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**A Faithful Adaptation of the Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
(E.F.K.S) / Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (C.C.C.S) in
Aotearoa New Zealand in the twenty-first century**

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for the degree of Master of Theology in Practical Theology**

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The EFKS church is not only seen as a spiritual home, but also a cultural home for many Samoan families and communities. It is a place where well-being for Samoan people is maintained through the receiving of spiritual and cultural nourishment, as well social benefits through means such as networking. This research focuses on the notion of modernising the church without breaking away from Samoan traditions and principles. It is my belief that it is more ideal and effective for the EFKS to continue looking back in history – language, culture, traditions, and spirituality – in order to move forward, rather than adapting to the context of the twenty-first century while letting go of its indigenous past. Far too many young New Zealand-born Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand are insecure with different things – church, family, education, and identity (to name a few). Likewise, a considerable amount of Samoan people are struggling to cope with the different challenges of the twenty-first century which affect their well-being. Thus, the church has an important role in helping frustrated youth and unstable families to improve every area of their lives in the hope of restoring well-being – and this begins at feeding their malnourished spirits.

God is central to many Samoan people. The happenings in life are always attributed to God. Samoan people believe their worldviews, culture, land, and spirituality are a heritage (*tofī*) or gifts from God. Acting as lens for this study are the Samoan traditional concepts of *tautua* and *tōfā*. The two concepts bring together the past-present-and future, that is, they collectively associate the past with the future especially in regards to well-being. For the continual significance of EFKS churches in Aotearoa New Zealand, the weaving of Samoan culture with the present culture in Aotearoa (Samoan people are immersed in) must carry on. By being faithful to both respective cultures, may possibly change the representation of the EFKS – whether it is in the style of worship, or its activities – not necessarily to break away from Samoan culture... but adding zest and a twenty-first colour to it in adapting to changes brought in with time.

With the concept of Jesus as the personification of wisdom, I focus on *tōfā* (wisdom), in view that the role of EFKS leaders is pivotal in maintaining and influencing the well-being of its congregation. Members of EFKS place their trust in the wisdom of EFKS leaders to make proper decisions which serve to benefit the community and not just an individual.

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CHAPTER 1: PREAMBLE

How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

- Proverbs 16:16

I have always been captivated by the opening words of Rick Warren's book; *The Purpose Driven Life* – "it is not about you".¹ As a Samoan, nothing is ever about me. Everything I do reflect beyond just myself to include my families and ancestors, as well all my village ties. In the above sentence, the 'other' Warren is referring to is God; meaning it is not about us but about God. With this, I believe it to be valid here also in that God is the foundation for all aspects of Samoan life, hence its national cliché; *e fa'avae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God). Thus everything I do reflect beyond just myself to include family, ancestors, and my multiple village kinships – through to God.

Furthermore, not only do the actions of a person reflect their background (families-ancestors-God), but who one becomes is a product of their background. That is, through the toil of families – any blessing from God (or lack thereof) for them is realised on their children or young ones. For me then, I see that it is because of all the sacrifices, good works and prayers of my families and community to God that have brought about any and all blessings in my life today. This understanding leads Samoan people to believe that all of the challenges and undertakings (good and bad) are there to make one stronger in mind, body and spirit.

My late paternal grandparents Tima and Fa'atele Onesemu were ordained ministers of the EFKS church (Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa²). I do not remember my grandfather for he took his final breath in 1983 when I was just three years of age, but my mother always tells us how before he died, he was adamant to see his son (my father), and especially his grandchildren. At the time of my grandfather's passing, there were just three of us, myself and my two older brothers. We are told that we made it to his bed side, whereby as his parting gift he orally passed on his blessings. Many years later, myself, and my two older brothers, have all graduated from Malua Theological College, which is the EFKS institution in Samoa that prepares its students for ministry work. Ironically, the three

¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I here for* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1.

² The Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS).

my grandfather had blessed before he rested... turned out to be the three grandsons (and the only ones at this point in time) that carry on his work for God. It is never about us.

I feel it is my duty to voice the opinions in my mind, because I believe that they are thoughts composed by spirits beyond me. In saying that, I hope not to dishonour my ancestors and background with the opinions expressed in this study; but to respect them and credit their guidance and counsel for helping me through life to get me to where I am today. I am aware that some of the thoughts articulated in this thesis may cause disapproval – it is not my intention. I speak from my own experience and would never dare imply that it applies to anyone else. But if something in what I say hits a mark within, then it is so... if not, it does not make it any less true for the speaker. In regards to my topic, perhaps it would help the reader to know a little about the person behind the work to gain a better understanding of what this thesis is about.

WHO AM I?

Although I dislike labels, I fall under the category of New Zealand-born which is technically first generation Samoan. I stand as a proud New Zealand citizen, but in my heart I am... and always will be – a son of Samoa. Given the limitation of word count, the background that moulded me is too far and wide to pen down everything. Nevertheless, I cannot ignore at this point, the significance of my father and mother... as well as the influence of my immediate family in who I am.

Both my parents are early migrants from Samoa who left the homeland in the 1970s for Aotearoa New Zealand in search for a better life – not purely for themselves but also for families in Samoa. They each held two-to-three jobs at a time at various stages of my upbringing in order to make ends meet. This was evidence of their great love for us children. My parents have been ardent servants of the EFKS church under God for almost forty years. In that time also, myself and nine other siblings have been sons and daughters of the EFKS. I may not have grown up in a wealthy household and neighbourhood but my home was always rich in two things – faith in God and love.

I was born into the EFKS and raised up to follow its codes, system of belief, and mission. Because of the influence of my parents, a passion for the EFKS runs through my

veins, the same for all my siblings and immediate family. There are indeed challenges and trials encountered in the church, but the EFKS is an integral factor of who I am – especially through its imparting in me my faith in God, spirituality and Samoan culture. However, growing up in New Zealand and living abroad; when I reflect back to my teenage years I was a ‘mixed up child’. I remember imitating Hollywood celebrities and gangster rappers who were foreign to whom I am; even wishing God had created me a white person or any nationality other than Samoan. The only time I felt in touch with who I really am was at EFKS functions when Samoan culture was paraded. By being exposed to the Samoan culture I found that not only was I gaining knowledge and understanding about it, but I was feeling empowered through knowing more about my place of belonging – my own Samoan culture.

