, the CCCS parishes of Henderson and Ranui in West Auckland. This signpost designated a stage in my life where I was exposed to an alternative way of looking at Christianity, by means of new religious, charismatic movements that promoted the understanding of ‘born-again’ Christianity.

1.1 My Home, my church...my comfort zones

My family and the CCCS were the chief institutions for nurturing the Christian faith in the early years of my life. It was important for my parents, as migrants from Samoa, to rekindle their Samoan Christian beliefs when they settled in New Zealand. Brought up in a family with a strict upbringing, our family was nurtured in the Samoan values, teaching of the Samoan language, and nurturing Christian beliefs. I can still remember images of being seated on the floor by my mother and I would recite repeatedly the Samoan alphabet from the chart *O le Faitau Pi* until I got the answers right,² and our family *lotu*³ every night with the singing of Samoan hymns, reading of the Samoan Bible and prayers. The home holds great significance as the first location of instruction and transferring core values with the Samoan language used as the core vernacular for communication.

² *O le Faitau Pi* is a simple alphabet chart with pictures used for the instruction of the Samoan alphabet. It consists of 17 letters of the Samoan alphabet, each letter aligned next to a drawing of an object or a living creature, in which its name starts with that letter.

³ A *lotu* in this context refers to family worship.

As pioneers of the Samoan migrant community, my parents maintained a shared determination to preserve the Samoan Christian identity. Their desire and persistence as Samoans to teach their children core aspects of their cultural and Christian identity was a clear indication that the teaching of things vital to a Samoan were important to pass on and preserve. My parents were cautious not to expose my sisters and me to the outside world too often, although attendance at primary school was important. Consequently the early years our life basically revolved around the Samoan culture and religious traditions.

Family worship or *lotu*⁴ was central to our family. It is a time devoted to God first thing in the morning, and in the evening. A *lotu* is also a prayer before a feast or a prayer before one sleeps at the end of the night. The belief is that everything starts and ends with God. In addition to the rituals, the core values were enforced. For example, the prohibition of offensive language, a demonstration of good behaviour, the performing of cultural protocols and the respecting of our elders were all enforced. We followed a stringent practice of obeying all instructions given by parents without a response or complaint. Even if we did have a valid reason to challenge what had been instructed, we had to keep it to ourselves otherwise we would be accused of being a *fiapoto* (a person who thinks he/she knows everything). The respect of the core values were mandatory for harmony in family relationships.

The Samoan church finds common ground with the Samoan home as it instilled the same values and were grounded in the same belief systems. The church was not only a place of worship and the teaching of scripture, but was another significant institution in the upbringing of Samoan children by nurturing cultural values. My first memories of the CCCS in the 1970's were based in forming new relationships in the Sunday school. It was mainly because I developed close friendships with other children who shared similar experiences to mine, that I enjoyed going to church. We may have all come from different homes, but they were domestic settings whereby Samoan parents were new migrants seeking a new beginning,

⁴ A typical family *lotu* would begin with a Samoan hymn, followed by the recital of Psalm 1 or Psalm 23 and/or the reading of the Bible. The central focus of the *lotu* is the prayer, usually said by the head of the family, the father. The *lotu* concludes with a short Samoan hymn.

and their children, the New Zealand-born generation, were drawn to a way of life shaped by the parents' generation. The church, to an extent, served as a place of gathering for Samoan families isolated from a world that was perceived as unfamiliar and outlandish. The Samoan church therefore, seemed more socially friendly for the diaspora Samoan communities.

The Samoan church became a regular meeting place and participation in numerous programmes was part and parcel of one's service to God's church. The church was like a second home because going to church was more than a Sunday-only affair, with a number of programmes run by the church during the week. For example, an individual would actively participate in any of the following groups: the Sunday school, the *Aufaipese* (choir), *Mafutaga a tinā* (mother's fellowship), *Mafutaga a tamā* (father's fellowship), the *Autalavou* (youth group), *Autalavou lāiti* (junior youth group), and the *Ekālēsia* (larger church group). Church life played and still plays a large role in the life of any Samoan Christian.

In many congregations, the most active groups are usually the *Aufaipese*, who prepare hymns for Sunday worship and the *Autalavou*.⁵ This latter group, exclusive to the young unmarried adults, and supported by the older members, have a schedule that involve games such as *kirikiti*,⁶ volleyball, cultural activities involving dancing and singing, fundraising events and providing the necessary support to other groups within the church ensuring that all aspects of the church operations function in a harmonious manner. In any Samoan church these two groups are the most engaged in the church's practical ministry.

Considering that the early years of my life were deeply rooted with family and the Samoan church, I had little knowledge of other forms of Christianity outside of the CCCS, though things began to change when I entered university. During this period I was given more freedom from the restrictions placed by my parents. Around the same time there was an

⁵ *Au* literally means a team. *Talavou* refers to a young adult. This group is usually given the label as '*o le mālosi o le nu'u*' which indicates they are the stronghold of the village. The jobs that require heavy labour and involve greater resources for example food preparation, cleaning and preparation for an important function are reserved for this group of individuals. Theoretically this group is for young adults but in reality, especially for churches in the diaspora it is common for all adults including the elders and younger people to get involved in the affairs of the *autalavou*.

⁶ Samoan cricket.

increasing awareness of new evangelical movements promoting a different Christian message and lifestyle. With a focus on a renewed faith and life by being born-again, I have labelled this stage of my life, ‘the born-again phase: conscientized from the old, traditional ways.’

1.2 The born-again phase: conscientized from the old, traditional ways.

The idea of being ‘born-again’ of the Spirit is a conviction which is a significant theological focus in the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Evangelical movements. Being born-again is a state of being where the individual has made a decision to turn away from old ways and commit his or her life to following Christ wholeheartedly. “Are you born-again?” is a question that seeks affirmation of one’s transition to a new, transformative, personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on an interpretation of Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3:3-7.⁷ The claims are based on an experience inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The churches that observed the ‘born-again’ focus posed a challenge to the traditional migrant churches from the Pacific, including the CCCS, based on assumptions that they focused too much on church traditions and cultural practices. What is more, it was perceived that the CCCS was missing a core aspect of Christian belief, notably, a personal relationship with Jesus.

Through mass gatherings, Christian rallies, fellowship groups at tertiary institutions, Bible study groups and face to face engagements, the charismatic evangelical movement was an attractive proposition to the younger Samoan generation, and beamed a new light that was different from the monotonous, routine-like, traditional systems of the migrant churches. Consequently, many of the younger people parted ways with their churches of ethnic origins in search of a ‘born-again’ spiritual experience. Some chose to attend both churches (the parents’ church in the morning and the ‘born-again’ church in the evening), while others tried to

⁷ John 3: 3-7 (New Revised Standard Version), ‘Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.’

implement features of the ‘born-again’ churches into aspects of the traditional churches. For the latter, the course of action allowed for maintaining a connection with their Samoanness, and ensuring they minimized any possible conflicts with parents and family.

In my case, many of my friends who had left the CCCS shared the joy in their newly discovered experiences and encouraged me to join them. When I made the decision to attend the Community Christian Fellowship (CCF)⁸ in New Lynn, West Auckland, there was so much to be admired about this church. I have memories of CCF for the friendly nature of the community, the passion and joy in singing praise and worship songs, the powerful preaching and the relevance of the sermon to my spiritual journey as a young adult.

In the context of my faith journey, it was a time of confusion and anxiety. I found myself torn between obedience to my parents, loyalty to my family and the church I grew up in, and a new spiritual journey that provided a purpose and joy that was lacking in my experiences within the CCCS. I was torn between a church that treasured its cultural traditions and history, and a movement that catered for my spiritual needs. Despite losing many of my close friends, I decided to stay in the CCCS with the hope of making a change, rather than escaping it.

1.3 Asking new questions...challenging previous beliefs

Another contributing factor to a changing perspectives as a young adult was the influence of life at the University of Auckland. Subjects such as Sociology, Education and Pacific Studies enlightened me to look at many aspects of life, making connections about how society works, studying human social behaviour, human relations, and investigating Pacific cultures and societies more deeply. The encouragement to think more critically as an academic, opened to new ways of thinking and placed me in a position of challenging the beliefs I grew up respecting, adding to further confusion and uncertainty.

⁸ Community Christian Fellowship (CCF) was a multi-cultural Christian fellowship.

From the new teachings, I was exposed to and enlightened about theological and cultural contradictions that were previously masked. In other words, I started to question the how's and why's of my Samoan culture and Samoan Christianity. Some of the issues concerning why *faiife'au* and *ti'ākono*⁹ had to wear suit jackets to church, the wearing of white hats to worship by women, the announcement of monetary offerings during worship and the excessively monetary giving to the church warranted an enquiry.

My new understanding of the Samoan church was shared by other members of a University Christian fellowship called Pacific Students for Christ (PSFC). PSFC was a Pacific Islands student Christian fellowship held on campus, and was led by Pacific students from various churches and backgrounds. Despite its ecumenical nature, the fellowship was very much influenced and led by students who were born-again Christians. I chose to commit to the PSFC family because I wanted to be part of a community where students had a passion to know more about the Lord and encouraged each other in their spiritual journeys. In my quest to know the Bible in more depth and to seek answers to doubts I had about the Samoan church, I made a decision to pursue theological education.

1.4 The theology education experience: corned beef with substance!

In the midst of transitions as a tertiary student, I opted to pursue theological education. The signpost, 'the theology education experience: corned beef with substance' marks this transition in my journey, from a phase of being indecisive about my Christian identity to another phase as a theological student. Studying theology brought about a sense of confidence and direction in my faith journey as I studied the Bible and Christian teachings in depth. The following signpost looks specifically at my journey as an academic in theological studies in Malua Theological College and Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

In 2005, a teaching colleague from Malua, critical of a student's sermon during worship, stated that the sermon lacked coherency and an inspiring application for the

⁹ A *faiife'au* is a church Samoan church pastor and a *tiākono* is a deacon in the CCCS.

congregation.¹⁰ Using Samoan humour to describe his disappointment with the sermon, the teacher said, “it was if you came to my house for dinner with a 6 pound tin of corned beef, opened it up in front of me, cleared out the beef for yourself and offered me the tin can!”

Without further consideration of the context behind the remarks, the analogy of the corned beef may be appropriate in describing this stage of my faith journey. More specifically, my academic experience studying theology was a corned beef experience, and life before studying theology was a tin can experience. This statement does not imply that theological study is the core element to one’s faith journey, nor was there a lack of teaching beforehand. Rather, in the context of my journey as a confused and frustrated young man seeking answers, theological education provided me with in-depth knowledge that the church did not, and would not provide.

Malua Theological College and Bossey Ecumenical Institute both provided the ‘corned beef’ through my theological formation. Malua Theological College¹¹ is the breeding ground in the formation of *faife’aus* for the CCCS, and it was here that I studied for my bachelor’s degree from 2000-2003. Malua is an educational institution historically regarded by the Samoan people as the exemplar for producing highly educated individuals for pastoral formation, teaching roles, missionary work and administrative roles in the church. At Malua, my theological education was enriched by also learning Samoan cultural protocols, how to lead Christian worship, how to write a sermon, the formal Samoan language, how to make an *umu*,¹² how to plant taro and banana trees, how to survive long hours of physical labour and many other aspects of life unfamiliar to New Zealand-born Samoans. Four years in Malua was a test of a person’s character. The calendar year started with a week of intense physical labour,

¹⁰ The sermon was critiqued in the Sermon Class, a programme wherein 2nd year students of the College conduct the community worship. After the worship service, the student receives advice, encouragement and critique from the lecturers and students’ of the community.

¹¹ Featunai Liuaana, *For Jesus and His Church: Malua Theological College- A Historical Survey of 150 years of Theological Education, 1844-1994* (Suva: USP, 1995), 54. Malua Theological College was established by the London Missionary Society in 1844, with the aim of educating and training young Samoan men for the Ministry. Mālūa is now run by the CCCS, with its teaching staff selected from former students of the College who have post-graduate degrees. Malua is located on the main island of Upolu in Sāmoa.

¹² A traditional way of heating food using stones in an earth oven.

weeding many acres of the farmland in the hot weather, mowing the whole campus using weed-eaters, trimming hedges using machetes and many other jobs. Furthermore, students were expected to sit six three hour exams in four days.

My training in Malua led me to ask more questions about the authentic witness of the CCCS. Even though it laid the platform of helping me discover more about my heritage, paradoxically, I was also in danger of losing grasp of this identity as I became more sceptical of the church's scriptural foundations. The clarity and understanding I developed of the church made me more critical of the CCCS as an authentic witness of God's kingdom. This idea will be clarified more throughout the thesis.

1.5 My ecumenical story: Bossey Ecumenical Institute (2004-2005)

Bossey Ecumenical Institute, under the umbrella of the World Council of Churches is the home of Christian Ecumenism. Located in Geneva, Switzerland, the institution was founded in 1946 with the vision of strengthening ecumenical formation through international dialogue and encounters, allowing opportunities for bringing together Christians from around the world from different cultures and faith confessions. Bossey also served as a centre for academic study and I was privileged to study there for my Masters degree.

My experiences in Bossey Ecumenical Institute can be expressed in the following phrases: a journey into the unknown, an eye-opening discovery, a gradual learning process; and an unforgettable revelation. Many valuable life lessons were learned there. Bossey is an ecumenical institute and community rich in diversity where students from all over the world study and live together. The diversity is reflected in many ways: physical characteristics, language, cultural values, morals, mannerisms, work ethic, eating habits, the way people socialised, the way they dressed, how they spent their free time, the knowledge and experiences shared, cleanliness, respect or disrespect for others' space and property.

At the outset of our ecumenical journey we observed that studying, living and worshipping together was going to be a challenging experience. At the first chapel service, my

friends from the Orthodox Church struggled to cope with the beating drums and dancing of African worship. Consequently, a few of them were unhappy and walked out. Likewise, conflicting opinions were exchanged when some of the students were saying that Orthodox worship was too boring. In the worship of the 'Americas' there was the sharing of a poem, a short story and a solo by a violinist which raised a few eyebrows because of its casual and informal nature. In European worship, there was a traditional slow folk dance around candles from the Scandinavian students and we were enlightened by the stories of hardships and persecutions faced by the Chinese Christians during Communism in China.

Pacific worship, which I was part of, triggered some debate because of our dress code. Following the traditions of the CCCS, my colleague and I wore white suit jackets, a white *ie lavalava*,¹³ and white shirts with a tie, while the women (the wife and daughters of the Samoan lecturer) wore white dresses and white hats. Our religious form of attire, introduced by missionaries of the nineteenth century, has become part and parcel of the Samoan Christian identity. To our colleagues from Bossey, there were questions as to whether this form of clothing was perceived as non-Samoan, non-Pacific and out of date. If worship was seen as an indication of things to come, it was evident that we were going to need a lot of understanding, patience and tolerance to live in harmony.

Despite these issues, the Bossey experience definitely provided satisfaction and a rich understanding of Christianity in a global context, and the challenges that are bound with that understanding and experience. In one instance, an Orthodox deacon from the room next door came over to my room wanting to socialize. I asked him to return later as I was working on an assignment but he refused. In frustration I grabbed him and we started wrestling like little boys. Eventually I pushed him towards the window which scared him to death (our rooms were two storeys high), and he quickly left my room. Eventually, I went to see him and asked for forgiveness. From that moment we became close friends. On reflection, I laugh inside

¹³ Traditional Samoan attire that looks like a skirt. It is tied around the waist and covers the bottom half of the body.

knowing that I had an altercation with someone who could one day become the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church!

Many lessons were learnt at Bossey Ecumenical Institute. For one thing, I realized that God's ministry and the Christian church are much bigger than the world I grew up in. Before Bossey, I had been quite selfish, looking at my own faith journey and what was appropriate for me. Bossey taught me that I am not only a witness to my family and church, but also to my community, my country and to the world. To this day, my heart for God's church is mission-oriented, and I strive to fulfil His will in my quest for transforming the world by promoting justice in a world of inequality and injustice. This continuing lesson from my life as an academic, has reshaped my perceptions and continues to transform my Christian witness for God's ministry.

1.6 Our return home with a purpose

The signpost 'our return home with a purpose' marks a transition in my journey from theological formation in Malua¹⁴ and Bossey, back to the diaspora church in New Zealand. The significance of my family cannot be underestimated, particularly during the writing of this thesis. There is a two-fold meaning behind this signpost. First, one of the main incentives for our return home was driven by a hunger to share our story as a New Zealand-born Samoan in the CCCS, and second, there was a need to put my theoretical teachings into practice. I left New Zealand fifteen years ago as a single, young adult.

Since our return home, things have changed in terms of my reflection and practice in the Samoan church. With my added responsibility as an ordained minister and theologian, I have supported the church minister with conducting worship and teaching in the Sunday school. In comparison to my younger years in the CCCS, I have opted to maintain a Sunday-only commitment to church. My belief is that God's ministry encompasses the totality of life

¹⁴ My life in Malua includes my time as a student from 2000-2003, and as a teacher from September 2005-2011.

not only in the church, but beyond its boundaries. Our service to God's mission also involves being a witness and transforming lives in my community and the wider society.

In the process of writing this thesis, I have been privileged to participate in many aspects of God's ministry from my roles in the CCCS, teaching at Laidlaw College in Manukau, South Auckland,¹⁵ and mentoring theology students at stage II and III level at the University of Auckland.¹⁶ My other roles include managing my son's soccer team, working as a security guard, cleaner and of course, being a father and husband. My wife has been supportive of my roles, inspiring our family to help in other causes within our local community such as helping families who are less fortunate than us financially. It is through these various programmes and activities that we understand our faith journeys as a more meaningful witness.

1.7 Social location

Many contemporary writers who regard themselves on the margins of society give descriptions of themselves to convey their positions outside the white male, successful, dominant worldview of Western society. The identification of social location by informing about an individual's background, where that individual lives and what has influenced his or her view, enables the reader to identify with the social location of the author. In the context of this writing, by stating my location (through my eyes) as opposed to the dominant or mainstream worldview, I hope that the reader will be able to discern my worldview and the issues at hand. The process of clarifying the positions or social location of others is important because it allows room for other perspectives that differ from the traditional worldview to be voiced.

¹⁵Laidlaw College is an evangelical Bible College where Theology, Education and Counselling courses are taught.

¹⁶ The Tuakana programme at the University of Auckland is a support programme for Maori and Pacific Island students. Students with potential are mentors who provide extra support and assistance to undergraduate students in their studies.

My investment in this project is a valuable one from a personal viewpoint. It is a quest to make sense of my journey as a Christian in a Samoan church. In hindsight, reflecting on my own personal journey in the faith, I would say it is unique. My social location as a New Zealand-born Samoan, as an ordained minister of the CCCS and as a theologian, teacher, father, with a variety of other roles as well places me in a position different from other theologians and clergy. No one person can take ownership of my story, or claim to have absolute knowledge of my experiences. Yet, in saying that, many aspects of my reflection and experiences may also be shared by the stories of other people.

Many academics such as Melani Anae, Jemaima Tiatia, Mary Chun, Cluny and Laavasa MacPherson have written about identity crisis growing up in between two different worlds. This thesis finds common ground with their writings. However as a theologian who is inside the CCCS, not outside it, I claim a different starting point for reflection as opposed to the academics outside of this community.

Risati Ete and Uesefili Unasa have also addressed the issue of identity crisis in New Zealand, though a significant difference between us is that my perspectives look at the nuances of the Samoan Christian identity as a member of the CCCS. Unasa comes from a background in the Samoan Methodist church. Ete, who grew up as a son of a CCCS church minister in Wellington is not an active member of the CCCS at the present time. As Pacific theologians, we may converge and have common beliefs on many issues, but I believe we all come from different vantage points and have signposts that indicate different stories from the past and visions for future direction.

It must also be acknowledged that although generalisations are made about certain groups mentioned within this thesis, my perspectives as a New Zealand-born Samoan do not represent everyone in this cohort. Furthermore, my beliefs as a theologian and as an ordained minister may not be the same as the views of other Samoan theologians and clergy. It is for this reason that I have stated my social location. To end the personal reflection of my life, I would like to refer back to the research questions that have prompted me to write on this topic:

‘Should the coconut water, which symbolizes the Samoan Christian identity, be preserved?

Should the CCCS in New Zealand adopt a new perspective in order to be an authentic

Christian witness in the global world?’

Let the story continue...

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology: A *teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic

In the first chapter, I presented a brief account of my faith journey as a Christian. I was able to do this by reflecting on some of the turning points in my life, which also served as signposts to different experiences and understandings of the Christian faith. Furthermore, I was able to identify my social location as a New Zealand-born Samoan Christian. With the knowledge that ideas are fluid, it is important to state my social location here and now, at the moment of the writing of this thesis.

The main objective of this chapter is to develop an understanding of my *teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic. This chapter serves several purposes. First, I will briefly look at the concept of hermeneutics, focusing my investigation on selected components that I consider to be relevant to understanding my chosen research methodology. Then I will look at developing my *teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic, engaging with some of the traditional and contemporary views of the Samoan concept of *teu le vā* with particular focus on this approach as a communication theory.

Before I investigate my research methodology, it is vital that I address the following question: What is research methodology? It is easy to be sidetracked, as in my case initially, by the notion that research methodology and research methods are one and the same thing. In fact, research methods and research methodology, despite being interconnected, are quite distinct when doing research. The distinction is explained:

The term method can be understood to relate principally to the tools of data collection: techniques such as questionnaires and interviews. Methodology has a more philosophical meaning, and usually refers to the approach or paradigm that underpins the research.¹

¹ Loraine Blaxter, Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight, *How to Research*, 2nd edition (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), 59.

With this in mind, my chosen paradigm providing a framework for this research project is called the ‘*teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic.’ The concept of hermeneutics and *teu le vā* are derived from two distinct worldviews. The former is derived from studies in contemporary Western biblical interpretation and philosophy, and the latter is a Samoan belief system that is grounded in the Samoan spiritual, cultural, moral and ethical modes of conduct and way of living. The function of utilizing two contrasting ideologies and belief systems reflect the complex interdisciplinary, cross-cultural composition of this paper.

In the investigation of hermeneutics, I omit with caution many established theories that are considered the foundation of philosophical hermeneutics. My intention is not to undervalue these ideas, but in order to re-investigate, refine and focus my ideas from a vast history of hermeneutical tradition I will only allude to a few key insights. Many of the prominent advocates of traditional hermeneutics proposed ideas that were developed over time, but generally these scholars maintained common propositions that I will identify and accommodate in this thesis.

2.1 What is hermeneutics?

The English word hermeneutics finds its roots from an ancient Greek story of a Greek god Hermes, a character in the poems Iliad and Odyssey who was given the role of delivering messages from the gods to the mortals. In Greek philosophy, the gods were regarded as supernatural beings beyond human knowledge and wisdom. Hence the messages relayed from the gods convey meanings of a natural order beyond human understanding.²

The etymology of hermeneutics derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which means to interpret. Richard Palmer, a scholar in philosophical hermeneutics, separates out three main directions of the ancient usage of the term *hermeneuein* with a link to the story. The three directions are to express aloud in words (to say), to explain (e.g. a situation) and to

² Richard S. Briggs, “What does hermeneutics have to do with biblical interpretation?” *Heythrop Journal: a Quarterly review of Philosophy and Theology* 47, no.1 (2006): 57. doi: 10.1111/j. 1468-2265.2006.00279.x.

translate (from another language).³ The process of interpretive mediation from one world to another signifies the ability of the messenger to say, explain and translate a message that was initially incomprehensible, to one that was clearly understood by the recipient(s) of another context. Instead of transliterating the messages word for word, Hermes interpreted the meanings for the recipients. The significance of the translation process is portrayed in the following statement...

He had to re-create or re-produce the meaning that would connect to his audience's history, culture, and concepts in order to make sense of things...meaning happens by virtue of a "go-between" that bridges the alien with the familiar, connecting cultures, languages, traditions, and perspectives that may be similar or millennia apart. The go-between is the activity of human understanding that, like Hermes, tries to make sense of the world and the heavens.⁴

Another perspective with regards to the origin of the English form is given by David Jasper, a theologian who specializes in Religion and Literature. He refers to the term *hermeneus*. Unlike the previous literary nuance which focused exclusively on the process of mediation, *hermeneus*, on the other hand focused on the interpreter or expounder who translates the message. That is to say, Hermes, as a medial interpreter was responsible for translating the messages and secrets of the gods to the humans.⁵ On the whole, it can be concluded that hermeneutics highlights the significance of the role of the interpreter, as well as the interpreted message.

2.2 Hermeneutics: interpretation of a text

Hermeneutics is commonly regarded as a theory of interpretation of a text, more specifically a sacred text.⁶ In contemporary study, hermeneutics has opened up channels for different interpretations of biblical texts and sacred documents. However, before hermeneutics developed as an interpretive theory, the traditional systematic form of scholarly reading was

³ Ibid.

⁴ Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 3.

⁵ David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 7.

⁶ Ibid.

exegesis. Biblical exegesis demands a close reading taking the text word for word, and phrase by phrase, as the interpreter attempts to draw out the authentic meaning of the text accurately utilizing various tools of biblical criticism.⁷

The application of exegesis, which derives from the Greek word *exegeisthai*, which means to lead out,⁸ has a practical aspect to it. It entails a careful, historical, theological analysis of the text to give meaning.⁹ The objective of this approach is threefold; first, there is a need to discover the intention of the writer usually called the ‘authorial intention’¹⁰ or the author-centred interpretation.¹¹ The ‘word of God’ is expressed through human thoughts and expressions within sacred texts, and the purpose of the scientific approach seeks to find the original meaning of these human perspectives. The relevant questions that may be asked concerning this approach are: What is the motivation behind the writing? What sources did the author use?¹²

Furthermore, exegesis seeks to discover the world behind the text. From here we have a picture of the *sitz em leben* (setting in life) of the text which looks at investigating of the geographical, linguistic, socio-political, historical and cultural context behind the text. Third, another primary goal of exegesis is to gain an understanding of the text itself as an independent entity.¹³ The text-centred interpretation draws the focus to the world within the text. The text is the judge implying it is a world of its own. W. Tate writes,

...neither the author nor the reader is very important. Since the authors have simply internalized the conventional system, they bring only that knowledge to the text. So the meaning resides in the conventional code and not in the author’s intention or the reader’s presuppositional world.¹⁴

⁷ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 8-9.

⁸ Jasper, *Short Introduction*, 50. The emphasis of exegesis is to read out or from the text objectively, rather than reading into it the text by formulating a subjective view.

⁹ Gorman, *Elements*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ W Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach, Revised edition* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), xx-xxii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xx.

¹³ Gorman, *Elements*, 9.

¹⁴ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, xxiii.

The traditional understanding of exegesis as a process of interpretation is an objective, scientific reading of a text. As a theory of interpretation, hermeneutics finds common ground with exegesis, though the two processes can also be differentiated. In other words, exegesis is a scientific method of interpretation that looks at the text and hermeneutics is a perspective which may, or may not, utilize exegetical research methods. Moreover, the scope of the hermeneutical approach is not be restricted to the written form, but also encompasses the verbal and non-verbal elements of interpretation. I will look at this later in the chapter.

The view that exegesis is an objective investigation has been contested by advocates of hermeneutics and some scholars of modern exegetical investigation. The line of reasoning is based on the grounds that an interpreter never enters a conversation with unbiased or unprejudiced ideas. That is to say, the process of hermeneutics is dialogical as meaning is not only drawn out of the text as in exegesis, but the meaning of that text is reshaped and revised by the reader's preconceptions of the text.¹⁵

A transition from an objective reading to acknowledging the subjective perspectives of the reader designated a shift in worldviews during the time of the Enlightenment. A shift from a God-centred to human-centred worldview opened up an understanding that readers brought a preconceived systematic rationale into their engagement with a text.¹⁶ Thus, it can be argued that there can never be a pure, objective reading of a text because it is never exempt from the reader's experiences and presuppositions.

It leads to an understanding of a reader-centred interpretation or *eisegesis*,¹⁷ whereas the Bible is never read without any intention and the reader gives personal meaning to the text.¹⁸ In other words, there is always the living context of the reader. The world in front of the text is the world where the reader lives, and the composition of a community relates to its vision, its problems and the fruits of the exegetical analysis. Michael Gorman, an advocate of modern exegetical views, alludes to the existential approach to reading scripture. He writes,

¹⁵ Briggs, "What does hermeneutics," 57.

¹⁶ Jasper, *Short Introduction*, 62.

¹⁷ Gorman, *Elements*, 25. *Eisegesis* denotes reading into the text, the Greek *eis* means 'into'.

¹⁸ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, xxiii-xxiv

Existential methods are therefore “instrumental” methods: they allow the text to be read as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. The end, or goal, of this kind of reading is often an encounter with a reality beyond the text to which the text bears witness.¹⁹

On the whole, theorists of hermeneutics have clearly identified that biblical interpretation involves a study of the world of the author, a discernment of the text and the interpretation of the contemporary reader. An examination of the finer details of the engagement may result in complex scenarios. For instance, which exegetical tool(s) will be utilized by the reader? How will the text impact on the reader? What will provide a more authentic and relevant interpretation for the reader; exegesis, hermeneutics or both? To address the given questions, I will briefly look at the ‘hermeneutical circle’ proposed by hermeneutic theorist Friedrich Schleiermacher.²⁰

2.3 The ‘Hermeneutical circle’

The ‘hermeneutical circle’ stressed the significance of three key components in the hermeneutical process, which involves the dynamic interaction between the text, the world or intention of the author, and the interpretation of the reader.²¹ The interpreter gives personal meaning to the text and thus the bible or any text is never read without any intention. Significantly, the composition of hermeneutical analysis allows for meaningful interpretation of a text as it touches base with the realities of the contemporary world

Schleiermacher uses biblical exegesis interchangeably with hermeneutics and sees a need to interpret the biblical text fully utilizing the various processes of analysis provided by both processes. The purpose of this task is to avoid misunderstanding by following the grammatical and psychological rules of interpretation. The grammatical rules, provided by

¹⁹ Gorman, *Elements*, 18. In Gorman’s usage of the term existential, he claims there is no connection to existentialism as a philosophy, or Rudolf Bultmann’s existentialist interpretation of the Bible.

²⁰ Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 23.

²¹ Ibid.

exegesis investigate the faculty of language, linguistics and literary devices as a system of communicating conventional messages pertaining to the historical context of the text.²²

According to Schleiermacher, the task of the interpreter in trying to identify with the author's unique characteristics, feelings and motives may not be fully discovered using exegesis alone, rather, it may be achieved more through psychological means. The psychological approach, in line with the idiom 'to put oneself in someone else's shoes' portrays the importance of gaining meaning by understanding the author's mind, intentions, emotions and feelings. In seeking a reconstruction of the author's experiences, the reader or interpreter is able to understand the text more accurately.

2.4 Hermeneutics: from texts to a theory of human understanding

Schleiermacher was also prominent in advocating hermeneutics beyond merely an interpretation of given texts to a generalized science of understanding. The hermeneutical task between interpreting texts engaged in similar processes to that of an oral conversation.²³ Despite the fact that the focus of Schleiermacher's ideas and work was the hermeneutical interpretation of a text, his ideas initiated a progress of theories towards a universalistic hermeneutic of interrelatedness and opening up avenues for research in human sciences.²⁴ This was possible in cases of communicative misunderstanding in the greater domain, meaning hermeneutics was needed to provide solutions in the search for understanding.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Wilhelm Dilthey, in line with Schleiermacher's works broadened the scope of hermeneutics beyond texts by advancing a more holistic outlook encompassing all meaningful human action²⁵ and all spheres of cultural life.²⁶ Schleiermacher and Dilthey ignited what was regarded a revolution in hermeneutics. The new foundations set

²² James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 56-57.

²³ Brice R. Wachterhauser, *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 116-117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁶ Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice*, 57. See also Jasper, *Short Introduction*, 95.

by these two scholars not only changed the nature and scope of the concept, but refined it from a ‘discipline-bound utility for safeguarding (legal, philological, biblical) interpretations into a more generalized theory of human understanding.’²⁷

Accordingly, what is stressed here is that hermeneutics is a communication theory. This is evident in an encounter with a sacred text, because the world within the text is foreign to the reader. Hermeneutics is carried out to gain understanding and knowledge of that world, and from this view links to the communication theory.²⁸ The scope and nature of hermeneutics, which has advanced from the insights of Schleiermacher and Dilthey has evolved to a more generalized concept beyond the confines of the interpretation of the Bible or literary text.

If hermeneutics is considered an open-ended pathway to a continuous exploration of theories of interpretation, then an attempt to find a conclusive point of reference for intra-cultural hermeneutics is a challenging task. After all, as David Jasper states, ‘Hermeneutics recognizes this slippage between intention and meaning, or worse, between the slipperiness of written words and human understanding.’²⁹ The complexity of the task is based on the fact that hermeneutics is fluid, because interpretations change over time and is conceptualized from many vantage points.

Simply, intra-cultural hermeneutics looks at the process of interpreting relationships between and amongst people within an ethnic group or culture. In a situation where social interaction is involved and interpretation articulated, intra-cultural hermeneutics is in practice. As a communication theory, it allows for effective ways of interpreting communication within ethnic groups. It is the process of encountering the other and the way understanding these relationships contribute to social cohesion and stability within cultures. My research methodology, *teu le vā*, is the Samoan hermeneutical lens that thus interprets intra-cultural relationships within its cultural parameters.

²⁷ Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 23.

²⁸ Martha Frederiks, “Hermeneutics from an Inter-Religious Perspective?” *Exchange* 34, no. 2 (2005): 105-106. doi: 10.1163/ 1572543054068587.

²⁹ Jasper, *Short Introduction*, 14.

2.5 Exploring indigenous worldviews

The focus of this section looks at the nuances of *teu le vā* as an intra-cultural hermeneutic, providing a glimpse of the Samoan indigenous worldview. Before I address what *teu le vā* is, I will first examine the development of indigenous knowledge and non-Western worldviews as an emerging interest in contemporary academic studies.

The development and promotion in recent years of Pacific indigenous epistemology is an attempt by Pacific academics, theologians included, to explore and expand indigenous worldviews and forms of knowledge as an alternative to Western epistemological paradigms. Pacific indigenous knowledge, and indigenous knowledge on a wider scale has been victim to the suffocating coercion of the dominant Western paradigms since cultural contact and the exchange of experiences began. From the perspective of indigenous groups, it has fabricated the continuing problem of hegemonic domination of epistemological knowledge and inequality of power.³⁰

The concept of Negotiated Space was advanced as a model for ‘empowering indigenised [sic] theorising’ [sic].³¹ Originally proposed by Maori and Pacific Island scholars, the idea was researched further in the area of Pacific Mental Health in New Zealand. Negotiated Space was developed as a response to a need to raise awareness of indigenous knowledge and worldviews as an alternative view to Western science. The model endorses a continual re-negotiating of conflicts faced by Pacific people living in between the Western worldview and indigenous cultural paradigms.³² In the process, terms such as negotiation, mutuality and reciprocity replaced hegemonic concepts historically used in colonial relationships such as assimilation and inculturation.

In a slightly remonstrative manner Maori and Pacific Island scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith,³³ Melani Anae,³⁴ Vilisoni Hereniko³⁵ and Konai Thaman,³⁶ have been

³⁰ Karlo Mila-Schaaf and Maui Hudson, “The interface between cultural understandings: Negotiating new spaces for Pacific mental health,” *Pacific Health Dialog* 15, no. 1 (2009): 115-116.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 113-114. The model was initiated by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Maui Hudson and colleagues.

³² *Ibid.*, 116-117.

³³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a Maori scholar who specializes in Maori education and indigenous education.

contentious over the continual perpetuation of unequal power relations between the colonizer and the colonized as they identify forces of Western civilization suffocating indigenous epistemologies and depreciating local voices of the marginalized.³⁷ To be more specific, Western education as the vehicle for promoting the Western worldview is gradually wearing down indigenous ways of thinking. Of greater concern is that the unequal relations appear to be disguised behind a general attitude of nonchalance on behalf of the colonizers and the colonized.

Max Quanchi, an Australian who specializes in Pacific history, sees the importance of indigenous epistemology and emphasizes the need to maintain oral traditions and develop written accounts of indigenous traditions promoting local voices. Oral traditions, traditional wisdom, beliefs and values are not always written down, and for much that is already written, its style is often difficult to understand for those outside the culture. Quanchi calls “for the inclusion of written and oral evidence and the interpretations of both non-indigenous and indigenous historians, anthropologists and story-tellers.”³⁸

Inspired by Quanchi’s conception, I wish to share in the wisdom and contribute to the existing wealth of indigenous epistemology, with a continuous call to acknowledge the numerous voices of the multi-faceted world. In the Pacific today, there are so many voices that are speaking at the same time...the ancient voices, the traditional voices, the modern voices, the post-modern voices, secular voices, the voices of the church, cross-cultural voices, radical voices, voices of the leaders, voices of the poor, voices of the European epistemologies and non-European epistemologies.

³⁴ Melani Anae, “Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan perspective.” (Mai Review 1-24: 2010), 1-2. Melani Anae is a Samoan scholar and senior lecturer in the Pacific Studies department at the University of Auckland.

³⁵ Vilisoni Hereniko is an academic of Fijian origin. He also specializes in Pacific literature and film.

³⁶ Konai Thaman is a scholar of Tongan heritage. Her research looks at the relations between Education systems and Pacific indigenous knowledge systems and cultures.

³⁷ Max Quanchi, “Indigenous epistemology, wisdom and tradition; changing and challenging dominant paradigms in Oceania,” (Paper presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Queensland University of Technology, 29 October 2004), 3-4.

³⁸ Ibid., 2.

The emergence of indigenous epistemology in New Zealand as a concept in the 1990's was an attempt to 'create an academic dichotomy' between the untouched, authentic customs of the indigenous pre-colonial past defined by anthropologists as 'culture,' as opposed to the 'self-consciously expressed invented tradition' of the fabricated, man-made world of Western civilization.³⁹ One such example is *Kaupapa Māori*⁴⁰, described as 'the philosophy and practice of being and acting Māori.'⁴¹ *Kaupapa Maori* emerged as a response to suspicions of the Maori towards the motives and methods of Western research and researchers, which Tuhiwai-Smith claims have 'marginalised [sic] or disregarded Māori ways of knowing and knowledge.'⁴²

The most notable caveat is the idea that indigenous epistemologies are lived. It is a form of knowledge that is not only theoretical but needs to be applied to the dimensions of everyday practical living.⁴³ Indigenous epistemology is unique to each specific context or community and although there may be common elements or ways of thinking between different indigenous groups, there is a danger of misinterpretation when translating ideas of other cultural contexts or trying to form 'multicultural identities and pan-Pacific identities.'⁴⁴

Another caveat of indigenous epistemology evolved around Western misconceptions of indigenous knowledge as 'pure, timeless, archaic or untainted by the passage of time.'⁴⁵ In the postmodern world, indigenous epistemology can no longer be considered as a precious gift to be stored away in a treasure chest. Rather, it must be an acquisition to be traversed over cultural boundaries for the purpose of further exploration in intra-cultural and intercultural studies. Quanchi implicitly affirms that the emergence of indigenous epistemologies

³⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁰ *Kaupapa Māori* is translated as Maori subject.

⁴¹ Graham H Smith, "Tāne-nui-a-rangi's legacy: propping up the sky. Kaupapa Māori as resistance and intervention" (Paper presented at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education/ Australia Association or Research in Education joint conference Melbourne: Deakin University, 1992), 1.