Outside of home, the EFKS church is one context where I learnt about Samoan concepts *tautua* and *tōfā*. Now, suffice to say, I have come across several works – particularly by Samoan researchers around the concept *tautua*;³ but it baffles me how the concept of *tōfā* is rarely touched upon seeing that *tōfā* plays a significant role in the welfare of Samoan communities. For this reason, I chose to offer a meticulous explanation of *tōfā* for my research since I value it to be an imperative element for a stronger EFKS today and optimistically the future.

Research Focus

Why are Samoan people leaving the EFKS church? This is the common question asked as the EFKS church is continuously challenged by various researchers.⁴ Whether it is study conducted by EFKS members (insider) or non-members (outsider) – both parties nevertheless relay the negative impact the EFKS has on the Samoan church community. After reviewing survey findings of Manfred Ernst that clearly emphasises the continuous decline in EFKS

³ Gataivai Nepo Auva’a, “A Theological study of Tautua (service) in the light of Christian faith, with special reference to the ministry of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa” (BD Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1990); Fereti Tutuila, “A critical analysis of the meaning of tautua (service) in the lives of Faife’au Samoa (Samoan Ministers): Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS)” (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2009).

⁴ LF. Palenapa. “A study of the place of Samoan culture (fa’aSamoa) in New Zealand churches” (MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1963); Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand-born Pacific Island Perspective* (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998); Feiloa’iga 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, Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2001).

membership numbers,⁵ it is no wonder this question is on several Samoan people's minds and lips. Be that as it may, this study aims not to follow suit in criticising the EFKS and its decline, but quite the contrary as the EFKS continues to be the most attended church in the homeland of Samoa (31.8% of population⁶) and it also has a membership of 25,377 people⁷ in all of Aotearoa New Zealand. Instead of asking 'why Samoan people are leaving EFKS churches'; I intend to unearth legitimate reasons on 'what keeps a Samoan person in the EFKS'.

My intention for researching reasons 'why Samoan people stay at EFKS churches' is not apologetic in the sense to paint the EFKS in white coating; but it is essentially based on the belief that what the EFKS represent on earth for me personally is God. Meaning the EFKS is God's institution gifted for God's work to be done by God's servants for the well-being of God's children. But this is easier said than done, especially with the wave of change in the twenty-first century and that the EFKS is often referred to – a traditional church. I too question some of the traditions and protocols employed by the EFKS which may seem to bound the hands and feet of its mission – however, these issues do need to be and are taken through processes so that they may be highlighted and challenged by the people to its leaders. In hindsight, I stand for the EFKS on the grounds that for one thing, despite the many changes swept in by the tide of time; EFKS remains the vanguard place where being Samoan is taught and encouraged in the twenty-first century. It is also the mother church of Samoa where the people of Samoa are able to worship in their mother tongue. Because of its commitment to maintain Samoan traditions and culture abroad, I have great appreciation for the EFKS church.

By inverting the question from, 'why are Samoan people leaving the EFKS' – to 'what keeps them in the EFKS'; I hope to show that the unattractive side of the EFKS is little compared to its overall significance in the wider scope of things, foremost concerning the well-being of Samoan people. For me, the positives outweigh the negatives so much that the unproductive side of the EFKS are beside the point. But I am also mindful that there is no

⁵ Manfred Ernst, "Case Studies: Polynesia", in *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Manfred Ernst (Suva: The Pacific Theological College, 2006), 546.

⁶ Unumoe Esera, "Congregationalists still ahead Population Census Analytics say", in *Talamua Media & Publications*. Samoa, October, 2012. <http://www.talamua.com/congregationalists-still-ahead-population-census-analytics-say> Accessed 14 February 2013.

⁷ The EFKS 50 Aotearoa Komiti. (2012). EFKS 50 Aotearoa profile: Tala faata. Retrieved from Eddie Tuala Productions website: <http://www.efksnz.com/terms-of-reference.html>

institution or church that is free of problems and issues. Here, I am aware that the ostensible elements considered a blessing for the EFKS and the Samoan people like its cultural maintenance and orientation – in turn can equally be its downfall as well.

Researcher Position

I know that being born in Aotearoa New Zealand I am fortunate to know my Samoan culture and who I am. Since EFKS is culturally oriented, I believe its members born in Aotearoa New Zealand have rich exposure to the Samoan culture. One major reason why the EFKS church is at the heart of so many of its Samoan adherents, is because it is one of the few places outside of the homeland that upholds the practice of Samoan culture. So despite the findings of previous studies criticising the EFKS, this should not however subdue the importance and significance of the EFKS in the lives of Samoan people (young and old), especially the well-being of those residing in Aotearoa New Zealand – like myself.

Other than being an active member of the EFKS, a youth leader, and a graduate from Malua Theological College; I come as a son of Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand advocating for relevant changes in certain areas of the EFKS that require modernising – not necessarily to reform the church; but to better adapt the church for the twenty-first century. People change with time. So change should be viewed in a positive light because I trust that if the EFKS is improved where necessary, it will continue to be the place of hope that helps transform the lives of its members or congregation as it was in the beginning. The conversation for change is not new, as this notion is discussed and encountered at the EFKS annual conference as well as in the individual churches and district meetings. However, this research serves to reinforce existing dialogue and plans for the betterment of the EFKS not only in the homeland, but in Aotearoa New Zealand and countries outside of Samoa.

Research Aims

A central theme of the thesis is spirituality and well-being – what key issue is disturbing the well-being of individuals and the community at EFKS? What would that well-being look like in an ideal situation? Is that possible in the current context? Is spirituality still strong in the

lives of Samoan communities? All these microcosmic queries branch out from my main research question; how can the EFKS church be relevant for the twenty-first century while preserving the spiritual and cultural well-being of Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Spirituality is core to a Samoa person seeing that the worldview of Samoan people has as its basis a spiritual platform which serves as the springboard for everything in the physical world. This means everything a Samoan person does in life is a manifestation of their spirituality. Inherent to a Samoan individual are the dimensions of *fa'aleagaga* (spiritual), *fa'aletino* (physical), and *fa'alemafaufau* (mental or cognitive). All three dimensions must reside in balance and in harmony with each other for the individual to achieve well-being. His Highness, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi says;

In the Samoan indigenous religion there are three key parts to a person or self: the *tino* or body; *mafaufau* or mind; and the *agaga* or soul. Harmony within the self requires harmony in the body, mind and most importantly the soul. The body and all its movements and/or performances reflect at all times God's divinity – from the most physical and ceremonial to the most mundane.⁸

Therefore, if a Samoan person is viewed as being particularly materialistic and careless of the needs of others, then it may be assumed that that person's *fa'aletino* dimension is out of balance with the other two dimensions. From this, I look at the spirit behind the giving or offerings of EFKS members to God through the church, whether or not it is done in the true spirit of service to promote well-being and not to affect or distress others.

Fuafiva Fa'alau understands the well-being of Samoan people to reflect a holistic view which accentuates the interconnectedness and balance between the relationship of people with their natural, social and spiritual worlds.⁹ I investigate the connection of well-being to church activities that EFKS members participate in such as monetary offerings. I ask whether a reminder is needed for the emphasis of EFKS people to be redirected on the essence of EFKS which is protecting the interests of its congregation and people and most importantly its families and children.

⁸ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion", in *Pacific Indigenous Dialogue on Faith, Peace, Reconciliation and Good Governance*, eds. Tamasa'ilau Suaali'i-Sauni, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, Betsan Martin. Manuka Henare, Jenny Plane Te Papa, Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese (Apia: The University of the South Pacific, 2007), 9

⁹ Fuafiva Fa'alau, "Organisation and Dynamics of Family Relations and Implications for the Wellbeing of Samoan Youth in Aotearoa, New Zealand" (PhD Thesis, Massey University, 2011), 31.

That said, this research concentrates on the welfare and interests of members and families at EFKS churches in Aotearoa New Zealand, in the sense of finding out areas that need improvements and development to maintain well-being through the avenue of spiritual enlightenment. I anticipate that the findings of this study will lead to a more comprehensive research of appropriating Samoan culture and traditions, especially the spiritual notion of *tautua* (service) and *tōfā* (wisdom) for the twenty-first century. It is my hope that by the end of this thesis, I have effectively provided some sort of answer to the main question above or at the least a platform for the EFKS to build on. This thesis also serves as an acknowledgement of the spiritual notions of *tautua* (service) and *tōfā* (wisdom) that are important values of the EFKS.

Significance of Research

Recent studies have found that there is a decline in numbers of parish members within mainstream Samoan traditional churches such as the Presbyterian or Pacific Island Church (PIC), the Samoan Methodist church, the Seventh Day Adventist Samoan church (SDA), and the EFKS church – not only in Samoa but abroad. One of the many reasons for this – is language barriers. For example, Taule’ale’ausumai and Tunufa’i investigate the difficulty confronting New Zealand-born Samoan youth in Aotearoa New Zealand. In short, the common finding in their studies is that New Zealand-born Samoan youth leave mainline churches due by large to their lack of abilities – not only in understanding the Samoan culture, but in speaking the Samoan language.¹⁰ This is an issue within the EFKS church as well – understanding and speaking Samoan. In this research I observe the transparent friction around the *fa’aSamoa* and its practice inside EFKS churches as a probable cause for members departing the church.

In saying this, there is an irony apparent throughout the history of the EFKS – evident when comparing its beginning and the situation occurring today. A major reason the early Samoan migrants sought to initiate a Samoan church in Aotearoa New Zealand, was that

¹⁰ Feiloa’iga Taule’ale’ausumai, *The word made flesh* (Wellington: Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1990); Laumua Tunufa’i, “The Price of Spiritual and Social Survival: Investigating the reasons for the departure of young New Zealand-born Samoans from a South Auckland Samoan Seventh-day Adventist Church” (MA Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2005).

there was a ‘lack of *fa’aSamoa*’ – not enough Samoan¹¹ – in the churches they were attending. This caused the Samoan community to break away from their respective churches to form the EFKS – a Samoan church. Ironically, come the twenty-first century; a common cause for people departing the EFKS is that the EFKS and its procedures has ‘too much of the *fa’aSamoa*’. Youth especially are opting for the more charismatic churches, such as Pentecostal churches which have different traditions and cultural priorities.

What is concerning for me is that the declining trend in EFKS membership numbers has been consistent over the years. Ernst’s research indicates;

In 1961 there were 61,218 adherents of the CCCS, representing 53.5 per cent of the Samoan population. Forty years later the total number of adherents has increased by only 226 people, representing a historical low of 34.7 per cent. While the population of Samoa grew by a total of 62,421 or 54.5 per cent between 1961 and 2001, the CCCS grew only by 226 or 0.3 per cent in the same period. This means, beyond doubt, that a massive movement of people from the CCCS to other Christian denominations has taken place. If we look at growth rates during the past 10 years only, the picture is even more dramatic: the CCCS lost a total of 7,207 adherents in these 10 years and dropped from 42.6 per cent in 1991 to 34.7 per cent in 2001.¹²

Ernst suggests that should the EFKS ignore relevant changes, it seems more likely the declining trend will continue.¹³ Hence, the significance of this study is the hope of finding a space of balance between ‘lack of’ and ‘too much’ *fa’aSamoa*; and whether by managing a common ground can help reduce the declining numbers of EFKS members.

Limitations of the Research

This is a literature-based piece of research which fitted with the time and resource constraints I was working under, and that while this limits it in some ways, it then provides a foundation for further research that can incorporate interviews and other forms of data collection in the future. I am also aware of the dynamics of insider and outsider research, and acknowledge that I will be both. Like a chameleon – I switch from insider to outsider depending on the subject, and back to insider and so on at different points in my research. I consider myself an

¹¹ See, Uili Nokise, “A History of Pacific Islanders’ Congregational Christian Church in New Zealand 1943-1969” (MA Thesis. Theology, University of Otago, 1978), 216-244.