⁴² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Kaupapa Māori methodology: our power to define ourselves." (Seminar presentation to the School of Education British Columbia: University of British Columbia, 1999), 183.

⁴³ Quanchi, "Indigenous epistemology," 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

transcends space and time, noting the relevance and usefulness of organized traditional knowledge in the midst of post-modernism and the postcolonial era.⁴⁶

The Samoan concept of *teu le vā* has been applied by contemporary Pacific scholars, referring to a negotiating and mediating of relationships between Pacific and non-Pacific cultures and forms of knowledge. In the context of this research the opportunity to share the core beliefs of a treasured belief system, and analyzing its adaptability in different horizons opens up an opportunity for interpreting the dynamic aspects associated with intra-cultural relations.

2.6 *Teu le vā*: a cosmological model of interrelatedness

Vā is a Samoan term that is simply translated as space or interval⁴⁷ designating spatial distance between two points or objects.⁴⁸ Of great significance to the Samoan understanding is that the *vā* is not an empty space, rather it is relational. *Vā* is not space that separates but space that relates.⁴⁹ The *vā* can also refer to a state of rivalry.⁵⁰ The latter definition not only shows that the concept is relational, but explicitly presupposes an engagement between two parties in a state of competition or variance of some sort. *Teu* means to preserve or keep something. With this in mind, *teu le vā* may mean different things; negotiating spaces, negotiating diversity or a reconciling of differences in relations. However within the context of the Samoan worldview, *teu le vā* is commonly understood as preserving harmony in relations.

Teu le vā is a belief that transcends social space and relations between individuals or groups. It implies relations in the cosmological, physical and spiritual realms. The *vā* is about open spaces and relationships with animate and inanimate objects, material and the spiritual, that which is visible to the human eye and that which cannot be comprehended by human understanding and knowledge. The *vā* is fully realized when there is peace with oneself,

⁴⁶ Quanchi, "Indigenous epistemology," 2-3.

⁴⁷ Papaalii Semisi Ma'ia'i, *Tusi Upu Samoa: the Samoan dictionary of Papaalii Dr Semisi Ma'ia'i. Volume 1: Samoan to English* (Auckland: Little Island press), 53.

⁴⁸ Mila-Schaaf and Hudson, *Negotiating Space*, 209.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁰ Ma'ia'i, *Tusi Upu Samoa*, 53.

harmony with the other person (or people), harmony with the environment and with the cosmos.⁵¹ The interconnectedness of these different elements encompasses an identity moulded by a mutual communion of an inclusive nature.

Another significant aspect of *teu le vā* is the need to respect sacred spaces or *vā tāpuia*. It is believed that the protection of sacred covenants and taboo or sacred restrictions would result in peace, good fortune, growth, prosperity⁵² and the continual preservation of harmony with other elements of the cosmos. Conversely, the violation of the *vā tāpuia* results in misfortune, poverty and chaos.

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, many animate and inanimate objects of the cosmos were considered sacred and were venerated as gods. With the introduction of Christianity, there was a shift in the *vā tāpuia* to indicate the relationship between humans and the Christian God. *Teu le vā* demands a respect for existing boundaries and relations. If for some reason the boundaries are transgressed and relationships are compromised, '*ia teu le vā*' is verbally expressed which necessitates an action to rectify the wrongdoing. Another understanding that relates to *teu le vā* is '*aua le to'ia le vā*' or '*aua le sopo le vā*,' which both literally mean that one must not transgress the boundaries or invade another's space. The prohibition not to violate or transgress conveys a negative perception as opposed to *teu le vā*, which is a positive reinforcement to respect spaces and relationships.

The value in honouring cosmic relationships is also revered in Tongan belief systems. Winston Halapua, a Tongan theologian and Anglican Bishop, stated that according to the Tongan understanding, people who behave strangely are emotionally unstable or are believed to be possessed by a spirit, are connected in some way to the violation of relationships or sacred spaces leading to some type of tragedy.⁵³ It is significant therefore, as Halapua vividly

⁵¹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion." in *Su'esu'e Manogi In Search of Fragrance Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008), 104.

⁵² Ibid., 105-106.

⁵³ Winston Halapua, "A Moana Rhythm of Well-Being." in *Spirit Possession, Theology, and Identity: A Pacific Exploration*, ed. Elaine M. Wainwright with Philip Culbertson and Susan Smith (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2010), 93-94.

portrays, to view the existence of Pacific peoples, or Oceania, from this cosmological understanding of inter-relationships. Concerning the concept of *avea* or spirit possession he writes:

There is, in Oceania, a respect for the place of location, the network of relationships, and the ancestors. In the Oceanic world-view before the impact of the missionaries, the honouring of gods and spirits was closely linked to the earth and the sea, the flora and the fauna, all of which were integral to the people's lives. Spirit possession in an Oceanic paradigm is seen in the context of a whole range of relationships. It is a holistic tragedy, not an individual one.⁵⁴

The Samoan indigenous belief also honours cosmic relationships. Samoan myths and legends declare that the cosmos is made up of heaven which is portrayed as the giver of life; the earth is the mother that carries life in the womb and humanity is the embodiment of that life.⁵⁵ This cosmic triad not only has a reciprocal relationship, but the existence of each member is dependent on this relationship with the other.⁵⁶ A socio-ecological model of the Samoan worldview is therefore cosmo-centric as opposed to anthropological.⁵⁷

The fundamental principles of mutuality, interdependence and inclusiveness are elements that ground the social stratum of community. The holistic perception of self is something that is not isolated from the cosmos, but deeply entrenched in it and with it. A cosmic identity is fabricated in a union with other people, family, village, land, titles, status, customs, traditions, inheritance, Samoan myths, personal stories, history, ancestors and sacred objects. In other words, 'the cosmic community is the matrix that shapes and defines the identity of the individual.'⁵⁸ René Descartes' philosophical statement 'I think, therefore I am' was to prove his logic that we exist based on the premise of the human capacity to think. In the Samoan worldview of cosmic community, one could say, 'I am because we are.' One's existence and identity are understood in relationship to the whole.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁵ Upolu Vaai, "Faaaloalo: a Theological Re-interpretation of the Doctrine of the Trinity from a Samoan perspective" (PhD thesis, Griffith University, 2006), 163.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 163-164

⁵⁷ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 58-59.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 172.

2.7 *Teu le vā*: an ethical relationship

Teu le vā also sets the ethical conduct and moral principles within the *fa'aSāmoa* in every day social relations.⁶⁰ In other words, the *vā* designates 'metaphorical spaces between people and social, cultural and religious systems'⁶¹ of the Samoan world. Before I proceed further, in order for us to gauge the essential value of *teu le vā*, we must unveil the key components of what makes the *fa'aSāmoa* a unique value system to the Samoan people

The *fa'aSāmoa* is the 'total make-up of the Samoan culture.'⁶² The abstract ideals and concrete practices that form the inclusive embodiment of the *fa'aSāmoa* complement each other. These features are: courtesy and diplomacy, respect for elders and parents, a conventional means of accepted social behaviour with regards to walking, talking, sitting and standing, the use of the Samoan language, understanding Samoan protocols, humility, knowledge of the Samoan worldview and how Samoan people think, the social structures of the family and village, Samoan identity and ethnicity.⁶³

The ethical values of the *fa'aSāmoa* and rules of conduct are recognized in relation to the concept of *fa'aaloalo*, simply translated as respect or courtesy. '*Fa'aaloalo* is a symbol that shapes the whole of the Samoan existence.'⁶⁴ *Fa'aaloalo* (respect) is the mechanism of harmonious relationships as negotiated in *teu le vā*. Harmony is sought when the *vā* is treated with the utmost respect. The operating logic of the *fa'aaloalo* enforces harmonious relationships essential for the survival of the community. Social cohesion is promoted at different levels: within the family, village/church, the wider community and the whole cosmos.

As a stabilizing mechanism, respect of the *vā* is the 'spine' that binds together community within the hierarchical framework. The vitality of the Samoan culture finds its

⁶⁰ Terry Pouono, "Teu le Va: The Samoan Cosmic-community in Aotearoa preserving harmonious relationships...where is the harmony?" *Pacific Journal of Theology* 2, no. 50 (2013): 93-94.

⁶¹ Vaitusi L. Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan postcolonial reading of discipleship in the Matthean gospel" (PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2014), 43.

⁶² Pa'u Tafaogalupe III Mano'o Tilive'a Mulitalo-Lauta, *FaaSamoa and Social Work within the New Zealand context* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2000), 15.

⁶³ Ibid., 15-16.

⁶⁴ Vaai, "Faaaloalo," 58

energy in sustaining the *vā* and its image as a cosmic community. It is important to note that these values are honoured because they are sacred and contribute to the social well-being of the people. Anae elaborates this idea further by stating that a person is sacred, the relational arrangements are sacred, and thus all reciprocal relationships are also sacred.⁶⁵ Every individual within the *fa'aSāmoa* is brought up to value the caring for one another. The whole culture is founded on mutual sharing and reciprocity and no one is exempted from the rule.

In an environment of familiarity where there is a great sense of expectation, it is vital that roles and responsibilities are fulfilled properly. In all relationships, roles are socially determined; for example the relationship between brother and sister, a *matai* (chief) and his family, or the triad relationship between a minister, the congregation and God. In addition to co-operation, conformity and respect for status, one must show loyalty and commitment to the community.⁶⁶

'E lē tauilo fanau o tupu' is a Samoan saying that implies that children who are well nurtured by their parents are easily identified; they speak with politeness, use the appropriate language in different scenarios and they use appropriate behaviour. When one walks in front of another who is seated, it is custom for the person walking to say *tulou* and walk past in a crouching manner with head down. A formal address is used when addressing a minister and his wife. In the scenario of an overcrowded bus, it is *fa'aaloalo* for a young person to give up his/her seat to an elderly passenger; children must show 'unquestioning obedience' to their parents⁶⁷ and much more.

Teu le vā demands a respect for existing boundaries and relations. If for some reason the boundaries are transgressed and relationships are compromised; *'ia teu le vā'* is verbally expressed which necessitates an action to rectify the wrongdoing. As a premise for relational conduct, the *vā* administers respect for the 'other' regardless of whether it is a friend, relative

⁶⁵ Anae, "Research for better Pacific," 13.

⁶⁶ Lita Foliaki, "Pacific Cultural Competencies Framework for DSD funded NASCs," June 2005. Adapted with permission from the work of Lita Foliaki and used for 'Research Methodology PH 705 lecture' by Dr Philip Culbertson (University of Auckland, January 2012), 8.

⁶⁷ Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand Born Pacific Island Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998), 7.

or stranger. In a situation of conflict, there must be an attempt to reconcile. When negotiating with people who are not Samoan, there is usually a strong sense of ethnocentric pride in upholding the Samoan worldview, though it is still crucial to create and maintain good relations. When a guest departs from the home of a Samoan, it is vital that he or she has left satisfied and content by the hospitality given by the host.

It is important to note that in the context of this research, the varied possibilities of how *teu le vā* may be applied is an indication of the different perceptions of the *vā* in time and space. Put another way, traditional beliefs of the concept are liable to change with migration, intercultural engagement, global influences, personal preference, transition in one's life journey and other reasons.

Teu le vā as Negotiating Spaces, as mentioned previously, is a dialogic process of mutual negotiation between knowledge bases. The two parties are therefore involved in the process of negotiating spaces through mutual understanding. Now after reflecting on this, it needs to be noted that traditionalists may claim that there may be a danger of misinterpretation when indigenous concepts are used. One thing I learnt during my ten years in Sāmoa is the need to use proverbs and concepts in their proper contexts.

Despite the claims of the traditionalists, it is apparent that *teu le vā* is a fluid concept because the *vā* or relational spaces are also fluid. The cosmological model and ethical components are interrelated and form the traditional understanding of *teu le vā*. The primary factor behind *teu le vā* is the concern for preserving harmonious relationships, that is, within the cosmological understanding of the Samoan worldview and with one another within the cultural framework. *Teu le vā* as negotiating spaces on the other hand, is a relatively recent understanding in light of an increasing awareness for indigenous perspectives in the world of academia.

Melani Anae, one of the pioneers of Pacific Education research, sees the benefits of understanding this Pacific cultural paradigm for relevant Pacific educational policy and research praxis. Anae states that the 'philosophical reference point is the Samoan

concept/tenet/practice of ‘*teu le va*’—to value, cherish, nurture and take care of the *va* (sic), the relationship.’⁶⁸ This quintessential understanding of *teu le vā* raised by Anae will be mentioned again and critically engaged with in Chapter Four.

The nuances of *teu le vā* previously discussed will be acknowledged in this research because they form a key understanding of the traditional Samoan worldview. However, more significantly, the focus of this research looks at the context of the *vā* or spaces of the Samoan diasporic church. More specifically, this thesis investigates *teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic within the CCCS, and to a lesser extent within Samoan families.

In the next chapter, I will look at one of the significant transitions in Samoan history, that is the introduction and integration of the Christian faith with the *fa’aSāmoa*, indigenous beliefs and traditional values. The Christian faith transformed Samoan society and renewed perceptions and understandings of *vā*.

⁶⁸ Anae, “Research for better Pacific,” 2.

CHAPTER THREE

Establishing the coconut identity

Having discussed in the previous chapter the indigenous perspective of my research methodology, specifically the *teu le vā* intra-cultural hermeneutic, the objective of this chapter explores the integration of the Christian faith with that cultural framework, and the ensuing advancement of the Samoan Christian identity. Within the scope of this research, this chapter is significant for understanding the transformation of the *teu le vā* cultural paradigm, as Samoa developed an integrated collective identity as a Christian culture. This idea of a Christian culture will be addressed through other terms such as coconut identity, local culture or contextual theology.

It was noted in the Introduction of this thesis that the coconut is perceived by the Samoan people as a source of life. Meaola Amituanai-Tolosa, an education expert of Samoan descent uses the coconut as a metaphor for survival in Samoa,¹ while Sione ‘Amanaki Havea, a leading pioneer of Contextual Theology in the Pacific perceived the coconut to be a life giving source which represents salvation in Christ.²

Amituana’i Tolosa investigated the quality of effective teaching and achievement levels of students in bilingual education. The parallel with the coconut in this context is its provision of necessary sustenance which effective teaching procedures are perceived to give these students.³ Notably, she writes that the coconut comes in three different types; the green, the brown and the black coconut. These different colours indicate different stages of maturation. The metaphor is rich with meaning. Stages of maturation are depicted as the three different colours of the ripening fruit. The immature fruit is attached to the tree then as it matures it usually detaches itself, being then available for practical use and enjoyment. The metaphoric

¹ Meola Amituanai-Tolosa, “Ua Malie Toa Ua Malie Tau. Students with Silver Tongues Whip the Tail: Enhanced Teaching and Learning of Reading Comprehension in Samoan Bilingual Classes” (PhD Thesis: University of Auckland, 2005), 8-10.

² Sione ‘Amanaki Havea, “Pacific Theology,” in *Towards a Relevant Pacific Theology, The Role of the Churches and Theological Education*. A Report of a Theological Consultation held in Bergengren House, Suva, Fiji, July 8–12, 1985 (Suva: Lotu Pasifika, 1986), 22–23. Havea is prominent for advocating ‘Coconut Theology’.

³ Amituanai-Tolosa, “Ua Malie Toa,” 8-10.

imagery includes discussion of the white coconut flesh, the value of which changes as the fruit ripens then rots if not harvested and used well.⁴

The green coconut implied by Amituana'i Toloa is actually a white coconut covered by a green coloured husk. The white coconut from the green husk has more water in the interior than a brown coconut, and the meat of the brown coconut is more hardened compared to the gel-like meat of the white coconut. On the other hand, the black coconut is usually overripe⁵ or rotten when it is on the ground for a long time, exposed to the rain or fallen into the ocean. The water inside an overripe coconut contains either water with a sour taste, a coconut seed interior or no water at all. In some cases, a black coconut can also rot through contamination by bugs.

Establishing a view that opposed the influence of a form of Christianity tainted by nineteenth century missionaries, Havea proposed Coconut Theology as an authentic Pacific indigenous theology articulated with, but distinct from Western Christianity.⁶ Unlike Havea's search for an authentic Pacific Theology, the coconut water in the context of this research represents a processed and repackaged indigenized gospel formed out of an interaction with the Samoan culture.

The coconut, or coconut water, by itself is not the most relevant symbol or the most important thing. Rather, what is symbolically rich and very important is the way humans use coconuts. Havea presents the coconut as a natural symbol, but in the context of this research, nature and humans work together to create productive and fulfilling relations. The same principle applies to culture, where Western Christianity and pre-Christian Samoan culture are combined to make something distinct and new, namely, a Samoan Christian identity that is both durable but also changing. In the context of this research, the pure, nutritious and sweet-tasting coconut water symbolizes a form of Christianity that is essential to the Samoan people,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Havea, "Pacific Theology," 22-23.

and like the coconut water which fills the interior of a coconut, Christianity is central to Samoan society.⁷

If Samoan Christian identity is symbolized in this research by the coconut, what characterizes this form of identity? An attempt to provide a concrete profile may seem an impossible task, because it remains questionable if a single Christian identity is really attainable or if there can ever be an identity in absolute purity. Despite the uncertainties surrounding the concept of Christian identity, I believe a Samoan Christian identity is not an abstract idea but something to be cherished in the hearts and minds of Samoan people, a gift bestowed upon them as God's people. In order to understand how this identity has been developed, there needs to be an understanding of how the gospel penetrated the culture and lives of the Samoan people. The historical aspects of Samoan Christianity will therefore be addressed.

This chapter serves several purposes. A brief explanation of how Christianity was accepted in Samoa will be given, particularly how the Christian gospel penetrated into the Samoan cultural environment of 1830. The interaction of Christianity with the Samoan context forms an indigenized gospel that serves the purpose of shaping and perpetuating Samoan Christian identity. This study will be confined to the London Missionary Society (LMS) and its mission to Samoa in 1830, and to the subsequent development of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS).

3.1 Origin and Endeavour of the London Missionary Society

The birth of a Pacific myth was what initiated the establishment of the various missionary societies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Pacific myths are the preconceptions Europeans had of the Pacific Islands as a result of the observations or

⁷ The motto for the Independent State of Sāmoa "*Fa'avae i le Atua Sāmoa*" translates as "Sāmoa is founded on God".

‘ethnographic descriptions’⁸ of the earlier European explorers. In various writings there were images of the Pacific as a paradise or a utopian society conveying sexual freedom, nudity and dancing, which was a contrasting lifestyle to the industrialized environment of Britain at the time. Consequently, there was a craving for the British people to live in such a utopian society.⁹

On the other hand, the images of the missionaries were coloured by what they believed at the time to be moral. They fostered an evangelical motivation to save souls, to save them from pagan carefree idolatrous habits of nudity, singing and dancing. The mission ideology overtook the utopian image especially with areas of Melanesia portraying images of savagery as a kind of hell on earth with wars and cannibalism.

In the late eighteenth century the evangelical movement in England was to produce a new era of missionary work in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. This movement was associated with the non-conformist churches of England. These were Protestant churches that sought a more radical and simpler kind of religious expression than that of the established Church of England. The establishment of missionary movement was approved and ordinary men and women then went and preached the gospel abroad. The call for mission worldwide summoned the missionary societies to different areas of the world.

The London Missionary Society, an inter-denominational missionary society formed in 1795, was geared towards the Pacific. Initially called the Missionary Society, the LMS was formed by a group of people from different Calvinistic, evangelical churches, comprising Calvinistic Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Scottish Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Independents and Anglicans. Their aim was to spread the gospel among the heathens.

⁸ Jukka Siikala, *Cult and Conflict in Tropical Polynesia: A Study of Traditional Religion, Christianity and Nativistic Movements* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1982), 61-63.

⁹ Malama Meleisea. *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 46.

However, the formation of other mission societies later left the LMS predominantly Congregational.¹⁰

The LMS form of worship was therefore influenced by Congregational liturgies and forms of worship. According to the Fundamental Principle formulated by the Board, the spreading of the gospel must be done in a way allowing the receivers to be autonomous, so that they would have the freedom to choose their own mode of style and worship.

Our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government (about which there may be difference of opinion among serious Persons), but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen: and that it shall be left (as it ever ought to be left) to the minds of the Persons whom God may call into fellowship of His Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government, as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God.¹¹

The objectives of the LMS in promoting mission, with an explicit appeal to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19,¹² was to be met with great expectation by the Samoan people.

The arrival of the Christian gospel was believed to be the expected blessing from the heavens and anticipated by Samoan myths and legends. It would be inevitable that the new religion would transform Samoan culture and society if it was officially accepted. According to Malama Meleiseā, a Samoan scholar, Christianity gradually, over time, transformed pre-Christian belief systems and understanding of indigenous gods.¹³ The new faith became the dominant religion and the Christian God given pre-eminence over pre-Christian gods. classified above pre-Christian gods. It is to be understood that indigenous beliefs and worldviews were never abolished, but put aside.

¹⁰ Norman E. Thomas, *Missions and Unity: Lessons from History, 1792-2010* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), 15.

¹¹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 248.

¹² Matthew 28:19. The Great Commission: 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'

¹³ Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 31. According to Myths and Legends of Sāmoa, it was prophesised by Nafanua 'Tali i lagi sou malo' to await from the heavens the future blessing. The Europeans are called by Samoans as 'papālagi' which means 'burst from heaven.'

3.2 Samoan primal religion: A cosmological identity

Prior to the arrival of the missionaries and other European explorers in the nineteenth century,¹⁴ Samoa had its own indigenous culture and religious identity that differed markedly from that of the Christian missionaries. The traditional Samoan worldview portrays an alternative understanding of the origins of nature, of life, of creation and the norms that determine and shape the Samoan context. This differs from the point of view of Western religion and knowledge disseminated by the missionaries and other Western explorers to the Pacific.

The anthropological concept of animism reflects the nature of the primal religion, beliefs and practices of Samoa prior to the arrival of Christianity. The belief system traced its origins to the cosmological realm that portrayed all elements, animate and inanimate, as deeply entrenched in and interrelated with other elements. It is grounded in the belief that the spiritual, material realm, and mythical realms are all intertwined with the real world.¹⁵

David Inglis proposes that Samoan ‘cosmology is mythological and not experiential.’ The underlying factor here elucidates a belief system deeply engrained with ancient traditions and stories of the past that inform primal religious convictions of the indigenous group. Myths, which are an important feature in many cultures of the ancient Western and non-Western world as narratives, serve the function of explaining how natural creation and humankind came about in their present form.¹⁶

Samoan cultural traditions are rich in oral traditions, myths and legends. These narratives are not only recollections of legends of the ancient times, but the living stories re-enacted in the minds and memories of many Samoan people today. In one way or another, these stories mystically, spiritually, psychologically and physically touch the lives of the

¹⁴ George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia: Missionary Life, Travels and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific* (Papakura: R. McMillan, 1984), 97. The first sighting of Samoa was recorded by the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen in 1722. Other explorers to follow were French navigators Bougainville in 1768 and La Perouse in 1787.

¹⁵ Siikala, *Cult and Conflict*, 84-85.

¹⁶ David Jackson Inglis, “Change and Continuity in Samoan Religion: The Role of the Congregational Christian Church” (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1991), 33.

people. Myths and legends provide meaningful explanations because they offer information about genealogical connections, natural causes, seasonal trends, uninhabited land areas, customs, habits and moral codes that result in harmony and/or chaos, taboos, information about origins of plants and natural species, traditions of families and villages, narratives about spirits, sacred sites and objects, cultural traditions and other explanations.

From these sacred narratives, Samoan proverbs are developed and function as a type of allegory. As a literary device, Samoan proverbial expressions are filled with symbols that need to be interpreted. They convey hidden messages through tangible actions and/or events that, if interpreted symbolically, provide ethical and moral lessons and admonitions for everyday living.

For example, one myth that is well known to the Samoan people concerns the place called *O le Fafā o Sauali'i*, literally translated as the Cove of Spirits situated between the villages of *Tufutafo'e* and *Faleālupo*.¹⁷ Across the many accounts of the Cove of Spirits, the place is commonly believed to be the gateway for the spirits of the dead to enter into Eternity known as *Pulotu*. Because of this the area is uninhabited. According to the locals, it is a dwelling place for the spirits and must not be transgressed, but rather avoided.

Another example is the Samoan proverb '*Ia moe le toa*' translated as 'Let the rooster sleep' or 'Let the brave sleep.'¹⁸ When used in the context of everyday life, '*Ia moe le toa*' can be interpreted in various ways depending on the situation. For example, 'to leave for another moment, to postpone a decision, or action or for another day.'¹⁹ These expressions remain a source for valid interpretation as long as listeners are able to make sense of the concrete expressions from abstract principles.

As mentioned previously in my analysis of *teu le vā*, the *vā* is fully realized when there is harmony with oneself, harmony with the other person, harmony with the environment and

¹⁷ The islands of Faleālupo and Tufutāfo'e are located on the north-western side of the island of Savai'i.

¹⁸ The Ministry for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs, *Samoa Ne'i Galo*, 50. The latter definition makes sense when it is applied in the context of the myth it is derived from, "The House of Sina"- "*O le Fale o Sina*"

¹⁹ Ibid.

with the cosmos.²⁰ The Samoan people are a people ‘steeped in superstition.’²¹ Samoan people are cautious when approaching things or places that could harm them. They are careful in saying the right words in certain places to maintain harmony with the cosmos. As mentioned previously, in *teu le vā* one must first acknowledge the *vā tāpuia* or consecrated space marking one’s relationship with the gods. Respect of the *vā tāpuia* will result in peace, good fortune, growth, prosperity and the continual preservation of harmony with other elements of the cosmos. Conversely, when the *vā tāpuia* is breached, it is believed that something catastrophic will afflict the wrongdoer; hence fear of the *aitu* becomes more or less a means of social control in family life.

A central feature in ancient narratives, the *vā tāpuia* is grounded in a belief in indigenous deities (gods called *aitu*).²² Indigenous Samoan society was polytheistic in nature, and as a sign of their inherent belief in their gods’ provision of peace and prosperity, people expressed extreme loyalty and at times a sacrificial commitment to their deities. The veneration of multiple deities was carried out at different levels. On a national level, the Samoan people believed in the supreme God *Tagaloa-a-lagi* as the creator god. At another level, each family and village worshipped their own gods and the same was true for each individual, who had their own *aitu* (god) or guardian spirit offering protection from trouble and adversity.²³ The worship of war gods, classified as superior to household gods, was also common. The various gods were visually represented by animate and inanimate objects, for example a centipede or a certain tree could be a god. It is the belief that worshipping these gods would provide protection in times of peace and war, and provide continual blessings as opposed to curses and disharmony.

²⁰ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, “In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion.” in *Su’esu’e Manogi In Search of Fragrance Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi and the Samoan Indigenous* Reference, ed. Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008), 104. According to Tui Atua peace equates to harmony in the Samoan religious tradition.

²¹ Turner, *Nineteen Years*, 238.

²² Siikala, *Cult and Conflict*, 169.

²³ Turner, *Nineteen Years*, 238-239. See also Siikala, *Cult and Conflict*, 170. Pointed out by Aaron Buzacott a Congregationalist missionary to the South Pacific and colleague George Turner.

Derek Freeman, an anthropologist who did an extensive study of Samoan culture during the mid-twentieth century, descriptively alludes to the conception of pre-Christian Samoa as a ghost-saturated environment filled with rituals and beliefs.²⁴ By contrast Rarotongans thought otherwise, claiming that Samoan people were not religiously based because sacred buildings such as temples and icons were largely unnoticeable. This claim reveals a misconception, however, because Samoan primal religion was in essence a private affair, an aspect probably unknown to the Rarotongans. In the pre-Christian era, Samoan religion, in particular the practice of indigenous worship was part of a family system. This later changed to a centralized form of communal worship with Christianity.

The misunderstanding by the Rarotongans stemmed from their lack of knowledge of Samoan culture and their own expectation similar to the expectation of many Westerners, that religion's hallmark was public visibility. This idea was more evident when Western and Rarotongan missionaries erected temples and buildings, and introduced images of God and sacrificial rites to focus or stimulate devotion, which encouraged centralized worship and public gatherings. The new initiatives indicated a shift away from the more private base for religious activity of the family to the more community-based worship seen in village churches.

3.3 The *fa'aSāmoa*: an exclusive, enclosed identity

Another significant distinction of the Samoan islands was their social and communal lifestyle. The distinctive Samoan values and belief systems of the *fa'aSāmoa* can ensure a harmonious and coherent society based on a complex hierarchical and family-based system.²⁵ The *fa'aSāmoa*, assumed by the Samoan people to be the most appropriate and viable social system of living, is embodied in the family and the local villages. It is what holds the

²⁴ Peter Hempenstall, "Manuscript XV, On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa: Derek Freeman Preparing for a Heretical Life," *Journal of Pacific History* 39, no. 2, (2004): 243.
doi: 10.1080/ 0022334042000250760.

²⁵ Kamu, *Samoan Culture*, 37-50.

community together. More significantly, the origins of the *fa'aSāmoa* were organized and informed from the pre-Christian god- *Tagaloa-a-lagi*.²⁶

The function of the *fa'aSāmoa* as a set of general rules, and as a habitual enactment of ritualistic customs²⁷ that reflect the core values of community, is to enforce and maintain a coherent system of law and order in social relations. The Samoan community is very much like the organ system of the human body. For the organ system to function to its fullest potential, several systems such as the skeletal, muscular and nervous must work together. Symbolically, in like manner, the community cannot function properly unless the members of that community -the *matai*,²⁸ daughter of a high chief, father, mother, son, untitled man and others- perform their conventional roles and duties maintaining law and order within the community.

Through its structures and rituals the community preserves and perpetuates the core values of society as it operates in a stratified social hierarchy under the leadership of the *matai* (chiefly) system and a *fono a matai* (village council). The *matai* is an honorific titled position which is conferred upon a person, man or woman, by the extended family, which has decided that such a person should be the head of the family. Each extended family has a *Sa'o o le āiga*, which is a title given to the head chief of a Samoan extended family. He or she also represents the extended family at the village council.

The tradition of political roles within the Samoan community is an interconnected part of the broader social sphere, as various positions are hierarchically categorized and linked at different levels of the community on a spatial and organizational scale. The social ethos and moral ideals of the *fa'aSāmoa* come to fruition within families, villages and the nation as a whole when individuals understand and perform their allocated roles for social relationships to work harmoniously. The concrete manifestation of *teu le vā* is in operation through these social relations.

²⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁷ Inglis, "Change and Continuity," 217.

²⁸ A Samoan chief.

The expectations of higher regard and prominence, whether for a *matai* or a spiritual leader demanding respect and admiration from other members of the community, are based on two premises. First, positions of prominent status such as the *matai* carry with them a great deal of responsibility. Such functionally related systems of relations can easily be mistaken for autocratic ones, but in fact, the *matai* system survives on an organizational democratic scheme wherein a *matai* is selected by family to lead them.²⁹ The status is entrusted to one who has earned the right through committed service and the ability and wisdom to lead the family or village. Second, the *matai* carries a prestigious mandate as it was believed by the Samoan people to be a divine appointment.³⁰ A status inherently believed to be divine filters through levels of society promoting an understanding of Samoan culture as sacred.

The *matai*, like a priest or a prophet, had the divine right to administrate religious worship of the family gods.³¹ The status secured its prominence based on the belief that it was authority bestowed by *Tagaloa-a-lagi*. With the influence of Christianity, the priestly role of the *matai*, despite being replaced by the Samoan pastor as spiritual leader, was still believed to be a position appointed by God. There is a common Samoan phrase, '*Ua tofia e le Atua Sāmoa ina ia pūlea e matai, auā o lona suafoa ua vaelua i ai*' literally meaning, 'God has appointed Sāmoa to be ruled by chiefs because God's name is shared or divided by them.' The sustaining of the *matai* status is crucial to preserving the *fa'aSāmoa*.

It became clear to the missionaries of the LMS that Christianity would only be accepted by the Samoans through the *fa'aSāmoa*. With this in mind, they sought patronage from the *matai*,³² and eventually the gospel was accepted by Mālietoa Vainu'upō³³ in 1830.³⁴

²⁹J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), 17 & 22-23.

³⁰Inglis, "Change and Continuity," 125-126.

³¹Raeburn Lange, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa* (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1997), 15.

³²James Boutilier, "We fear not the Ultimate Triumph: Factors effecting the Conversion Phase of Nineteenth-Century Missionary Enterprises." in *Missions and Missionaries in the Pacific*, ed. Char Miller (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 14. The Gospel was accepted by Mālietoa Vainu'upō of Sapapālī'i in 1830.

³³Mālietoa Vainu'upō held the four most prestigious titles which gave him the authority as the premiere chief.

³⁴Hempenstall, *Manuscript XV*, 244. John Williams, Charles Barff and company aboard the 'Messenger of Peace' anchored on the shores of the village of Sapapālī on the morning of Friday 16th July, 1830.

3.4 Planting of the Christian gospel

Lalomilo Kamu, a Samoan scholar who researched extensively the interaction of the Samoan culture and the Christian gospel writes, ‘...the missionary movement chose to introduce the gospel to the islands through the *matai*, a decision which had long lasting implications.’³⁵

Once the Christian gospel was officially accepted by the prominent high chief Mālietoa Vainu’upo, Christian missions gained rapid momentum as the Samoan people welcomed with great enthusiasm the new knowledge and the material benefits affiliated with the foreigners.³⁶

The *matai* ensured that relations were created and maintained with the missionaries to enhance their prestige and influence. This process, described by Inglis as a ‘corporate cultural action,’³⁷ led to the rapid spread of conversion as mass followers voluntarily, or involuntarily, conformed to the intentions of the *matai* or village council.³⁸

Ultimately the Samoan congregations, according to Boutilier, developed from an intertwining of the Christian message forwarded by the missionaries, and an acceptance of that message and a relatively smooth transition for the introduction and penetration of Christianity via the indigenous political structures of the *matai* system.³⁹ Boutilier’s comments indicate an ironic turn in the shaping of the Christian message. Samoans had made Christianity their own. Rather than being rooted in Samoan soil, Christianity infused into Samoa’s hierarchical social

Inglis, “Change and Continuity,” 170, records a different date of the arrival on 21st August 1830. Malietoa’s reason for accepting the Christian religion was to increase his authority and power using the missionaries as an ally to fulfil his motives.

³⁵ Kamu, *Samoan Culture*, 78.

³⁶ Inglis, “Change and Continuity,” 175. By 1840, the rapid rise of conversions to Christianity was labelled by British Missionaries as the “Great Awakening” whereby it was recorded that 70% of the total population covering the main islands of western and eastern Samoa were converted.

See also Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* (University of Canterbury, Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 2005), 78. Prior to the arrival of the missionary societies, renegades, deserters and beachcombers were influential in spreading the gospel message as demanded by the Samoan people.

See also Raeburn Lange, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa* (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1997), 13-14. As a result of the zeal of the Samoan people for the new religion and a lack of missionaries, the deserters and renegades, despite their limited knowledge in theological training and commitment to the Christian faith, were sought by the Samoan people to act as religious leaders and carry out baptism and healing.

³⁷ Inglis, “Change and Continuity,” 183.

³⁸ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 34.

³⁹ Boutilier, “We fear not the Ultimate Triumph,” 27. James Boutilier is a scholar whose research covered the development of the Christian church in Samoa. See also Danny Ioka, “Origin and beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand” (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 1998), 130.

garment, those aspects in particular that fitted comfortably into the *fa'aSāmoa*. Meleiseā writes, 'Although there is evidence that Christianity revolutionized Samoan culture during the mid-nineteenth century, 'these changes were absorbed and Sāmoanized.'⁴⁰

The acculturation of the Western religion was a working process wherein aspects of the old traditions were intertwined with the doctrines and practices of the new religion.⁴¹ John Garrett, a Pacific historian implicitly highlights a disproportional synergy between the carriers of the new religion and the native Samoans, particularly evident in the abolition and revision of certain indigenous beliefs and practices to align with convictions of Western Christendom.⁴²

Despite the impact of Christianity in Samoa over the years, many indigenous beliefs and practices are still alive today. Stories and indigenous knowledge are retold and passed down the generations validating the idea that some aspects of the indigenous Samoan era went through a process of relegation or accommodation. The Christian God-Jehovah, for example, replaced *Tagaloa-a-Lagi* in name, although the latter was never quite extinguished but was recorded in written literature about Samoan myths and language. Old concepts remained despite the introduction of the new.⁴³ Samoan myths, legends and old traditions are continually re-informed in traditional speeches of orators, even if the traditional beliefs are complementary or subordinate to the proclamation of the Christian God and faith.

However, not all aspects of indigenous beliefs were accepted by the missionaries, leading to abrasive action for abolishment. For example, the *taulā aitu*⁴⁴ (priests who honored village gods) and indigenous prophets were denounced by the missionaries as deceitful,⁴⁵ paving the way for the accelerated prominence of Samoan pastors and teachers of the gospel to

⁴⁰ Malama Meleiseā, *Lagaga: A Short history of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 69. This term refers to the integration and interaction of the Western classical gospel and Samoan culture, which in effect has developed an autonomous CCCS church structure. The gospel has become a Samoan thing.

⁴¹ Hempenstall, *Manuscript XV*, 244.

⁴² John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Suva: Oceania Printers Ltd, 1982), 123-124.

⁴³ Inglis, "Change and Continuity," 193.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 104. Mead presents *Taula-aitu* as people who conversed with spirits or were possessed by them. Inglis, 106- The word can be translated to mean "anchor of the spirits". Inglis, 304- There was no form of institutionalized priesthood although the *matai* of each family performed functions associated with priests such as healing, praying and leading family worship.

⁴⁵ Lange, *The Origins*, 15.

positions of leadership and more significantly as mediators of the Christian God.⁴⁶ The introduction of values and moral codes familiar to the Protestant missionaries reframed some indigenous practices as repugnant. As J.W. Davidson notes,

Samoan acceptance of polygamy, of extra-marital intercourse, and of easy divorce was inevitably regarded with horror, as were the performance of ‘lewd’ songs and dances and the public testing of virginity at marriage.⁴⁷

The interaction between the gospel and Samoan culture in this case is perceived as a relationship of hegemonic proportions with the dominant force of Western christendom prevailing over the core belief systems of the indigenous Samoan culture. By spreading a gospel message largely tinged with Protestant values and structural compositions, the work of the missionaries in Christianizing the native cultures came to be seen as a form of colonialism along with other introduced institutions like military power structures and new political and economic structures.⁴⁸

Conversely, it would seem unfair to blame the colonizers entirely for asserting ascendancy over the local people. Since early contact with the Europeans, Samoans conceived ideas of the foreigners as super humans, even gods, who possessed technology and resources far beyond indigenous resources and knowledge capacity.⁴⁹ Faueā, a Samoan *matai* assisted the missionaries of the LMS to Samoa, made a clear social and economic distinction between the foreigners and his people when he addressed the Samoans. He said,

Can the religion of these English be anything but wise and good? Look at them and look at us. Their hands are covered (gloves) while ours are exposed to the heat of the sun and the wet of the rain...Behold how rich they are in axes, scissors and other property, while we have nothing.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Garrett, *To Live Among*, 124.

⁴⁷ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 35. J.W. Davidson is a Pacific historian.