¹² Ernst, “Case Studies”, 546.

¹³ Ibid., 546.

insider; because I am Samoan, speak the language and a committed son of the EFKS. However, I may also be seen as an outsider because I was born in Aotearoa New Zealand, educated under the Western education system; and being a *semi*-young male that although a Malua graduate, may still not classify me a part of elderly circles and EFKS ministers' club.

Order of Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. This first Chapter introduces the research topic and identifies the context it and I exist within. The following Chapter, *Matāniu Feagai ma le Ata*, looks at the history of the EFKS; from the arrival of Christian missions to Samoa – to the arrival of Samoa's own mission to Aotearoa New Zealand, and with specific reference to well-being; I set the spiritual framework required for well-being in the EFKS context. The third Chapter, *New Zealand-born Samoans living in the 'gap'* outlines the issue of identity crisis amid New Zealand-born Samoans. It centres on the positive input of the EFKS in uplifting the spirits of insecure youths through it being the medium where Samoan language and knowledge is taught and promoted in Aotearoa New Zealand. Following on from that; Chapter 4, *Tautua*, outlines the significance of the Samoan culture, specifically a person's service or *tautua* – to families, villages, and God, presenting the changing contours of *tautua* as it transitions with time so that people can make out for themselves the 'what', 'when', 'why', and 'how' of *tautua*. As will be seen, historicising *tautua* can target and locate where and which version of *tautua* affects well-being. Following this; Chapter 5, *Tōfā*, introduces the crux of my thesis – wisdom (*tōfā*). I hope to communicate lucidly the role of wisdom in defining genuine and pristine *tautua* for God, leaving behind the debris of the scheming and unjust face of *tautua* that pollutes well-being. Chapter 6, *E.F.K.S*, presents two opposing sides of the church together with relative theological vindications in accordance with the research question. Lastly, Chapter 7, *Conclusion*, provides an overview analysis and discussion of the findings from the thesis, and ends with some recommendations and possible ways for future work and research.

CHAPTER 2: O LE TAEAO NA I MATĀNIU FEAGAI MA LE ATA

A history of the Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand

We can only be ourselves linked to everyone and everything else in the *va*, the Unity-that-is-All and now.¹⁴

Pre-Christian Samoa was a time when sacredness was embodied in nearly everything with the implication of them being worthy of worship.¹⁵ Animals and even nature were symbolic of sacredness and considered *tapu* (restrictions) since for a Samoan fisherman (or *tautai*) the ocean was seen as a place of worship. Prior to the arrival of Christianity, Samoa was a polytheistic nation, and some of the sacred entities aforementioned were revered by the Samoan people because they were in fact their gods.¹⁶ Not only were these physical deities worshipped, they were also understood to be an important part of the pre-Christian locals' self-identity in a holistic understanding of the interrelationship of everything in the universe – physical and spiritual.¹⁷ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi wrote:

.... I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies.¹⁸

This means that human beings are as much dependent on animals, nature, and the sea – as they are of them. It is like there is a presence of a binding energetic force whereby all things are able to somehow communicate in maintaining well-being and balance. An example of this is of when an owl (*lulu*) is seen at my mother's village of Ulutogia, it is usually a sign that something is about to happen in the village; either it be manifested in a death of a village member, or worst a prediction of a natural disaster such as the tsunami tragedy of 2010. More importantly, this interrelationship belief extends beyond just the physical world in that

¹⁴ Albert Wendt, *Ola* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1991), 307.

¹⁵ Feiloa'iga Taule'ale'ausumai, "Pastoral Care: a Samoan Perspective", in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, ed. Phillip Culbertson (Auckland: Snedden & Cervin Publishing, 1997), 17.

¹⁶ Kiwi Tamasese et al., "O le Taeafo Afua, the new morning: a qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services", in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 39, no. 4 (2005), 303.

¹⁷ "The (Samoan) human being found his/her true identity, not in the essence of one's own being, but in association with other selves, including the natural environment and the Gods". Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga – The Household of Life. A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag Fur Mission und Okumene, 2000), 171.

¹⁸ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion", in *Pacific Indigenous Dialogue on Faith, Peace, Reconciliation and Good Governance*, eds. Tamasa'ilau Suaali'i-Sauni, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, Betsan Martin. Manuka Henare, Jenny Plane Te Papa, Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese (Apia: The University of the South Pacific, 2007), 51.

human beings are closely linked to ancestors of the past, and are very much dependent on their spirits as well for counsel and guidance.¹⁹ For a Samoan person therefore, well-being exists when their relationships with their environment including the animal world, the spiritual world, their God and other people are in a state of mental, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual balance.²⁰ This is not difficult to fathom if we see how Samoan perceptions today still reflect the acknowledgement of animals, the environment or nature, and ancestors in Samoan oratory.²¹

The interrelation of all things under heaven was largely built on Samoa's integral belief of a procreator God, the progenitor *Atua*, Tagaloa-a-lagi (Tagaloa).²² When Ama'amalele Tofaeono recorded his *talanoaga* (interviews) with various Samoan chiefs, he observed the cosmological claim of Samoans to be "rooted in the affirmation of their ancestral origin and common genealogical heritage in God-Tagaloa".²³ That is, their preconception was that everything, and especially humankind, are descendents of God.²⁴ So for Samoan people of pre-Christian times there existed no separation or *vā* (gap, space) between things – cosmos, animals, humans, and spirits – but a common connection, since they all equally trace their origins back to the one Supreme God Tagaloaalagi, who in a sense gave birth to all creation 'in the beginning'.

¹⁹ "Every Samoan who lives his culture speaks to the dead. The dialogue between the living and the dead is the essence of a Samoan spiritual being. It is this dialogue that provides substance and direction to his life". Taken from, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "In search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy", in *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Issue 20 (June 2003), 50.

²⁰ Tui Atua Efi, "In search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy", 1.

²¹ ... 'the chanting of the faalupega as a liturgical expression of the cosmic components, the whole geographical-scape was viewed as a web of living bodies enhanced and animated by a life-giving energy, the Gods, Ancestors, or Spirits. Mountains, trees, stones, fish, reefs, and heavenly components were seen as inextricable parts of a single bodily heritage that was shared in common with human beings. Each component had meaning and a role to play for the whole body'. Taken from Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 156.

²² This is what Tui Atua Efi says about the Samoan mythology of creation: "The connection between the gods of creation and a residence is sacred... This connection is also evident in the way in which Samoans draw links between man and his earthly environment... For example, the term *eleele* meaning earth and *palapala* meaning mud are also the words for blood. *Fatu* meaning rock is also the word for heart. *Fanua* meaning placenta is also the word for land. For Samoans these links point to *Papa* and *Eleele* as the progenitors of man". Taken from, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "Resident, Residence, Residency in Samoan Custom" (address at the "Symposium on Concepts in Polynesian Customary Law", University of Waikato, New Zealand, 12 October 2004), 3.

²³ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 156.

²⁴ "The Samoan indigenous religion posits a thesis that places God as ancestor. It promotes that God Tagaloaalagi, was progenitor of all living things on earth (humans, animals, plant, cosmos, sea, land, etc) and that as such all relationships between these living things are governed by the imperatives of being kin. That is, in the Samoan version of creation God is progenitor of man. Man is therefore God descended and there are genealogical links between man, the Sun, the Moon, the Seas, the Rocks and the Earth." Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "Whispers and Vanities in Samoan Indigenous Religious Culture" (address at the "World Parliament of Religions", Melbourne, Australia, 3 December 2009), 4.

Samoa's worldview of a progenitor *Atua*, along with its spiritual packaging which by and large, was the basis of their early traditions, was challenged at the arrival of European missionaries. From the eighteenth through to the nineteenth century, European missionaries of different Christian denominational alliances competed for Samoan converts. Despite efforts by the Lotu Pope (Roman Catholic church) and the Lotu Toga (Wesleyan Methodist church), the London Missionary Society (a Protestant non-denominational body²⁵) made rapid advancement and quickly became the leading religious influence in most parts of Samoa.²⁶

CONTACT

The London Missionary Society (LMS)

One of the important processes that gave rise to the growth of the London Missionary Society (LMS) was the Industrial Revolution.²⁷ As a result of the Industrial Revolution which was synonymous with the spread of scientific knowledge in the sixteenth century, people in Europe were driven to explore and investigate new lands.²⁸ Particularly with the industrial use of iron and coal, there was increased wealth – the growth of commerce and urbanisation increased, agriculture and industry became ever more automated, health and education greatly improved – and more capital was accessible for investment, exploration, innovation and evangelisation.²⁹ Ideally, it was an opportune time for new discoveries outside of England as methods of transport, communications and navigation advanced progressively.³⁰

The islands of the Pacific became increasingly enticing following tales and reports by explorers like James Cook on returning from their expeditions. The famous English Baptist

²⁵ Neil Gunson, *Messenger of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797–1860* (Melbourne, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1976), 12; According to Comaroff, the LMS was decidedly Congregationalist and Calvinistic. See, Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

²⁶ Norman Goodall, *A history of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

²⁷ Lonise Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana, Faitautusi ma le Tუსitusi i le A'oga a le Faifeau: Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS): Literacy Education, Language, Reading and Writing in the Pastor's School: Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS)" (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2004), 134.

²⁸ Allan R. Tippett, *The Deep Sea Canoe: The Story of Third World Missionaries in the South Pacific* - 9(California: William Carey Library, 1977), 3.

²⁹ Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana", 135.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

missionary William Carey, known as the “father of modern missions”³¹ read Cook’s reports on the Pacific and commented:

... we have found new seas and new races of people who had never heard of Christ, what does this mean to Christian people to whom God has committed the Gospel in our day?³²

Hence, in the year 1795, the LMS was established in London for the purpose of diffusing knowledge of Christianity among “heathen” nations including the Pacific.³³ Moreover, the immediate influence of the LMS mission in the Pacific began the following year with the first group of missionaries arriving at Tahiti in 1797 on board the *Duff*.³⁴ They established themselves in Tahiti and Rarotonga, and from there they went to neighbouring Tonga and the Marquesas. It was not until the 1820s and thereafter however that missionary work became more prolific as Gilson noted, with the Reverend John Williams functioning as the leading European missionary;

Williams was probably guided more by considerations of expediency than was any other London Missionary Society missionary of his time. Certainly, no one placed a higher value on the patronage of chiefs . . . nor did any display greater confidence in being able to gain it and use it to advantage. . . . In the vanguard of the mission, he sought to make the most spectacular first impression that mass conversion might occur in the shortest possible time.³⁵

Matāniu feagai ma le Ata

The *taeao*³⁶ of *Matāniu feagai ma le Ata* refers to the arrival of the LMS missionaries on board the ship ‘*Savali o le Filemu*’ (the Messenger of Peace) in the year 1830 at Sapapali’i.³⁷ Supported by the collective historical writings of the early missionaries including those of

³¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity Volume 2: The Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 306.

³² Tippett, *The Deep Sea Canoe*, 3.

³³ Tanielu, “O le A’oa’oina o le Gagana”, 135, 139.

³⁴ Gunson, *Messenger of Grace*, 12.

³⁵ Richard P. Gilson, *Samoa, 1830–1900: The Politics of a Multi-cultural Community* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970), 75.

³⁶ *taeao* - dawns (*taeao* can literally be translated as ‘morning’ or ‘tomorrow’). The three *taeao* (dawns) represents the three Christian missions to Samoa (1. London Mission Society = *taeao* of *matāniu feagai ma le Ata*; 2. Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society = *taeao* at *faleū ma Utuagiagi*; 3. Roman Catholic Mission = *taeao* at *malae ola ma gafoaga*) - the “Dawns of the Gospel”. Takito P. Fido, *Samoa Navigators of the Gospel* (Apia: Ta’amua Publications Ltd, 1995), 20.