⁴⁸ Siikala, *Cult and Conflict*, 15. The four social institutions extending European culture to native cultures were clearly evident in the history of Samoa. Economically, tradesmen and missionaries were influential in providing resources that triggered a great sense of economic dependence on European supplies. After the acceptance of Christianity in 1830, at the turn of the century, Samoa was at the center of political and military conflicts between the Germans, Americans and the British Empire.

⁴⁹ Inglis, “Change and Continuity,” 22.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 186 Quote from J. W. Ellison, *Opening and Penetration of Foreign Influences in Samoa to 1880* (Oregon: Oregon State College, 1938), 229-230.

An attractive proposition, with the recognition of superior material wealth and technology, and an alternative new knowledge system⁵¹ characterized by biblical teaching, general education and Western medicine lured the natives to assimilate to a more “civilized” lifestyle regarded as superior to their own.

3.5 Forming a ‘Coconut identity’

The Adaptation model as interpreted by Robert Schreiter⁵² may best explain the process which connected the gospel with the Samoan context. It entails the planting of the seed of faith and allowing it to interact with the native soil leading to a new flowering of Christianity. As Christianity developed and the church was established, communal worship became a centralised event and all aspects of the *fa’aSāmoa* socially and politically evolved around the church and Christian values. The church had become central to Samoan life, embedded into its culture by enriching and preserving the spiritual and ethical values already present.

The Translation model, advocated by Stephen Bevans reflects the initial stages and later developments of evangelization adopted by the LMS. The translation model stresses the importance of translating the core essence of the gospel message into the new context. The effects of such an approach allow for Christianity to be expressed in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the culture being evangelized. Bevans notes the importance of preserving the Christian message in the process,

If, for example, gospel values and cultural values come into conflict in the evangelization process, there is no doubt that the content of the gospel message must be preserved, rather than the values and practices of the culture.⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid., 192. Parsonson (1967) coins the longing of indigenous peoples for western knowledge as a “Literate Revolution.”

⁵² Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 9-10. Adaptation means the adjustment to environmental conditions or the modification of an organism or its parts that makes it more fit for existence under the conditions of its environment. Robert J. Schreiter is a Catholic priest and scholar. The focus of his research was in the areas of world mission, reconciliation and inculturation.

⁵³ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 41.

The beliefs in the *vā tāpu'ia* and *teu le vā* may have shaped the Samoan environment before the arrival of the Christian faith, but it cannot be denied that the *vā tāpu'ia* and *teu le vā* were seen in a new light with Christianity. The church was influential in restricting local wars, discouraged barbaric practices, enforced the sanctity of marriage and the practice of monogamy was regulated.

Furthermore, Bevans' 'Anthropological model' collaborates well with the 'Translation model' when describing the complex evangelization process. Although the missionaries brought a message that interacted with and transformed aspects of Samoan culture, there were aspects of the Samoan culture that were preserved based on the belief that they were divinely gifted to the Samoan people. The Anthropological model allows the evangelized to interpret the Christian message within the framework of existing cultural beliefs. Bevans states that 'the primary concern of the Anthropological model is the establishment or preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith.'⁵⁴

The Christian teachings of love and forgiveness not only fitted in well with the principles of *fa'aaloalo* and reciprocal giving, but gave these cultural principles a sense of meaning and purpose, because the attributes of a loving and merciful Christian God form the foundation for Christian ethics. One of the core messages of the Christian gospel is about transforming the lives of people, to maximise the possibilities of an identity founded on theological and ethical attributes of the Christian God and manifested in the life of Jesus Christ. With the integration of the gospel message into a culture, 'the best in them is realized when they have authentic self-identity and self-expression. Thus the denial of opportunity for self-identity and authentic expression impedes the gospel.'⁵⁵

The process of adaptation entails the embodiment of a Christian message- its moral, ethical and political implications in many aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa*. Such a process of translating ideas finds its focal point of familiarization and localization with a lens of native

⁵⁴ Bevans, *Models of Contextual*, 54.

⁵⁵ Christopher Duraisingh, "Gospel and identity in community," *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 336 (1996): 4. doi: 10.1111/j. 1758-6631.1996.tb02727.x.

interpretation of the foreign message. Siikala clearly expresses this idea stating that ‘The adaptation of the Biblical tradition...was to begin with naturally on the listeners’ terms.’⁵⁶ What makes the indigenized gospel unique, authentic and special to Samoans are the essential elements of Samoanness inherently believed to be gifted from God.

Samoan Christian identity, an identity that is moulded with a mixture of twists and turns of processes and academic concepts, whether it is planting, intertwining, integration, assimilation, abolishment, relegation or accommodation, continues to evolve over time. Christianity was embedded in Samoan culture and thus the gospel teachings must be reflected in the individual’s life and interactions with other people in the community. Corporate decision making and the traditional extended family, which reflected the essential nature of the social fabrication of things Samoan, was less compatible with individual autonomy and the smaller unit of the nuclear family. Every individual within the *fa’aSāmoa* is brought up to value caring for one another, mutual sharing and reciprocity. The whole culture is founded on mutual sharing and reciprocity and no one is exempted from the rule. Communal living is what makes Christianity in Samoa and in the Pacific unique, an aspect that the early Western Congregationalists insisted that churches should operate.

3.6 Rise of the Samoan church

The role of the LMS and other missionary societies in the dissemination of the Christian faith is seen as invaluable to the islanders of the South Pacific, with many islands today still predominantly Christian nations. The new recipients of the gospel were introduced to particular elements of European culture through the agency of a uniform, systematized, and organized church institution which gave form and structure to the new faith.

The gradual progress of institutionalization- the moulding of church practices and beliefs into a system was integral to the initial strengthening of relations with the indigenous inhabitants, and the eventual development of the indigenized church structure in the form of

⁵⁶ Siikala, *Cult and Conflict*, 200.

autonomous village churches.⁵⁷ Sharon W. Tiffany, an anthropologist and advocate in Women Studies notes that, ‘...the transition from mission to indigenous church was influenced by the organization of the early LMS enterprise and its adaptation to local socio-political institutions’.⁵⁸

With the enhancement of the status of the *matai*, the presence of orators drawing mass followers to the new religion, and the rapid elevation of Samoan teachers functioning as a catalyst for an increasing sense of independence from the foreign missionaries, the Samoan church and the wider Samoan Christian identity started to take shape.⁵⁹ In 1870, the missionaries conceded ordination to Samoan pastors, thus setting a seal on the process of ‘Samoanisation’ [sic] of the church’s inner life.⁶⁰ The rise in prominence from teachers under the surveillance of the missionaries, to ordained Samoan pastors was seen as a stepping stone to a self-sufficient and autonomous Samoan church.

The people of the LMS take great pride in the deeds of their missionaries, particularly their efforts in translating and printing the Samoan Bible. Protestant hymns and musical scores were later translated into the Samoan language and a hymn book compiled. Malua Theological College was initiated for the training of Samoan pastors. On the whole, the common factor that created the value of Samoanness was that everything was done in the Samoan way through the Samoan language.

The process of amalgamating aspects of LMS Christianity and the social and political structures of the *fa’aSāmoa* made conversion to the new Christian faith a lot easier because the social order was respected and maintained. Missionaries must be given credit for withholding their desire to impose all of their ideals, and Samoans were astute in selecting common elements that would further enhance their Samoan Christian identity. In 1962, the London

⁵⁷ Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 55, 59-60. See also Siikala, *Cult and Conflict*, 256. The London Missionary Society introduced a formalized form of Christianity that was not transparent in the attempts of beachcombers and renegades to preach the gospel prior to 1830.

⁵⁸ Sharon W. Tiffany, “The Politics of Denominational Organization in Samoa.” in *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania*, ed. James A. Boutilier, Daniel T. Hughes and Sharon W. Tiffany (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1978), 425.

⁵⁹ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 36.

⁶⁰ Garrett, *To Live Among*, 121-128. Samoan teachers were allowed to be ordained in 1876.

Missionary Society church, later the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), gained autonomy.⁶¹

3.7 Congregationalism in the mix

Congregationalism stands in the Reformed theological tradition, with the origins of its ecclesiology and polity rooted in the earliest Christian churches that found their initial denominational expression in Puritan and Separatist gatherings in sixteenth-century England. Congregational Christian Churches are marked by the independence of the local congregation as an expression of Christ's headship of that gathered fellowship of believers.⁶² The underlying principle is that Jesus alone is the head of each congregation and that the relations of the various congregations are those of fellow members in one common family of God.

For Congregational churches, the polity takes priority over the confessional concerns, each church being formed through its own church convention. As an autonomous type of Protestant church organization, each congregation or local church has free control of its own affairs, then eliminating the roles of bishops and presbyteries.⁶³ Congregationalism's distinctive feature is its ecclesiology, which emphasizes the completeness of the local church under the headship of Christ. The local church is seen as the only true, or visible representation of the church. Only in the visible church is one able to discover the classical 'marks' of the church: the word rightly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and church discipline rightly applied.⁶⁴

The focus of Congregationalism on self-autonomy was the objective of the 'Fundamental Principle' of the LMS missions in the nineteenth century. This was clearly evident over time as the missionaries opted to occupy a supervisory role while allowing the village-based local churches to develop the Samoan ministry and refashion a Samoan

⁶¹ Tiffany, "The Politics of Denominational," 424. See also "The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa" (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1962), 3. Full self-government for the Church was realised in May 1961.

⁶² Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The Encyclopaedia of Protestantism- Volume I, A-C* (London: Routledge, 2004), 507.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 508.

Christian identity that best accommodated a synergy between cultural traditions and the newly introduced Christian religion.⁶⁵ Many aspects of ecclesiastical life, liturgy, the Constitution, mission statement, theological foundations, religious education programmes and authority of Congregationalism emerged as a prototype that the Samoans could simulate.⁶⁶

Church buildings were erected in villages where Samoans attended worship services en masse. The *matai* automatically fitted in well within the church structure, adopting positions of prominence that befitted their status by becoming deacons. As the believers became more knowledgeable of biblical stories, the names of biblical characters such as *Mose* (Moses), *Tavita* (David), *Tanielu* (Daniel), *Paulo* (Paul) and *Peteru* (Peter) became prominent names for males.

The wearing of white attire in the likeness of the missionaries gave the Samoan people a more dignified sense of aristocratic belonging to the new religion. Men wore white jackets and ties and women wore long white dresses.⁶⁷ The structure of church buildings is another of the features of the Victorian era. These visible features of Samoan Christian identity, the moral conduct and practices reformed by the missionaries, have largely been resistant to external influences of the outside world because they embody an identity of communal strength motivated by pride.

As C.G.R MacKay observed through his experiences as a non-Samoan living in Samoa, Samoans were proud people who had ‘pride in self, of family, and of race.’⁶⁸ Through an inherent, ethnocentric pride in an identity that is believed to be a divine gift, boundaries are drawn as cultural subjectivity dominates the disposition in relation to other religious, cultural and ethnic identities.

The fashion in which the CCCS conveys the gospel shapes the way that CCCS believers understand the gospel message better in the Samoan context. The indigenized gospel

⁶⁵ Lange, *The Origins*, 19: 22-25. The idea of greater autonomy and self-sufficiency of the local church was encouraged by the LMS missionaries.

⁶⁶ Inglis, “Change and Continuity,” 41.

⁶⁷ Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 67-68.

⁶⁸ C.G.R McKay, *Samoana: A personal story of the Samoan Islands* (Wellington: A.H & A.W Reed, 1968), 7.

and church structure of the CCCS are fruits of the seed that was sown by the nineteenth century missionaries, and today are still perceived as key elements of Samoan Christian identity. The infusion of the Protestant gospel interpenetrates into indigenous Samoan culture and develops an institutionalized church structure.

As the twenty-first century progresses, Samoa as a nation has continued to transform in line with the changing world. The indigenized gospel and church structure of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa are fruits of the seed that was sown by the nineteenth century missionaries. For the purposes of this thesis these aspects that are preserved will be referred to as the Samoan church tradition. The objective of tradition however is not only continuity and coherence, but also renewal and change. The affirmation of Samoan Christian identity depends on how the CCCS responds to both tradition and renewal.

In this chapter, I looked at key components of Samoan primal religion as a cosmic-centred belief system. The inherent belief in myths, legends, ancient traditions and indigenous gods was the platform for Samoan belief systems, rituals and practices. I also addressed the mission objectives of the London Mission Society and the impact they had in interacting with and penetrating the Samoan culture. From the dynamic interaction of the indigenous Samoan community and the Christian faith, an indigenized gospel has been formed and a Coconut identity realized as authentic to the Samoan people.

The next chapter will briefly give an historical account of the mass migration of Samoan people to New Zealand since the mid-twentieth century. What are the implications of migrating away from the homeland to a new country? What effects will migration have on ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations? These questions will be addressed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Re-establishing an identity: transplanting the coconut.

The previous chapter addressed the way the Christian message promulgated by the LMS was accepted in Samoa, and how this message was integrated with traditional Samoan culture. Consequently, the interaction formed an indigenized gospel that has developed over time and has shaped the Samoan Christian identity.

In this chapter, I will examine the significance of transplanting the CCCS on New Zealand soil as a means of preserving the Samoan Christian identity. One of my initial research questions is relevant for the transplanted church: Should the coconut water, which symbolizes the Samoan Christian identity, be preserved? Through the CCCS, the Samoan Christian identity is perpetuated in the midst of an increasingly diverse society. Taking this into consideration, another relevant question comes to mind: what stance must the CCCS take in order to be an authentic witness? It is a question that will be observed as I explore the developments of the diasporic church.

I will firstly look briefly at the influence of migrant communities and early settlements in New Zealand, with specific focus on the ethnic communities that brought with them and transplanted their forms of Christianity into New Zealand. In addition, a brief historical account will be given of the mass migration of the Samoan people to New Zealand during the mid-twentieth century. I will also examine the favourable and unfavourable reasons for transplanting the CCCS in New Zealand.

4.1 Exploring the ‘Land of the long white cloud’

The portrayal of New Zealand as an immigrant nation in the contemporary era alludes to the fact that its social makeup over time has been shaped by existing traditions and cultures of the indigenous Maori people- the *tangata whenua*, and the influence of a diverse range of migrant communities over time. Initially, since the arrival of the foreign settlers, migrant communities have gradually assimilated into the new environment. In recent times, society has become

more multifarious with migration trends still flowing.¹ Centuries of migration define New Zealand as a settler society.

The historiography of New Zealand (history) neglects to an extent the earlier endeavours of the indigenous Maori people, the first migrants who were descendants from Polynesian seafarers. Written accounts of New Zealand history form a body of work largely involving accounts of the colonial British Empire in the nineteenth century and thereafter, the migration and settlement of other groups into New Zealand. Our direction nevertheless, looks at the processes of migration and settlement with particular emphasis on the relocation of Christian communities.

Migration and settlement in New Zealand during the nineteenth century was motivated by many reasons such as Christian evangelization,² colonial expansion, exploitation of natural resources for economic gains, especially the gold rush in the South Island. Some migrants left their homelands due to political instability, discrimination, poverty, health, civil war, personal dilemmas and the quest for a new start to life.³

Migration is a dynamic process that should not be described as solely ‘an inflow of population, since immigrants bring with them various cultures and traditions that may influence those of their adopted countries.’⁴ The initial European settlers made their mark by introducing elements of their distinctive national, ethnic, cultural and religious identity to ensure they felt at home on foreign soil. The adaptation and transition would inevitably, over time, contribute to an ongoing transformation of social networks within the existing New Zealand society.

¹Jane Roscoe, *Documentary in New Zealand: An Immigrant Nation* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1999), 40.

²Allan K. Davidson and Peter J. Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History* (Palmerston North: Massey University Printery, 1995), 20.

³Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, *Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England, Ireland and Scotland 1800-1945* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 3.

⁴Arvind V. Zodgekar, *Immigrants in New Zealand Society* (Wellington: Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Victoria University, 1997), 1.

For instance the French settlers of the nineteenth century, after initial hostile reception, introduced Catholicism to the Maori.⁵ The persistent religious factions between the Irish Catholics and Protestants caused a stir in Christchurch and the West Coast in the 1860s.⁶ The Welsh immigrants fostered enthusiasm and passion indicative of the Welsh spirit mystically linked with the mountains and green valleys' of the homeland. The Welsh choir, formed in 1925, and annual literature competitions were notable features of the Welsh community in New Zealand. The Dutch provided workers for farms, trades and nursing in the 1950s and an indulgence for 'coffee bars, pubs, the theatre, soccer.'⁷ The Scandinavians, for their part, were influential in transplanting the Lutheran Church and more significantly, the development of the farm and dairy industry in the central regions of the North Island.⁸ In an area where I was raised, the Corban Estate is an iconic, distinguished estate of the late Assid Abraham Corban, a migrant from Lebanon who was the vanguard of the winemaking industry in West Auckland.⁹

If the migrants were to 'show and tell' their contributions to their adopted homeland, the exercise would clearly reflect cultural diversity evident through differences in physical characteristics, languages, beliefs, artistic dispositions, motivations, skills, and cultural practices. It was inevitable that the New Zealand kaleidoscope would continually evolve over time as migrants contribute things foreign to the New Zealand melting pot.¹⁰ The migrants, British and non-British, gradually grafted their ideas and traits onto the new environment thus allowing it to interact and grow in the new adopted home.

⁵ David Gill, *The Other New Zealanders* (Wellington: Mallinson Rendel Publishers Ltd, 1982), 14-15. In 1835 the western Pacific Ocean Apostolic Vicariate was established.

⁶ Ibid., 24. Orangemen or an advocate of the Orange Institution is a Protestant organization in Northern Ireland.

⁷ Ibid., 29-31.

⁸ Ibid., 39-41.

⁹ Ibid., 107-112.

¹⁰ Melting pot is a metaphor used in the 18th century to describe the fusion of different races via the processes of immigration and colonization to form the utopia vision of the emergence of the American dream. The expression here follows the idea of New Zealand as an increasing multicultural nation though it is debatable if New Zealanders have formulated from the fusion of races, a united vision of what a New Zealander would incorporate in a patriotic sense.

4.2 Transplanting Christianity

The transplanting of Christianity to New Zealand as noted earlier is not a recent phenomenon. Davidson and Lineham trace the initial movement of transplanting Christianity to the nineteenth century missionary activity.¹¹ The migration of the early settlers signified a movement of a people, their histories, their experiences and stories. Primarily, the Church Missionary Society saw migration as a means to colonize. To the missionaries, civilization of the highest degree as reflected through ‘the British way of life’ was seen as the stepping stone to evangelizing the primitive culture.¹²

The indigenous Maori people, like those of Samoa, had their own indigenous belief systems and practices which were largely neglected by the missionaries.¹³ Despite the initial achievements of the missionaries in converting the Maori people to Christianity;¹⁴ the growing force of colonialism, the resentment of Maori to land sales by the New Zealand government bringing about political tensions and wars, and the growth of Maori religious movements were an indication of a relationship at the crossroads. As mentioned previously, due to the direction and limited scope of this thesis we will not dwell on these events, but our focus explicitly is the transplanting of the Christian missions that eventually led to the transplanting of churches in New Zealand.

The initial ventures of the Church Missionary Society to New Zealand in 1814 under the command of Samuel Marsden paved a way for a history marked by many significant events. In the years to follow, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (beginning in 1822)¹⁵ and the Roman Catholic Mission (as mentioned earlier, beginning in 1836)¹⁶ fomented the growth and development of Christianity in New Zealand. Through the efforts of Christian

¹¹ Davidson and Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity*, 20-21. The authors labelled the era as the ‘the Age of Missions, 1814-1850’.

¹² Ibid., 21.

¹³ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴ Ibid., 37. The catalyst to this course of action was based on their enthusiasm to learn how to read and write and a thirst for western knowledge.

¹⁵ Ibid., 30. The beginning of Methodism to New Zealand was introduced by Samuel Leigh in 1822.

¹⁶ Ibid., 46. Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier introduced the Roman Catholic Mission and established its headquarters in the Bay of Islands in 1839.

missions, the transplanting of a gospel shaped by convictions of the churches of the Victorian era was achieved. The mainstream churches such as the Anglican Church, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and the Wesleyan Methodist were the main denominations of early settlement. This information was recorded in the first of Census of 1871.¹⁷ The increasing significance of religion in New Zealand in the early to mid-twentieth century was evident in the expansion of churches but also the escalation of church numbers.

Even though the seeds that were sown by the early settlers had grown and flourished, various church missions and denominational churches competed against each other for recognition in the new colonial land. The conflicts between the different factions were based in the quest for political stability and a search for relevance as little financial and moral support came from the settlers.

Significantly, when Samoan Christianity was transplanted by its pioneers during the mid-twentieth century, Christianity had already flourished in the host nation. What is peculiar about the transplanting of the Samoan church via the CCCS in the modern era is that it is a church introduced by an indigenous group. The Samoan people received the indigenized gospel, infused it into their culture, refined it, and transplanted it elsewhere.

4.3 Doorway of opportunity for the islanders

For the people of the Pacific Islands, New Zealand is perceived as a land of opportunity and is often spoken of as paradise¹⁸ or the ‘land flowing with milk and honey’¹⁹ where material wealth and prosperity are the hallmarks of paradise. Here we have an ironic twist in changing perceptions from the Pacific myth of the nineteenth century mentioned earlier in Chapter Three, where paradise in the Islands was linked to preconceived ideas of sexual freedom,

¹⁷ Ibid., 176-177.

¹⁸ Gill, *Other New Zealanders*, 133.

¹⁹ Exodus 33:3a, “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey.” God informs the people of Israel that the Promised Land is associated with abundance and prosperity.

nudity and dancing. Conversely, the renewed understanding of paradise is linked to the ‘needs and wants’ of the Pacific people to assimilate with the progressive Western world.

The doorway of opportunity was opened by the New Zealand Government after World War II, highlighted as a time of economic growth and increasing prosperity, there was a need for human resources to meet the demands of a thriving economy. At first, government immigration policies allowed free immigration from Britain while arrangements were later made for immigrants from other parts of Europe as New Zealand looked to find ways to increasing resources in productive and services industries.²⁰

The Pacific Islands were summoned to answer the call to provide labourers for the proletariat-like, factory-type workforce.²¹ The mass migration of Samoans to New Zealand in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was seen as a step to greater things, for New Zealand was seen as the land of opportunity. The vision of hope and prosperity became a reality as migrants were encountering new opportunities, thus developing expectations for a prosperous future.

New Zealand provided employment, education, better health and social services for immigrants from abroad. It was commonly believed that the most valuable reason for the migration of Pacific Islanders was to give their children a better education or to attain a better financial future for their families. This in turn would enable opportunities to maintain links through remittances and provide financial security for families in the homeland.²² These reasons were the catalyst for the initial migration movement of Samoans to New Zealand in the 1950s²³ and more than sixty years later they remain the core incentives for new migrants.

²⁰ Zodgekar, *Immigrants in New Zealand*, 10.

²¹ Ibid., 14-15. Many of the immigrants entered on temporary work permits and visitor’s permits. See also Cluny MacPherson, “The Polynesian Diaspora: New Communities and New Questions” in *Contemporary Migration in Oceania: Diaspora and Network*, ed. Ken’ichi Sudo and Shuji Yoshida (Osaka: Japan Center for Area Studies, National Museum of Ethnology, 1997), 81. Government policy targeted young, single with the incentive of saving costs and most likely to adapt to the new society.

²² MacPherson, “Polynesian Diaspora,” 89. The decline of subsistence agriculture due to an increase in plant and crop diseases and the lower wage return from the Samoan economy compared to the New Zealand labour market was a motivational factor for migration.

²³ Melani Anae, “Fofoa-i-Vao-Ese: The Identity Journeys of NZ-Born Samoans” (PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 1998), 243.

They may be seen as pilgrims or pioneers. Despite encountering an environment foreign to them it was inevitable that in time communities would be built up.²⁴

Unfortunately for the Pacific Islanders, circumstances took a turn when the New Zealand economy struggled with the oil crisis of 1973 and Britain turned from their colonies for trade in 1975. The unexpected course of events led to the ebb of immigrants flowing into the country coupled with measures enforced by the government that led to an increase in emigration.²⁵ Consequently, with the rising unemployment, the Pacific Islander migrants were unfairly treated and made scapegoats by the New Zealand government in changing circumstances.

There was growing prejudice from the white New Zealand public against Pacific Islanders. For instance the fact that they congregate regularly in their own collective groups was seen as a sign of negligence to assimilate to the New Zealand way of life. The colour of their skin, not speaking English, overconsumption of alcohol, street disorder and domestic violence which intensified the conflict of race relations were also issues.²⁶ With increasing animosity from the general public, the home and the church were comfort zones in an environment where they were generally discriminated against based on physical and cultural differences.

The unfair treatment of the island community became extreme when the immigration department, aided by the New Zealand Police enforced deportation of Pacific Island overstayers. In events known as the ‘dawn raids’, the Police would raid homes and work-places seeking overstayers. These people were arrested and locked up before being transferred for deportation. Furthermore, the unwarranted treatment was widespread throughout the

²⁴ Levesi Afutiti, “Samoan Church and Church Diaspora: A Case Study of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa,” *Pacific Journal of Theology* 2, no. 16 (1996): 19.

²⁵ Zodgekar, *Immigrants*, 7.

²⁶ New Zealand on Screen, *Dawn Raids*. Documentary. Directed by Damon Fepulea’i (Documentary New Zealand- TV One, 2005) You Tube video, 44:03, accessed September 4th 2014, www.nzonscreen.com/search?search_text=dawnraids.

Another general perception of the New Zealand public was that the European and North American immigrants were more accepted based on the fact that ethnically they traced their origins back to Britain. The irony was that most of the over-stayers were from Europe and North America but were not targeted by the Immigration department for deportation- from interview of Paul Spoonley.

community. The people's freedom was restrained as strict Police measures carried out strict measures persistently pestered the island people, at times visiting their homes, and asking for their passports in public areas.²⁷

From the brief account given, the Samoan diaspora in the 1970s had encountered a series of events that define the community. Although the main focus of the thesis thus far has looked at what the diaspora communities brought to the host country, another determinant of equal importance investigates the way divergent forces of society affect the nature of the diaspora community. The diaspora is not an isolated community. On the contrary, the survival and existence of the community is dependent on various factors of influence such as economic affluence, government policies, educational conditions and ethnic composition. Cluny MacPherson, a well known writer of the diasporic Pacific communities in New Zealand writes,

...while the aspirations and actions of migrants themselves are important determinants of the sociocultural forms which migrant communities take, these are aspired to and acted out within particular sets of constraints and opportunities which are shaped by demographic, economic and political contexts within which the migrant communities form.²⁸

In his analysis, MacPherson correctly observes that Samoan diasporic communities take different forms varying from context to context.²⁹ The evidence of this understanding is apparent on an international and national level.

In contemporary New Zealand, the Samoan community within the Hawkes Bay region, particularly in Hastings and Napier, was formed around the opportunity in the labour market for fruit picking, apple picking and thinning. Many families of the Samoan community in Dunedin chose to move there to avoid the fast life and congested traffic problems in Auckland and Wellington. Possibly, 'fast life and congested traffic problems' also symbolizes a hidden

²⁷ Ibid. Another general perception of the New Zealand public was that the European and North American immigrants were more accepted based on the fact that ethnically they traced their origins back to Britain. The irony was that most of the over-stayers were from Europe and North America but were not targeted by the Immigration department for deportation- from interview of Paul Spoonley.

²⁸ MacPherson, "Polynesian Diaspora," 78.

²⁹ Ibid., 79.

agenda, namely, evading the continuous financial demands of cultural exchange and church obligations.

Taking MacPherson's analysis further, the social organization and status of diaspora communities also show variation on a metropolitan level. Take for example within Auckland, the Samoan community in Howick and Pakuranga is different from the Samoan community in Clendon Park, South Auckland in many ways. The former community is generally regarded as more economically stable, consisting of Samoan families who have worked in New Zealand for many years and own their own houses and assets. The make-up of Clendon Park on the other hand, consists of a high number of young Pacific Island families who have just migrated or are trying to establish themselves socially and economically. These families tend to be reliant on government welfare or have people working in low income jobs. Many of these families are experiencing economic hardships, renting homes and sending their children to schools that provide breakfast where required.

The reciprocal forces discussed above, for instance, what the migrant community brings to its adopted society and what influences that society exerts on the migrant community, generate two specific questions about the transplanting of the CCCS. What influence will the transplanting of the CCCS have on New Zealand society? What degree of influence will the forces of the complex society have on the CCCS as a transplanted community?

4.4 Transplanting the coconut identity

It can be assumed that migration and movement of peoples for the benefits of modernization can make the meaning of home as an ancestral place less significant. For the initial Samoan migrants to New Zealand, there may have been a sense of detachment, a feeling of loss and depression in leaving the home land, added with a sense of fear and insecurity about the

uncertain future that awaited them. Living on the fringe of two worlds can cause ‘dislocation’³⁰ for migrants in their attempt to adapt to ways foreign to them.

However, on the contrary, for Samoan migrants to New Zealand, migration had an opposite effect when the traditions and values of the homeland were re-enacted. It gave the Samoan people a sense of pride and dignity on foreign soil with the idea ‘...that the further away something is, the more precious it becomes. The fear of losing something dear to one’s heart results in a choice to cling to it more tightly.’³¹ The significance of Pacific families in sustaining transnational links with the homeland cannot be underestimated, because it is the Pacific way to preserve interconnected family relations, rather than being disconnected to non-Pacific perspectives and ways of life.³²

The concept of diaspora in its original usage referred to the departure of Jews from their native soil. What is important here is that not all people or communities who migrate are diaspora communities. It is fundamental that in referring to the diaspora, that the migrants have maintained some kind of connection with their land of origin. This form of identification is best carried out through the preservation, continuation and disseminating of one’s identity in a foreign land.³³ Coined by Anderson (1983) as an ‘imagined community,’ these communities perpetuate the use of the native language, cultural and religious practices and other key elements of the culture of origin.³⁴

Yamamoto alludes to this permanent disconnection as a feature of diaspora in the past. Moreover the present diaspora is marked by a reconnection of the ties with the motherland through modern communication systems.³⁵ Despite the advancements in technology,

³⁰ Kevin M Gushiken, “Is a Christian Identity compatible with an Ethnic Identity? An Exploration of Ethnic Identity Negotiation Influences and Implications for Multiethnic Congregations,” *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 1 (2014): 33. Citing M.M. Gordon, *Human nature, class and ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University, 1978), 270.

³¹ Feiloaiga Taule’ale’ausumai, “Pastoral Care: A Samoan Perspective.” in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, ed. Philip Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997), 226.

³² Ilana Gershon, “Viewing Diasporas from the Pacific: What Pacific Ethnographies Offer Pacific Diaspora Studies,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 2 (2007): 474. doi: 10.1353/cp.2007.0050.

³³ Annabelle Mooney and Betsy Evans, *Globalization: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 67. Quoting from B. R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

³⁵ Matori Yamamoto, “Samoan Diaspora and Ceremonial Exchange.” in *Contemporary Migration in Oceania: Diaspora and Network*, ed. Ken’ichi Sudo and Shuji Yoshida (Osaka: Japan Center for Area Studies, National

Yamamoto's perception of a permanent disconnection has limitations based on two reasons. First, communication with the Samoan family in the home land had never ceased with the writing and exchanging of letters which became the nexus relaying news and re-establishing emotional ties. Second, family networks and the Samoan diasporic church were in a sense the new home away from home.

To the Samoan people, their Christian identity is unique. Danny Ioka notes that the 'Samoan mind reflects the influence of Samoan Christianity on Samoan cultural spirituality...to preserve the Christian spirit of culture through being wedded to the movements of the Divine spirit.'³⁶ He further stresses that it was upon this prophetic vision of moving under the presence of the Holy Spirit that Samoan migration took place. This prophetic dimension in the Samoan mind fostered the movement of 'A Biblical Culture and a Christian Society,'³⁷ which has a liberating dimension for the Christian self-understanding that faith opens up the world and other cultures for the migration of a religious culture.

This signifies the importance of preserving the Samoan Christian identity, for in the Samoan mind the conceptions of cultural and spiritual roots are outward expressions of the deeper reality of blood relations. The connectedness of Samoan migrants to their homeland is a bond that cannot be disconnected; the Samoan church is to the Samoan people what water is to fish. The persistence of Samoan migrants to replicate the church as if it was a village, which portrayed the holy and sacred place of God to foreign soil, suggests a fundamental religious character entrenched in faith and faithfulness to their spiritual and cultural roots. Ioka reaffirms this:

...in the Samoan mind the 'Church rooted in Culture' was the 'womb and reservoir' of the birth and rebirth of the national identity of modern Samoa which is shown to be fundamentally religious...what is believed to have preserved their human spirit and the life giving aspects of their culture in their home society and created the modern identity of Samoa is also trusted to preserve Samoan Christianity in countries of migration.³⁸

Museum of Ethnology, 1997), 65-66. Matori Yamamoto is a socio-cultural anthropologist and the main context of her research is the Polynesian region.

³⁶ Danny Ioka, "Origin and beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand" (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 1998), 130.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 133.

Transplanting the Samoan church in New Zealand or in any other migrant country is a challenge for re-establishing and reaffirming the Samoan Christian identity. The church community would act as a focal point for all aspects of life in the new societies, as Samoan people struggle to keep their authentic vision of a Christian society. The CCCS as a diaspora church is creatively illustrated by Afutiti in his image of the CCCS as a tree on a hill struck by the wind:

The coconut tree on the hill symbolizes the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa. The fruits symbolize the adherents. The wind is the earthly power that trembles the whole of creation and causes the falling of the fruits. The sea with sailing fruits shows the migration; and the new shoots on the same and the new land picture the growth and the character of the Church Diaspora...In relation to the CCCS, the fruits that fall and are journeying away are going with life (faith), which is well protected by the covering husk (culture). In that way, their identity is maintained and prolonged as witnessed by the churches established overseas...³⁹

The image illustrates the transplanting and the growth of new shoots on New Zealand soil, evident by the increasing number of migrant churches in the last seventy years or so.

4.5 Replicating the village church

The role of the *matais* of the Samoan diaspora was crucial to the social organization of the migrant community. The social obligations associated with the kinship status meant that the *matai* provided the necessary leadership regulating social organization, and ensuring that guidance and comfort was offered to members of the community. Assistance was given to new migrants in finding accommodation, jobs and how to use the social services provided in society. The kinship links also enabled the diaspora to unite with a collective confidence to perform community events and formal activities such as weddings and funerals and observing the necessary cultural exchanges associated with Samoan cultural traditions.⁴⁰ The consolidation of links within the diaspora as a unified whole illuminated the idea of a need for a centralized confluence. The motivation was towards a Samoan church.

³⁹ Afutiti, "Samoan Church," 28.

⁴⁰ MacPherson, "Polynesian Diaspora," 82.

The planting of the CCCS began in 1962 with the establishment of the Grey Lynn CCCS parish.⁴¹ Since then, the CCCS churches gradually increased in numbers over the years to cater for the demand of migrant enclaves. This process was expedited under the banner of Congregationalism. The planting of a Samoan church began with a demand by the Samoan people to have a church in the local region, usually associated with socio-cultural enclaves in these regions. A decision to start a church would require consent from a church elder of the district. If consent was granted, the news was circulated to the diaspora and small gatherings gradually became church communities over time.

Nearly all the churches of the CCCS today had humble beginnings either in a garage or house with a few families. Later, church buildings and halls were erected for Sunday worship and community programmes. This was seen as the catalyst for growth as people responded positively to a church in their local region or district.

The Samoan church as an institution provided the grounds for social cohesion.⁴² In other words, *teu le vā* as a social mechanism for respecting organized spaces, mobilized by the cultural and ecclesiological hierarchical system was reignited in the Samoan church. The diasporic CCCS was instrumental in re-establishing, or rather reaffirming the Samoan Christian identity. Here, the role of the Samoan church is twofold. First, it replicates the Samoan church in Samoa; and second, the diasporic church integrates the *matai* system within aspects of the practical ministry. The *matai* normally serves in the church as a lay preachers or deacons, and these roles are prominent in Sunday worship and other church business. The role of the *matai* is acknowledged in cultural ceremonies where the obligations and roles of the *matai* come to the fore through oratory engagements.

The migrant churches in New Zealand enabled the migrants to feel at home in their new environment, the familiarity of church services alleviates for the difficulties of integrating

⁴¹ Ioka, "Origin and beginning," 170-171. Ioka records that the first official meeting for talks of a new Samoan church was initiated by a *matai* and *tiākono* Fuimaono Ta'ala. A group of Samoans met on December 29, 1962.

⁴² Ibid., 81.

to a new society.⁴³ In a sense, the migrants saw the Samoan church as their village beyond the homeland. The de-attachment from the sacred commodities that defined one's Samoan identity, the family, culture and Christian beliefs, were recaptured, memories refreshed and a new purpose of life invigorated.

In a society where personal autonomy and a new lifestyle were accessible, the migrants instead maintained their faithful allegiance to the systems associated with their culture and church tradition. In spite of the opportunities for change, the perception of racism and the hostile reception of the white public to Islanders, particularly in the earlier years of settlement, may have driven the Samoan church to seek refuge in itself.⁴⁴

Furthermore, limitations in the English language and unfamiliarity with the new context foster the search for an environment where people can play a familiar role and meet predictable behaviour. The new migrant community discovered within the Samoan family networks and more evidently in the Samoan church a together-ness bound by shared emotions, sentiments and meanings that promoted a sense of identity and community. To use another metaphor of "home," I would suggest that the CCCS in New Zealand was, and still is, like a nest for a bird returning after exploring the world.

Boundaries play an important role in the semiotics of identity by helping define different ethnic and cultural groups. Here ethnification takes place which is a process of rediscovering a forgotten identity based on an individual's cultural ties.⁴⁵ It concerns the assertion of local identity in the light of social change and cultural instability, and involves a process of coming to understand an individual's identity in relation to others, acknowledging the boundary of difference.⁴⁶ It must be noted that boundaries help in the formation of identity to orient and situate people in the world.

⁴³ Susan J. Wurtzburg, "Creating a New Zealand-Styled FaaSamoa: Samoan Identity in Christchurch," *New Zealand Sociology* 19, no. 1 (2004): 52.

⁴⁴ MacPherson, "Polynesian Diaspora." 92-93.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁵ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 23.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

For any migrant, it is important to find ways of articulating life in community, since belonging to something is one of humanity's strongest needs. Ethnification serves the role in perpetuating the rediscovery of identity for a Samoan migrant in the light of social change and cultural instability. The CCCS is the concrete foundation upon which this concept is grounded for 'ethnification involves memory, and memory is necessarily selective and creative, since any group involved in ethnification by definition lives in changed social circumstances.'⁴⁷ It would be inevitable that as the CCCS develops, and the new shoots from the coconut tree flourish on foreign soil, one of the basic functions of the church will be assisting members in maintaining their identity and coming to grips with a society that is symbolized by the beauty of the Pohutukawa tree or the might of the Kauri tree.

4.6 CCCS in New Zealand: embodiment of a renewed spirit

The church ministry of the diasporic CCCS in New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America largely resembles the village church in Samoa in many ways. The essential features of Sunday worship are so similar in many ways. If a guest preacher or visitor were to visit a congregation in another district or country, one would find it easy to adapt into the unfamiliar setting because of the uniform, systematic procedures of communal worship as well as shared experiences of cultural protocols.

Communal worship on Sundays in the CCCS has become an established form of tradition so changing the format and manner in which worship is practiced is unlikely to occur. For the migrant community, persisting with familiar habits and practices connects them physically, mentally and spiritually with others within the diaspora network. More significantly, in a mystical sense, the practice of worship in a familiar habitual manner connects the Samoans with the spiritual mana of the mother-land.