³⁷ Fido, *Samoa Navigators of the Gospel*, 20.

Williams,³⁸ the following four factors have been well documented by previous studies as basis for the peaceable contact between the Samoan people and the LMS missionaries:

1. Nāfanua’s prophecy;
2. Faueā and Puaseisei;
3. The death of Tamafaigā; and
4. Malietoa Vainu’upō’s acceptance of Christianity.

Firstly, Christianity has been regarded as the fulfilment and realisation of the Samoan war goddess Nāfanua’s prophecy made to one of Samoa’s most important chiefs of the time, Malietoa Fitiseanu.³⁹ Having missed out on one-of-the-four paramount or *pāpā* titles since she had already distributed them – Fitiseanu was promised by Nāfanua; to await a head (*ao*) of his government from heaven (“*tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*”⁴⁰). It was not until Malietoa Vainu’upō – Fitiseanu’s son⁴¹ – became successor of the throne that this prophecy came to pass. In addition to being crowned King, Vainu’upō also became the paramount chief of Samoa after being bestowed with the most prestigious honour, as the *Tafa’ifā* of Samoa in possessing all four *pāpā* titles at once.⁴² This was extremely significant in the evangelisation of Samoa following the missionary strategy of seeking sponsorship of a powerful chief.⁴³ Vainu’upō’s main threat to his government was the feared warrior Lei’ataua Tonumaipe’a Tamafaigā from Manono⁴⁴ (referred to by Williams as the ‘devil’/*tevolo*⁴⁵) – whose death was seen as another important factor in the advent of Christianity in Samoa.

Meanwhile, across the Pacific in the kingdom of Tonga, Williams was in contact with a Samoan native named Faueā, who with his wife Puaseisei converted to Christianity in Tonga before the LMS missionaries had reached Samoa. Faueā was a great influence in the

³⁸ John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, 1888), 267-298.

³⁹ Malama Meleiseā, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 52.

⁴⁰ Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i: O Le Tala Fa’asolopito O Le Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa*. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 90-94. Fauolo’s rendition of the same prophecy says; “*Sau ia ina e alu ma i’u o malo; ae tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*”.

⁴¹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi, “The riddle in Samoan history”, in *The Journal of Pacific History*, 29:1 (1994), 68.

⁴² See Meleiseā, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 32.

⁴³ Evelyn Coxon, “The Politics of ‘Modernisation’ in Western Samoan Education” (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 1996), 122.

⁴⁴ Tui Atua Efi, “The riddle in Samoan history”, 69-70.

⁴⁵ Williams, *Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands*, 265.

mission to Samoa, and it was through Faueā's persuasion plus his own convictions that Williams decided to sail for Samoa first, instead of Fiji and the New Hebrides as initially planned.⁴⁶ Faueā offered to accompany Williams on the journey to his cultural home, and although Faueā had confidence in a peaceful reception given that he was a *matai* (chief) of the village Sapapali'i and a relative of Vainu'upō;⁴⁷ it was not until nearing the shores that confirmed for both Williams and Faueā especially, that it was indeed God's will for them to set sail for Samoa at that time. The confirming factor was the timely death of the 'tevolo' Tamafaigā which was celebrated by the Samoan people as a divine intervention from God; the significance of his death is apparent in Williams' report:

Fauea asked a variety of questions, to all of which he received satisfactory answers. At length, with a tremulous voice, as if afraid to hear the reply, he said, "And where is Tamafainga?" "Oh," shouted the people, with evident delight, "he is dead, he is dead! He was killed only about ten or twelve days ago." Frantic with joy at this unexpected intelligence, Fauea leaped about the vessel and ran toward me, shouting, "Ua mate le Devolo, ua mate le Devolo!" etc. ("the devil is dead, the devil is dead! Our work is done: the devil is dead"). Astonished at this singular exclamation I inquired what he meant, when he replied, "The obstacle we dreaded is removed, Tamafainga is dead; they have killed him. The people now will receive the lotu (religion)".⁴⁸

While each of the above events are significant and represents its own place in the peaceful reception of Christianity, perhaps the most influential was Vainu'upō's acceptance of the new religion.

When Williams arrived in Savai'i, he and the other European missionary Charles Barff, aboard the *Savali o le Filemu*, were referred to as *papālagi*⁴⁹ or 'sky-bursters' by the Samoan people in believing that they had burst out from heaven. Vainu'upō, on the premise that this was the fulfilment of Nāfanua's prophecy to his father – "*tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*" – peacefully accepted Christianity and made Christianity the head of his government.⁵⁰ Shortly thereafter the whole of Samoa was virtually converted, whereby new rituals and forms of discipline and worship were put in place by the *papālagi* missionaries.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Read, Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana", 121-129, 318-319.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁸ Williams, *Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands*, 265.

⁴⁹ *Papālagi* means sky bursters – *Papā* = burst, *Lagi* = sky or heaven. It is the name given to Europeans/white foreigners. Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana", 125.

⁵⁰ Fido, *Samoa Navigators of the Gospel*, 18-19; Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana", 120.

⁵¹ James W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa – the emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), 34.

The impact of Christianity

Samoa's conversion to Christianity brought about the introduction of Western ways, and Western practices which impacted greatly on Samoa and its traditions. Meaning for the pre-Christian Samoan people, it was advancement from certain traditions such as the oral transmission of knowledge with the introduction of literacy through the development of Western education.⁵² Also, a transition in Samoan worldview as their ethics and principles came under fire with the cessation of certain rituals the missionaries had outlawed like the *pōula*⁵³ festival, or the practice of Samoan cultural tattooing (*tatau*⁵⁴). Siauane reports that in time, Samoa evolved into a more civilised society in the eyes of the missionaries as Christian values of the West came to pass as enlightenment.⁵⁵ After all, Christianity was presented to the Samoans as the start of the *aso malamalama* (spiritual enlightenment) and the end of the *aso pōuliuli* (spiritual darkness).⁵⁶ To follow is a brief chronological account of a few of the many significant developments Christianity imparted on Samoa that perhaps was for some people, supports the claim of Samoa undergoing a spiritual awakening following the arrival of missionaries.

Only nine years after the *Savali o le Filemu* anchored on the shores of Sapapali'i, Savai'i; two major 'firsts' or important events occurred. Firstly, in the year 1839, the first twelve Samoan missionaries left for mission work in Melanesia; and secondly, the setting-up of the first printing press in Falelatai.⁵⁷ Five years later in 1844, the tuition institution originally called the Samoan Missionary Seminary which later became Malua Theological College, as it is known by today, was built.⁵⁸ It was an institution where Samoans were taught pastoral conduct and educated in biblical and theological studies while training to be missionaries of the Gospel to nations abroad.⁵⁹ Most importantly, in the year 1845, led by

⁵² Lona Laneselota Siauane, "Fa'aSamoa: A look at the evolution of the fa'aSamoa in Christchurch" (MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2004), 100-101.

⁵³ "Literally the term refers to the night of the shrimp. People tended to see the behaviour of the shrimp as hyperactive or very energetic. They were believed to be prolific breeders and assumed to be very sexual. Poula captures these metaphoric meanings". Tui Atua Efi, "Whispers and Vanities", 13.

⁵⁴ *Tatau* – Traditional tribal tattooing. Tattooing was active in all of the Pacific Nations up until the arrival of the missionaries in the 1800's. Samoa was the only Pacific Nation that did not lose the traditional art and application of tribal tattoo's which is what makes tattooing in the Pacific unique to the Samoans.

⁵⁵ Siauane, "Fa'aSamoa", 98-99.

⁵⁶ Setu called it Samoa's movement from "the days of darkness into the marvellous light". Fa'atutituli Setu, "The Ministry in the Making: A History of the Emergence of the Ministry of the Church in Samoa 1830-1900" (MA Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1988), 112.

⁵⁷ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 74, 81.

⁵⁸ Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana", 145.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

Reverend George Pratt (Misi Parate), the translation of the Holy Bible into the Samoan vernacular was finally completed.⁶⁰

Indigenous Christianity

In hindsight, years after their conversion to Christianity, the Samoan people began to instigate a contextualisation process to indigenise Christianity in their pursuit to be free from British hegemony and control. A trend began to gradually shape itself in which the church in Samoa became more indigenised as Christianity underwent a transition process referred to as the ‘Samoanisation’⁶¹ of Christianity. Davidson argues that one of the contributing factors towards a Samoanised adaptation of Christianity was the training of Samoan teachers as pastors or *faiifeau* of local parishes.⁶² Hitherto the year 1869, Samoan students were trained at Malua Theological College strictly for mission work abroad; but by 1875 all Samoan graduates were ordained and officially recognised to employ full pastoral powers in local Samoan parishes.⁶³ Samoan women were also being fine tuned for ministry work in local communities with the establishment of the Papauta Girls College in 1891.⁶⁴

Instead of being just passive receivers, the Samoan people were acquiring the necessary tools to become good teachers of Christianity for other Samoans themselves. Albert Wendt states that by the 1920s;

Christianity – much to the horror of missionaries – had been ‘samoanised’ successfully. And Christianity had become a positive force in strengthening traditional Samoan conservatism.⁶⁵

With their ever-growing awareness of the Bible and maturing understanding of the Christian God, the Samoan people opted to adapt and contextualise Christianity more and more to Samoan culture against the desires of the LMS.⁶⁶ And little by little, the Christian church in Samoa was transitioning itself further away from British control and orientation eventually becoming autonomously Samoan – in worship, structure, and particularly in leadership. Meleiseā writes:

⁶⁰ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i*, 75.

⁶¹ For an in depth view of ‘Samoanisation’, read, Melani Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese: The Identity Journals of NZ-born Samoans” (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 1998), 91-95.

⁶² Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 36.

⁶³ Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 92.

⁶⁴ Meleiseā, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 60; Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea’i*, 697.

⁶⁵ Albert Wendt, “Guardians and Wards: A Study of the Origins, Causes, and the First Two Years of the Mau in Western Samoa” (MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1965), 14.

⁶⁶ Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 87-88.

Although there is evidence that Christianity ‘revolutionised’ Samoan culture during the mid-nineteenth century, these changes were absorbed and Samoanised... In this way, over the past one hundred and fifty years of Christian Samoan history, Christian and *papālagi* customs and institutions have been made distinctively Samoan.⁶⁷

EKALESIA FA’APOTOPOTOGA KERISIANO SAMOA

Unfortunately the scope of this chapter does not afford me to detail the long history of rifts and struggle between Samoa and British headquarters over control of the Christian church in Samoa. I will only say that once the feud settled and the smoke cleared, the emergence of the independent Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) or the Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS) occurred in 1962 – officially breaking away from LMS authority. This occasion marked the beginning of a new journey for the Christian church in Samoa and especially for the Samoan people. Killing two birds with one stone; in December that same year, the EFKS church was at the start of another significant journey, that is, its humble beginnings across the Pacific on the shores of Aotearoa New Zealand.

EFKS church in Aotearoa New Zealand

Fifty years on, the EFKS church in Aotearoa New Zealand has grown proportionally into a well accomplished and widely established ministry. Today, there are currently seventy-three EFKS congregations stretching from Christchurch, Wellington and all across Auckland – and still growing. According to Danny Ioka, who wrote the first complete history of the EFKS in Aotearoa New Zealand; it began as a ‘settler church’.⁶⁸ He explains that Fuimaono Taala, one of the leaders of the initiators of the first EFKS church, started lobbying in 1962 “to found a *Lotu fa’aSamoa* (A pure Samoan church⁶⁹)” in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many Samoans at the time originally worshipped as part of a pan-Pacific Protestant church – the Pacific Islands Congregational Church (PICC)⁷⁰ – which from 1946 had established

⁶⁷ Malama Meleiseā, “Ideology in Pacific Studies: A personal view”, in *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, Antony Hooper et al., (Auckland and Suva: Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland and Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 69.