Conversely, change for the migrant community triggers anxiety and uncertainty in the minds of the Samoan people. In various situations, I have heard the saying "*aua le aumai ni*

⁴⁷ Ibid., 24.

mea fou!”- “do not introduce anything new” that may cause harm to the existing establishment. Hence, the introduction of new ideas that may threaten the existing accepted ways of doing things are usually averted. The traditionalists are advocates of preserving existing traditions and accepted ways that have been passed down by the London missionaries and indigenous progenitors of the Samoan Christian faith. They have established a solid fortress defending the Samoan Christian identity from current, ongoing existing threats.

Looking at this another way, the transplanted CCCS on foreign soil may be seen as an embodiment of a renewed spirit. The transplanted church is part of a social ecological framework different in many ways from village life in Samoa. The motivations behind migration to New Zealand generate a new sense of zeal to maximise the opportunities offered. A positive work effort demonstrated by previous generations earned them great respect.

At times, the people of the migrant community of the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's would work at least two jobs a week. This renewed spirit provided a means for families not only to survive, but to progress further socially and economically. The Samoan migrants were able to buy new homes and cars, churches were erected and they were able to send remittances to support families in the homeland. The embodiment of a renewed spirit meant new stories were told by the migrant community; stories of progress, of new acquisitions and achievements, making new relationships and taking risks.

4.7 *Teu le vā* in New Zealand: Transplanting or Transformation?

There are inherent dangers in assuming that transplanting the CCCS into New Zealand is like transplanting of a tree, even when the soil, water and sunlight conditions are similar. Many questions arise: Should it maintain its position as a transplanted faith community or should a new stance be taken? Should the Samoanized be re-Samoanized? What approach must be taken by the CCCS in order to make the gospel a living reality in New Zealand? How will the CCCS deal with tradition and Christian identity in changing circumstances? Transplanting or transformation? Complacency or change? These questions lead to other key questions

concerning the significance of *teu le vā* in the new context, such as why this is important for the Samoan people and what challenges will they face by preserving *teu le vā* in a complex world.

Since the establishment of the Samoan church in New Zealand over fifty years ago, there is reluctance by the CCCS to move beyond the indigenized gospel and spirituality even amidst the technology of the twenty-first century and the knowledge gained by the new generations. The preference is to be locked in the traditions of the past; hence changes for a liberal stance may be perceived as blasphemy. Taule'ale'ausumai points to the conservative position by stating, 'It is a comfortable niche for the church to be in. Why, therefore, should the church wish to change?'⁴⁸ Although Taule'ale'ausumai's statement is valid, it demands investigation.

The issue at hand concerns what the significance of transplanting is. On the other hand what would be the benefits of transforming or being open to new possibilities and solutions? In addressing these two opposing views, it gives us light and a basis for making practical proposals. The question is not a new one. Pearson posed the question of whether the Samoan Christian identity in the diaspora, made up of faith and the parental island culture could adapt to a more complex society or whether it needed reconfiguration.⁴⁹ In addressing these opposing views, it gives this investigation direction and a basis for making practical proposals later in the thesis.

The historical aspects of transplanting the CCCS and its implications have been briefly discussed in this chapter. It was noted that the CCCS serves the purpose of reaffirming the Samoan Christian identity in a complex society. Why is this reaffirmation important? It is significant for the preservation of what Samoan people perceive as a living tradition. If a living tradition forms a living community, then the traditional forms of Samoan Christianity in New Zealand exercises this idea by linking the community together on a religious and cultural

⁴⁸ Taule'ale'ausumai, "Pastoral Care," 233.

⁴⁹ Clive Pearson, "Telling Tales: Following the Hyphenated Jesus-Christ" *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no.1 (2004): 8.

basis. With an emphasis on coherence and continuity it is perceived as a communication system or the driving force for providing resources for incorporating innovative aspects into a community.

The development of the CCCS was crucial to the migrants gaining recognition with the right to own and exercise the ultimate control of religious life, religious development, and religious future in New Zealand. This enabled the Samoan people to rekindle *teu le vā* spiritual and cultural relations through the diasporic church. The transplanting and development of the CCCS gave a sense of recognition, dignity and pride for Samoan people in a foreign land. As the CCCS developed, it adopted a centripetal⁵⁰ focus through the preservation of its investments, its infrastructure, buildings, assets and land property.

In a sense not only does a living tradition form a living community, but also a community can bring life to a tradition that is meaningful to them. A well-known contemporary Samoan music artist reiterates this notion, 'We are Sāmoa, people from the Sun. We are Sāmoa and our heritage lives on.'⁵¹ Despite the relocation of migrants to New Zealand, 'Family, country, culture, and spiritual roots flow in the blood, and as long as these are remembered their hearts would always be historical- that is, they cannot sever themselves from their origins and roots.'⁵²

A Samoan Christian identity is not an abstract idea but is grounded on its principal roots with the interpenetration of the gospel message into culture, put into realization by the visible church. The cohesiveness of the Christian performance is one of the factors giving identity to a community. In the worshipping context and Christian performance, it is believed that the Lord is also present in the community of word and sacrament expressing a form of Christian identity participating in the ritual activity. The praxis of the community and the Christian performance is crucial and 'by their fruits you shall know them.'⁵³

⁵⁰ A scientific term in Physics for force acting on a body causing it to move towards a centre.

⁵¹ Jerome Grey (Music artist), "We are Samoa," from the album *Ava: We are Samoa*. Produced in Hawaii by Tom Moffat, 1980.

⁵² Ioka, "Origins," 134.

⁵³ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), 119.

The Samoan church and community is the worshipping context, all aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* socially and politically evolve around the church and Christian values. To honour the Pacific peoples and traditions, worshipping communities need to reclaim those aspects of cultural heritage that make the Pacific unique and special. The Samoan Christian identity may indicate ethnocentric prejudice, by secluding others outside the periphery, but it also requires an understanding from within to comprehend the uniqueness of the identity. Bradshaw reaffirms this and says:

The strength of the EFKS⁵⁴...the Samoan Church is very great. It goes beyond just being the church, but it includes the whole way of life, the island way of life...We are not living in the same world as Samoan people, they were right in making their own church in New Zealand; otherwise they would not have been able to preserve their way of life, and stood against the temptations and difficulties in a foreign country.⁵⁵

Was the transplanting of the CCCS the best means of making the gospel a living reality in New Zealand? In the mind of many Samoans particularly the majority of the migrants, it is. Preserving the Samoan identity of a fixed nature is an inherent gift from God, for it characterizes their most authentic vision and version of a Christian culture.

4.8 Is there a need for transformation in the CCCS?

Transformation is an act or process of change. In the context of the CCCS church in New Zealand, it stresses that the method of transplanting needs to be followed up by renewal. The consequences of renewal may have an inspiring and encouraging effect. On the other hand, however, renewal may weaken the link between the CCCS in New Zealand and the homeland. Therefore transformation is seen as risky by some in the CCCS.

A new life in Christ must find expression in the life of the church at all levels. Each church or congregation will clearly show the signs and marks of this renewal. It must be identified that the congregation is set in a particular time and place, it has a context, and the

⁵⁴ EFKS is the Samoan version of the CCCS and stands for *Ekālēsia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Sāmoa*.

⁵⁵ A transcribed interview of John Bradshaw cited in Ioka, "Origins," 305. Bradshaw was a LMS Missionary in Samoa from 1956-1963.

marks of renewal may well vary in many diverse contexts in which the church lives and offers its witness. This renewal is never for the sake of individuals alone. It is for the sake of the renewal of human community by making the church a more efficient and valuable sign and instrument. In this renewal the church and the world stand alongside each other.⁵⁶ There needs to be a prophetic voice calling for the ministry to move forward and to be creative. The challenge would be to find the balance between respect of the Christian identity and the need to transform it.

For the gospel to be a living reality, it is vital for the CCCS tradition to deal with the problem of a diverse, complex New Zealand society and globalized world. If culture is fluid in these contexts with new questions and challenges, tradition must have a means of affirmation and renewal. Traditions need to be in motion and need to incorporate innovation and weave it into a culture's identity. Schreiter states that,

Social change is often the reason why local theologies need developing...received notions of what it means to be a Christian, accepted modes of Christian behavior [sic], formulations about the relation of the Christian to God may all be called into question by the emergence of new circumstances or by awareness of social relationships not previously understood.⁵⁷

The comment points to the adapting of a church to social change within a specific context, though the same principle may also apply if the church community were to relocate to another context, in which case the challenges would most likely intensify. It is important to note there is time and attention needed for history and identity. There is a dichotomy between Samoan tradition and the modern world. Times change and generations face new challenges, thus should the same methods be used in different contexts? As catalysts, men and women are the centre of all social change because if the environment changes, humankind changes and vice versa.

⁵⁶ World Council of Churches, "Faith and Order Study Document, Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community- Paper No. 151," (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 46.

⁵⁷ Schreiter, *Constructing Local*, 44.

If the theology is static in a Christian culture that is old fashioned, determined by the spirit of the people of the past and to an extent the present, then the CCCS loses its founding nature as a mission church.⁵⁸ The Christian message is about change, repentance, salvation, and an eschatological reality hoped for. The challenge would be to find the balance between respect for the Christian identity and the need to transform it.

One of the purposes of the establishment of the CCCS on New Zealand soil is the idea that it serves the purpose of reaffirming the Samoan Christian identity in a complex society. Why is this reaffirmation important? It is significant for the preservation of what Samoan people perceive as a living tradition. That living tradition is the *vā, fa'aaloalo, the fa'aSāmoa* and most importantly the gospel which grounds all of these elements. If a living tradition forms a living community, then the traditional forms of Samoan Christianity in New Zealand exercise this idea by linking the community together on a religious and cultural basis.

The irony of transplanting key institutions such as family and the Samoan church, and re-animating core values of the Samoan identity is that the purpose of migration was supposed to establish a new beginning and a fresh start to life. If transplanting denotes a movement of ideas, beliefs, cultures and practices from a point of origin that is foreign to the aspired destination, then migration and settlement does not entirely reflect making a new beginning. Rather, one enters a life of new challenges though clinging on to dispositions and old ways are relived.

One of the pertinent issues faced by immigrants is whether they should assimilate more with the new society, or stick to their own and preserve their own culture, ideas and all aspects associated with *teu le vā*. Many migrant groups have preferred the latter. In many ways, the moral community of the Samoan diaspora has been suggested to be 'more Samoan

⁵⁸ Ioka, "Origins," 126. Samoa is known as the 'Antioch of the Pacific'- No island group maintained a larger or more continuous tradition of overseas service than the Samoans.

than the Samoans at home'⁵⁹ but as popular discourse posits, these stereotypical versions can at times be exaggerated.⁶⁰

A fresh start to life may be indicated by a new home, a job or the acquisition of resources. Yet, a motivation to replicate ways that mirror the homeland seems fittingly appropriate in the initial stages, while familiarity with a new place or situation grows. An opportunity to adapt to the environment denotes progress, though for Samoan migrants it is vital that one core element remains intact, namely, that which moulds together the Samoan identity. MacPherson writes, 'While an ideology of conservatism characterises (sic) the *fa'aSāmoa* in the islands and wherever Samoans may be...this ideology does not prevent change when individuals and groups find it to their advantage to change.'⁶¹ It is significant for any migrant group or ethnic culture to adapt to the surrounding environment, in order to become a relevant living identity in touch with the past traditions, present challenges and future visions.

Tupua Tamasese Efi⁶² and Melani Anae⁶³ stressed that aspects of traditional Samoan spirituality may offer resolutions to many of the social problems evident in Samoa, and Samoan diaspora around the world. This is a valid statement taking into account the theoretical and practical implications of *teu le vā*. Anae further writes that 'Pacific youth need to value the cultural reference of *teu le vā*, to look after/maintain the sacred and secular relational spaces in Pacific and *pālagi* contemporary contexts.'⁶⁴

⁵⁹ MacPherson, "Polynesian Diaspora," 81.

⁶⁰ Roscoe, *Documentary*, 106.

⁶¹ Melani Anae, "Fofoa-i-Vao-'Ese: The Identity Journeys of NZ-Born Samoans," (PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 1998), 74. Quoting Cluny MacPherson, "The changing contours of Samoan ethnicity." In *Nga Take: Ethnic Relations and Racism in Aotearoa, New Zealand*, ed. P. Spoonley, D. Pearson, and C. MacPherson (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1991), 67-86.

⁶² Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion." in *Su'esu'e Manogi In Search of Fragrance Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi and the Samoan Indigenous*, ed. Tamasailau M. Suaali'i-Sauni et al, Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008. Tupua Tamasese Efi is the current Head of State of Samoa and researcher in Samoan indigenous beliefs.

⁶³ Melani Anae, "Towards Reclaiming Pacific Spirituality in New Zealand in the 21st Century." Paper presented at Pacific Futures: Preparing Pacific Communities for the 21st Century Conference (University of Auckland: August 28-31, 2006), 1-10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

In disputing Efi and Anae's quintessential view of *teu le vā*,⁶⁵ the basis of my argument is drawn from a different vantage point. For example, whereas Anae utilizes the core philosophical nuances of *teu le vā* as an ideal for better Pacific schooling and better outcomes for social well-being in Pacific contexts, my starting point is not an abstract ideal, but a concrete, lived reality.

I respect wholeheartedly the concept and practices of *teu le vā*, however, is it realistically visible in the Pacific community today? As someone who is living within the *vā* of the CCCS, who sides with a cohort whose voices are suppressed, in a church where the gap between the rich and the poor is evident, where the Christian faith is an obligation rather than a response of joy to God's love and grace ... *teu le vā* seems to be more an ideal that needs to be nurtured, rather than a reality that needs to be transformed in order to preserve the authentic nature of the concept.

The danger with Anae's perception, particularly if there is a call to respect the sacred spaces is that it does not always recognise the erroneous motives, intentions and practices of certain individuals that plague Pacific communities today. One example that will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Eight is the increasing belief in the infallibility of the Samoan *faiife'au* in the modern context. The church people believe that the *faiife'au* is God's representative, and thus must respect this sacred relationship. However, if the *faiife'au* does something wrong such as misusing church funds, in many cases, the people would not voice their discontent. Instead, they would *teu le vā* with the *faiife'au* and ensure that there is minimum fuss about what happened.

There are two issues that need to be addressed here. First, the problem is that *teu le vā* is transplanted, rather than translated and renewed in the new environment. New Zealand is a complex, multicultural society and the global world is the 'new cosmos' and this is the 21st century. The *teu le vā* intra-cultural paradigm fits best in a traditional Samoan village setting

⁶⁵ Melani Anae, "Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan perspective." (Mai Review 1-24, 2010).

where all relationships are based on an egalitarian-type model. Put it simply, if everyone performs their roles to the best of their ability, then *teu le vā* would be a reality.

In the contemporary New Zealand society, the transplanting of cultural and ecclesiological understandings of the *vā* become compromised. The issue concerns the assumption that equilibrium is an on-going dynamic in *teu le vā* relationships. In a world where the laws of market indicate a trend that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, the struggle for survival in a competitive world and the intensification of global forces on local perceptions indicate an inevitable influence on indigenous value systems and local theologies. It generates an increasing imbalance in relationships within the Samoan community. Competition, power, greed, pride, ignorance, social and political injustice are characteristics that have compromised and tainted what *teu le vā* stands for; that is, the principal of reciprocity in striving for harmonious relationships.

The egalitarian model that best expresses a traditional Samoan society is masked by concepts of competition and consumerism. It creates a community of the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. In a capitalist world the haves of the Samoan community are the educated elite, the decision makers, the political, cultural and religious leaders with strong social and economic networks. This group is marked by wealth, prosperity and status. However, the underlying problem is when the ‘haves’ of the community are generally ignorant of pertinent values of the cosmic-centred community, contributing to further oppression and exploitation of the ‘have nots’.

Looking at the problems the Samoan community is constantly dealing with today, suicide, domestic violence, crime, gambling, unemployment, underachievement in schools, ambiguity of Christian identity and many more, it is clear that harmony is a distant reality. The New Zealand-born generations struggle to find a place in the church, where it is expected they will be acquiescent. The *vā* is suppressed and relationships are pushed to the limits in the CCCS.

Teu le vā is an reminder to the Samoan people of their obligation to family, church and their village. It suppresses their right for an alternative choice or means. Indeed, these values are important but when boundaries of the *vā* are stretched and manipulated, it creates issues such as the accumulation of debts, loss of assets, poor quality of life, family conflict and many social/economic issues. When theological principles of love, justice and hope are compromised, then it is questionable if *teu le vā* is realistic (in a physical, mental and spiritual sense). In such cases, critical reflection and praxis is required in the practical ministry. These issues will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

The church is therefore not called to be a silent supporter, but to adopt a revolutionary option under the mandate of the gospel. For the church, *teu le vā* can be fully realized by tending to the marginalized of the community, offering greater support systems to those who need jobs and education, tending to the sick (mental and physical), up-skilling our leaders including ministers, providing financial advice to families, sharing resources and time, being aware of those who are considered ‘at risk’, especially taking care of wholesome family relationships.

When equilibrium is distorted in the cosmological realm, the theological concept ‘*oikumene*’ brings to the fore a call for justice in systems of injustice. *Oikumene*, from the words *oikos* meaning household and can also refer to the whole inhabited earth, and *nomos*-law or management therefore refers to laws of the household, stewardship or economy. If Christian theology forwards the belief that all aspects of our life, the spiritual, physical and psychological are subject to God's love and grace, then *oikumene* or God's economy informs us that the management of His household must be in line with His intentions and demands.⁶⁶

According to biblical traditions, particularly the ministry of Jesus, the objective is a household grounded in love and justice. Christian mission is to bring life in all its fullness. The

⁶⁶ Nicholas Lossky et al., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd Edition (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 840-841.

nature of God's mission can be understood in eschatological terms here and now, that we hope for a consummation of God's reign in terms of love, justice and equality for all humanity.

In this chapter, I have looked at the CCCS as a transplanted faith community in New Zealand, and its significance in re-establishing or rather reaffirming a Samoan Christian identity. I have highlighted the limitations of a transplanted community in a complex world, and a need to adapt or transform in order to become a more viable community and authentic Christian witness. The objective of the next chapter is to address further difficulties faced by New Zealand-born Samoans within the Samoan church. The challenges to the Samoan Christian identity are further enhanced by the influences of exposure to the Western world, which makes the problem of identity even more complex.

CHAPTER FIVE

Many variations of the coconut water: the problem of identity

The previous chapter gave a brief account of the migration of Samoans to New Zealand at its early stages, and the subsequent development of the diaspora community. Significantly, the aspirations of the Samoan community to cling on to memories and things that represented core aspects of their Samoanness came to fruition when the coconut identity was transplanted on New Zealand soil. The origins of the CCCS in New Zealand, with an intention to replicate as much as possible the church of the homeland, introduced a new page to the history of Christianity in New Zealand. The effects of transplanting Christianity were discussed along with the alternative approach of a ministry that transforms as it adapts to the new environment. Again, the question is raised: what stance must be taken for the CCCS to be an authentic witness of the Christian faith?

The title of this chapter, ‘Many variations of the coconut water: the problem of identity’ literally reflects the different ways coconut water is sold in the market today. In the Samoan market, the coconut water is preserved in the coconut shell which needs to be cracked open for the water to be consumed. In the New Zealand market, the coconut water may be accessed the traditional way through imported coconuts, or in cartons now sold on supermarkets shelves. The ‘Refresh’ brand can also be found mixed with different flavours such as thai lime, watermelon, or matcha green tea.¹ Symbolically, the title of this chapter reflects the exposure to and impact on the Samoan Christian identity by the Western world.

As reflected in the title of the thesis ‘Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle,’ this chapter identifies one of the predicaments illustrated by the image, that is, the New Zealand-born generations being caught in between two socio-cultural worlds. By protecting and preserving an identity from being compromised, the transplanted CCCS serves as a type of fortification safeguarding the Samoan Christian identity from the outside world. Conversely, as the New

¹ UFC ‘Refresh’ Coconut Water. <http://www.ufcrefreshcoco.com/>. This brand of coconut milk is imported from Bangkok, Thailand.

Zealand-born generations interact more with the Western world, new ideas and experiences broaden their horizons beyond existing parameters set within family and church.

This focus of this chapter investigates the in between dilemma of a New Zealand-born Samoan in the diaspora Samoan church. Firstly, I will look at the two worlds in which Samoans in New Zealand find themselves. A new set of circumstances for the migrant community allows for a greater flexibility of choices. Any aspects of each world that are absorbed or neglected will eventually result in some divergence within the Samoan community. Hence, although specific groups may be associated with certain classifications, the intricacies of culture and ethnicity in a complex world must be appreciated, given the prevalence of wide diversities.²

My contention is that New Zealand-born Samoans at some stage of their lives struggle to harmonize conflicting ideals associated with the two worlds. Because of this, I will explore the predicament within the Samoan church, and to a lesser extent the family environment regarding an existing, but overlooked demarcation between the migrant community and the New Zealand-born members. Differentiation is generally ignored by the migrant community as they attempt to exert their influence on the younger generations. Furthermore, they make up the core who preserve and relay Christian and cultural traditions. For this reason, they are regarded (in this thesis) as traditionalists.

From a different vantage point from that of traditionalists who preserves their identity, the secular society challenges the perception of life for the migrant, or a member of an ethnic minority who is required to fit into the new community. Secondly, a positive aspect of today's world is its cultural diversity and most people would agree that this makes an international community a more interesting place than one that is monocultural. It is plausible to assume that the visions of the migrant community are regularly in defiance against aspects of secular

² Terry Pouono, "Coconut Juice in a Coca Cola Bottle. In search of an Identity: A New Zealand-born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World," *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* 45, no. 2 (2013): 173-176.

society if traditions are threatened. In these circumstances, the task of individuals or groups of people living between two socio-cultural worlds can be a challenging one.

5.1 Clarifying the two socio-cultural worlds

The theme of an identity being caught between two worlds has been researched in many areas of the academic world such as health, education, anthropology, sociology, literature and poetry. The issue is also portrayed in forms of entertainment, for example in visual and performing arts, music, live comedy and media culture. Some of the notable examples are the Laughing Samoans³, the music of rapper-Scribe⁴, and through the poetry of Grace Teuila Evelyn Taylor,⁵ to name a few.

Furthermore, the various stories about Samoans growing up ‘in between two world’s’ has been addressed by Samoan scholars. Melani Anae, for example, is a first generation New Zealand-born Samoan raised in the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church. Jemaima Tiatia, like Anae, was raised in the Presbyterian Church but addressed the socio-cultural predicament as a second generation New Zealand-born Samoan. Mary Chun also addresses the issue in detail in her Masters research. Another is Risatisone Ete, nurtured in the CCCS ministry for many years, who reflects on his life experiences and offers theological insight to his experiences. Uesifili Unasa, also a church pastor with a background in the Samoan Methodist Church explicitly addresses the issue by advocating the need for the traditional Samoan churches to re-evaluate aspects of the ministry to promote a more authentic Christian message in the New Zealand environment.

The idea of a New Zealand-born Samoan living in an ‘in between world’ cannot be adequately studied without consideration of the nature of the worlds that create the in between experience. One such experience is not unique to New Zealand-born Samoans, but is also a

³ A New Zealand based duo formed by comedians Tofiga Fepulea’i and Eteueati Ete, both of Samoan descent.

⁴ A New Zealand music artist of Samoan descent.

⁵ Grace Teuila Evelyn Taylor, *Afakasi Speaks* (Honolulu: Ala Press, 2013).

diagnosis that affects many other ethnic groups that have migrated and settled in a foreign environment. Australian-born Tongans, Chinese-born New Zealanders, American-born Koreans and Fijian-born Indians are just some of the groups challenged by socio-cultural and psychological dilemmas in their own respective contexts. Despite the common feature of being agents of in between worlds, it cannot be assumed that the different contexts have similar points of origin, causes, historical events, socio-cultural experiences, developments and outcomes. The differentiation of in between experiences between different in between groups must be acknowledged.

Hence, it is important to further clarify in more detail the two worlds that a New Zealand-born Samoan encounters. First, there is the Samoan home, the Samoan church and community in New Zealand. As reflected in my personal story in Chapter One, the home and church were significant bases in nurturing the *fa'aSāmoa* and Samoan expressions of the Christian faith. More specifically, some of the elements that were critical to my upbringing were the Samoan language, customs and cultural traditions, values and belief systems.

Moreover, with particular emphasis on the Christian identity, the indigenized gospel that was sown by the nineteenth century missionaries is still perceived today as a key element of Samoan Christian identity. For the CCCS, the Protestant gospel was infused into the Samoan indigenous culture and developed over time as an institutionalized church tradition under the banner of Samoan Congregationalism. It is still visibly evident in the diaspora Samoan church today, that Christian-European customs of the indigenized gospel have been maintained. Men still wear white jackets and ties, and women wear long white dresses to Sunday worship. The structure of church buildings, theological perspectives and features of ecclesiology reflect traditions of the nineteenth century Victorian era. For the purposes of this research, these aspects will be referred to as Samoan church tradition.

The other world, which is seen as an opposing force to beliefs and values of the Samoan church and community is the complex, diverse society. This world is a multifarious, world of elements exemplified in many ways varying from a different lifestyles, school

curriculum, secular music, media culture, belief systems, government policies, migration, economic and social changes or even just conversing with a stranger.

In contemporary New Zealand, any migrant community has a legal allegiance to the indigenous people of the land, the Maori and the British Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, the development of the Treaty relationship and its implications for new migrant communities will not be addressed. In the context of this section however, what is significant is that biculturalism or the allegiances to two different cultures⁶ informs the immigrants of the actual political jurisdiction that provides an identity challenge to the diaspora communities.

Furthermore, cultural diversity and multiculturalism in essence is what characterizes the New Zealand melting pot. The gradual diminishing notion of an 'ethnically homogenous nation'⁷ marked by biculturalism, consolidated with changing social demographics as a result of increasing mass migration paved the way for transition to multiculturalism in the later stages of the twentieth century. It could be said that the Treaty of Waitangi sustains the political establishment while society in essence, reflects a multicultural oriented advancement.

One can distinguish three stages in the development of a multicultural society. The first is the recognition of diversity or the recognition of each group. The key issue is 'the identity of each group.' The second stage is the respect for difference, which entails a deeper interaction by exploring the nature of the difference and the consequences for living together. It requires struggling with the meaning of difference. It can be debated that stages one and two cannot be separated because we only ever make our identities through identifying both sameness and differences, selves and others. The third stage concerns co-operation and communication, with the aim to creating a communicative society. The notions of recognition, respect for difference and co-operation are part and parcel of the continual struggle for harmony, solidarity and the

⁶ Annabelle Mooney and Betsy Evans. *Globalization: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 13.

⁷ James H. Liu et al, *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 11.

search for a common interest in a miscellaneous world.⁸ As cultures compete, culture itself becomes a conflictual element.

An attempt to define a New Zealand culture can be an elusive exercise. One could say it is dynamic because foreign cultures, ethnic groups, foreign ideals and values are interwoven and reticulated into a social pattern and environment. Over the last thirty years or so, there has been a paradigm shift to multiculturalism.

In a multicultural society, there is an acknowledgement of the ethnic minorities by the majority culture. As a consequence, action is taken by the dominant culture to create policies that accommodate for diversity and difference and a quest for social cohesion.⁹ The number of opportunities granted to minority groups in the education system, immigration policies, the workforce, and even leadership roles in politics. It has been evident in recent years government and city council policies have accommodated by reforming policies to meet the changing dynamics in social demographics.¹⁰ The representation of persons from different ethnic cultures in the New Zealand government, prominent positions in businesses, in comedy, sports teams, arts, literature and academia symbolizes to a degree the steady transition to an increasingly complex and diverse nation.

New Zealand-born Samoans face many dilemmas which in effect contribute to uncertainty of their Samoan Christian identity. Many experience identity confusion by not fully belonging to either the Samoan or Western worlds. The pressures imposed by the migrant community to respect the core aspects of the Samoan world may be enlightening for many, to others it is a form of cultural oppression. Responses may differ, as many attempt to accommodate to both worlds, while others choose an alternative identity.

Within the CCCS, many New Zealand-born Samoans have questioned the ambiguous theology and inactive stance of the traditionalists to many social issues. Consequently, many have become non-practicing Christians, while others have left for other churches raising its

⁸ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 95.

⁹ Mooney and Evans, *Globalization*, 170.

¹⁰ Ibid.

own question as to their future. These issues will be addressed in the following sections of this chapter.

5.2 Caught in between world two worlds: dilemma of New Zealand-born Samoans

For New Zealand-born Samoans, exposure to these two different worlds can either be advantageous or harmful. Melani Anae investigates the construction of a New Zealand-born Samoan identity and perceptions, formed out of a wrestling between divergent socio-cultural realities and ‘hegemonic identity discourses’¹¹ of two co-existing worlds; that of the dominant Western society and the Samoan worldview. Anae comments on the problem of identity;

For NZ-born Samoans, the problem of identity is the problem of arriving at a life story that makes sense, which provides unity, stability and purpose, within a sociohistorical matrix that embodies two much larger stories--those of the dominant society of New Zealanders and those of island-born Samoans.¹²

The New Zealand-born Samoan identity is unique, yet the degree of choice to be Samoan, or a New Zealander varies from individual to individual. For some, there is a tendency to avoid open-endedness and ambiguity by clinging to his or her Samoanness. The assimilationist on the other hand tries to affiliate more to the Western model of culture, knowing that his or her inherent cultural heritage contradicts Western ideals. New Zealand-born Samoans therefore, being exposed to two different worlds, find themselves oscillating in ambivalent spaces between the Samoan community and the complex world. Kearney and colleagues describe this oscillation between spaces, more specifically between the Samoan home and the school environment.¹³

¹¹ Melani Anae, “Fofoa-i-Vao-‘Ese: The Identity Journeys of NZ-Born Samoans” (PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 1998), i.

¹² Ibid., 156.

¹³ Judith F. Kearney, Margaret Fletcher, and Maria Dobrenov-Major. “Nonaligned worlds of home and school: A case study of second-generation Samoan children,” *Journal of Family Studies* 17, no. 2 (2011): 146. doi: 10.5172/jfs.2011.17.2.146. The process is called a ‘cultural transition’.

One of the possible consequences of being a subject caught in an ‘in between’¹⁴ world is that it can cause identity confusion and disorder. MacPherson prescribes the disparity as ‘identity by descent’ in contrast with ‘social identity.’ The former is established at birth and characterized by a fixed identity that is dependent on a culture or tradition that strives for continuity and coherence, while the latter is fluid and can be selectively constructed and re-constructed outside the socio-cultural boundaries set by parameters of that identity.¹⁵ Arguably, the limitations of the former is that it may be dangerous to posit groups of people within the likely classifications, given the socio-cultural divergence in a world where boundaries indicating differences have become increasingly ambiguous.

The boundaries of difference that distinguish different ethnic and cultural groups are increasingly becoming indistinct and uncertain. To restructure boundaries is to restructure identity. A change in society most often comes when certain boundaries are transgressed. The tension between two distinctive contexts, which differ in ideals, attitudes and belief systems, form ambivalence; consequently, the victims often find that their self-identity has become lost or at least ambiguous.

For many New Zealand-born Samoans, being trapped in an in between world is a realistic challenge by the mere fact that they are engaged with multiple affiliations. The circumstances of an open engagement, if utilized astutely, may be assumed as favourable and beneficial. However if the two worlds repel each other, then the negative energy within that space can create tension. For many individuals, this conundrum often causes an inner crisis.¹⁶ Dubois calls this psychological dilemma a ‘double-consciousness.’¹⁷

The opportunities for assimilation may enhance personal autonomy though concurrently it may challenge established epistemological assumptions of the migrant

¹⁴ Sang Hyun Lee, “Liminality and Worship in the Korean American Context.” in *Christian Identity in the Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Martien E. Brinkman and Dirk V. Keulen (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2003), 75.

¹⁵ Cluny MacPherson, “Will the ‘Real’ Samoans Please Stand Up? Issues in Diasporic Samoan Identity,” *New Zealand Geographer* 55, no. 2 (1999): 51. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-7939.1999.tb00542.x.

¹⁶ Susan J. Wurtzburg, “Creating a New Zealand-Styled FaaSamoa: Samoan Identity in Christchurch,” *New Zealand Sociology* 19, no.1 (2004): 51.

¹⁷ Mooney and Evans, *Globalization*, 14.

experiences. This, in effect, causes ‘opposition’ or intra-cultural conflict within Samoan families¹⁸ and a generation gap or a hiatus within the community or the Samoan church. The generation hiatus is viewed in two ways. First, an exposure to a world outside an individual’s ethnic community creates an opening, allowing opportunities for assimilation to the other world. Second, with assimilation comes the possibility of transformation and a discontinuity with existing traditions.

Many New Zealand-born Samoans feel they do not fully belong either to their original culture or to their new one. A conflict in ethnic identity may entail two things, accommodating to both worlds or choosing one over the other. The choice to accommodate both worlds is likely to cause disequilibrium because of an imbalance between the local culture and the greater forces imposed by the new cultural framework.¹⁹ Accommodating to the changing spatial dynamics and parameters of the *vā* can be a daunting experience as the following poet conveys.

I am the Va²⁰

My va

is neither here

nor there

not brown

nor white

it belongs in nothing

and exists in everything.

I am the space

¹⁸ Mary Chun, “One Person, Two Worlds? Two persons, One World? Cultural Identity Through the Eyes of New Zealand Born Samoans” (MA thesis, University of Hawaii, 2000), 2. See also Jemaima Tiatia, “Commentary on ‘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* 6, no. 2 (2012): 76. doi: 10.1017/prp.2012.9.

¹⁹ Kevin M. Gushiken, “Is a Christian Identity compatible with an Ethnic Identity? An Exploration of Ethnic Identity Negotiation Influences and Implications for Multiethnic Congregations,” *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 1 (2014): 33-34.

²⁰ *Vā* means spatial relationship.

between ignorance and acceptance.

So cut me up

scatter me among yourselves

and use me

to fill the gaps²¹

The poem is a reflection of the author's experiences as a half-caste daughter of parents from different ethnic backgrounds- a *pālagi*²² father and a Samoan mother. The poem portrays someone who is caught in between two worlds and thus her mixed heritage indicates the occupation of in between spaces by claiming that she is the *vā*. Despite the claim, it is not assumed that she is a bridge or a pathway reconciling the differences between her two worlds. Rather, she occupies in between spaces in a world that seems divided, incomplete with her identity defined by uncertainty.

Although the content of the poem is written from the perspective of a half-caste, many of her images typify the 'in between' worlds predicament faced by New Zealand born Samoans. 'My va...is neither here...nor there, I am the space...between ignorance and acceptance'.²³ The plight of the New Zealand-born Samoans is largely attributed to a plethora of social and cultural influences conflicting with traditional beliefs and practices.

The next section looks at the continuous appeal made by the Samoan church and many Samoan families to the younger generations to preserve and perpetuate the core aspects of the Samoan Christian identity.

5.3 An appeal towards the Samoan socio-cultural world

For the migrant generation, the purpose for preserving cultural traditions and loyalty to the Samoan church is to ensure that the younger generations are nurtured in authentic Samoanness

²¹ Grace Teuila Evelyn Taylor, *Afakasi Speaks*, (Honolulu: Ala press, 2013), 26-29. This is an excerpt from her poem 'I am the Va'.

²² *Pālagi* is a Samoan reference given to the white man.

²³ Taylor, *Afakasi Speaks*, 28-29.

from a young age. It is hoped that as a sense in an individual's identity develops, young Samoans will cultivate tools of discernment and appropriate means for assimilating to the Western world, with minimal loss. In such a case, the ultimate objective is to preserve and perpetuate, in the midst of change, the essence of old traditions. Hence, the home and the Samoan church have become significant contexts for articulating cultural customs, as well as practices associated with Samoan Christianity.

To the traditionalist, total commitment to the Samoan church implies respect for the *vā* and an allegiance to the Samoan identity. The Christian faith and the Samoan cultural traditions are closely intertwined. It could be said that a sense of duty and responsibility to the Samoan church is a cultural contract with theological implications. It is cultural because the Samoan saying '*E alu va'ava'alua le aganu'u ma le talalelei*' indicates that the Samoan culture and the gospel go side by side.

Many traditionalists believe that attendance of a non-Samoan church is a betrayal of the Samoan church and the family roots. This view may be debatable, particularly in the case of the many Samoans who are proud of their ethnic identity and culture, but attend churches that are not Samoan. The central conflict for traditionalists is 'how to balance assumptions that one is born with an identity with the belief that one can choose against one's identity by assimilating.'²⁴ Concerns have been raised regarding the failure of the New Zealand-born generations to meet prescribed expectations associated with personal family agendas, Samoan culture and church related programmes.

Another notable limitation for many New Zealand-born Samoans is the inability to speak the Samoan language fluently. Many find it more comfortable using the English language as the language for communication. This is a significant issue for the preservation of the core aspects of Samoan tradition which will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Six. There are two aspects of the same concern involving great numbers of younger people leaving

²⁴ Ilana Gershon, "Compelling culture: The rhetoric of assimilation among Samoan migrants in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 5 (2007): 799. doi: 10.1080/ 01419870701491812. See also Chun, "One Person," 14.

the traditional Samoan churches,²⁵ and a lack of motivation or participation for those who choose to remain in the Samoan church.

Many times traditionalists express suspicion, fear or negative perceptions towards elements of the Western world, particularly when younger generations rebel against the traditional systems, emulate forms of behaviour or adopt ideas that are alien to the Samoan way of life. The general scepticism towards the Western world as mentioned earlier, generates tension within the family environment.

Constraints are usually laid down by parents to ensure that all members of the family abide by the cultural protocols of *teu le vā*. When the younger generation show symptoms of being influenced negatively by the Western world, these disruptions are usually dealt with by quite heavy-handed discipline. Tiatia alludes to the notion of unquestioning obedience as means of maintaining order, writing:

One is automatically placed in a position of oppression. Those who have an authoritarian right, namely parents and elders, give the youth a sense of powerlessness particularly within the church.²⁶

The unwritten, verbal instruction *fa'alogo ma usita'i*, which translates as 'to listen and obey without question' sets the tone for a stringent relationship between elders and young people, or between parents and children.

The cultural protocol of service without complaint *tautua lē gutuā*,²⁷ or service without making a sound *tautua lē pa'ō*,²⁸ signifies the constraints imposed upon the younger generation when engaging in situations that demand subordination and obedience to parents' instructions. There is little room for voicing an opinion or dialogue of any sort, thus limiting opportunities for personal autonomy and critical thinking. These pedagogical methods ensure

²⁵ Melani Anae, "Why are our young people leaving our Churches? Pacific NZ-born youth and the search for spirituality." A paper presented at the "*Talanoa Oceania: Lotu, Tabu, Tikanga*" conference, University of Auckland, 10-12 September, 2009.

²⁶ Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand-Born Pacific Island Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998), 9.

²⁷ A Samoan cultural saying that refers to 'service without complaint'

²⁸ A Samoan cultural saying that refers to 'service without making a sound of any sort'

that harmony is preserved, as one with limited experience and knowledge learns from those with greater experience and wisdom - the elders.

Adding to the cultural protocols, elders and parents find biblical grounding for their authoritative status in the fifth Commandment, 'Honour your father and your mother so that the days may be long in the land that the Lord God is giving you.'²⁹ In terms of the literary context, this commandment is the centre of the Ten Commandments and forms the transition from the duties which relate to God to those which are related directly to humanity.³⁰ The Hebrews believed that the parents were considered to be representatives of God, so this commandment still formed for them a part of the first section.

Since parents are given the opportunity to co-operate with God in the creation of life, it is the duty of children to honour both the human and divine sources of life. In Exodus 21 verse 15, the teachings of the Law revealed severe consequences to children who lacked honour and respect towards their parents.³¹ This included the responsibility of caring for them in their old age.

The ancient practice of the Hebrews fits well with Samoan cultural traditions. The Samoan stance maintains that the relationship between parents and children are held together by the sacredness of the *vā*. Like the Hebrew tradition, children must *teu le vā* and display the utmost respect towards their parents, and care for them in their old age. For this reason, the fifth Commandment is regularly recited and used as a source for theological reflections by the elders in family *lotu*,³² Sunday sermons and Sunday school lessons.

For many New Zealand-born Samoans, cultural obligations can be a burden when taking into account many other priorities families face such as work commitments, children's education and family time. Another burden is the management of finances, particularly if large amounts are being absorbed by church and extended family obligations. This could mean

²⁹ Exodus 20:12.

³⁰ The First Commandment is the centre of the theological context. Exodus 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before me."

³¹ Exodus 21: 15 (NRSV), 'Whoever strikes father or mother shall be put to death'

³² Evening worship in the family context.

a young person is expected by his parents to contribute financially with the family shopping, church offering and family expenses from ones salary. The young person may feel troubled from the possibility of having little left over for personal expenditure.

For an individual in a state of crisis, Tiatia uses the analogy of being left in a ‘shackled existence’.³³ Hypothetically, the analogy makes sense when it seems as if there is no way out as this person searches for answers or refuge of some sort. The consequences of making a stand would lead to being despised as a *fiapoto* (know it all)³⁴ and possibly be cursed.

Regarding relationships in the family and church, *teu le vā* is compromised. First, the principal idea of reciprocity is not authenticated. Instead the decision making seems to go one way and favour the ideals of the parents and elders. Hence, in effect, those in authoritative positions determine what is appropriate and what is not, and the voices of the ‘other’ in the relationship are to an extent suppressed.

Risati Ete, considered to be the pioneer Samoan theologian to advance the issue of identity crisis, views it as a form of cultural oppression because New Zealand-born Samoans are pushed to the margins of both the Western and Samoan cultures. From his experiences as a New Zealand-born Samoan, he astutely reflects on the literary fairy tale of the ‘Ugly Duckling’³⁵ to symbolically illustrate his own personal life story. The ugly duckling in the narrative was ridiculed based on physical appearance which created a sense of identity confusion. Ete, like the ugly duckling felt alienated and estranged as a New Zealand-born Samoan who was intrinsically and extrinsically dissimilar to the mainstream white middle class. Ete shares,

In the immediate New Zealand environment, my very Samoanness became a conspicuous signature of difference, my brown skin a symbol of otherness, my unpolished accent a label of awkwardness. In many ways, being Samoan, in the presence of so many of those who were not, made me feel ugly.³⁶

³³ Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 13.

³⁴ Ibid., 12.

³⁵ Hans Christian Andersen, *The Ugly Duckling* (Copenhagen: C.A Rietzel, 1843). The book was originally published in the Danish language.

³⁶ Risatisone Ete, “Ugly Duckling, Quacking Swan.” in *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross Cultural Theologies Down Under*, ed. Clive Pearson and Jione Havea (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 2004), 44.

The story of ugly duckling has a happy ending when it discovers that it was a swan and finds a place within the conventional wedge of swans as it flies away. Like the swan, Ete finds comfort in his Samoan community. However, as Ete acknowledges, there is also differentiation within his own ethnic group. Accordingly, Ete uses the following analogy to symbolically describing his experience.

Here I am Samoan, but one who thinks and acts like a European...I fly and move with my flock, but my wings lack the grace of a real swan. It appears that in my time spent with ducklings, I have adopted the actions and flying motions of the ducks....I am no longer an ugly duckling. I am a swan- but a swan that quacks like a duck.³⁷

According to Ete, the predicament faced by New Zealand born Samoans is reflected in his analogy. To the *pālagi*, European, New Zealand environment, we are ugly ducklings; to the Samoan community, we are quacking swans.³⁸ Reflecting in hindsight on the various phases of my identity journey, and as the conclusion of the 'Ugly duckling' narrative depicts; I too, feel like the swan that quacks like a duck. However, in a complex world where so many forces are interacting, it can be said that in a figurative sense, other alternative scenarios can be depicted, giving an accurate portrayal of the realities facing individuals in an identity crisis.

In the contemporary world, many ideas presented in existing literature concerning identity crises of 'in between' two worlds are oblivious to the realities of an increasing complex global world. By reconstructing the ugly duckling analogy to fit the complex society, it could be said that there were many ducklings that were distinctively ugly in their own unique way. If an authentic culture is questionable, could it be said that none of the swans fly away with true grace? Instead, when they fly away, many strange sounds were heard. Some quacked while other swans made a high pitch croaking sound, others belly laughed and others hooted!

The next section looks at another shift for many New Zealand-born Samoans who have chosen an alternative identity. Simply this is achieved in two ways, either by disregarding the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 44-45.

Samoan world and pursuing a new life offered by the Western world, or by the accomodating both worlds.

5.4 Transition to an alternative identity

The different visions for building bridges between the two different worlds vary, dependent on the benefits and dangers of intercultural engagement. When seeking a balance, perceptions of equilibrium differ between the migrants and the New Zealand-born Samoans. Many New Zealand-born people tend to favour the assimilation of new ideas and lifestyles more. This reaffirms Mary Chun's investigation, suggesting that New Zealand-born Samoans were more favourable of embracing and sharing a greater affinity with the dominant society than to their own ancestral heritage.³⁹

In this case, the wrestling with both sides leads to the formation of an alternative identity. If identity is an inclusive term covering all significant and distinctive aspects of humanity, including both biologically determined aspects and culturally determined ones such as gender identity, nationality, social role, character and disposition, then culture in a complex world becomes a force field in which new identities are enacted. The establishing or re-establishing of an ethnic identity in a complex world can be a complicated task, and 'purity in identity is hard to come by'⁴⁰ as a result of mixing and hybridization. It denotes the erasing of a boundary between cultural or religious entities and the redrawing of a new boundary. Ethnicity may be manipulated in order to serve varied individual or group purposes.

When individuals seem to shift their ethnic identity for example, concentrating on their 'Samoan' self rather than their 'New Zealand-born' identity it can be disorienting for others, often resulting in considerable miscommunication and misunderstanding. Unfortunately for many, attempts made to adapt and assimilate to the Western world have also been found wanting as they have underachieved in Western schools, filled our prisons and contributed to

³⁹ Chun, "One Person," 4.

⁴⁰ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 24.

high suicide rates. Identity crisis or social exclusion has been identified as one of the causes for concerns associated with mental health issues for Pacific Islanders.⁴¹

Uesifili Unasa refers to a hybridized Samoan cultural identity in an evolving world where the traditional and new forms of Samoan cultural identities interact to form this alternative identity. This identity becomes relevant as the two worlds become incompatible with Samoan cultural traditions and the New Zealand environment renegotiating 'structures of power built on differences.'⁴² The subjects of the in between worlds in this case should not be involved in a continual strife to grapple with the variances, but as Unasa endorses, it would be beneficial for the subjects to use the in between spaces as wanderers accommodating the best of both worlds.⁴³ This corresponds to Victor Turner's 'liminal states' which refer to a mediating device or the transition between two sign systems.⁴⁴

The birth of a new ethnic identity may at times find itself in a condition of uncertainty, though it opens up avenues for an identity that is not rigid or confined within fixed boundaries. If openly faced and recognized, New Zealand-born Samoans' own liminal existence can be honestly dealt with as they open to new ideas of the meaning of their lives and destinies. MacPherson elaborates further on this idea;

Some identity as Samoans [sic] had created a new space in which they had more freedom in which to be different sorts of Samoans. The fluidity which changing circumstances introduces into inter-generational identity may be further exacerbated by the freedoms available to each of the generations.⁴⁵

The New Zealand-born Samoan identity is shaped by an enduring of conflicting experiences, grappling with difference, experiences of alienation and continual reassessment and adaptation. As a result, an individual cultivates a secured identity described by Anae as 'a self-

⁴¹ Karlo Mila-Schaaf, "Not another New Zealand-born identity crisis: Well-being and the politics of belonging." in *Pacific Identities and Well-being: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Margaret Nelson Agee, Tracey McIntosh, Philip Culbertson, and Cabrini 'Ofa Makasiale (Otago: Otago University Press, 2013), 50-52.

⁴² Uesilifili Unasa, "The Borderlands: Relocating Samoan identity." in *Su'esu'e Manogi In Search of Fragrance Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008), 269.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Victor Turner quoted by Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 54.

⁴⁵ MacPherson, "Will the 'Real' Samoans," 56.

satisfying ethnic identity'.⁴⁶ New Zealand-born Samoans in this case, identify with a set of values and accommodate shared socialization experiences.⁴⁷ More significantly, a secured identity is attained when that person is able to negotiate differences, reconciling in between conflicts and affirming a sense of satisfaction and wholeness in an individual's ethnic and cultural identity. Despite the variant experiences of New Zealand-born Samoans, the shared social experiences enable this group to identify with one another.

What has been evident in recent times, is the growing influence and contribution of New Zealand-born Samoans to New Zealand society.⁴⁸ Many have not only represented the country as members of the All Blacks rugby team, but also been selected in the national teams for softball, athletics, rugby league, boxing and many other sports. Some of these high profile teams have also been captained and coached by Samoans. They have also achieved prominent positions in the church, become university educators, lawyers, teachers, medical doctors, politicians and held many other influential positions.

Pacific identities, as a subculture of the wider ethnic minority groups are finding positions of social and political power in contemporary New Zealand society. The gradual transition to a more liberating social experience not only raises the profile of Samoans and other Pacific peoples, but also bridges the gap of differentiation that was visible in the early years of engagement between the migrant communities and the New Zealand public.

One could say, the vision behind migration in the mid-twentieth century have been fulfilled. It may be one small step for one individual, but it is a giant step for the whole extended family in New Zealand and abroad. '*Success is a family concept*'⁴⁹ ...declaring that any achievement, regardless of the discipline or scale, brings dignity to the family name. It has been apparent in many of their success stories, the immense pride shown by these individuals and groups in their Samoan identity. This reaffirms Anae's secure and persistent identity belief

⁴⁶ Anae, "Fofoa-i-Vao-'Ese," 251.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁸ Wurtzburg, "Creating a New Zealand," 56.

⁴⁹ Taule'ale'ausumai, "Pastoral Care," 224.

that the New Zealand-born identity will be prolonged as long as the idea of shared experiences are reciprocated from generation to generation. What has progressed also is the fact that many prefer to identify as Samoan rather than New Zealand-born Samoan. It is an affirmation of a new interpretation of what it means to be a Samoan, even if that interpretation deflects from the Samoanness identified with the traditionalist worldview.

In the next section, an investigation of the social diversity within the Samoan church community will be addressed. Despite the changing social dynamics within the church in recent times, the church still chooses to maintain its traditions and thus neglects any possibility of change.

5.5 The CCCS: A community of divided generations

'Man cannot discover new oceans until he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.' Andre Gide's quote addresses a situation in which an individual cannot, or will not see past the boundaries of the immediate surroundings and indicates a reluctance to explore unfamiliar territory and different horizons. It is appropriate to apply the meaning behind the quote to the mindset and beliefs of the Samoan migrants, and to a large extent, the general ministry of the diaspora CCCS. Because there is a tendency to hold on to things familiar and meaningful, it leads to a lack of motivation in exploring new experiences of the unexplored horizons. What has become obvious is the stagnant position of the diaspora church in spite of the continual interaction, in one way or another, with the outside world.

To some extent, the migrant community acknowledge intra-cultural diversity, as long as their visions of the Samoan church are respected by members who may be more inclined to accommodate aspects of the Western world. There is a strong claim that there is less attention given to catering for the different needs and more focus given to the need to conform to existing, traditional understandings of the *vā*. The New Zealand-born generation bring modern voices and ideas that are needed in the practical ministry of the CCCS, but these ideas tend to be refined down or manipulated to comply with beliefs of the elders.

Coined by Anae as ‘an invisible cohort,’⁵⁰ the New Zealand-born generations continually find ways to articulate relevant questions to their needs within the church. They might ask why parents give so much to the church, and why worship services are so conservative. The question of why the CCCS do not ordain women as church ministers is also an issue. *Teu le vā* as a concept is speculative based on the realization that not all the spaces are respected. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, *teu le vā* appears to be a one-way process, rejecting the reciprocal nature of this sacred belief, as the needs of younger generations are addressed with minimal concern for their views.

A third group in the contemporary CCCS are the young migrants who speak Samoan but know very little English. The younger migrants also go through an identity crisis in the new environment.⁵¹ Probably the greatest difficulty for them involves trying to assimilate into a social group of younger people who are pre-dominantly New Zealand-born. Without necessary discussion on their situation, it must be recognized that they may also feel marginalised within internal church relationships. Bringing these groups together is one of the major problems facing the men and women in charge of migrant churches’ youth programmes.⁵²

The conflicting ideas between the conservative approach of the traditionalists and the liberal mindset of many of the younger generation, are masked by *teu le vā* when the utmost respect for positions at the top of the hierarchical ladder nullify any opportunity for standing up for what one believes is right. The demands of maintaining traditions is an inhibitor when aiming for radical changes that may be appropriate and relevant.

If a healthy identity is determined by a definite sense of personhood and place in the community, then ways must be found to accommodate all groups of people. The stagnant

⁵⁰ Melani Anae, “Why are our young people leaving our Churches? Pacific NZ-born youth and the search for spirituality.” Paper presented at the “Talanoa Oceania: Lotu, Tabu, Tikanga” conference (University of Auckland, 10-12 September, 2009), 3.

⁵¹ Identity Crisis! Issues Facing Pacific Migrant Youth, *Pacific Migrant Youth Meeting Report* (Tongan National Council of Churches Ecumenical Centre, Nukualofa- 30th March-1st April 2005).

⁵² Cluny MacPherson and David Pitt, *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in New Zealand* (Auckland: Paul Longman, 1974), 54.

approach of the church infiltrated with increasing discontent of the New Zealand-born Samoans has consequently led to three alternatives for the younger generation. They may be attracted to new contemporary fellowships,⁵³ leave the church altogether, or instead, choose to stay in the CCCS and continue to struggle with their identity.

The continual departure of the younger generations indicates the ineffectiveness of the CCCS to deal with the different attitudes and experiences of its younger members. In recent times, the move of New Zealand-born generations to a new church means a shift in allegiances to multi-ethnic churches, where people are able to assimilate their Samoanness into the melting pot of a multicultural community of faith. It opposes the 'corporate inherited faith experience' of the traditional churches,⁵⁴ but offers an autonomous style of worship free of rigid Pacific cultural protocols.

The exodus of New Zealand-born Samoans from the CCCS is a widespread trend on a national level. There are no church records or pastoral documents to support my statement based on the understanding that the exodus is not seen as a problem for the church to investigate. Once I even heard a church minister say these words, "Let them go...they'll come back one day!" Sadly these words are just mere rhetoric.

For New Zealand-born Samoans in the CCCS, many have questioned the ambiguous theological stance of the CCCS and its stagnant ministry in relation to many social issues. It may be the cause as to why many New Zealand-born Samoans are non-practicing Christians, others question the importance of the cultural aspect of Samoan Christianity which poses a dilemma concerning the makeup of the future leadership of the church. Connected to these issues is the rising number of New Zealand-born Samoans leaving the CCCS for other churches. This will be discussed in the next section.

⁵³Feiloaiga 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*, ed. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley and Melani Anae. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001), 181. F. Taule'ale'ausumai is a Samoan woman, a theologian and a Presbyterian minister.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

5.6 New Zealand-born generations: different needs and visions

The accommodating of a new identity challenges the CCCS to adapt to socio-cultural diversity. Just as a green apple will taste differently from a red one, the CCCS needs to account for the different contexts in the world. For a New Zealand-born Samoan, exposure to the complexities of society is part and parcel of the development of each individual. Despite family and ethnic connections, conflicts of interests and differences in perceptions are common between the generations. For a New Zealand-born Samoan, the effects of a complex society have fostered an emerging consciousness concerning the search of a Christian identity.

Especially in situations of transition and permanent change the migrant will ask the following questions; Who am I? Will I be able to maintain my Samoan Christian identity in a complex world? These inescapable questions are not easy to answer. They may not limit themselves to the confines of cultural protocol and church traditions. Nonetheless, many see their lives and worlds defined by opportunity, potential and possibility, which they do not believe is possible in the traditional context of the Samoan church. In Chapter Three, we looked at the core components of the Samoan Christian identity. In the context of the modern New Zealand, the concept of identity becomes increasingly ambiguous.

Many of the younger generation have been critical of ambiguous theology in the Samoan churches. In regards to many moral and social issues, the theological stance of the CCCS is not clearly definitive at a trans-national, national and local level. Even though the CCCS holds a strong conservative stance against issues such as homosexuality, same sex marriages and prostitution, there appears to be more uncertainty surrounding issues such as drugs and alcohol, sex before marriage, gambling and physical abuse.

The reality of double standards within the Samoan community emanates from the obscure and indirect approach of the CCCS to give a definitive position. For example, should the consumption of alcohol be prohibited to members of the church or should drinking be permitted as long as one does not reach a stage of being intoxicated? The answer is varied and changeable because many of the decision-makers in leadership roles are social drinkers. Other

issues such as gambling, physical abuse and sex before marriage are generally condemned by the CCCS ministry, but the fact is, these issues are increasingly common realities affecting members of the Samoan church. The problem stems from a combination of factors, namely, the ambiguity of its theology, the lack of integrity and a lack of concern for mission in the community. The problem is an issue for the pastoral ministry and mission of the CCCS.

The vision and the ongoing persistence of the migrant community to preserve what they perceive as a living community, is greeted by a reluctance of the younger generations to participate fully in this community because they have different needs and visions. The CCCS in New Zealand, by catering to the needs of the migrant community, in effect, pushes the New Zealand-born generation to other alternatives.

There are two troublesome outcomes in the process. First, the emergence of non-practicing Christians or back-seat nominal Christians. These church members, out of loyalty and respect to family may attend Sunday worship from time to time, though the commitment expected in all aspects of the church ministry gradually dissipates and they eventually leave the church. Thus far, it has not been a concern that there are little, if any, New Zealand-born deacons in the diaspora church, because those roles are taken by migrants. This raises the problem of succession because when the older migrant generations move on, and with the growing exodus or lack of commitment shown by New Zealand-born generations in leadership roles, who will take their places?

Furthermore, a deeper problem links to the idea ‘are there elements of ethnic identity that are preventing people from finding their principal identity in God?’⁵⁵ To many New Zealand-born Samoans, the statement is a valid one. What is considered right or wrongdoing? Many aspects of Samoan cultural traditions plus an inconsistent theology have led to many members, particularly the New Zealand-born Samoans abandoning their church of origin. The more common way out is by adopting a Christian faith that places less emphasis on cultural

⁵⁵ Gushiken, “Is a Christian Identity,” 43.

traditions, but more significantly, a church that is morally and ethically adheres to its theology and teachings. This is clearly conveyed by Taule'ale'ausumai,

The charismatic churches provide guidelines for people in search of boundaries and who need clear demarcation between 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not'.... Many of the young are concerned that within the traditional Pacific churches there are no clear lines of demarcation between right and wrong, and that faith as ritual and faith as cultural protocol are both right.⁵⁶

An openness for freedom of expression in worship in the pentecostal, charismatic and multi-ethnic churches is symbolic of its vision for an alternative ordering of life. It creates open space with a freedom beyond the status quo of Samoan Christianity, a sense of freedom to rebuild it in a different way. The pull factors⁵⁷ are complemented by the push factors in a shift of position that has increased rapidly in recent times.

The new faith expression is perceived as a more meaningful form of Christian faith. As converts who claim to be born-again Christians, they are convinced that all persons who are not born-again through confessing and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour will not experience eternal life and happiness. Furthermore, it is an experience or a transformation that can only be encountered in the evangelical churches. One must be born-again to become a new spiritual being.

The new converts to the evangelical fellowships, in experiencing a new transformation, are encouraged to continue their goal of evangelism by attempting to convert those who have remained in the CCCS. However, the problem with proselytism, as reiterated by Feiloaiga Taule'ale'ausumai, is the perception 'that the family faith becomes wrong. The individual who stands outside it prays for total change and commitment from the family.'⁵⁸

The title of this chapter, 'many variations of the coconut water' portrays a vagueness with the notion of an absolute Samoan Christian identity. With reference to the diasporic

⁵⁶ Taule'ale'ausumai, "New Religions," 191.

⁵⁷ Pull and Push factors are terms used in Geography denoting patterns of Migration. It entails motives which may appeal (Pull) and which force out (push) a migrant from one place to another.

⁵⁸ Taule'ale'ausumai, "New Religions," 192.

church, particularly with the New Zealand-born generation, an encounter with the Western world contributes to conflicting ideas and values with the Samoan way of life and church.

Probably the main catalyst for the change is the penetrating impact of the English language, and the diminishing significance of the Samoan language especially with the New Zealand-born generation. The issue concerning the decline of the Samoan language renders a problem for the survival of the diaspora community in the future. I will also provide an argument against existing belief that the Samoan church is one of the instrumental foundations for preserving the Samoan language.

CHAPTER SIX

Indigenous language loss: The future of *gagana Sāmoa* in the diaspora

In the previous chapter, I examined one of the disparities evident in the CCCS, notably, the changing attitudes and reactions of the New Zealand-born Samoans to their church of origin. Differing perceptions of the Samoan Christian identity lead to various scenarios, such as seeking another faith community, maintaining loyalty to the CCCS, and struggling to make sense of one's identity or leaving the Christian faith altogether.

At the Oceanic Biblical Students Association (OBSA) Conference in August 2013, I presented a seminar paper focusing on intricacies of *teu le vā* in the diaspora Samoan community.¹ The response of Feleterika Nokise, the Principal of Pacific Theological College to my presentation was refreshing and thought provoking. Nokise stated that one core component that was missing in my presentation about *teu le vā* was the medium of language, hence the prompting to write this chapter on the Samoan language. Significantly, in the context of this chapter it addresses how the pervasive influence of the English language, and the decline of the Samoan language in recent times, impact the practical ministry of the CCCS.

This chapter serves two goals. First, my contention is that the penetrating domination of the English language via Western education, as well as global networks, symbols and patterns circulated through mass media and media culture, contributes to the language problem by infusing values and ideas into the already ingrained ethnic subaltern personality. Consequently, the effects lead to the increasing social, cultural, linguistic and psychological diversity amongst members of the Samoan community.

Second, I assert that the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), regarded as a core language nest, out of negligence and partly out of a conservative myopic position fails to provide a relevant ministry for New Zealand-born Samoans by restriction of bilingualism in

¹Terry Pouono, "*Teu le Va*: The Samoan cosmic-community in Aotearoa. Preserving harmonious relationships...where is the harmony?," (OBSA Conference Presentation, Pacific Theological College, Suva- Fiji, 1-3 August 2013).

worship, educational programmes and the general community setting. The restriction varies from congregation to congregation, though the majority of churches would disapprove of the use of the English language.

A crucial indication mentioned in the previous chapter is the social divergence amongst Samoan communities, more clearly distinct between the migrant community and the New Zealand-born generations. Language, as a means of communication between members of the community is no exception. It has been observed that within the migrant community, most if not all are fluent speakers of the Samoan language. Moreover, New Zealand-born generations are more comfortable English language speakers.² It must also be acknowledged that there are individuals who may be considered fluent speakers of both languages but these individuals are a minority.

In light of this crucial limitation, how can *teu le vā* operate? If *teu le vā* entails the ordering of space, what implications does the diversity of language capacity and usage have on relational spaces? Can linguistic differentiation be bridged and spaces re-ordered to authenticate *teu le vā* in a dynamic community? These questions will be addressed in this chapter.

6.1 *Gagana Sāmoa*: central to the Samoan identity

In certain pockets within the main cities of Auckland and Wellington, there are large populations of people from Samoa. Unlike the settlement of early civilizations throughout history, which settled into regions of fertile land, proximity to waterways and trade centres, the island migrants were drawn to and settled in contexts of familiarity. It is in these regions today that you would find sites that attract Pacific peoples like takeaway shops, island fashion stores, Chinese shops that sell cheap merchandise, island music and video outlets, and fruit shops that sell taro, green bananas and coconut cream. Also common in these pockets are numerous

² Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: a New Zealand-born Pacific Island Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998), 8.

networks of Samoan churches that can be viewed as transplanted villages replicating the homeland. These areas are ‘linguistic enclaves’ where the languages of the Pacific people are spoken more frequently inside and outside the home.³

Language is a key component of one’s identity. As a mechanism for social interaction, language allows the development of understanding, discernment, and active participation in a socially constructed world. Explained more vividly by Grace, “...language can only be understood if more attention is paid to its relationships with the external world.”⁴ Language is more than just a collection of words. Language is a social phenomenon. As a semiotic device, language aids in distinguishing peoples, personalities, groups of people, attitudes, beliefs and worldviews. Whether it is written, spoken or expressed through signs, language is not an isolated entity from cultural or ethnic identity.⁵ In other words, a culture without language is like a physical body with no skeleton.

The continuing effect of language loss holds repercussions for ethnic communities in many ways because language is crucial for preserving the vitality of cultures, traditions, epistemologies and values. From an anthropological view, the shared notion about the nature of language declares it as an essential feature to ‘...inform worldviews, shape verbal behaviors [sic], and contour social interactions. As such, it helps construct social realities, personhood, identity, agency, aesthetic sensibilities, and sentiments.’⁶ Crucial to this insight are the questions of language ideology: What is the function of language in the minds of the people? If there is difference in a community, what is the value of language to different groups?

To the traditionalists who preserve the Samoan culture, traditions and customs, the Samoan language is integral for the survival and social cohesion of the core elements that

³ Melenaita Taumoevalau, Donna Starks, Karen Davis & Allan Bell “Linguists and Language Maintenance: Pasifika Languages in Manukau, New Zealand,” *Oceanic Linguistics* 41, no. 1 (2002), 24. doi:10.1353/ol.2002.0015.

⁴ Taumoevalau et al, “Linguists and Language,” 26. Citing Grace.

⁵ Meaola Amituana’i-Tolua, “To each a Language: Addressing the challenges of language and cultural loss for Samoans,” *AlterNative: Special Supplement Issue Ngaahi Lea ‘a e Kakai Pasifiki: Endangered Pacific Languages and Cultures* 6, no. 2 (2010): 81.

⁶ Matt Tomlinson and Miki Makihara, “New Paths in the Linguistic Anthropology of Oceania,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18, (2009): 18. Citing Paul V. Kroskrity, *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics and Identities* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2000). doi: 10.1146/annurev-anthro-091908-164438.

define the binding together of the Samoan community. The Samoan language is a central facet of the Samoan identity. Lalomilo Kamu defines the Samoan language as ‘a living expression of culture’ and further states that ‘When language is enriched, the culture and the people are enriched.’⁷ There is a saying, *E iloa le Sāmoa i lana tautala, tū ma lana savali*. Metaphorically the saying denotes that the identity of a Samoan person is clearly grounded in the way one speaks, by one’s moral conduct and respect for others. Samoan customs are abundant in gestures and uses of language that communicate rules for behaviour and social conduct within the Samoan community.

With a great sense of ethnocentric pride, the traditionalists regard the Samoan culture as morally and ethically superior to other cultures because it centres on mutual respect and reciprocal love. A lack of understanding or violation of these characteristics implies a deviation from accepted ways unique to the Samoan society. The vitality of the Samoan culture is sustained by respecting cosmic spaces and relationships as in the *vā*, and the *vā* is articulated through the Samoan language. The ethnolinguistic vitality of the Samoan language, in this case, has two significant functions. First, the Samoan language acts as a tool for articulating Samoan culture and values, which preserves the cosmic nuances of the *vā*. Amituana’i-Toloa expresses the significance of the connection between Samoan language and identity thus:

Language empowers, encourages, motivates and reinforces identities because it cups the ancient, past, present and future, thus, in the Samoan context, it stores within it the experiences, knowledge, wisdom, understanding and activities of home life that is habitually Samoan.⁸

For an individual, acquiring a language is a strong marker for the affirmation of cultural identity because of the concomitant values and belief systems attached to that language.⁹ On the contrary, the adverse effect of language loss may incur a loss of these pertinent values and

⁷ Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 55-56.

⁸ Amituana’i-Toloa, “To each a language,” 82. Amituana’i-Toloa specializes in research of the Samoan language and its significance in the diaspora community.

⁹ Ibid.

the ‘questioning of ethnic identity.’¹⁰ Collectively, as a whole, the preservation of an ethnic language gives a sense of ethnic pride and a cultural heritage. In a complex world, language retention is crucial for the well-being and productivity of an ethnic group.¹¹ The ‘ethnolinguistic vitality’ of groups, an idea initially proposed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor argues that the greater a groups’ vitality, the more likely it is that the members of that group will use and maintain the language.¹² Vitality in this case may be defined by factors such as economic status, political representation and geographical concentration.

The vitality of the ‘*gagana Sāmoa*’ is deeply entrenched in the spiritual mana of the language and culture. Inherent to Samoan belief, the Samoan language is a gift from God; a divine language entrenched in the Samoan culture. The survival of the Samoan language here is dependent on the vigour and strength of the community to preserve what is believed to be God-given. Regardless of the profound insights advancing the value of the Samoan language, one fundamental component absent in existing academic literature is the idea that the Samoan language is sacred and divine.

For the Samoan diaspora within New Zealand, the significance of preserving the native tongue reassures and regenerates cultural and religious chauvinism within the diaspora community. As a medium for cultural identity, it channels the values and history of an ethnic group on a continuum from the past traditions and locations, to the minds of the people in the present. Hence, affirming the significance of the home and church as literary sites for the teaching and learning of language and applied in communities of practice.

The Samoan language is a socio-cultural tool for the affirmation of an identity in a multicultural society. The survival of the Samoan language here is dependent on the vigour and strength of the community within the wider society. It is not surprising that Samoan communities, as a collective entity have shown an awareness of the dilemma and have

¹⁰ Galumalemana A. Hunkin, “To let Die: The state of the Samoan language in New Zealand,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 8, no. 2 (2012): 204.

¹¹ Hunkin, “To let Die,” 203.

¹² Howard Giles, Donald Taylor and Richard Bourhis, “Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations.” in *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Howard Giles (London: Academic Press, 1977), 307-348. Cited in Mugler and Lynch. *Pacific Languages in Education*, 229.

attempted to address the problem. It is sign that the Samoan language is valued by its members who want to keep the language alive.¹³

6.2 *Gagana Sāmoa*: subsumed by the universal language

Many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders, as well as those outside the Pacific who are concerned with indigenous language sovereignty, have become concerned with the threat of local languages being lost to global English. This problem is particularly acute for Samoans in New Zealand. Language decline or language loss is a worldwide issue that contributes to the diminishing authentic and increasingly ambiguous identity of indigenous groups as they are influenced by the language and dominant cultural values of mainstream New Zealand. The decline of the Samoan language, or at least the threat of the language being lost, is a concern not only shown by Samoans themselves, but by other ethnic minority groups whose languages are also under threat.

Today, the Samoan language is the third most spoken language in New Zealand,¹⁴ behind English and Maori. The focus of this chapter addresses the inevitable. The issue for *gagana Sāmoa* is not about whether or not it will survive, but what needs to be done to slow down the gradual decline.¹⁵ The decline of the number of New Zealand-born Samoans who could speak the Samoan language, as recorded in government statistics over a period of five years, has been gradual from 48% to 44%.¹⁶ There are many reasons for the decline. One is the increasing ratio of New Zealand-born Samoans.¹⁷ The increasing population of first, second and third generation New Zealand-born Samoans,¹⁸ added to other changing social dynamics such as mixed marriages, the choice not to attend the Samoan church or Samoan-centred

¹³ Taumoeofolau et al, "Linguists and Language Maintenance," 24.

¹⁴ Amanda Fisher, "Samoan language under threat in New Zealand Promoting Their Mother Tongue," *The Dominion Post*, June 7, 2010.

¹⁵ Taumoeofolau et al, "Linguists," 24.

¹⁶ Hunkin, "To let Die," 204; See also Meaola Toloa, Stuart McNaughton and Mei Lai, "Bi-literacy and language development in Samoan bilingual classrooms," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12, no. 5 (2009): 515-516. See also Galumalemana A Hunkin, "A Frequency based word list for teaching the Samoan Language," *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics* 17, no.1 (2011): 16.

¹⁷ Fisher, "Samoan language under threat," *The Dominion Post*, June 7, 2010, A14. 2006 Census: 60% of the total Samoan population (131,100) are New Zealand born Samoans (78,660).

¹⁸ Hunkin, "To let Die," 207.

communal gatherings and a preference for predominantly English speaking homes contribute to the decline. Simultaneously, the gradual decrease in numbers of the older migrant community who have either passed away or returned to Samoa adds to the dilemma. The elders are a crucial missing link to preserving the language as well as maintaining connections with family and community.¹⁹

In the postcolonial period, the issue of language has been the converging point not only for new acts of colonization but also for resistance. In resistance, the narratives of the dominant group who fosters hegemony are scrutinized by minority groups in the struggle for ethnic, cultural, and political autonomy. This chapter looks at the gradual decline of Samoan-speaking Samoans in New Zealand and the imposing influences of the invasive forces of the complex world.

Despite the historical political struggles and attempts of indigenous *Te Reo Maori*²⁰ for recognition, and the rapid increase of diaspora communities contributing to the multicultural complexion and linguistic diversity²¹ in New Zealand, the English language remains the more universal and commonly spoken language in New Zealand. Coined by Mugler and Lynch as the ‘metropolitan language’ of the colonial era, the English language is understood to create greater opportunities for regional and international exposure.²² This colonial mindset is still a persistent reality.

The cultures associated with ethnic minority languages are acknowledged within the multicultural fabric of New Zealand society today, though they play second fiddle to the dominant culture associated with the language of success and progression in Western society. This colonial understanding is further justified in the revision of the New Zealand Curriculum

¹⁹ Melenaite Taumoevalau, Donna Starks, Allan Bell and Karen Davis, “The Role of Second Language Acquisition Theory and Practice in Pasifika Language Maintenance in New Zealand.” in *Language acquisition research: papers presented at a Ministry of Education Forum held in 2003* (Wellington: Ministry of Education Research Division, 2004), 46.

²⁰ Language of the indigenous Maori.

²¹ Penny Haworth, “Globalising literacy: the challenge of ethnolinguistic diversity in New Zealand,” *Literacy-Special Issue: Literacy and Politics* 45, no. 3 (2011): 142.

²² France Mugler and John Lynch, *Pacific Languages in Education* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1996), 3. Mugler and Lynch have done research in Pacific Socio-linguistics.

by the Ministry of Education in 2007, which affirms the significance of literacy in English as a constitutive resource for appropriate understanding and participation in all aspects of life within New Zealand and the wider world. In that line of thought, English is branded as the ‘global language’.²³

6.3 Turn on the TV! Sesame Street is on! Linguistic postcolonialism and the survival of *Gagana Sāmoa* in a diverse world.

I will use the American children’s television series *Sesame Street* as a reference to symbolize the potent, pervasive influence of media culture that has invaded not only our Samoan home, but many others. The initial Samoan language nest is the home, involving face-to-face instruction with the parents. Another significant site is the Samoan church where the Christian teachings in Sunday School are disseminated in the Samoan language. These places of activity are coined by John Dickie as ‘educative sites’²⁴ that promote the instruction of the Samoan language, customs and cultural values. Literacy, in this respect, is more than just a simple exercise of reading and writing, but ‘is always embedded within social and cultural practices.’²⁵ The Samoan home and church, as ‘communities of practice’,²⁶ serve two key objectives: first, to preserve the core values of the community through application of the ethnic language and enacting cultural practices; and second, to be places where members of the community are able to reconcile differing values circulating around society.²⁷

These communities, also labelled by Dickie as ‘out-of-school’²⁸ literary sites, are not isolated places of instruction but they all connect by operating systems with indistinguishable value systems and beliefs. Cremin refers to this network as “configurations.”²⁹ The

²³ Haworth, “Globalising literacy,” 144.

²⁴ John Dickie, “Samoan students documenting their out-of-school literacies: An insider view of conflicting values,” *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 34, no. 3 (2011): 247.

²⁵ Ibid., 248. This idea finds its roots in Vygotsky’s ‘Sociocultural perspective’ (1978).

²⁶ Ibid. Citing Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 249.

²⁹ Ibid., 248.

components of this network are connected systems that designate contexts of familiarity and homogeneity of things Samoan such as...language, values, culture and traditions finding harmony in these settings. The migrants, as agents of transmission are crucial to upholding communal supportive values in these sites. For ethnic minorities such as the Pacific ethnic groups, the preservation of the native tongue reassures and regenerates cultural and religious zeal in a land considered as the new home. As a medium for cultural identity, language channels the values and history of an ethnic group on a continuum from the past traditions and locations to the minds of the people in the present.

In Chapter Five, I looked at New Zealand-born Samoans as in between subjects either struggling to come to grips with both the Samoan and Western worlds, choosing one over the other or as wanderers oscillating within the in between spaces accommodating the best of both worlds.³⁰ The literary sites promulgating the knowledge systems of both worlds also face social, cultural, psychological and spiritual conflicts. In a situation of conflict, there is a demand to reconcile variances between sites such as curriculum, pedagogy, personalities, beliefs, objectives, group policies and group functionality. The in between subjects are therefore faced with the task of having to 'reconcile between the differences of the various communities in which they operate.'³¹

The issue demands further consideration especially if there is a struggle to reconcile differences that create many social issues plaguing young Pacific Islanders today. Maybe one of the causes for underachievement in schools, the high suicide rates for Pacific youth in New Zealand and identity crises is a consequence of the lack of skills, or an inability to reconcile or cope with conflicts posed by being caught in between spaces. For those who do have the ability, it may necessitate creating new pathways that may alter existing perceptions of identity and how the Samoan language is valued.

³⁰ Unasa, "Borderlands," 269.

³¹ Dickie, "Samoan students," 256. Citing Wenger 2006.

The penetrating domination of the English language infusing values and ideals upon the already ingrained Samoan ‘ethnic personality’ provides a pathway for hegemonic ascendancy. The nature of the shift to the dominant dialect alludes to a sense of uniformity, which is a reversal of the social fabric of linguistically diverse New Zealand. It raises the question why ethnic minority speakers are vulnerable to losing partially, or completely, their mother tongue. One reason is colonial education via Western forms of education in New Zealand schools. This is a significant issue, as indications from research have shown a language shift from bilingualism to monolingualism particularly with younger speakers.³²

The assimilationist policies of the New Zealand Government in the latter stages of the twentieth century was developed with the intention of devaluing the status of ethnic languages to a diminutive position. The implication was that ethnic languages were inferior and irrelevant in New Zealand society at the time. The objective of the policy, was to aid migrant parents and their children to learn the English language faster.³³ Phillipson terms this as ‘linguistic imperialism’ describing the structures of the dominant group as reflecting ‘persisting colonial mentalities.’³⁴

For many Samoan children, the initial teaching of the Samoan language and values in the early stages of life loses momentum to subtractive bilingualism, children become subjects of colonial encroachment of Western education systems in their social life outside of the home and church. Subtractive bilingualism is apparent when the Samoan language is lost or on the decline, even before knowledge of the English language is fully developed.³⁵ Of great concern, is the fact that the phase happens so early, that Samoan children lose crucial information at such a vital stage in their lives and end up playing catch-up when learning the new language. Grace, who investigated the process of language shift, alluded to the process of translation ‘whereby a speaker says something in a different way, that is, in a different language ... until

³² Taumoeofolau et al, “Linguists,” 23.

³³ Hunkin, “To let Die,” 203, citing B. Spolsky, “The Samoan language in the New Zealand educational context.” (Unpublished report presented to the Department of Education, Wellington, 1988).

³⁴ Ibid., 208.

³⁵ Citing from Lightbrown and Spada (1993), Taumoeofolau et al, “The Role,” 50.

the former way is forgotten.”³⁶ Tove Skutnabb-Kangas describes this as learning subtractively.³⁷ Skutnabb-Kangas also employs a savage-like allusion referring to the dominance of the English language as having a ‘killer-effect’ impact on the subordinate languages.³⁸

An even greater concern is the fluid process of globalization. More specifically, networks of communication, symbols and patterns that are circulated through various regions and throughout the whole world itself. Gilroy uses the term ‘cultural flows’³⁹ to denote elements and symbols that are transported through global networks. Promoted through commercialization and/or media culture, this affects cultures socially and economically at different levels. Global cultures based on production and consumption have an homogenizing effect on clothing, food and entertainment, thus forming cultural synchronization⁴⁰ or the sameness of cultures worldwide. Sports labels such as Nike and Adidas, McDonalds, and Coca Cola are examples of such global cultures.

Sesame Street has for many years amused our family by captivating our emotions, planted in our memories images of Muppet characters: Big Bird and his best friend Mr Snuffleupagus, Super Grover, Bert and Ernie, Oscar the Grouch and personalities such as Mr Noodle, Gordon, Susan, Bob and Maria. *Sesame Street* has educated our minds, taught me and my children the English alphabet, to count, to sing and many more things. As an audience we have been mesmerized by the colourfulness, and the vibrant, modern and relevant conceptions that are portrayed. It is the reason for the human alarm clock in the early hours of the morning: ‘Daddy, turn on the TV! *Sesame Street* is on!’

³⁶ Taumoeofolau et al, “Linguists,” 26; Citing George W. Grace, *An essay on language* (South Carolina, Hornbeam Press, 1981).

³⁷ Hunkin, “To let Die,” 207. Citing R. Phillipson, “Realities and myths of linguistic imperialism,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18, no. 3 (1997): 238-248.

³⁸ Ibid., 203.

³⁹ Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 54.

⁴⁰ Annabelle Mooney and Betsy Evans, *Globalization: The Key Concepts* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2007), 56.

Sesame Street exemplifies the social and cultural ascendancy of media culture in promoting the ‘global language’ and continually evolving global cultural perceptions explicitly portrayed in its educational content, images communicated and cultural references. The effect of engaging with the global world opens channels to exploring worlds beyond the local context. Other than the possibility of conflicting values, media culture opens doors for engagement with various genres such as hip hop music, Hollywood movies, global sports teams and through social media we are able to enter the personal lives of people, even strangers around the world.

English as the dominant global language may not be seen as the pervasive ‘killer language’, but as an attractive proposition that cannot be ignored. It is the language that connects us with the world! The consequence of the resulting identity is the ‘Glocal identity’ which will be discussed further in the next chapter. This term forces us to renew our thinking on the local, asking for new reflections on the local and the global. Why are children learning the English language so quickly? The key here is the attitude and needs of the learner, from where the motivation to learn comes. Dornyei reiterates this fact by stating that ‘motivation is a significant aid to learning.’⁴¹ The younger generation today, my children included, are fond of what media culture presents to them.

I am reminded of Aesop’s fables on the race between the tortoise and the hare. The hare is challenged by the tortoise to a race. The hare ridicules the tortoise and leaves the tortoise behind. Ending the story here to fit the direction of this essay, the English language and the dominant culture is like the hare; mediated to the minds and hearts of indigenous people at a rate that is rapid and powerful. The Samoan language, is to many of its non-speakers, like the tortoise ... slow and, it would appear, ineffective.

⁴¹ Citing Z. Dornyei (1998), in Taumoevalau et al, “The Role of Second Language Acquisition,” 50.

6.4 Towards preserving *gagana Sāmoa*

In recent times there has been a shift in thinking by the New Zealand Government, from the assimilationist policies in the late twentieth century to seeing the benefits of biculturalism in Western schools. This initiative led to the development of bilingual schools and language programmes where the Samoan language was taught in some secondary and tertiary institutions. Added to this, the passion and desire of the Samoan community to move forward generated the development of language nests (*Aoga amata*).⁴² Consequently, a great number of projects have been implemented in the Manukau region in South Auckland to cater for the large Pacific population.⁴³ It is not surprising that Samoan communities, as a collective entity, have shown an awareness of the dilemma and have attempted to address the problem. It is a sign that the Samoan language is valued by Samoan people who want to keep the language alive.⁴⁴ The irony is that despite the attempts of the migrants to preserve something dear to them, these sites cannot survive, or at least move forward as a thriving community, without engagement with society at large.

The Samoan diaspora community has for many years struggled for recognition in a monocultural New Zealand. From the early stages of migration in the 1960's and 1970's the Samoan migrants were seen unfavourably by the 'white' New Zealand public for many reasons, primarily the perceived English language incompetence of many.⁴⁵ Bilingualism in contemporary society marks a huge step towards cultural recognition in an increasingly multicultural society.⁴⁶ The educational policy of bilingualism has been advantageous in developing linguistic and intellectual capacities as opposed to monolingual education.⁴⁷

⁴² Taumoeofolau et al, "Linguists," 24.

⁴³ Donna Starks and Hayley Refell, "Reading TH: Vernacular Variants in Pasifika Englishes in South Auckland," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10, no. 3 (2006): 383; Citing Allan Bell, Karen Davis and Donna Starks, *Languages of the Manukau Region: A pilot study of use, maintenance and educational dimensions of languages in South Auckland*. Report prepared for the Woolf Fisher Research Centre, University of Auckland, 2000.

⁴⁴ Taumoeofolau et al, "Linguists," 24.

⁴⁵ New Zealand on Screen, 'Dawn Raids' directed by Damon Fepulea'i (Documentary New Zealand- TV One, 2005) You Tube video, 5 minutes 40seconds, accessed April 28th 2014, www.nzonscreen.com/search?search_text=dawnraids.

⁴⁶ Hunkin, "To let Die," 203 & 210-211.

⁴⁷ Dickie, "Samoan students," 256-257.

Intrinsically, for Samoan traditionalists there is a hope that children may not only acquire the Samoan language, but also the core values and spirituality of Sāmoa.⁴⁸

Although it may be too soon to make a judgment on a relatively recent initiative, there is a sense of hope that implementation of bilingual education and biculturalism can improve academic proficiency of young Pacific Islanders, drawing the Pacific community away from the unfavourable generalizations as an under-achieving and marginalized community. Looking at the overall scope of social living, Pacific Island people are generally known for low literacy levels, literacy levels for adults and children,⁴⁹ under-achievement in schools, poor health, poverty, housing, unemployment, crime⁵⁰ and income levels on the lower spectrum of the socio-economic scale.⁵¹

Who is to blame here? The wider New Zealand community has generally pointed the finger at Pacific parents, their language and culture. Samoan parents, in turn, would not protest the accusations, but would most likely direct the blame to themselves or the children.⁵² It is my opinion that most migrants, who maintain the cultural belief that wisdom is a virtue gifted to elders or people in authority, hold an indomitably unshakeable view that would without question, place the blame on the ‘other’ in community. The ‘other’ here refers to the younger generation or children who have accepted ways of the outside world with the consequence that their ethnic and cultural identity has been compromised.

6.5 The CCCS: preserving the *gagana Sāmoa*, myth or reality?

It is traditionally believed by the Samoan people that the Samoan church plays a significant role in the maintenance and survival of the Samoan language. Historical evidence suggests

⁴⁸ Pasifika: Identity or Illusion (Herald article 4/8/2007)

⁴⁹ Toloa et al, “Bi-literacy,” 513.

⁵⁰ New Zealand Herald article, “Pasifika: Identity or Illusion” (Herald article 4/8/2007). 7% make up the New Zealand population/ 11% prison population/ 13% convicted violent offenders (based on information from Ministry of Justice conference).

⁵¹ Patisepa Tuafuti and John McCaffery, “Family and Community Empowerment through Bilingual Education,” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 8, no. 5 (2005): 481.

doi: 10.1080/13670050508668625. See also Toloa et al, “Bi-literacy,” 513.

⁵² Ibid., 493.

that the literacy practices initiated by the endeavours of the LMS missionaries in the nineteenth century have been influential in the establishment of Christian education programmes. The missionaries, traders and colonizers introduced many aspects of the nineteenth century Western world to the islands of the Pacific, including the English vernacular.⁵³ Unlike the traders and colonizers, the missionaries of the LMS preferred to preach and teach the gospel to the natives using the local vernacular. This objective was evident in the determination shown by the LMS to translate the Samoan Bible efficiently and in quick time to cater to the growing demand of converts to the Christian faith.

In the early stages, the process of evangelization, with the aid of the Tahitian missionaries was rapid as the gospel message was received with great enthusiasm by the Samoan people. One of the greater achievements in which the LMS missionaries made a name for themselves was the translation of the Samoan Bible and the first Samoan hymn book.⁵⁴ The achievements of the LMS Missionaries gave the LMS church a sense of dominance in relation to the Samoan Methodist church and the Samoan Catholic church. The LMS missionaries not only taught the natives how to read and write, but it was important that the people were nurtured with scriptural and doctrinal knowledge.⁵⁵

The progress of the LMS endeavours eventually led to the use of the Samoan language in worship services. In addition to scriptural knowledge, a curriculum that included reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and science was taught at a centralized institution for the training of Samoans for the Ministry.⁵⁶ The initiative further emphasizes the existing power of the missionaries in possessing knowledge systems the natives regarded as superior to their indigenous consciousness.

⁵³ Mugler and Lynch, *Pacific Languages*, 3. The language of the missionaries was coined here as a 'Metropolitan language.'

⁵⁴ In 1909, the LMS Samoan church produced the hymnal *Pese ma Vi'iga* to guide the Samoan church in their worship. It also provided the guidelines for the worship services on Sunday's including the contents of such worship.

⁵⁵ Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity*, (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 2005), 81-85.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 84. On September 25th 1844, the teaching for the formation of Samoans for the Christian Ministry began at what was initially called the Samoan Mission Seminary. The institution to this day maintains the purpose in the formation of Ministers for Parishes worldwide but is now called Malua Theological College.

Samoan people today know how to read and recite biblical passages in Samoan, worship services are conducted in the Samoan language, the hymns are in Samoan, the Samoan culture and traditions are passed on to the younger generations⁵⁷ and the Christian education curriculum is not only taught in the Samoan language, but includes in it features to help with the learning and acquiring of the Samoan language. In addition to the literacy practices are the extra community activities such as singing, dancing and sports targeting the younger people to participate in communal gatherings promoting cultural protocol and language promoting activities.⁵⁸ The CCCS serves the purpose of perpetuating the monolingual mindset and Christian tradition that is characteristic of the Samoan church.

The need to preserve language denotes more than just maintaining cultural roots, but also involves safeguarding an inherent Samoan belief that language is a special gift from God, and it needs to be used for His praises and evangelization endeavours. When Samoans migrate to other places, the key dimensions of Samoan Christian identity are taken with them. They are Samoan customs, cultural values, traditions and Christian convictions. These dimensions intersect unified by the Samoan language. Regardless of the profound insights advancing the value of the Samoan language, one fundamental component absent in existing literature concerns the idea of the Samoan language as incorporating the ‘sacred and the divine.’

The importance of maintaining the Samoan language for the church, particularly the CCCS, is clearly obvious, because it is a Samoan church. The authenticity of its Samoanness remains a living presence when all aspects of the church from worship and cultural traditions are carried out in the mother tongue.⁵⁹ What is interesting here and quite ironic is the fact that the established indigenous gospel that characterizes the Samoan church, carries with it the baggage of colonialism.

⁵⁷ Mugler and Lynch, *Pacific Languages*, 231.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ BK Duncan, “A Hierarchy of Symbols: Samoan Religious Symbolism in New Zealand” (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 1994). Cited by Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand-born Pacific Island perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998), 113.

To the Samoan belief, any diversion from these established ways is a travesty to the Samoan Christian heritage. It was the major reason why a small group of Samoans in the early 1960's broke away from the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church and established the CCCS in New Zealand.⁶⁰ Besides the distinction of being a religious congregation, the CCCS also serves as a transplanted replication of the Samoan village in New Zealand.

However, contrary to the belief of traditionalists, the conventional idea of the CCCS as a guardian of the Samoan language is narrow minded and largely uncritical. Amituana'i-Tolua implies that the secure language domains, such as the church, are vulnerable to the language shift but she does not explicitly address the problem.⁶¹ The deception, I believe, is masked by the ignorance of the CCCS to adapt its ministry to the New Zealand context, and the changing dynamics of the evolving world.

Referring back to the question previously raised as to whether linguistic differentiation can be bridged and spaces re-ordered to authenticate *teu le vā* in a dynamic community. Two different responses may be proposed here. First, to the advocates of Samoan tradition and language preservation, *teu le vā* is a realistic entity in a monolingual community because total comprehension of Samoan ways can only be communicated and understood through the Samoan language. The preference for a monolingual church replicates a stagnant Christian tradition that is reluctant to change, and an acknowledgement of a foreign language system will be a deterrent causing disharmony within the Samoan community.

The assumption is that all members of the CCCS are fluent Samoan speakers, which many are not. Another dangerous assumption is that the strictly monolingual community is the most authentic Christian witness in the diaspora world. To the advocates of bilingualism, *teu le vā* is a distant reality because the English language, which for many, is the more favourable

⁶⁰ Danny Ioka, "Origin and beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand" (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 1998), 168. Ioka cites from U.P Taimalelagi, "Migration: The Study of Western Samoan Migration and the Roles of the CCCS" (Bachelor of Divinity Thesis: Pacific Theological College, 1980), 60. Taimalelagi notes two reasons for the establishment of the CCCS in New Zealand, namely, the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church was too Europeanised and the Samoan people wanted to govern their own church.

⁶¹ Amituana'i-Tolua, "To each a language," 80.

and appropriate medium for articulating the Christian gospel is discouraged by the church. A predicament is formed where opposing objectives are in conflict; whether to preserve existing traditions or to adapt to the changing needs of the dynamic community.

It needs to be acknowledged that the majority of New Zealand-born Samoans have a limited command of the Samoan language.⁶² There is concern is that no resolution to the problem exists. The inferiority complex associated with being deficient speakers is realized in everyday, informal exchanges and notably in formal cultural protocols and traditions. The Samoan church is a community that aspires to sustain an adequate, if not a high level of excellence in speaking, reading and writing in Samoan. It is observed regularly in the interaction between articulate and inarticulate speakers of Samoan, the process of correcting one's pronunciation or proper usage of the language. At times, the so-called *pālagi* accent common in the verbal repertoire of many New Zealand-born Samoans becomes a cause for ridicule from fluent speakers.

Two things have become visibly obvious based on linguistic divergence; first, social groupings are observed distinguished by linguistic competence and incompetence. Even though there is no organized segregation of members, it is apparent that fluent speakers who have similar personalities and interests tend to congregate together. Likewise, the New Zealand-born Samoans have a tendency to assemble in their own comfort groups where they are most likely to converse in the English language. There are other evident dissimilarities within the church community for observing personalities, interests, worldviews and differing interpretations of the Christian faith.

Second, the more fluent Samoan speaking cohorts are more likely to aspire to important positions of status such as church minister, lay preacher and deacon. The younger generation on the other hand, commit to communal groups demanding less individual responsibility and cultural obligations such as the choir and youth group. The seeds of the CCCS in New Zealand were sown more than fifty years ago, but the flourishing of the church

⁶²Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 8.

is questionable if New Zealand-born Samoans are not committing to positions such as *faife'au*, lay preachers or *tiākono*.⁶³ This will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Sadly, essentialism is at the fore when the differences are overlooked by church leaders and decision makers with the objective of maintaining the status quo. While the migrant community is geared to preserving elements defined by the Samoan Christian identity, the New Zealand-born generations have been influenced by ideas and perceptions of the multi-faceted world and tend to be more open to a growing awareness of cultural overlap, hybridity and the need for change in theology and ministry.

In relation to the Samoan language, the challenge for the church is whether it should continue to preserve the Samoan language as the only means for communication, or be open to bilingualism. Explicitly, the basis of my response is linked to two key features. First, the motivation to preserve the Samoan language is not shared by all members of the congregation. Evidently, many aspects of the Samoan culture and church are becoming less meaningful as a motivational practice and spiritual haven for New Zealand-born Samoans because the gap of linguistic and social differentiation will not be bridged.

Despite the attempts of the traditionalists to enforce strict measures for the use of the Samoan language, the reality is that most of the New Zealand-born Samoans speak English, the language they feel comfortable with on a regular basis. While the development of teaching and promoting minority ethnic languages is steadily becoming acceptable in society at large, bilingualism in the view of the CCCS can be contentious and disruptive in its experience.

Second, for many New Zealand-born Samoans, the Samoan language can be viewed as a turn-off because it is attached to cultural protocols and practices, biblical interpretations and Samoan church traditions which they perceive as unfavourable or irrelevant to the contemporary context. Some examples that come to mind are oratory language, excessive

⁶³ Grey Lynn CCCS have several New Zealand-born deacons based on the initiative of their recent church minister to utilize their gifts for church service. Outside this congregation, not many churches have a New Zealand-born lay preacher or deacon.

monetary offerings to church operations and caring of the *faife'au* and *fa'alavelave*.⁶⁴ In particular the tendency to question excessive monetary offerings and *fa'alavelave* foster an attitude of avoidance participating in these practices.

Some say that the *gagana Sāmoa* is 'taught less in the traditional strongholds.'⁶⁵ The *gagana Sāmoa* and cultural activities are very much part of the Sunday School curriculum and church programmes. The real issue, particularly in the minds of the younger generation, lies around the value and usefulness of the language. Are the school examinations or job interviews conducted in the Samoan language? What is the value of the Samoan language? The Samoan language may serve as a medium for temporary participation in the church, but the lives of New Zealand-born Samoans are very much subsumed by the English language.

6.6 Oratory language: expressions of the cultural elite

Oratory language is considered formal language because it is used in formal ceremonies such as the *ava* ceremony, funerals, weddings, a celebration of an opening of a church building to name a few. Regarded as the talking chiefs' dialect, it demands an eloquent, articulate speaker with a good knowledge of village genealogies and Samoan proverbs. This is important because a formal address or speech given by an orator enters into an arena of analysis by other orators and listeners. In other words, it is commonly understood that the general success or failure of a ceremony can be determined by how well an orator speaks and how well an orator runs proceedings. Like a form of art, the vernacular in Samoan oratory is uniquely poetic and figurative, making it uniquely distinctive from everyday conversation.

Within the church community many of the chiefs, including orators, offer their services to the church as lay preachers or deacons, an indication of the deeply entrenched relationship between the Christian faith and Samoan culture. The use of oratory language in many aspects of the church can also be problematic for many church members who are not chiefs or deacons

⁶⁴ Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 10. Tiatia translates *fa'alavelave* as 'extended family commitment

⁶⁵ Amanda Fisher, "Samoa language under threat in New Zealand Promoting their Mother Tongue," *The Dominion Post*, June 07, 2010, A14.

so do not understand the specific format. Here, a distinction is made between the Samoan language as a ‘language for social communication’ and a ‘language for communicating cultural traditions, rituals, myths and customs.

Stephen Krashen gives a comprehensible account of my ‘language for communication versus formal language’ analysis. He makes a distinction between language acquisitions as opposed to the process of language for learning. For language acquisition, linguistic ability and fluency in speech is developed natural and subconsciously in the process of everyday communication.⁶⁶ Known also as implicit knowledge based on the spontaneous methods of acquiring knowledge, this form of language development does not enable the user to explicitly explain or articulate the formal rules.⁶⁷ Language for learning, therefore involves attaining the formal processes of linguistic competence by way of learning the explicit knowledge of rules associated with the language.⁶⁸

Samoan oratory and the cultural protocols associated with the language are imperceptible because they are physically, mentally and spiritually detached from the contiguous signs that animate, or bring to life the Samoan language. Many of the proverbs come from a specific context such as fishing, the plantation fields, nature, relationships within the family, service, authority, or ethical conduct. From these everyday experiences object lessons are formed for the immediate context. What is problematic here is that the context described in formal language is alien to many New Zealand-born Samoans. Without explicit explanation of oratory expressions, there is little sense and meaning in language. Instead of fishing, planting taro or serving the chief, the everyday experiences of a New Zealand-born Samoan would mostly likely evolve around Smart phones, computer games, surfing through Facebook and playing sports.

A similar effect occurs in sermons when *faiife’au* and lay preachers use oratory language in their sermons. The advantage of the usage of flowery, oratory nuances is that it

⁶⁶ Taumoevalau, “The Role of Second Language,” 46.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 47. See also H.D. Brown, *Principles of language learning and teaching*, 4th edition (New York: Longman, 2000), 285.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 46.

brings to the fore a creative and meaningful Samoan understanding and biblical interpretation. It is creative because of its poetic nature, and meaningful through the application of indigenous images and perceptions to the gospel message. On the other hand, oratory language and expressions compromises the preached word by catering only for a designated group that understand the cultural vernacular, while ignoring others. The pulpit should serve the purpose of preaching and teaching the gospel message to the congregation. As Tomlinson and Makihara write, ‘Sermons are key sites for tracing articulations among texts, performances, and broad patterns of ideology and practice.’⁶⁹

In the CCCS, many Sunday sermons promulgate theological teachings geared towards a certain ideology that in effect, encourages particular practices. As exponents of biblical knowledge, church traditions and cultural understanding, many *faife’au* are cleverly able to prepare sermons that encourage church practices manifested as God’s will. The belief has become evident in the CCCS that the more you give, the more blessings you receive from God. Of course, this theology benefits the recipients of the giving!

Hunkin offers a traditionalist view by endorsing the relatedness of language to the indigenous, cosmological signs and expressions. He states:

...the fullness of that truth is mitigated by the fact that asserting “Samoan-ness” is ultimately rendered redundant if one is unable to articulate the nuances of that Samoan-ness, most of which are best captured and made apparent through the Samoan language-Samoan terms and expressions.⁷⁰

The relevant question here is whether there can be many shades of what is considered Samoanness. To the traditionalists, the original and authentic expressions reflect the fullness of truth. But in a continually evolving contemporary world where migration, transplanting, intercultural, cross-cultural, multicultural, multifaceted, hybridity and many other forces are at play, the idea of relevance becomes increasingly significant. This leads us back to the question of the value of language. Is it the same for all members?

⁶⁹ Tomlinson and Makihara, “New Paths,” 23.

⁷⁰ Hunkin, “To let Die,” 208.

The Samoan communities in diaspora, especially the CCCS, opt to preserve the Samoan language and culture through its largely Samoan speaking worship, Sunday School curriculum, church related cultural programmes and the endorsement of a rigid 'no English speaking' environment. Taking this into account, one could argue that the incompetent speakers of the Samoan language, notably the New Zealand-born Samoans feel marginalised and oppressed as they do not meet the expectations of the community.

The Christian message is therefore delivered to competent speakers, while the New Zealand-born generations become victims of misunderstanding. Unfortunately, the people who are talked of as the future of the church end up finding a church community they are comfortable with, or leaving the church altogether. The inherent belief of those who preserve the Samoan language is that it will survive. Language is the key element which should be the bridge between the generations, on the contrary, it forms a barrier that seems unbreakable. Like the tortoise, it may seem slow and ineffective but in the long run it can win! Really?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Coconut water: a fixed or fluid identity

In Chapter Six, one of the major emerging issues that reflect the growing influence of the Western world on local Pacific cultures and churches was addressed. More specifically, the gradual decline of indigenous languages and the pervasive dominance of the English language are part and parcel of the changing dynamics in the diaspora community.

The objectives of this chapter are to explain how gospel and culture are intertwined, and how perceptions with regards to their interaction are continually changing in a globalized world. The phenomenon of globalization and its effects on Christian identity have become an increasingly popular area of study in contemporary theology. In the context of this research, some of the key questions raised concern how traditions of the CCCS and Samoan Christian identity face the challenges of globalization. Another connected question looks at whether the coconut water, which symbolizes the Samoan Christian identity be preserved. As new questions arise in the modern world, new solutions are required by the church to make the gospel a living reality.

Taking into consideration the objectives of this chapter, I will look at the challenges of the local churches and contextual theologies in a globalized world from the perspective of intercultural and ecumenical theology. I will examine how the effects of changing attitudes in light of globalization influence the perception of Christian identity and tradition. This broader ecumenical vision, developed from my research ten years ago in Bossey, in addition to the extensive literature on cultural studies will help to get a sharper view concerning the questions raised above.

7.1 Globalization: promoting a Coca Cola identity

At the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, 1998, the Christian Churches recognized the pervasiveness of globalization as an economic, cultural, political,

ethical and ecological issue in the life of the world.¹ The inevitable effects of such a phenomenon at all levels of life have generated concern from the church, contemporary theological research, and across various academic disciplines.

Globalization as a concept carries with it various nuances. An attempt to construe a comprehensive description of globalization is a complex task because of its multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary disposition. Lewis saw the task as problematic because globalization is used to ‘mean different things for different people.’² For this reason, only specific explanations to align our frame of interpretation to the focus of this thesis will be alluded to. Most of the focus will be aimed at the effects of the profound interconnectedness between the global and local contexts, and how these connections are made possible via the various avenues such as media culture, mass communication and global capitalism. For the moment, other pertinent theological issues such as global economic injustices, worldwide poverty, global ecological destruction, and many others, will be set aside in this investigation.

The imagery of the Coca Cola bottle in recent chapters has referred to the diversity of New Zealand society as challenging the authenticity of the coconut water identity. This chapter widens the scope of the Coca Cola world to include the growth of connections between people on a global scale.³ Through globalization, people become more able physically, legally, culturally, and psychologically to engage with each other in one world, and therefore ‘no given relationships can remain isolated or bounded.’⁴ It extends the effects of modernity throughout the entire world via communication technologies that create a network

¹ WCC Executive Committee, *The Harare Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1998* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1998).

² Donald M. Lewis, “Globalization: The Problem of Definition and Future Areas of Historical Inquiry.” in *A Global Faith: Essays on Evangelism and Globalization*, ed. Mark Hutchinson & Ogbu Kalu (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998), 26-27. Lewis notes that Marshall McLuhan initially came up with the idea of a ‘Global Village’ in 1960, but the concept did not become a popular term until the 1980’s.

³ Terry Pouono, “Coconut Juice in a Coca Cola Bottle. In search of an Identity: A New Zealand-born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World,” *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* 45, no. 2 (2013): 177-181.

⁴ Emmanuel Clapsis, “The Challenge of a Global World.” in *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation*, ed. Emmanuel Clapsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 47.

for information flow such as the Internet.⁵ It is a trend whereby various kinds of global relations emerge, proliferate and expand. Time and space in a metaphorical sense, can either be enlarged or compressed as local and global forces continually interact.⁶ As a result of this phenomenon, social geography gains a planetary dimension. “Place” comes to involve more than local, provincial, country, regional, and continental realms. With globalization the world as a whole also becomes a social space in its own right.

Inevitably, manifold identities from a multicultural society may conflict, as identities convey multiple meanings. The quest for an identity, therefore, may not be clear-cut, and confusion can surface in the minds of individuals. The vast influences of global media culture are evident upon all localities in time and space, as a kind of invasion forming ‘ambivalent cultural settings’ generating uncertainty and vulnerability for many.⁷ The effects of media culture on the everyday experiences of all people can be immense.⁸

The globalization of markets is levelling out differences, and changing the way people dress, eat, entertain and express themselves.⁹ The media foster this process by interacting with their audiences.¹⁰ Television, for example, conveys images of religions, conflicts, business enterprises and various forms of entertainment. Feelings, emotions and ideas are involved in the interaction between media and the audience.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the influence of media culture as an invasive force in my own home is profound. My children find great motivation in watching children’s programmes on a daily basis such as *Barney*, *Sesame Street* and *The Wiggles* as well as movies

⁵ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 9-10.

⁶ Robert J. Schreiter, “Globalization, Postmodernity, and the New Catholicity.” in *For all people: Global Theologies in Contexts. Essays in Honor of Viggo Mortensen*, ed. Elsie Marie Wiberg Perdersen, Holger Lam and Peter Lodberg (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 17.

⁷ Clapsis, “The Challenge,” 57.

⁸ Theo Witvliet, “Christian Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective.” in *Christian Identity in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Martien E. Brinkman and Dirk V. Keulen (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2003), 171.

⁹ Jorge Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 53-54. Rieger calls this process the erasure (or Trivialization) of differences. See also Craig Ott, “Conclusion: Globalizing Theology.” in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 312. Ott calls this process ‘cultural homogenization’ and sees the significance of local theologies in promoting diversity.

¹⁰ Dafne Sabanes Plou, *Global Communication: Is There a Place for Human Dignity?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 6-9.

like *Frozen* and *Spiderman*. The entertainment factor, educational insights, colourful characters, and the fascination with musical fantasy and fictional superhero status generate emotions beyond the television screen.

In response to the animated and fictional characters portrayed through media, children are easily lured to the bait exhibited in clothing, toys, books and other forms promoting various media programmes. Through media culture, my children have been greatly influenced by these images that have invaded my home. My wife and I, as the adults of our home, are also influenced and we too, have our own interests to choose from the media and elements of the global market. Media are important, yet complex factors in the development and reproduction of culture, forums where consensus and dissent take shape. These influences on a local or national basis are a microcosm of the wider picture. How this affects Christian identity will be discussed later.

Regardless of the different experiences encountered, the immense pressure imposed by globalization formulates an exposure to cultures beyond a person's own comfort zone and may possibly represent a loss of cultural identity. Vernon White writes,

Change here is rampant, and its consequences for identity felt more keenly than before. There are major, rapid and interconnected changes in information technology, globalization, work and employment practices, consumerism, family structures, all of which affect us deeply, ambivalently, and at every level.¹¹

It is difficult to imagine that in some way or other globalization has not influenced other Samoan people worldwide, even those back in the homeland. Samoan people in an active or passive way are in touch with the world. It is remarkable to note the changes that have occurred with the advancement of modern technology and communication systems. In Sāmoa, nearly all households are in possession of a television set and radio and are connected to electronic power systems. In one of my recent visits to my father's family home in the village of *Siumu*, it was evident that my relatives in Sāmoa had a habit of returning from an overseas

¹¹ Vernon White, *Identity* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 2.

trip with an electronic appliance. The lounge room in our family home had two television sets, three dvd players and two stereo players!

For Samoan migrants to New Zealand, the multicultural society alleviates one's perception of a fixed identity to an opportunity for openness in other dimensions.

Globalization intensifies this exposure by expanding and compressing boundaries in time and space. Even though Samoans in New Zealand aim to maintain their cultural heritage, living in New Zealand demands assimilation to facets of Western civilization for survival. If the migrants perceive New Zealand as the land of opportunity, they must be opportunists and take risks by discovering and experiencing new dimensions in order to keep up with the times. The radiating effects of globalization erase or form new identities.

For the diasporic Samoan church, all facets such as the language, the mode of worship, the communal living, the clothes worn, the practices adhered to, attitudes and behavioural patterns connected with the *fa'aSāmoa* have been influenced. These elements are the crux of what forms and moulds the Christian identity of a Samoan. Indeed, a way of life that diverges from the *fa'aSāmoa* may cause change. From an extreme level it may entail not going to church, or rather attending a church that speaks a foreign language and accommodates aspects of Christianity foreign to a Samoan. This will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Eight.

7.2 Culture...like water flowing from the mountains

I can remember my time as a postgraduate student in Switzerland being intrigued by the beauty of the Swiss mountains and in particular watching the water flow through different channels connected to Lake Geneva during the spring season. Water is a vital natural resource for the survival of human existence and indeed the whole of creation. The images of the water flowing freely symbolize to an extent, how I perceive the significance of culture in a person's life.

Culture as a concept is like a facial expression. It has many nuances, with even the expression of widening eyes and a gaping mouth speaking volumes. One could say that this

kind of facial expression can even be triggered if one were asked to define culture! Like globalization, it would be difficult to find one simple definition of culture, though Sebeok provides a concise, exhaustive definition of culture as ‘superficially different representations of one abstract culture, human culture.’¹²

Charles Kraft, an evangelical Christian and anthropologist forwards a definition conveying the notion that culture is moulded, shaped and modified in relation to the surrounding environment. ‘Culture is the integrated system of learned behavior [sic] which are characteristic of the members of society and which are not the result of biological inheritance.’¹³ The things people make reflect the ideas and the moral dispositions they carry within themselves. Kraft’s view of culture as an integrated system of learned behaviour reveals the interdependence of a relationship between the whole human existence and an evolving creation.

Along the same lines of the sociological analysis, many years before Kraft, Richard Niebuhr had emphasized the role of the human in the interaction with nature. Culture is the ‘artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural.’¹⁴ Culture is the work of human minds and hands. The world so far as it is human-made and human-intended is the world of culture, and the world of culture is a world of values. What humans have made and what they make is intended for a purpose, it is designed to serve a good. The values with which these human achievements are concerned are predominantly those of the good for humanity. Culture is ‘inextricably bound up with man’s life in society; it is always social.’¹⁵ Culture is social tradition, and its *telos* is to seek to combine peace and prosperity, justice with order, freedom with welfare.

¹² Ben Knighton, “Christian Enculturation in the Two-Thirds World.” in *Global Christianity: Contested Claims*, ed. Frans Wijsen and Robert Schreier (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 57. Quoting T. Sebeok, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987), 165.

¹³ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 46.

¹⁴ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row Publications, 1951), 46.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The Anglican theologian Kathryn Tanner, sees the significance of investigating cultural studies for renewing contemporary theological thought. She explores the basic elements of modern meanings of culture from a cultural anthropological perspective. To summarise her views, culture is a universal element shared by all humans though it is an aspect marked by diversity. In other words, ‘all people have culture but they do not all have the same one.’¹⁶ Connected to the previous line of thought, Tanner specifies the diversity of ethnic groups in the world; culture is what distinguishes one group from the other. Within each social group, affirmation is substantiated by social consensus and a way of life characteristic to that ethnic group. This way of life, in agreement with Kraft’s view, is a human construction. Tanner also considers culture as a ‘traditional inheritance’ or ‘customary behavior’ [sic] passed down through the generations. Ethnic groups that coerce traditional aspects of culture animate social determinism by moulding the character of its members to the idiosyncracies of that social group.¹⁷

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a developmental psychologist who proposed an ecological systems model which stresses the significance of environmental systems and its direct or indirect interactions with people. The ecological system explains an individual as being shaped and moulded by surrounding social influences, the inter-relationships with social agents who act as determinants in forming one’s identity in a specific culture. Bronfenbrenner conveys the significance of the interaction of environmental systems in the formation of individuals’ value systems.¹⁸

By contrast, Jens Loenhoff, a philosophical anthropologist proposes a semiotic definition of culture in three dimensions. First, it is ideational in that it provides systems of meaning to interpret the world; it embodies beliefs, values and rules for behaviour. Second, it is performance that entails rituals, which in turn bind members together in a participatory manner by the enacting of histories and values. Third, it is material characterized by the

¹⁶ Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 26.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26-28.

¹⁸ Jennifer Watling Neal and Zachary P. Neal, “Nested or Networked? Future Directions for Ecological Systems Theory,” *Social Development* 22, no. 4 (2013): 723-726. doi: 10.1111/sode.12018.

artifacts and symbolizations that become a source of identity, for instance, language, food, clothing, music and the organization of space.¹⁹

The common view among these various perspectives on culture is to be found in its role for providing systems of meaning to interpret the world.²⁰ Without culture people have no identity. The image of the water flowing freely to Lake Geneva signifies fluid movement, symbolizing the shifts of meaning or changes in the interpretation of culture. It is a fact that we live in a world continually in motion, and the activity of a living creation involves the transformations of many aspects of life are continually going on.

The similarities to and/or differences between human beings are recognized by cultural characteristics such as language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, rituals and ceremonies of a certain society.²¹ Each ethnic group in the world distinguishes itself from another by pointing to differing physical habitats, resources, social organizations and historical phenomena.

After providing different views of culture from a Western lens, I feel it is necessary to contribute a Samoan voice for comparative purposes. Many aspects of the Western perspectives embrace the Samoan belief of what of culture encompasses. For instance, Niebuhr's view of culture as a social tradition pursuing peace and prosperity is analogous to the overall objective of the indigenous belief- *teu le vā* which was explored in Chapter Two. Kathryn Tanner's cultural anthropological viewpoint of culture to some extent, bridges the understanding between the Western ideas of culture and the *fa'aSāmoa*. Her understanding of culture as a way of life can be applied to the *fa'aSāmoa*, which is the 'total make-up of the Samoan culture.'²²

As examined in Chapter Two, some of the features of the *fa'aSāmoa* are courtesy and diplomacy, respect for elders and parents, a conventional means of accepted social behaviour

¹⁹ Quoted by Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 29.

²⁰ Clifford Geertz, ed., "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5. Clifford Geertz pioneered the approach to culture-as-meaning.

²¹ Plou, *Global Communication*, 41.

²² Pa'u Tafaogalupe III Mano'o Tilive'a Mulitalo-Lauta, *FaaSamoa and Social Work within the New Zealand context* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2000), 15.

with regards to walking, talking, sitting and standing, the use of the Samoan language, understanding Samoan protocols, humility, knowledge of the Samoan worldview and how Samoan people think, the social structures of the family and village, Samoan identity and ethnicity.²³ Samoan traditional culture involves preserving relationships and performing roles that are crucial to fulfilling peace and prosperity in a family or village environment.

The social practices and attitudes observed in the *fa'aSāmoa*, like many other Pacific cultures, are connected to the cosmological and spiritual realms. This element distinguishes the origin of Samoan culture from those of Western ideologies. According to Samoan indigenous beliefs, the origins of the *fa'aSāmoa* were gifted from the pre-Christian god-*Tagaloa-a-lagi*.²⁴ The belief is maintained with the acceptance of the Christian God. All aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* integrated with the Christian belief are believed to be a gift from God.

The Samoan culture, therefore, is an important facet of the Samoan identity. The role of an individual or community in identity formation becomes increasingly significant in multicultural and diverse contexts. What it means to be Samoan, and to live as a Samoan Christian, is enacted in the Samoan community and church both in Sāmoa and diaspora communities. For Samoans in a village setting, there is a strong sense of familiarity and cultural sameness with others in the community. On the other hand, for the diaspora Samoan, life is more complex with inter-ethnic difference and conflicts. This is the kind of world discussed in many theories concerning globalization.²⁵ These are the points of tension that highlight the 'Coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle.' The effects on one's identity may differ depending on the response of the individual to various external influences. I will now look at the concept of culture in consideration of post-modernity and globalization.

²³ Ibid., 15-16.

²⁴ Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 36.

²⁵ Bryan S. Turner, "The Concept of the World' in Sociology: A Commentary on Roland Robertson's Theory of Globalization," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31, no. 3 (1992): 312. doi: 10.2307/1387120.

7.3 Integrated concepts of culture

Robert Schreiter addresses the complexities of the concept of culture in light of post-modernity and globalization. He makes a distinction between integrated and global concepts of culture.²⁶ Both concepts of culture are very much alive in the world today, though they are contrasting systems in time and space. Schreiter in his analysis of both the integrated and global concepts of culture sees positive and negative effects of both systems of thinking.

The 'integrated' concept or the functionalist approach to culture is a quest for order and understanding where everything within society makes sense, and has meaning.

The patterned nature provides a sense of recurrence and sameness that gives to those who participate in the culture a certain identity...The coordination of the different patterned systems gives rise to a sense of organic connection among the parts.²⁷

Much of its credibility comes from the common experience of living in one's own culture. The strengths of the concept are marked by the idea of an integrated whole and its struggle to achieve a greater organic unity serves a firm base for values. The image of unity brings a sense of consistency to the different elements that make it up. Furthermore, Schreiter states that such a concept of culture,

...seems to fall in line with cumulative, conjunctive ways of thinking...knowledge is arrived at not through ever greater analysis, picking and pairing away more and more of the idea until the core is revealed, but by a careful ordering and balancing of things until nothing is left out.²⁸

This kind of outlook is common in many oral cultures. The transmission of oral tradition in for example, the Samoan indigenous culture, is a dynamic process, in the sense of the ordering of things in a coherent manner from generation to generation. 'Wisdom is valued above analysis. Harmony is sought, rather than differentiation.'²⁹

The force of this concept is its ability to focus attention on the specificity of cultures. Integrated concepts of culture may be seen as an objection to the more pessimistic aspects of

²⁶ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 47-59.

²⁷ Ibid., 48.

²⁸ Ibid., 50.

²⁹ Ibid.

modernity and the capitalism that fuel it. The struggle for unity and harmony goes against the viable force and the fragmenting propensity of capitalism. 'Culture's integrating, centripetal tendency be-speaks a certain holism that stands against the fragmentation of mass society.'³⁰

Schreiter refers to well known British sociologist Margaret Archer in order to point out certain weaknesses of the concept of culture, referring to it as 'the Myth of cultural integration'. According to Archer this concept of culture lacks clarity in articulating the vibrant energy of cultures and their interaction with other systems within society. The concept was analyzed from a sociological perspective as being

...more aesthetic than analytic in quality...culture swings from being the prime mover (credited with engulfing and orchestrating the entire social structure) to the opposite extreme where it is reduced to a mere epiphenomenon (charged only with providing an ideational representation of structure).³¹

Many of the local churches in a multicultural context find themselves trapped in a web of parochialism. It is my view that the CCCS ministry in New Zealand is no exception. Its reluctance to explore the many virtues of the global church that may benefit her Christian witness leads to many imbalances. Newbigin warned of the process of the 'domestication of the gospel' in Western and non-Western cultures.³² Furthermore, Robertson coins the process as 'Relativization.' The term implies that in a world where there is a greater sense of interconnectedness between different ethnic groups, the effects may result in adherents of these groups feeling threatened by the co-existing situation of living in close proximity.³³ For that reason, ethnic and cultural communities may become more relative and self-contained.

In a parochial community, the centripetal focus can be totalizing particularly in cultures with a hierarchical structure. Exclusion or restraint may be imposed upon minorities who do not fit in the integrated whole. They are governed by a process of indoctrination through accepting the supremacy of the dominant elite as common sense. The concept can be

³⁰ Ibid., 49-50.

³¹ Ibid., 50-51.

³² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans, 1987), 144.

³³ Roland Robertson, "Globalization and the Future of Traditional Religion." in *God and Globalization: Religion and the Powers of the Common Life*, ed. Max L. Stackhouse and Peter J. Paris (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2000), 59-60.

criticized for its stagnant and fixed nature, which may not account for conflict and change based on the idea that it is a normative consensus.³⁴ It works more readily with fixed patterns of culture than with cultural change that defies integration. The issue of relativism of the CCCS ministry in a global world will be discussed more in Chapter Eight.

7.4 Global concepts of culture

In the 1990s, much sociological research was done ‘about the increasingly interconnected character of the political, economic, and social life of the peoples on this planet.’³⁵ According to Schreiter, this process is characterized by three converging phenomena: a multi-polar world, global capitalism and communication technologies.³⁶ Space and time are important concepts in the literature about globalization. What is meant by global concepts of culture?

As a reflection on the tensions and pressures arising out of the globalization process, Schreiter also refers to two different but related concepts of culture in a globalized world; these are found in postcolonial writing and in the literature about globalization. The first idea focuses on power contests in relationships. Culture is something to be constructed on the stage of struggle amid the asymmetries of power. The narratives of the dominant group who foster hegemony are scrutinized by minority groups, as ‘culture in this sense strives to establish a ‘third space’ between self and other, beyond colonizer and the colonized.’³⁷ Joerg Rieger, a theologian and activist against exploitation of economic and political power, identifies globalization as a channel for the expansion of power and control across geographical boundaries penetrating into foreign aspects of life. This movement asserts a ‘top-down’ power control over all aspects of life, animated by those who benefit from the movement who are, more explicitly, the elite minority.³⁸

³⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *The Concept of Social Change: A Critique of the Functionalist Theory of Social Change* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 2.

³⁵ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁸ Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 5.

The process also suppresses alternative means to the ‘top-down’ dynamic, which particularly at a cultural level erases, or at least lessens in one way or another diversity and power at a local level. Examples of the ‘top-down’ forms of globalization may be identified in history through the formidable efficacy of the Roman Empire that emerged as a sociopolitical and military force in the first century AD, the Spanish Conquests of the sixteenth century and German Fascism under Hitler and the Nazi Regime. On the other side of the scale, the Christian persecutions, enslavement and massacre of Native Americans and the Jewish Holocaust marked the unjust and cruel intentions of these control-driven regimes.³⁹

In the contemporary world however, global expansion may not be advanced primarily through violent means. Rather, globalization extends the effects of modernity throughout the entire world via communication technologies that create a network for information flow such as the Internet.⁴⁰ Hegemony, as intellectual domination, is possibly strengthened by the growth of a global mass culture. Globalization is the trend whereby various kinds of global relations emerge, proliferate, and expand.

Here, the second perspective stresses globalization as a fluid process. Networks of communication, symbols and patterns are circulated through various regions and through the whole world itself. Paul Gilroy uses the term ‘Cultural flows’⁴¹ denoting elements and symbols that are transported through global networks, promoted through commercialization and/or media culture that affect cultures socially and economically at different levels.

Schreier refers to hypercultures as an element ‘that moves in and out of local cultures...constituted as a culture itself only in the mind or in fantasy.’⁴² Hypercultures have been identified as global cultures based on production and consumption, which may have a homogenizing effect on clothing, food and entertainment. Several scholars of globalization

³⁹ Ibid., 5-14.

⁴⁰ Schreier, *New Catholicity*, 9-10.

⁴¹ Ibid., 54. A term advocated by Paul Gilroy.

⁴² Ibid., 55.

note that the erasure of difference and the elimination of alternatives in the local setting are perceived as common threats posed by the global market.⁴³

In this regard, the title of this chapter, ‘globalization promoting a Coca Cola identity’ reflects the pervasive force of cultural and economic imperialism.⁴⁴ The consequence of the resulting identity is called ‘Glocal identity.’⁴⁵ With the same idea in mind, Robertson uses the term ‘Glocalization.’⁴⁶ It denotes the process whereby globalization makes the local an aspect of the global and vice versa. It forces us to renew our thinking on the local, asking for new reflections on both the local and the global. Schreiter also states that global-local encounters are experienced by many in the world as asymmetrical, unequal and violent both literally and symbolically.

The term ‘disorienting’ is used, which Fernando Calderon calls ‘*tiempos mixtos*’,⁴⁷ denoting a situation whereby the pre-modern, modern and postmodern all exist together in the same place. Homi Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture*, gives an impression of ‘double vision’, the seeing of both the promises and the contradictions marking the encounter of the global and the local. Bhabha adds, ‘Culture becomes...an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival’.⁴⁸

If modernity aspires to material prosperity, personal freedom, better health care and greater opportunities for education, then globalization as deviating from the *telos* of modernity is a phenomenon of the postmodern era. Postmodernism emerges when the values of innovation, efficiency and technical rationality remain abstract ideas. The strengths of the

⁴³ Rieger, *Globalization*, 53.

⁴⁴ David Lyon, “Wheels within Wheels: Glocalization and Contemporary Religion.” in *A Global Faith: Essays on Evangelism and Globalization*, ed. Mark Hutchinson & Ogbu Kalu (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998), 51.

⁴⁵ Theo Witvliet, “Christian Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective.” in *Christian Identity in the Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Martien E. Brinkman and Dirk V. Keulen (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2003), 173.

⁴⁶ Robertson, “Globalization.” 64. Robertson corresponds the given concept with the Japanese word *dochakuka* which means something like ‘global localization’.

⁴⁷ Quoted by Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 55. See also Robert Schreiter, *Globalization, Postmodernity, and the New Catholicity*, 20. The idea of this concept derives from the situation whereby an inhabitant of the rural area migrates to the urban city. The new migrants take with them traditions and a pre-modern way of living. However, in order to survive in the new environment, the new migrant must adopt attitudes and practices of modernity.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

concept are found in its realistic connotations to life's struggles, awareness of and reflective action to the asymmetries of power and an openness to change.

Global culture reflects the experience of people living in a changing society. In a world of conflict, disorientation and fragmentation, every aspect of culture becomes a struggle in the production of meaning with the piecing together or the transposition from one context to another. As distinguished from integrated concepts of culture, it assumes change as the normal state of affairs. Its limitations are that as a theory it is still at an early stage of development. A second potential limitation has to do with the theoretical presuppositions that stress the agonistic nature of culture. It succeeds in providing a credible phenomenology of contemporary experience.

The question raised by Schreiter whether human beings and human societies are fundamentally, even ontologically, violent.⁴⁹ Schreiter denies this, but affirms that the world will continue to be violent with neoliberal capitalism as an integral element in the process of globalization. In his evaluation, Schreiter sees good and bad in both integrated and global concepts of culture. The 'in between world' is presupposed in many imbalanced relationships created by glocalization, whereas specifically in this research topic, the focus addresses the imbalanced dynamic of a New Zealand-born Samoan in a Samoan church.

Schreiter explains that perception of Western theology in the initial stages of contextual theology has changed in recent times.⁵⁰ What has happened to the meaning of context under the impact of globalization? How has context changed? The effects are major in that the perceptions of how cultures are reshaped and the consequences for theology are being changed. In light of our understanding of the global culture, the 'context' in contextual theology has uncertain boundaries, and will continue to change with the evolving world. The meaning of 'context' of a globalized world differs from the functional concept and reshapes

⁴⁹ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 58.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

our perceptions for theology. A globalized identity transcends the boundaries that enclose the Christian identity of contextual theology.

There are reasons for this. First, context has become deterritorialized. Boundaries today are not boundaries of territory, but of difference.⁵¹ The blurring of boundaries, or the vaporizing of traditional ways of doing things result from an intensification of cultural contacts and the oscillation of cultural shifts between the global and the local.⁵² Second, context is becoming hyperdifferentiated, a greater participation in different realities at the same time suggests that ‘there is multiple belonging.’⁵³ Third, contexts are more clearly ‘hybridized,’ and thus the complete ideal of a purity of culture in a globalized world is not realistic.⁵⁴ Theology as an investigation must be done within the framework of globalization in the light of post-modernity.

7.5 Integrated concepts of culture and theology

According to Schreiter, the influence of the integrated concept of culture can be seen in theology, as the functionalist approach provides the groundwork for contextual theology. Much of the pressure for developing contextual theologies has taken for granted the distinctiveness and coherence of culture. The suggestion therefore is that distinctive theologies can be formed.⁵⁵

The contextual forms of theology have arisen out of the essential need by its advocates and their diverse cultures to make sense of receiving the gospel message in their present context or environment. The traditional theologies of Europe and North America lack the impetus in expression of its content to a civilization alien to that of the Western domain. The

⁵¹ Ibid., 26.

⁵² David Lyon, “Wheels within Wheels,” 49.

⁵³ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 26.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 52-53.

theology of the ‘older churches’ was considered as irrelevant and inappropriate in making sense of the Christian message in local contexts.⁵⁶

C.S. Song, a theologian and scholar in Asian cultures developed the ‘theology of transposition’ indicating the process whereby traditional Christian understandings of the West are transposed into the local, non-Western contexts. For Song, the strengths of contextual theology enable new theological questions to be asked, and the reinterpretation of the Christian faith through fresh eyes, making it more relevant to a specific context. It is assumed, then, that theological questions and relevant interpretations vary from context to context.⁵⁷ This resulted in a shift in perspective and the development of newer theologies in local contexts, and the emergence of terms such as contextualization, localization, indigenization and inculturation.⁵⁸

7.6 CCCS Christianity like an ice boulder

Samoan Christianity, with its nineteenth century origins, followed by processes of indigenization, presupposes an integrated concept of culture. However, there has been no reflexive stance to promote the contextualization of its theology. Instead the traditions from the nineteenth century are preserved in the midst of changes throughout time. The indigenized gospel has become a form of Samoan Christian tradition. Even though the CCCS has become autonomous from the London Missionary Society, the structure of the church, along with many aspects of the liturgy and customs which emerged in the Samoan Christian culture, still follows the lines of the Protestant dominion.

Religious tradition, particularly in the CCCS tradition, values unity and harmony of the human community. The concept is appealing when religion continually searches for meaning and for the design of God in the world; what is sought is usually found. It is apparent that a

⁵⁶ Daniel J. Adams, *Cross-Cultural Theology: Western Reflections in Asia* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 82. Quoting C.S. Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Attempt* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1976).

⁵⁷ Adams, *Cross-Cultural*, 82-83.

⁵⁸ Schreiter, *Constructing Local*, 1.

centripetal form of religious tradition is able to deal better with issues of cultural identity than with the challenges of social change. Furthermore, it fails in conceptualizing the relationship between faith and culture.

‘How might Christian faith be inculturated in a new context without displacing some (integrating) aspect of that culture altogether?’⁵⁹ The culture of the evangelizer is often so closely identified with faith itself that the two become inseparable. This model represents the process of evangelization in Samoan Christianity. Although the culture was not displaced or destroyed through the adopting of many aspects of the nineteenth century Victorian era Christianity, there was a strong message equating Christian with Western.

The first generation of contextual theologies used integrated concepts of culture to help assert local identity, and integrated concepts continue to be very useful in this regard. At the same time, the mixing of cultures today requires additional approaches. Many groups such as feminists and liberationists see the benefits of global concepts in their efforts to address abuses of power, issues of oppression, dislocation, and survival. It signifies taking on a new position that may oppose traditional religious approaches to life with a focus on the moments of change rather than the moments of stasis. The question of Christian identity presupposes trying to find a valuable inculturation and trying to make the gospel a living reality in changing situations.

In contrast to the free flowing of water through the contours of Geneva, I would like to make reference to the images prior to the melting stage, with the deposits of ice boulders over the land. The deposits of ice boulders convey a static and fixed image as they were impossible to move and would take immense heat from the sun to melt. It symbolizes a stance taken by many local settings that have preserved a form of theology as something under their custody, a possession that is to be cherished and maintained. It poses the danger of forming something liable to be permanently fixed.

The preservation and maintenance of religious tradition is reflected by the image of an ice boulder. What do we mean by tradition? Tradition provides a set of codes within a system

⁵⁹ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 53.

whereby the basic messages of identity can circulate through a culture. Because of its complex inter-relating of stories, activities, memories and rules, it gives a sense of cohesion, continuity to a culture and the individuals who live within it. The cohesion means it all fits together, making sense. Continuity means that the solutions to problems can be counted upon to stay relatively stable over a period of time. Without cohesion and continuity, identity becomes an arbitrary posture at any given time.⁶⁰ Tradition presents a way of life, providing pathways on how to behave and how to think. It provides basic messages (values) and codes (rules), which relate messages (signs) to data in the environment.

It may be a sensible thing to say that traditions and customs may be found in culture; but culture as a changing phenomenon may differ in that aspect from traditions and customs. While culture adapts to changes, continually transforming and evolving as nature itself is continually in motion, tradition on the other hand is firmly based on the drive for continuity and coherence. Although the two concepts of tradition and culture are integrated in serving a common goal as people search for meaning in this world to affirm their identity, the different purposes of both in a world where boundaries are continually transcended and diversity is a reality must be recognized. That is, one is deeply rooted in continuity for affirming identity while the other aims to adapt to a given situation in time and space. The *fa'aSāmoa*, translated as the 'Samoan way of life' or even 'Samoan culture' is thus best illustrated as 'Samoan tradition'.

Tradition holds great significance to a human community.⁶¹ With an emphasis on coherence and continuity it is perceived as a communication system or the driving force for providing resources for incorporating innovative aspects into a community. This is a valid indication of the general ministry of the CCCS, and forms a motive within which both the church as a whole, and the individuals within it, find that selfhood called identity. Schreiter

⁶⁰ Schreiter, *Constructing Local*, 106.

⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

further affirms that identity is not a self-evident thing of nature. It needs that reaffirmation.⁶²

The threat occurs when culture is confronted with new data and tradition may be unable to accommodate the signs and basic messages, and consequently ceases to provide cohesion and continuity to a culture resulting in its breakdown.

7.7 Coconut water: an authentic witness?

How can the CCCS as a ministry be an authentic witness in the midst of a complex, global world? The reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ interacting with a specific culture is a significant historical experience in itself as Paul Crow, an American evangelist asserts ‘one way to interpret the twenty centuries of church history is to perceive the history as an interaction between gospel and culture.’⁶³ The discernment of this interaction in history, particularly with the objective of making the gospel a living reality in time and space is a daunting task for the visible church. Tradition and culture, although they belong together, are to be distinguished (as done by contextual and intercultural theology), hence the relationship between gospel (transmitted by tradition) and culture becomes a problem.

Different stages of handling this problem can be distinguished. Contextuality or inculturation looks for the presence of the gospel or Christ in a specific context or culture. The gospel is never outside the context or culture, but emerges through reading the context or situation in the light of that same gospel. The identity of the gospel or the Christian identity, then, is not simply given, but has to be discovered again and again with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The World Council of Churches’ Vancouver Conference in 1983 warned that ‘not all aspects of every culture are necessarily good,’⁶⁴ that there are aspects which deny life and oppress people. The Vancouver Conference stressed an increasingly subjective criticism of

⁶² Ibid., 106.

⁶³ Paul A. Crow, “Ecumenics as Reflections on Models of Christian Unity,” *The Ecumenical Review* 39, no. 4 (1987): 11. doi: 10.1111/j.1758-6623.1987.tb01433.x.

⁶⁴ James A. Scherer, “Salvador- Bahia 1996: What will it mean?,” *International Review of Mission* 84, no. 334 (1995): 227. doi: 10.1111/j.1758-6631.1995.tb02702.x.

missionaries for imposing a culturally bound proclamation on other people leading to a new ecumenical agenda, in search for a theological understanding of culture with various cultural expressions of the Christian faith.⁶⁵ The questions raised by the Vancouver Conference were: What cultural changes take place in receptor communities (local churches) when they are transformed by the gospel? How is local witness enhanced when faith and worship are inculturated or contextualized?⁶⁶

One of the challenges faced by the World Council of Churches is its continual wrestling with the gospel-culture interaction, developing and reassessing its mission criteria according to the needs of a changing world. The Conference for World Mission and Evangelism in Bahia-Salvador in 1996 saw the need to probe the fresh possibilities inherent in the gospel and culture relationship, especially in the light of globalization.⁶⁷ It was noted that the gospel both challenges and is challenged by the cultures in which it finds itself. The theme of the conference was 'Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures.' This theme was explored around four foci: Authentic witness within each culture; gospel and identity in community; Local congregations in pluralistic societies; and One gospel-diverse expressions.

The aim of the conference was 'to help churches and Christians to live and witness authentically, to equip for mission and evangelism in diverse cultures.'⁶⁸ The conference pressed for inculturation and contextualization in the context of globalization. It was acknowledged that there was a need to go beyond uncritical acceptance of words such as contextualization and inculturation, and explore the fresh possibilities inherent in the gospel and culture relationship. An investigation was carried out concerning the authenticity of Christian witness within cultures. It was seen as the central missiological question regarding the content and message of the gospel in relation to the diversity of cultures.⁶⁹ The necessity of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 232.

⁶⁷ Christopher Duraisingh, "Looking Towards Salvador," *International Review of Mission* 84, no. 334 (1995): 203-209.

⁶⁸ Scherer, "Salvador- Bahia," 223.

⁶⁹ Duraisingh, "Looking Towards Salvador," 206-207.

confessing Christ as specifically as possible with regard to cultural settings is important.

Scherer comments,

...we can say that Jesus Christ does not make copies; he makes originals... We need each other to regain the lost dimensions of confessing Christ and even to discover dimensions unknown to us before. Sharing in this way we are all changed and our cultures are transformed.⁷⁰

The tendency to see the gospel or Christ as transforming culture⁷¹ seems to be the main outcome of Salvador-Bahia. However, the inherent danger of this approach is that the gospel or Christ seems to be perceived as something 'given', a fixed depositum for which the church in its mission is responsible. The gospel or Christ only has to be adapted to the different cultural settings.

In a globalized world, the Salvador-Bahia Conference saw the importance in seeking further clarification in its search for authentic witness, within the diversity of cultures in a globalized world, one where globalized concepts of culture claim to unify the world into a single system. The centripetal claims are made by the global market and media with the promise of integration and uniformity of the world into a new order. 'McDonalds and MTV are the new, powerful symbols of a promise toward this new world...behind the promise lies the dangerous desire to create the cultural values necessary to material consumption.'⁷²

The question however remains what Christian identity means in this complex world. The question is whether the Salvador-Bahia Conference has really perceived what is at stake when using terms like contextualization and inculturation. The question is not how to adapt the gospel to different contexts or cultures, but how to discover the presence of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in situations of conflict, injustice and violence.

⁷⁰ Scherer, "Salvador- Bahia," 226.

⁷¹ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 190-229.

⁷² Duraisingh, "Looking Towards Salvador," 8.

7.8 Coconut water: a fixed or fluid identity?

Schreiter's book, *The New Catholicity* addresses the issues of the changing world which are reshaping theology. He states that 'Theology stands today between the global and the local.'⁷³ Globalization and its aims for homogenizing challenge many local theologies, which in turn may offer resistance. A theology of culture should focus on the moments of change rather than on the moments of stasis. In the process of forming new identities globalized culture is a study in surprise, to expect the unexpected as these are moments of risk and change.

Schreiter affirms that globalization causes ambivalence with the project of modernity in creating personal autonomy at the expense of traditional values and relationships. He further states that it is in this ambivalence that we must theologize, 'in a force field in which people are at once attracted and repelled by modernity. Western culture through the spread of modernity creates powerful homogenizing systems that function in many countries.'⁷⁴

This may require the need to address the asymmetries of culture, signalling the imbalance of power relations, but it may also mean seeking new possibilities. While integrated concepts of culture are seen as helping to assert local identity, the mixture of cultures requires additional approaches. In recent times the presupposed Christian identities of a contextual nature are becoming fragmentary and syncretistic in a pluralistic world. Various challenges and questions demand attention and renewal. Christian identity becomes problematic when the boundaries that formulate the divisions become ambiguous and fluid.

For more clarity on the complexities of the notion of identity within a cross-cultural setting, the writings of the Dutch theologian, Theo Witvliet will be discussed.⁷⁵ He presents Christian identity as a questionable concept, because identity is fluid in a cross-cultural context as a result of the continual interaction and convergence of a number of factors. A fixed form of Christian identity has become a perplexing problem, particularly in light of the effects of globalization and media culture.

⁷³ Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, ix.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 57.

⁷⁵ Theo Witvliet, "Christian Identity in Cross-Cultural Perspective." in *Christian Identity in the Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Martien E. Brinkman and Dirk V. Keulen (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2003).

It must be noted that Christian identity in a cross-cultural perspective has been a concern for the Ecumenical movement, as it strives for a universally accepted Christian identity which transcends boundaries of cultural difference and theological disparities. It has however become questionable whether a common Christian identity or visible unity will ever be possible, particularly in the light of new trends and experiences.

As the world is continually in motion, the ecumenical vision of visible unity becomes a distant reality. Witvliet directs attention to the inescapable power of external factors he claims as affecting not only the society on a local scene, but on a global scale because of the immense influence of globalization and media culture.⁷⁶ The present resurgence of identity politics is a sign that identities are in crisis because of cultural changes and transitions.⁷⁷

The ambivalent nature of an identity in light of permanent change is affirmed by Witvliet, 'Identity, therefore, has become fluid, pluralistic, fragmentary and syncretistic. In a world full of conflicting interests and loyalties, it is no longer possible to see oneself as an autonomous subject with a clear and stable identity.'⁷⁸ I would add that Witvliet's use of mixing metaphors that seem contradictory, may be valid assumptions and generalizations in different cross-cultural settings. In other words, fluidity makes a lot of sense for Samoan identity, while the other metaphors may reflect other identities.

The instability is inevitable, for as history evolves, change constantly shapes us individually, corporately, biologically and socially. It touches on the raw spots of our being. As a defining feature in most elucidations of time and space, the changes in effect form an identity, an element feasible as a consequence of the evolving world. The constant reforming of an identity in a cross-cultural perspective is a perplexing issue with various factors being suggested as causing this problematic phenomenon.

Witvliet's perception of a fluid identity reaffirms the belief that Christian identity in a cross-cultural perspective is a complex phenomenon. He asserts that a fixed Christian identity

⁷⁶ Ibid., 171-174.

⁷⁷ Emmanuel Clapsis, ed., "The Challenge of a Global World." in *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 49.

⁷⁸ Witvliet, "Christian Identity." 173.

or image is not possible since all we say or do is provisional and not definite. In contrast to the conclusion drawn by Witvliet, the Samoan Christian identity can be said to be fixed in definite categories, like the traditions of the *fa'aSāmoa*. Lived Samoan reality is more complex than the notion of *fa'aSāmoa* can encapsulate, but it marks a moment of definition and (temporary) completeness that defies the supposedly endless fluidity. If humankind is made in the image of God, then an invisible image to human sight conveys the difficulty of having a clear fixed image, or identity. If fixed Christian identity is regarded as an unachievable goal, then what does it mean for humans, if we are made in the image of God?

The success of asserting a Samoan Christian identity is dependent on a tradition that strives for continuity and coherence. It is an approach that takes precedence over transformation or renewal. Regardless of the various interpretations of culture, which in itself is continually re-interpreted, the twenty first century opens up new mysteries and surprises. Humanity must expect the unexpected. The times of holding on to something dear, such as identity, are moving beyond our grasp.

If identity is a dynamic process involving everyday changes, then culture is not a stagnant identity.⁷⁹ It can never exist only in terms of tradition, for it is bound up with peoples present and future.⁸⁰ Globalized concepts of culture might also enable us to discover a fundamental biblical insight because such concepts stress the crisis of identity and its fragmentary character. Identity is never given, but does have an eschatological dimension. 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.'⁸¹

The eschatological, mysterious dimension of Christian identity makes us look to God's future. This Biblical insight could be of liberating importance for the CCCS. By looking to the past, tradition or some aspects of tradition, making absolute what in fact is relative, then the gospel becomes an idol. If they discover there is no faith without hope (the eschatological

⁷⁹ Plou, *Global Communication*, 41.

⁸⁰ World Council of Churches (Pacific delegation), ed., "The Pacific Youth Perspective on Economic Globalisation" in *Island of Hope: A Pacific Alternative to Economic Globalisation* (Fiji: WCC Publications, 2001), 106-107.

⁸¹ Hebrews 11:1.

dimension), then they might feel free to investigate everything new and keep what seems right in light of the biblical witness.

Coconut water: a fixed or fluid identity? The inquiries directly challenge not only the CCCS, but also all churches in a globalized world. What does this say about the Samoan Christian identity, a conception of cultural and spiritual roots that are outward expressions of the deeper reality of blood relations? How will the CCCS deal with tradition and Christian identity in changing circumstances? These questions will be addressed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Out of place: the voice of a NZ-born Samoan theologian in the CCCS

The previous chapter examined the importance of the connection between gospel and culture in the context of this research. More specifically, the chapter demonstrated how the concept of culture is continually changing in a globalized world. Fixed or fluid identity? Preserving tradition or transformation? Contextual theology or global church? This will be discussed further in this chapter looking at the stance of the CCCS.

The first part of the title of this chapter, ‘Out of place’ is borrowed from a book edited by Jione Havea and Clive Pearson.¹ The book presents stories of individuals and groups of persons who are ‘out of place where they are...their place is out of place, some because of fate, some because of choice, exclusion, discrimination, oppression, and so forth.’² One of the objectives of the authors is to seek to bring ‘out of place’ subjects into place by letting their voices be heard.³ In this chapter, my goal is to voice my opinion; a voice that has been suppressed for many years due to *teu le vā* and *fa’aaloalo* to my church and family. I write this thesis because I want to first and foremost, *teu le vā* with God and show *fa’aaloalo* to my calling as a servant in His ministry. It is my contention that critical theological reflection is needed for the CCCS to be a relevant and authentic Christian witness in the world today.

In this chapter, I give a personal reflection as someone who feels ‘out of place’ in the CCCS. I feel ‘out of place’ in many ways. First, I am a New Zealand-born Samoan caught between two different worlds, the Samoan world and the complex, secular world. Second, I am an ordained minister of the CCCS who does not feel completely at home because of my limitations in the formal Samoan language and limited knowledge of cultural traditions. Third, the ambiguities of my Samoan Christian identity are formed by the fusion of an insider’s perspective as a Samoan in the CCCS, and an outsider’s perspective developed from academic knowledge and outsider experiences. Fourth, I feel ‘out of place’ based on feelings of

¹ Jione Havea and Clive Pearson, *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Cross-Cultural Brink* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd 2011).

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid., 2.

discontent with church practices that have deviated from the core biblical teachings. Last but not least, the diasporic CCCS in New Zealand is ‘out of place’ by ignoring, to some extent, a Christian witness and mission that is relevant on a national and global scale.

In my quest to discover fulfilment from a sense of being ‘out of place,’ I will examine aspects of the CCCS traditions that deviate from the gospel message in more detail. My theological reflection does not come from a vacuum, but from sound knowledge of growing up in the CCCS in New Zealand, as well as studying theology in Samoa and abroad. My synthesis of the historical and theological experiences gives me a basis for proposing some practical suggestions to the CCCS ministry in New Zealand.

8.1 CCCS ministry: boxed in

An enclosed box conveys an image of being fenced-in or confined. It may be used for storing important documents or objects, safeguarding it from danger for a long period of time. This imagery of confinement symbolizes the centripetal, parochial focus of the CCCS in protecting something precious, which in effect closes itself from pursuing its mission to the world. As previously discussed, this line of thought may be seen in a positive frame of mind as a means of securing a sacred, Christian identity.

The CCCS in New Zealand adopts an essentialist view of culture and identity,⁴ viewing changing social realities as a threat to their identity, thus opting for exclusion. As highlighted in Chapter Seven, the determination in preserving tradition leads to essentialism and relativization.⁵ The erasure of the local culture and difference is one of the concerns about globalization as a phenomenon where global socio-cultural hegemony is at force. For the CCCS, a fear of losing something precious in an evolving world creates the natural mechanism to isolate and safeguard a sacred commodity. Namely, this commodity is its belief system,

⁴ Emmanuel Clapsis, “The Challenge of a Global World,” in *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation*, edited by Emmanuel Clapsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 48.

⁵ Roland Robertson, “Globalization and the Future of Traditional Religion,” in *God and Globalization: Religion and the Powers of the Common Life*, edited by Max L. Stackhouse and Peter J. Paris (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2000), 59-60.

epistemological knowledge, ideologies and practices. As a consequence, faith communities outside the CCCS tend to be looked at unfavourably.

The traditionalists of the CCCS inherently believe that Samoan belief systems and values are gifted from the divine and reflect the highest good for any Samoan. In situations when younger generations transgress or discard these values and belief systems, the blame is usually pinned on the influences of modern technology in advancing secular, Western ideas and values. These alternative ideas are considered a threat by providing choices different from that of Samoan Christianity.

The traditionalists still use the expired tag from the nineteenth century. It is a reflection of a fixed identity in a fluid world. The fixed, established ideas entrenched in the minds and hearts of the traditionalists would be difficult to remove or change. This is illustrated by pessimistic perceptions of modern technology. For example, gadgets such as smart phones and I-pads, and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, are at times condemned as evil because they threaten the old ways.

Alternatively, rather than any sense of fear or loss, pride and assurance in their religion contributes to a sense of superiority to the extent that other churches are perceived inferior to Samoan religious knowledge and experience. This mentality is another expression of the conviction that the Samoan way is a gift from the divine. For this reason the core components of Samoan Christianity, its liturgy, cultural protocols, language and its theology are protected from external influences.

Moreover, parishioners of the CCCS, particularly the traditionalists have immense pride in the historical achievements of the church. Parishioners love to share stories about John Williams and the London Missionary Society who first spread Christianity to Sāmoa. It was the London Missionary Society, with the help of some of the locals who translated the Bible into Samoan. Mālua Theological College was the first theological seminary to be built, in 1844, and holds the reputation as the premiere theological institution in Sāmoa. The Samoan Congregationalist pastors, or the *faiife 'au*, are trained at Malua which is known to offer

education at the highest level and thus holds a prestigious position in the Samoan church and society. The parishioners also take pride in the fact that the CCCS is the largest Samoan church.⁶

The perpetuation of existing tradition leaves little room for change and renewal and the human spirit becomes restricted and confined.⁷ The stagnant ministry suffocates the fervour, charisma of the spirit, and divine gifting of God's church. It also prevails over the intention of working on a mutual basis in accomplishing ecumenical initiatives. The Samoan Christian identity remains intact to Samoan people as long as the CCCS chooses to stay within its comfort zone, rather than transcending boundaries that threaten the coherency and continuity of tradition.

In today's society, social changes are forcing the CCCS to renew its thinking about society. New questions need to be asked in order to discover true witness in relation to different social issues. The task is a difficult one when the CCCS chooses to box itself in, content with its position in relation to the world. Without the presence of the outside experience (world), a local church runs the risk of turning in on itself, becoming self-satisfied with its own achievements.

8.2 What is a relevant mission for the CCCS in the twenty-first century?

Prior to the impact of modernity and post-modernity, the church-centred approach of the CCCS ministry and the relaying of the gospel message were perceived as meaningful to the Samoan people. A church-centred understanding of mission as planting churches and saving souls, which was closely intertwined with colonial expansion and the missionary enterprises of the nineteenth century, is still utilized by the CCCS. The main purpose of establishing Malua Theological College was for the evangelization of the Samoan people. The catalyst for this

⁶ Besides pride in historical achievements of the church and its cultural heritage, there are many other pertinent reasons for sticking with the CCCS tradition. For instance the maintaining of family affiliations with the church, choosing a local congregation with established infrastructures, the location of a church in close proximity with the family home or the choice to maintain ties with a *fai'feau* who may be a family relative.

⁷ Schreiter, "Globalization, Postmodernity," 26.

process was to train Samoan teachers to cater for the increasing demand for Samoan pastors in village parishes.⁸

Today, the diaspora CCCS still respects these convictions. Evangelization of the gospel message, channelled through preaching, worship and teaching programmes remain the core mandate of church. This suggests that evangelism takes precedence over Christian mission. It raises the question why there is any need for change. Such a question assumes that preserving traditions provides an authentic Christian witness for the CCCS.

Another way of viewing this issue may be reviewed by asking whether the CCCS is capable of reacting efficiently to these challenges. With its conservative stance, the CCCS has shown a lack of responsibility and leadership in social, economic, and political issues. The CCCS and many migrant churches from the Pacific have been accused of adopting a passive stance. Manfred Ernst, a German researcher at Pacific Theological College in Fiji writes that they,

‘...exhibit a lack of vision which has kept them as passive spectators of an increasingly unjust socio-political order. At the centre of any vision should be the poor, the exploited, those in need, and those without voice or power.’⁹

Vaitusi Nofoaiga, a teacher at Malua Theological College is critical of what he calls ‘traditional discipleship’ in the Samoan church where parishioners are obligated to make sacrifices to the church. In effect this practice places families in positions of social and economic marginalization.¹⁰ Social issues such as suicide, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, underachievement in schools, economic hardships for families, excessive gambling and other problems are overlooked by the church.

It raises the question as to where the prophetic voice of the church is. These issues are not secluded, sporadic problems uncommon to the church. In fact, they contaminate the crux

⁸ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapidly growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands* (Suva: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1994), 167.

⁹ Ibid., 287.

¹⁰ Vaitusi L. Nofoaiga, “Towards a Samoan postcolonial reading of discipleship in the Matthean gospel” (PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2014), 49-52.

of the church community, its very own people. Tiatia noted in her research on Pacific Islanders' suicide rates in New Zealand the alarmingly high ratio of victims of Pacific suicide victims compared to other ethnic groups. These issues are taboo in Pacific cultures and Tiatia believes that 'suicide prevention strategies must include spiritual and religious components.'¹¹

In the event of a dilemma, the role of the church community is limited to consoling the individual or groups affected through communal prayer and pastoral visitations. But how can the church be a more relevant witness in these situations? The church must first act as a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. There needs to be an acknowledgement that these issues require a prophetic witness and a call to mission. For this process to take effect there also needs to be an acknowledgment of the limitations of existing traditions in dealing with new challenges, and a need for further social-theological analysis and praxis.

Cultural taboos also need to be de-stigmatized, removing barriers that may restrict measures for seeking help.¹² For the CCCS, there needs to be a reassessment of its function as a faith community and theological stance in dealing with new challenges. For effective mission, the church must be critical of a distorted theology that justifies oppression and discrimination.¹³ Christian mission is synonymous with evangelism but is much broader in scope. The objective of Christian mission is to carry out the responsibility for promoting hope, justice and peace in situations of political, social and economic injustice. In twenty-first century ecumenical theology there has been a shift to understand mission as an attribute and activity of a Trinitarian God. Participation in God's saving activity, or *Missio dei*,¹⁴ is understood as bearing witness to God's love towards all people and working for the promise of God's reign.

¹¹ Jemaima Tiatia, A Pacific Response to Suicidal Behaviours (Video), Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand <http://www.spinz.org.nz/resourcefinder/listings/resource/552/a-pacific-response-to-suicidal-behaviours--dr-jemaima-tiatia/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Darrell L. Whiteman, "Anthropological Reflections on Contextualizing Theology in a Globalizing World." In *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 60.

¹⁴ James A. Scherer, "Salvador Bahia 1996: What will it mean?" *International Review of Mission* 84, no. 334 (1995): 226. The theme for the 1952 CWME Conference in Willingen Germany was 'Mission under the Cross' and *Missio Dei* was a term that opposed the church-centered approach to mission, and stated it as a mission that belongs to God.

Mission is ecumenical because it has the universal Christian community as its horizon, through which God wishes to demonstrate his love and justice to all nations. The world is recognized as the horizon of mission. This opposes the prevailing notion of the church as owning mission. The primary aim of *Missio dei* is the realization of the full potentialities of all creation and its ultimate creation and unity in Christ. Therefore mission is not primarily about church planting but about generating and nurturing shalom. The concept of shalom has multiple meanings, but the common element describing its fundamental component is the implication of right relationships with God and between people.¹⁵ The goal of mission is the promotion of the Kingdom of God and of the church as its symbol and servant. 'The church is not the ark of Salvation, but a dynamic community that is called and sent to serve God in God's own mission of building up God's reign in the world.'¹⁶

8.3 CCCS pastors: preservers of tradition or agents of change?

The role of a pastor is important in any Christian church. The CCCS is no exception. The *faife'au* has many roles including preaching, teaching, sacramental ministry, pastoral visitations and counselling. Furthermore, the pastoral office incorporates an advisory role and juridical functions, though his main task involves the spiritual formation of God's church. The *faife'au* is also informed in Samoan culture and traditions.

From a theological-cultural perspective, the *faife'au* is considered 'o le sui va'aia o le Atua'¹⁷ the personal representative or substitute of the biblical God looked upon as the mouthpiece, as an intermediary between the village and the God they worship.¹⁸ Imoa Setefano, another Malua teacher translates this title as 'an embodiment of God'¹⁹ and Danny

¹⁵ Steven Schweitzer, "The Concept of *Shalom* in the Book of Chronicles." In *Struggles for Shalom: Peace and Violence Across the Testaments*, ed. Laura L. Brennenman and Brad D. Schantz (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 104.

¹⁶ Michael Amaladoss, "Mission." in *Dictionary of the Third World Theologies*, ed. Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 144-145.

¹⁷ Literal translation: "Visible mediator of God."

¹⁸ Derek Freeman, "Manuscript XV: On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa," *The Journal of Pacific History* 39, No. 2 (2004): 24.

¹⁹ Imoa Setefano, "*O le faifeau*- The Servant of God: Re-defining the *faifeau* paradigm of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa" (Master's thesis, University of Auckland, 2008), 33.

Ioka, a former Malua teacher sees it as the ‘visible ambassador of the divine will.’²⁰ As leaders of the church, they are perceived as the examples of Christ and of the gospel. It is a role loaded with pressure and great expectation of the Samoan people.²¹ Success or failure of the ministry is largely dependent on the ability of the *faiife’au* to manage church affairs.

The *faiife’au* has various titles and he is addressed in an honorific manner. One example of a title given to the *faiife’au* is the *Ao o Fa’alupega*. This translates as ‘clouds of the genealogical order.’²² If the *fa’alupega* or genealogical line denotes a status assigned only to the chiefs, or *matai*, then the *Ao o Fa’alupega* indicates an elevated, sacred status given to the *faiife’au*. The *faiifeau* are the elite, elected by divine calling, revered under Samoan cultural beliefs and respected by the church. Setefano writes,

The elevation of the *faiifeau* to such a status has inevitably elevated the understanding of *faiifeau* in this way in relation to God. Therefore the *faiifeau* can be understood as the “highest point” closest to God...which supersedes even the traditional privileges awarded to the highest chiefs of Samoa.²³

In Chapter Two, the concept of *teu le vā* which means to preserve harmonious relationships was discussed. Another significant aspect of *teu le vā* is the need to respect sacred spaces or *vā tāpuia*. The Samoan indigenous belief emphasizes that the protection of sacred covenants and taboo or sacred restrictions would result in peace, good fortune, growth, prosperity and the continual preservation of harmony with other elements of the cosmos. Conversely, the violation of the *vā tāpuia* results in misfortune, poverty and chaos.

The church parishioners, or traditionalists believe that by respecting and honouring God’s chosen mediator, they are respecting the *vā tāpuia* or sacred spaces. At the same time, the *faiife’au*, knowing they are perceived as mediators of God, use the *vā tāpuia* belief system to preserve, perpetuate and reinforce their power and status. The elevation of pastors as cultural and theological elite has generated concerns about the issue of power and human

²⁰ Danny Ioka, “Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S.) in Aotearoa New Zealand” (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 1998), 31.

²¹ Feiloaiga Taule’ale’ausumai, “Pastoral Care: A Samoan Perspective.” in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, ed. Philip Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997), 222.

²² Setefano, “O le faiifeau,” 29.

²³ Ibid.

accountability in church leadership. As with other social issues, these concerns tend to be kept under wraps in order to preserve harmony within the church.

The question of how power is applied, and to what degree, varies from *faiife 'au* to *faiife 'au*. Some may use it positively to enhance harmonious relationships with others. However, many use *teu le vā* for their own benefit and exploit relationships with others of lower status in the hierarchical ladder in cultural and church positions. The top-down arrangement of the CCCS shakes the foundation of Congregationalism by switching the power base that should actually belong to its people, the congregation.

One way the *faiife 'aus* power is imposed is through the preaching of sermons. As a medium of communicating biblical messages, the sermon is a central focus in CCCS worship. It can be a viable tool for influencing the hearers of the message. Propaganda comes to the fore when the biblical message is presented selectively, or partially to encourage a particular message. For example, the emphasis in giving to God's church and respecting traditional spaces is given greater emphasis than the ethical teachings of Jesus and His ministry for the marginalized of society.²⁴ This is common sense if the pastors are benefactors of financial offerings (church giving). Why would you preach a gospel of the marginalized, if the marginalized are the very people contributing to your 'love offering'²⁵ and paying your bills?

Theoretically, the nature of God and His plan for salvation is central to the preached gospel message. In reality, this theological belief encourages church praxis that translates to the accumulation of riches of His human representative the *faiife 'au*, who becomes the recipient of many material blessings from the church. In discussions about globalization, the dominant global forces has been criticised in theological circles for suppressing the minority and the marginalized. Yet, within the local context of the CCCS, the idea of a top-down dynamic in relationships has become an unchallenged, hidden agenda to honour the sacred spaces of the *vā*.

²⁴ Nissen, "Mission and Globalization." 36-37.

²⁵ Love offering is a translation of '*alofa*'. The '*alofa*' is a financial contribution given to support the Samoan pastor. In many Samoan churches, this offering is given on a fortnightly basis.

The elite *faife'au* contribute to the danger of absolutism if they continue to decide for others what is appropriate and what is not. Rieger writes: 'The only thing achieved here is the universalization of a particular relativity, namely the relativity of the elite.'²⁶ In line with this mode of thought, many *faife'au* of the CCCS adopt a conventional stance within the ministry, conforming to existing patterns developed by the local church and seeking harmony with the actual preservers of that tradition.

Samoan Christianity in the modern era has been characterized by the size and glamour of the new church buildings, *faife'aus* houses, some of which cannot be distinguished from the church, and excessive amounts of financial contribution to church affairs.²⁷ The undisputable and absolute belief in the status of a *faife'au* as an 'embodiment of God'²⁸ or a 'divine ambassador of God's will'²⁹ contradicts the biblical image of a pastor caring for God's flock, serving with love and compassion. The belief that promotes practices leading to *faife'aus* Beverly Hills-like lifestyles is distorted theology and even a kind of heresy.

Moreover, if the family units make up the Samoan church, then features of Samoan Christianity may also be characterized by the burden of paying off a mortgage, families losing their homes, struggling to provide basic necessities for the family, children forced into the workforce instead of pursuing higher education, crime and other social issues. If the centripetal focus of the CCCS in expanding infrastructure takes priority over a mission-oriented focus, then an image of a church as a healing community and providing hope for its people is a distant reality, since it does not touch base with the realities of life.

It is my contention that the starting point of the problem is the demands of the Samoan church and cultural obligations. A close family member shared with me how the parishioners

²⁶ Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 58. Rieger calls the domination of the emerging elite in Contextual Theology as 'Soft Power.'

²⁷ Cultural exchanges are carried out in many formal ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, birthdays, the opening of a church or building, or a formal installation of a new *faifeau* to a congregation. It has become the norm that all *faifeau* present at the ceremony receive a cultural gift and the decision is made by the hosting congregation or family. Therefore, if for example forty *faife'au* turn up to a wedding, they all receive a gift. The minimum would be a financial gift, but if a family was capable, then fine mats and boxes of corned beef may also be given. The amount of money received and the quality of the fine mats depends on the status of the *faife'au*. These cultural obligations place a lot of financial pressures on the hosts.

²⁸ Setefano, "O le faifeau," 29.

²⁹ Ioka, "Origin and Beginning," 31.

would congregate in the car park after Sunday worship and joke about what they were having for lunch. Toast and butter...porridge...last night's leftovers would be some of the comments then they would guess what the *faiife 'au* would have and continue with cynical remarks. In spite of attempts by some of the *faiife 'au* and some local churches to alleviate the problem, those efforts will continue to be ineffective if it is not addressed on the larger scale.

Many times, the New Zealand-born generation and traditionalists (privately) have shown increasing discontent towards many affairs of the church, yet they can easily choose to avoid conflict. For the New Zealand-born and younger people, the choice may be based on a lack of understanding in church affairs and respect for the elders. For the elders, their position of authority is restricted by defined roles within the church and the *vā*.

When traditionalists express themselves by complaining and letting out their frustrations, in the absence of the *faiife 'au*, it seems as if they are released from a hypnotic trance. However, these emotions can be quickly restrained when they are reminded of their duty to respect the sacred spaces defined by the *vā*. These automated responses of being put in a trance again, are symbolic of their respect for spaces and relationships that were previously condemned. This is *teu le vā* in reality.

The respect elders have for sacred spaces within the church (*teu le vā*), and the *vā tapuiā* (with God and the *faiife 'au*) seem to be based on the idea of fear; that is, fear of violating spaces, of being cursed by God or the *faiife 'au*, of being excommunicated from church, or even fear of bringing shame to the family name. It may be a point of trajectory as to why many traditionalists at a Samoan community gathering in South Auckland, stated that excessive giving to the church was acceptable and thus directed the blame for financial hardships to non-church *fa'alavelave*.³⁰ It is also no mystery that the prophets conveyed by *faiife 'au* in their sermons are passive messengers of God's will, rather than revolutionary, aggressive and transformative agents fighting for justice and righteousness in an unjust world.

³⁰ Melani Anae, "Christian Politics in Samoa and Beyond: Indigenising Globalisation?" Paper presented at the Christian Politics in Oceania Workshop, (Melbourne, July 22-23, 2010), 2.

Reflecting back on the focus of this section, namely, whether *faiife 'au* are preservers of tradition or agents of change, it is evident that *faiife 'au* prefer to side with preserving traditions. One of the advantages in enduring with traditions is the convenience of being rooted in a lifetime of experience. As prospective *faiife 'au* go through formation and theological training, they enter their training with a richness of prior knowledge and experiences. In fact, the only real difference between a *faiife 'au* and a deacon in the church is the specialised theological training at Malua.

Malua Theological College equips prospective Samoan *faiife 'au* with knowledge of biblical studies, Hebrew and Greek languages, theology, church history and practical theology. It has historical prominence as an educational institution and therefore any graduate from the College is respected highly in church circles and by Samoans worldwide. A lot of focus is placed on pastors as academic achievers,³¹ and many pride themselves as elite theological academics alongside other secular professions in Sāmoa or abroad.

In recent times Malua Theological College has introduced new insights into the ministry with studies in Pastoral Care and Counselling, Christian Ethics and subjects that gear students towards understanding the ministry in a changing world. Despite these new initiatives, Malua's main focus is to prepare its graduates for the local ministry underpinning a greater focus on biblical courses, theology and its sermon class. These courses provide sufficient knowledge for what is needed in the crux of the ministry, namely conducting worship and preparing sermons.

It is worth mentioning that sermons in Malua are generally biblically and theologically focused, linked to concrete theological and biblical themes. Put it simply, academics are

³¹Liuaana, *For Jesus*, 60-62. Historically, Malua Theological College was well known in Samoa for providing the best education for the Samoan people, and only the promising students were selected. In 1844, the white missionaries settled into a routine of teaching subjects such as Scripture Instruction, Scripture History, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, astronomy and manual labor. Between 1944 –1994, Malua Theological College went through changes in academic standards, power and authority in the leadership of the college, changes in the outlook of the compound, and changes in its place and role within the Samoan church and society, and in the Pacific scene. Bradshaw, the Principal from 1956 to 1963 raised the standard of education in Malua. The introduction of new subjects into the curriculum saw a rise in the standard of education. Subjects such as Psychology, Pastoral Counseling, Homiletics and Greek were added.

encouraged to ground their sermons on themes that are Trinitarian, for example the love and grace of God. In the local churches however, many sermons may reflect theological beliefs but are very much geared towards a church-centred application as might be expected. The theme of serving the church is given more attention, instead of serving the Kingdom of God through His church. In fact there is more emphasis on the visible, rather than the attributes and universal plans of salvation of the Triune God.

This reflects a shift in theological interpretation when the ‘good works in the church’ type of spirituality is very much entrenched in parishioners’ hearts and minds. Many of the parishioners are experts in observing who is absent from Sunday worship, who gave how much, who joined this and who dropped out, who said this and who said that. The dynamics of community mentioned previously are the realities faced in the CCCS.

Another factor behind the *faiife’au* preserving tradition may be traced back to the fact that nearly all of the *faiife’au* looking after congregations in New Zealand are born and raised in Sāmoa. This fact contributes to intra-cultural favouritism with traditionalists and ignorance to disparity within the diasporic community. Many *faiife’au* lack the motivation and skills to embrace the intercultural experience with the wider social context. Setefano, a Samoan theologian raised in New Zealand reaffirms this idea. He states:

‘The reality of the *faiifeau* paradigm exists in honouring a contextual reality which is grounded not in the soils of Aotearoa New Zealand...upholding a commitment to continue realising [sic] the historical past in the present without consideration of the new context.’³²

The motto for a new *faiife’au* is to follow those who have come before you. The system is beneficial for helping one to follow existing guidelines and ways of doing things, yet it limits personal autonomy and the capacity to promote change by applying relevant ideas and practices. Other than the Minister’s Renewal Fellowship held annually at Malua Theological

³² Setefano, “O le faifeau,” 39-40.

College,³³ the *faiife 'au* seem to believe that renewing their education is not needed because the four years in Malua plus the experiences in the ministry are sufficient for their vocation.

Theological education is an aspect of the total ministry and mission of the church. It must be both faithful to the gospel and receptive to advances in the body of wider knowledge. So the gospel must be constantly re-read to render it relevant to people in time and space.³⁴ If the *faiife 'au* has the authority and knowledge to introduce change, it is of concern that risks are not taken to align the local church with the global world.

8.4 Sacrificial giving or giving wisely?

Financial offering is a significant aspect of the Samoan church and it is one of the practices that requires critical theological reflection. It is also another cause for debate between the older and younger generations. The inherent belief of the traditionalists is that these contributions are a sacrifice to God. This form of church practice is carried out in various ways from the *alofa*, *atina 'e*,³⁵ offering for visiting preachers, financial gifts for the opening of a church building or *faiife 'au*'s house, annual offerings for the mother church, donations to Sunday school, choir, youth fellowship and other ways.

The general theological understanding for financial giving is that through faith, one gives sacrificially to God. It is associated with the belief that the believer will suffer for the sake of the gospel, but through faith and perseverance, will eventually receive His blessings. Hence, for those who give sacrificially, the motivation to give vanquishes any thought of immediate financial anxiety and hardship for families because there is eminent hope with light at a later moment in time. This is distorted theology when financial prosperity flows one way and benefits the *faiife 'au*, while the parishioners continue to seek, or interpret God's blessings through other means in the midst of social and economic struggles.

³³ Malua Theological College invites *faiife 'au* and *a'oa'o Malua* around the world to a 'Renewal Fellowship' held at the College in August every year and seminar papers are prepared by staff of the college.

³⁴ Roswith Gerloff, ed., "Learning to Fly: An Introduction." in *Mission is Crossing Frontiers* (South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2003), 16.

³⁵ *Atina 'e* literally means 'to develop' and is distributed to the operations of the church for example the power bill. The *atina 'e* and the *alofa* are usually done on alternate weeks, but may differ from parish to parish.

From the perspective of the CCCS traditionalists, the crux of the matter is that strain is necessary and enduring it is a sign of good Christian character. Tiatia³⁶ provides a social-theological analysis to monetary offerings, stating that ‘the practice of the love offering made to the pastor places financial strain on the parishioners, providing young people with a motive to reject their traditional churches.’³⁷ The problem is not a new one, and it not only applies to the diaspora CCCS. The idea of contributions to the church creating financial burdens for families in Samoa was raised by Ernst in the 1990s.³⁸

I support Tiatia’s perspective, viewing the strain as unreasonable and un-Christian. I would also add that movement away from the CCCS includes more than young people, as financial pressures are actually drawing out many faithful traditionalists who are unable to meet the responsibilities of being a deacon within the church so are looking for a manageable situation. The ministry of the CCCS has often been criticised for being too materialistic. Materialism overhauls the mission-oriented focus by investing in buildings and sub-groups within the church, which to an extent comes at the expense of the people. The focus on fundraising events has taken priority over spiritual matters, which compromises an emphasis on Bible study and prayer meetings.

It seems as if the traditionalists’ act of giving is determined by an external obligation to give, rather than an act motivated by internal fervour and joy. Furthermore, giving as mentioned earlier, it is not just a ‘once a week’ contribution, but is done in many ways. Of more concern is the competitive nature of the practice. The amounts of money given to the church has increased dramatically over the years to the point where families are unable to slow down, stop and step back.

The practices of giving prior to the mass migration of Samoans abroad have been translated in the contemporary context. Rather than being reinterpreted to adapt to the needs of the context, the processes of cultural traditions are maintained but the symbols have been

³⁶ Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand-Born Pacific Island Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998), 143.

³⁷ Taule’ale’ausumai, “New Religions,” 185.

³⁸ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 169.

altered. For example, the lifestyles of *faiſe'au* in pre-modern times were very simple, and the *alofa* was a very small financial contribution from the church people. Congregations looked after their *faiſe'au* by providing other means resources such as coconuts, fruits, produce from the plantation and cooked food. Today, the same respect is given to the modern *faiſe'au* but the simple life has been replaced by the glamour of mansion-like homes, expensive cars and healthy bank accounts. Schreiter calls this process “re-traditionalization” and states that traditions are not returned and re-enacted in pre-modern ways, but are enlightened and translated in the postmodern context.³⁹

In view of traditional methods of giving, what suggestions can I make in the quest for a relevant theology for a just community? The belief in God’s blessing must be understood as both an abstract and concrete reality for all who are citizens of His Kingdom. Modelled by the life and earthly ministry of Jesus, the theological belief in receiving divine blessings must be complemented by the ethical witness of His believers. In this way, divine blessings are filtered down to the people and not subsumed by a few.

The belief of the Protestant tradition that the Kingdom of God is already present and is being realized in the course of history is based upon the passage of Jesus which stresses that the ‘Kingdom is among us’.⁴⁰ This was revealed in the earthly ministry of Jesus when he ministered to the poor, the weak and the marginalized of society. When he dined with Zacchaeus, fed the multitudes, healed the sick and gave hope to the marginalized, he was dining with, giving life, providing healing and granting hope for citizens of his Father’s Kingdom. The kingdom is ‘opened up to the outcasts of society, a world restored, and lives and people transformed. It is a vision also of final victory over the forces of evil.’⁴¹

In other words, the practice of giving with regards to the Kingdom of God in the 21st century is more than just giving money and being committed to the church. Giving to God, in

³⁹ Schreiter, “Globalization, Postmodernity,” 29.

⁴⁰ Luke 17: 20-21 (NRSV), ‘Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.’

⁴¹ Andrew Chester, “Eschatology.” in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 245.

a broader sense, encompasses a holistic view of God's ministry whether it is worshipping God in a meaningful way, feeding the homeless, promoting safe homes or providing basic needs for the family. The Kingdom of God is also manifested by ensuring quality education for children, providing employment for church members, having an awareness of ecological and health issues, gaining a secure future and a safer society, participating in global relief programmes and many other ways. The *faife 'au* are to be reminded that *Missio dei* entails service to God by leading His people faithfully. The call to be committed disciples is searching for someone who is willing to wash their feet, not stand on them.

8.5 Global and the local

Emmanuelle Clapsis poses the question of how to live our faith in the context of globalization.⁴² It is important to ask ourselves how we as Christians exercise our prophetic calling in witnessing to a free and reconciled human community in justice and peace in the face of dehumanizing forces of globalization that destroy identities and freedom of local cultures and groups.⁴³ The churches are challenged to participate in the questioning of the modern world by 'raising the right questions and developing the right pastoral strategies towards the creation of a just and peaceful world.'⁴⁴ If the church opts to be ignorant to the rapid social changes by not recognizing or putting forth valid and relevant enquiries, then it may be disputable if it is faithful to the Christian gospel.⁴⁵ The responses of the church are crucial in that they may offer meaning and expression and play the role of holding a person's identity.

⁴²Emmanuel Clapsis, ed., "The Challenge of a Global World." in *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 47.

⁴³ Christopher Duraisingh, "Gospel and identity in community," *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 336 (1996): 8.

⁴⁴ Clapsis, "The Challenge," 48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 49-52. As a result of the social interaction of forces, three forms of identity are formed in the building of the modern world. 'Legitimizing identity' entails accommodation to the dominant principles of society, whereas the forming of own principles in opposition to society outlines 'Resistance identity'. The more appropriate model according to Manuel Castell is the 'Project identity' as it conveys the illumination of a new identity in relation to the redefining of position in society. Clapsis proposes that to be an authentic witness of the gospel message calls for a negation of the dualistic viewpoint of reality.

The church cannot alienate itself from what is happening in the world because it is part of the world. The challenge for the CCCS is whether it will move out of its comfort zone. Naturally, common sense would say that the local church would commit more to familiar spaces and relationships, avoiding ‘personal estrangement’ in unfamiliar, impersonal and distant spaces.⁴⁶ In Chapter Seven, the concept of glocalization bridged the local and the global as mutually dependent contexts. Turning this idea in the direction of this investigation means asking how can meaningful connections between the *teu le vā* intra-cultural, contextual hermeneutic and the intercultural, global hermeneutic be fulfilled.

A new perspective of the Christian church in a global world is marked by a wholeness of inclusion and fullness of faith in a pattern of intercultural exchange and communication.⁴⁷ It provides a way of negotiating between the global and the local, recognizing the possibilities and perils of both. To negotiate the path in theology, we must be aware of how our world has been changing and what skills and practices are needed to understand, communicate and act within it. ‘Dialogue with our neighbour does not in any way diminish our full commitment to our faith. In dialogical interaction with others, our own faith is enriched, refined and strengthened.’⁴⁸ The American theologian and existentialist philosopher Paul Tillich makes a statement concerning the church as losing its significance as a faith community in many parts of the world,

History shuts and opens doors. It is history which has created the problem of the irrelevance of the Minister and not the inevitable deficiencies and failures of Ministers, Theologians and Church Authorities. And it is history, which gives the churches opportunities to restore the relevance of the Ministry.⁴⁹

Tillich affirms that if the church opens doors to history, it has a positive effect by learning from it. It is reasonable to say that churches do not have to comply, and if changes are good,

⁴⁶ Donald M. Lewis, “Globalization: The Problem of Definition and Future Areas of Historical Inquiry.” in *A Global Faith: Essays on Evangelism and Globalization*, ed. Mark Hutchinson and Ogbu Kalu (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998), 34.

⁴⁷ Schreier, “Globalization, Postmodernity,” 29-30.

⁴⁸ Report of the Moderator Aram 1, Catholicos of Cilicia, “Together on the Way” official report of the 8th Assembly of the WCC, 1999, 49-77.

⁴⁹ Paul Tillich, “The Relevance of the Ministry in our time and its Theological Formulation.” in *Making the Ministry Relevant*, ed. Hans Hoefman (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1960), 19-26.

the church might have to find different ways to uncover the new meaning of God in that change. There needs to be a prophetic voice calling for the ministry to move forward and to be creative. The challenge is to deal with the stumbling blocks that inhibit the CCCS from being more vigorous in its ministry.

For the CCCS to become a truly prophetic church, it is vital for tradition to deal with the problem of a complex, global world. The question of identity presupposes trying to find relevant, but always provisional, forms of inculturation and contextualization. There needs to be a better understanding of the complexity of intercultural communication, of the struggles for human and Christian cultural identity today. For the CCCS to be faithful as a diaspora church, the CCCS must make sense of her surrounding environment. The context, in contextual theology, needs to be re-contextualized within the globalized world. Rather than only telling stories about its history, there would be great value in sharing new achievements here and now.

A well-known *faiife 'au* and theologian, the late Kenape Faletese,⁵⁰ stressed that in order to preserve the identity of a Samoan Christian in the diaspora church, the CCCS must strive to be in line with the Word of God. He writes, 'The true nature of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa is very colourful, like a rainbow, and richly flavoured, like a fruit cake.'⁵¹ For the CCCS to be colourful like a rainbow or richly flavoured like a fruit cake, it demands creativity and innovation. It needs to move in line with the changing society and the demands of the situation. New soil and surroundings for the coconut fruit may not produce the best coconut water, keeping in mind the diverse nature of the New Zealand climate, the cooler airs, a different landscape, and more urbanized settings.

What must the CCCS do in order to be an authentic witness? I have already forwarded some proposals in this chapter. To be a vital, colourful church, the CCCS should change its stagnant approach and continue to re-evaluate the relevance of its ministry in time and space.

⁵⁰ The late Reverend Kenape Faletese served as a church minister in a New Zealand congregation and taught at Malua Theological College from 1951-1955.

⁵¹ Kenape Faletese, "Congregationalism in Samoa," *Pacific Journal of Theology*, no. 10 (1993): 95.

Schreiter proposes that the relation to context is always one of intimacy and distance. The universalizing function in theology is important and requires an ability to speak beyond its context, demonstrating an openness to hear voices from beyond its boundaries. ‘Theology cannot restrict itself only to its own and immediate context.’⁵² Local concerns must be complemented with global openness, keeping in mind the direction of Christianity began from Jerusalem and spread globally, drawing from Jesus’ mission mandate of Matthew 28: 16-20.⁵³

If the question “who is your neighbour” was asked to members of the CCCS, the answer would be people who are ethnically and physically close to them. Yet, we have access to news and see images of poverty, crime, broken families, ecological degradation, violence and many other problems facing the global world. In a call to reconcile a broken world, the CCCS is called to adopt a wider perspective and embrace our brothers and sisters of the multicultural society and global world. How can we care for our brothers and sisters in a globalized society?⁵⁴

The CCCS is called to conscientize their members about the interrelationships of the whole world about injustice, exploitation and dehumanization.⁵⁵ The churches are encouraged to co-operate with groups outside the churches and look for signs of the Kingdom of God at work, on behalf of those who are marginalized by the system of the neoliberal market. The total missionary task requires faithfulness to Christ and requires the church to come to grips with the social, political, economic and cultural life of the people to whom it is sent.

The CCCS need to be reminded that like many other local churches it started as a missionary movement, a dynamic that gradually diminished with the institutionalization of the

⁵² Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*, 4. See also Charles E. Van Engen, “The Glocal Church: Locality and Catholicity in a Globalizing World,” in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 157. Engen suggests that the twenty-first century church needs to become ‘glocal’ in its essence, in its theologizing and in its missional calling.

⁵³ Nissen, “Mission and Globalization,” 40. Nissen suggests that there needs to be a re-reading of the mission mandate from the perspective of Christianity as a global religion.

⁵⁴ Mark W. Scarlata, *Am I my Brother’s Keeper?* (Oregon: Cascade, 2013), 68.

⁵⁵ Patrino Dumar (Pacific Concerns Resource Center), “Economic Globalization and the Environment: What can the churches do?” in *Island of Hope: A Pacific Alternative to Economic Globalisation*, edited by World Council of Churches (Fiji: World Council of Churches Publication, 2001), 56-57. The Pacific churches play a crucial role in raising people’s understanding of the world around them and their attitudes towards it. As such, churches have a vital task in addressing the growing negative threats of economic globalisation in the Pacific.

church. It was our ancestors, the Samoan missionaries, who spread the gospel to Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Jamaica and other nations. These feats demanded great courage and passion. The mission of the church will always transcend boundaries and reach out beyond the accustomed boundaries for the sake of witness to the Lord. There may be a fear that the acknowledgment and the carrying out of new discoveries and ideas may be seen as a threat to the maintenance of the purity of the coconut water. On the contrary, I believe it could strengthen and inspire the CCCS to move forward and take more risks.

In March 2001, four delegates from the World Council of Churches visited the islands of Sāmoa and American Sāmoa to meet church leaders and discuss the need to develop new ecumenical leadership. In his key address to leaders in the two island states, Konrad Raiser stated:

We can no longer close our eyes to changes taking place in the transition to the 21st century. Reference to traditions alone will not help deal with these challenges. The fellowship of the WCC is the place where the churches in the two Samoas can build on the experience of others who have had to deal with similar situations. They do not have to deal with these challenges alone.⁵⁶

Raiser called on the WCC and its member churches to do everything possible to contribute to training future leadership in an ecumenical spirit. Asked by students at Malua College in Sāmoa about the role of the WCC in the twenty-first century, Raiser suggested that in the face of globalization, 'the WCC can be an instrument for churches to lobby on the world stage.'⁵⁷ He pointed to increasing contact among people from different faith groups, and said that such contacts require a fundamental rethinking of mission activities so that Christians can learn what it means to be part of a missionary church while at the same time respecting other faith traditions. Liturgy is worship and worship is not only what takes place in a church but in the world.

⁵⁶ Worldwide Faith News archives, *WCC General Secretary visits Samoa and American Samoa* (Submitted 27th March 2001) www.wfn.org (May 11th 2005), 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

8.6 Renewing attitudes of *teu le vā* relations

Renewal challenges Samoan Christian identity as an absolute principle. There would be a dilemma if a community with a previous local theology wished to renew aspects of its theology. For example, making changes to a liturgy with a long-standing tradition, which in certain situations has become a special mark of distinction and identification, may not be an easy thing to do.

Schreiter raises the question; ‘How does one respond to these realities of previous local theologies?’⁵⁸ They may be seen as obstacles, but may also serve as reminders of what the local church has struggled with in the past. Other connected issues that hold relevance for the ministry of the CCCS concern who it is that benefits from the preservation or change of local theologies, and why the intransigence of the elders contributes to driving out the young from church. It even suggests that the pride of the expatriate pastor is the main stumbling block.’⁵⁹ In short, my conclusion is that change must be made for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The CCCS may be afraid of admitting its inadequacies and limitations in offering solutions to societal problems and traditions that shape the Samoan Christian identity. The CCCS needs to stop looking for solutions to their problems and begin looking for prevention measures. In other words, the CCCS needs to be more pro-active rather than being stagnant by reacting to the same problems with old, ineffective solutions. The question is whether or not the church is afraid of what it will find.⁶⁰ As a consequence, many of the younger generation who have considered the church too traditional have been shovelled aside. Trying to bridge the intergenerational gap requires understanding and reconciling the differences between all participants.

According to Taule’ale’ausumai, ‘neither theology nor tradition is wrong. The problem with our parents’ model is that their generation believe that this expression of faith is true and

⁵⁸ Schreiter, *Constructing*, 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁰ Taule’ale’ausumai, “Pastoral Care,” 234.

right.’⁶¹ Based on what I have debated thus far, I would disagree with Taule’ale’ausumai because the parents’ model finds its source from theological expression promulgated by the *faife’au*, and tradition is the embodiment of that model. The parents do carry with them established beliefs, but it is my contention that *faife’au* have the authority, influence and knowledge to reform existing expressions of faith. Traditionalists remain traditionalists, as long as their existing forms of knowledge and organized spaces are left unchallenged.

In one way or another, there needs to be a renewal of attitudes. Biblical teachings which convey justice, healing and love must be continually re-interpreted into new contexts in time and space. If it is not reflected in the praxis of the faith community, then church traditions become meaningless. The problem of renewing attitudes may be an impossible task especially for the adherents of tradition, whereas younger generations are concerned about certain issues happening in society.

Paul Hiebert develops the idea of ‘critical contextualization’ informing a need for critical reflection and evaluation of local expressions of faith. The idea presupposes that there are aspects of cultural practices and beliefs inconsistent with new theological understandings in the midst of a rapidly changing world. Critical contextualization acknowledges good aspects of the local context, though the not-so-good are the subject of critical reflection to attune the community in line with biblical principles. Hiebert reaffirms that renewed local beliefs and transformed local communities cannot be isolated from the global world, and thus, must find meaningful ways to dialogue with the global church.⁶²

Dialogue with other global churches and an openness to take risks is crucial if the CCCS want to move forward with the times. This is preferred to dialogue within the CCCS which only leads to perpetuating old ideas or making changes for the sake of change and would most likely become ineffective in the wider scope of things. It challenges the traditional

⁶¹Taule’ale’ausumai, “New Religions,” 192.

⁶²Darrell L. Whiteman, “Anthropological Reflections on Contextualizing Theology in a Globalizing World.” in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 58.

teu le vā intra-cultural hermeneutic to open up to visions and initiatives of ecumenism and promote the *teu le vā* intercultural hermeneutic and relations.

The issue raised in Chapter Five of many former New Zealand-born members of the CCCS have moving on to new charismatic or multi-ethnic churches is a concern. Over the last forty years or so this has affected the first and second generations and is slowly eating away at the next generation. The social dynamics of the new churches are intercultural, thus catering for the spiritual needs that are not being fulfilled in the CCCS.

If the generation of today is continually searching for meaning within the Samoan church in New Zealand, the danger of losing identity as symbolized by the coconut water may be a reality for generations to come. If an identity is the people's source of meaning and experience, then the Samoan churches in New Zealand must be aware that identity is always fluid and bound to change. My proposals see the need for renewal in both and stress the importance of human endeavour in striving for the eschatological vision of hope. However, it is important to note that human effort has its limitations. The CCCS theology and practical ministry must open up spaces for the power of the Holy Spirit to guide, lead and inspire the visible church as we continue to seek the vision of a 'new heaven and a new earth.'⁶³

8.7 Thy Kingdom come: Christian identity as an eschatological reality

The CCCS is tempted to maintain a gospel that was historically moulded as its own, and consequently formed a supposedly fixed identity, that of a Samoan Christian. This concept negates change and presupposes a fixed identity regardless of time and space. The rapid pace of change on a local and global scale is straining our sense of identity often to the breaking point.

The paradox is that we are liberated by Christ and called not to worry about our identity. Precisely that is our Christian identity, one that transcends the local, the global and

⁶³ Revelation 21:5 (NRSV).

humanity.⁶⁴ If life is a pilgrimage, and identity is an eschatological reality, then the task of the Samoan church and faith communities worldwide is to point its people to the eschatological dimension, where there is no sense of time and no fixed boundaries.

The eschatological character of identity⁶⁵ is connected to the anthropological and historical, despite the uncertainties associated with an identity that because of our present human condition cannot be reached, fixed or absolutized. The petition ‘Thy Kingdom Come’⁶⁶ is Jesus teaching us how to pray. He is instructing us to affirm what is the real priority for humankind, his Kingdom and rule. It has futuristic connotations and entails an identity not looking to the past, but by looking to the future and therefore, Christian identity can never be fixed once and for all. The nature of the message of the ‘Kingdom of God’ is translocal, not limited to a place, or a people, or even a time. It transcends the local, it transcends humanity and all barriers so that the Lord reigns with authority over all his creation.⁶⁷

Identity is an eschatological promise, that indicates looking ahead to future expectations as sojourners. In the act of praying ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ our minds and hearts refuse to be bounded by stages and degrees. Life is a pilgrimage, full of adventure and risk, so that making a fixed image deprives us of future expectation and hope. The quest for definite answers or fixed solutions should be negated in favour of being always open to mutual challenges. Thus, through prayer and the ecclesiological dimension of the sacraments, Christian identity points to the eschatological hope for fulfilment of life.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Schreiter, “Globalization, Postmodernity,” 25.

⁶⁵ Witvliet, “Christian Identity,” 167.

⁶⁶ Matthew 6:10, ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ is the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer.

⁶⁷ Schreiter, “Globalization, Postmodernity,” 25.

⁶⁸ Terry Pouono, “Coconut Juice in a Coca Cola Bottle. In search of an Identity: A New Zealand-born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World,” *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* 45, no. 2 (2013): 183-184.

8.8 Conclusion

I would like to make reference to the idea of a magnetic force, which may be conveyed in the two magnets repelling each other if similar poles are pushed against one another. The force between the two magnetic forces reflects the dilemma many New Zealand-born Samoans are going through.

The picture of the coconut water in a Coca Cola bottle reflects this dilemma, the search for a Christian identity within the CCCS. The coconut water represents a tradition that preserves the Samoan Christian identity while the Coca Cola bottle represents complex structures whereby identity is always viewed as fragmentary or multiple, constructed and imagined. Torn between loyalty to tradition and the appeal for renewal, caught in a quandary of maintaining family ties or opting for individualism through a move to fundamentalism and relativism, the Congregational Christian Church Samoa faces the immense task of dealing with this problem.

The CCCS is challenged to make the gospel a living reality by continually renewing its traditions in changing circumstances. In trying to understand the radical message of the gospel, renewal must be relevant to the context, which demands an awareness of the people's situation in relation to their surrounding environment. The CCCS in New Zealand is called to take risks. The renewal of traditions may open up spaces and avenues to new possibilities and objectives. It does not denote the taking away of an identity that is vital to the Samoan people, but may further enrich this Christian identity as we journey into the 21st century. The question raised at the beginning of this research was whether by being faithful to the gospel message the coconut water, which symbolises the Samoan Christian identity should be preserved. Alternatively, must the CCCS in New Zealand adopt a new stance in order to be really a global church?

In a complex world influenced by globalization, the CCCS must take a balanced approach with regards to the practical proposals forwarded in the last chapter. It is important

to preserve the Samoan Christian identity, for in the Samoan mind the conceptions of cultural and spiritual roots are outward expressions of the deeper reality of blood relation.

However, in the hearts of many New Zealand-born Samoans it is an identity that needs to explore new innovations beyond its traditions. The renewal of attitudes, aspects of liturgy and openness to ecumenical initiatives and programmes entail moving forward for the CCCS. Many of my Samoan friends, born and raised in New Zealand, once had dreams and visions for the CCCS. Their intentions, attempts and desires to preserve the coconut water eventually lost their flavour in a Coca Cola bottle. The CCCS are called to learn from the past in order to move forward as a pilgrim community. It is God's voice that utters the promise: "Behold, I make all things new"⁶⁹

The vision...of a new heaven and a new earth illuminates and instructs our responsibility and hope. This is no utopian vision. We are not architects of the New Jerusalem; it is not a city made by human beings. It is the city of God. Once this promise sets us free we can begin our pilgrim way, setting out hope.⁷⁰

If life is a pilgrimage, a journey whereby Christian identity is an eschatological notion and something we must strive for continuously, then the mission of the CCCS must be guided by the Holy Spirit, as we continually 'run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.'⁷¹

By way of concluding this thesis, the question is raised: Where do I stand? After much reflection my quest is first to seek God's will in my life and make choices that are best for my family. If that means sacrifices need to be made regarding my Samoan identity, then I will follow my heart. The question forwarded earlier was: Who am I? My search for a Christian identity in this changing world involves a journey. May the journey continue...

⁶⁹ Revelation 21:5.

⁷⁰ Faith and Order Study Document, *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community- Paper No. 151* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990), 76.

⁷¹ Hebrews 12:1b-2a.

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