⁶⁸ Danny Ioka, “Origins & Beginnings of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) in Aotearoa/NZ” (PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1998), 171.

⁶⁹ Ioka, “Origins & Beginnings”, 171.

⁷⁰ “This denomination was connected with the London Missionary Society church, which led the earliest Christian missionary activity in the South Pacific. It became the most influential denomination in many Pacific islands and established its first parish in Auckland for Cook Islanders, Samoans, Niueans, Tokelauans, and Tuvaluans in 1946 before expanding southward”. Taken from, Gunson, *Messenger of Grace*.

congregations in Auckland, Tokoroa, Wellington, and Christchurch.⁷¹ The objective of the PICC is to cater for the multiplicity of Pacific groups like the Cook Island, Niueans, and Samoan groups; where Sunday school is conducted in English to encourage unity amid the young of all the different ethnic groups.⁷²

For Taala though, the PICC church did not provide the same cultural environment for Samoan people especially the elderly as did the EFKS church in Samoa; and in the year 1963, Taala and a group of Samoans broke away from PICC Newton because it was “not Samoan enough”.⁷³ But the problem of not being “Samoan enough” was only part of why people like Taala left the PICC. To begin a Samoan church in Aotearoa New Zealand was also a fight for equality and opportunity for Samoan people as well.

Anecdotal reports indicate the decision to break away from the PICC Newton was fuelled further by detrimental attitudes shown by certain church members of the PICC towards Samoan ministers. For example, Robert Lye Challis who was the ordained LMS missionary appointed to minister to the Pacific community in Newton,⁷⁴ refused to acknowledge Samoan graduates from Malua Theological College as ordained ministers, preferring rather to level them with deacons.⁷⁵ This was perhaps the icing on an already crumbling cake, which confirmed for a number of Samoan people’s decision – including Taala – to depart their respective PICC churches. Taala, his wife and members of his family (*aiga*) resigned from PICC Newton in Auckland to start a separate Samoan church that would model its parent EFKS church in the homeland. Furthermore, by initiating a Samoan church in Aotearoa New Zealand, the opportunity of appointing ordained Samoan *faifeau* to minister to congregations of Samoan communities abroad was opened.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Melani Anae, “The Origin of the Newton Church: Historical Invention or Cultural Truth?” (Paper presented to the “Ninth Pacific History Association Conference”, University of Canterbury, 1992).

⁷² Siauane, “Fa’aSamoa”, 107; The Reverend Challis, “who was part of the Newton Church from its inception, encouraged Samoan parents to teach their children English, and enforced this principle in setting up the Sunday school and bible class to meet the needs of the NZ-born children”. Taken from, Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 269.

⁷³ Nokise, “A History of Pacific Islanders’ Congregational Christian Church in New Zealand 1943-1969”, 216-244.

⁷⁴ Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 152.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁶ Cluny Macpherson, “From moral community to moral communities: the foundations of migrant social solidarity among Samoans in urban Aotearoa/New Zealand”, in *Pacific Studies*, 25, (1/2) (March/June 2002), 73.

The importance of EFKS in Aotearoa

Considering the sheer numbers of Samoan people and families that had begun to migrate and settle in Aotearoa New Zealand throughout the 1960s,⁷⁷ establishing an EFKS church in Aotearoa New Zealand was seemingly imperative not only for Samoan cultural and language maintenance, but for the well-being of Samoan immigrants and future generations.⁷⁸ The birth of the EFKS or a Samoan church for that matter in Aotearoa New Zealand was a movement that saw the need for a church that could firstly, provide a safe environment where Samoan immigrants would be able to continue their cultural traditions abroad. For Ngan-Woo, the Samoan church is the force behind the teachings of language, customs and traditions – and is a place of belonging;

... a *fanua* (land) where a Samoan can stand tall and feel dignified in exercising his cultural and religious practices without being looked upon as a stranger while doing what is right in accordance with his *fa'aSamoa*.⁷⁹

Likewise Tamasa'ilau Suaali'i-Sauni twenty years later echoed Ngan-Woo's attitude;

In New Zealand the church provides a cultural alternative to the *nuu* system... The church is a space where the Samoan culture and language continues to be practised and transferred between old and new generations... It (church) plays a significant role in perpetuating the *faaSamoa* in New Zealand.⁸⁰

Thus, Samoan churches abroad – in particular, the EFKS – came to replace the village system of Samoa which is prominent in all aspects of Samoan life. It helps to mention here that the village setting is where *tautua* and *tōfā* – Samoan concepts which are discussed in later chapters – are learned and developed by the Samoan people back in their cultural homeland. By replicating the Samoan village system in Aotearoa New Zealand, the EFKS becomes the place where Samoan culture is taught, maintained, experienced; practiced and applied.

⁷⁷ According to Cluny Macpherson's research; many Samoan people throughout the 1960s left the islands to settle and work in the growing industrial sector in the cities of Aotearoa. Cluny Macpherson, "One Trunk Sends Out Many Branches: Pacific Cultures and Cultural Identities", in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley, Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2001), 70.

⁷⁸ Ioka, "Origins & Beginnings", 181.

⁷⁹ Feleti Ngan-Woo, *Fa'aSamoa – the world of Samoans* (Apia: Office of the Race Relations Conciliator, 1985), 9.

⁸⁰ Tamasa'ilau Suaali'i-Sauni, "Le Matuamoepo: Competing 'Spirits of Governing' and the management of New Zealand-based Samoan youth offender cases" (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2006), 228.

Secondly, the establishment of EFKS in Aotearoa New Zealand was to enable Samoan communities to worship and praise God their own distinct way. For EFKS members it centred on a desire to preserve indigenous forms of Christianity and to retain the traditions and language of their homeland. Moreover, the preservation of the indigenous Samoan form of Christianity was deemed possible only by having ordained Samoan *faiifeau* at the helm. That said, while the establishment of the EFKS in Aotearoa New Zealand, plus the initiation of *faiifeau* to lead congregations – is a testament of the Samoan people’s determination to preserve indigenous Samoan Christianity. However, I think the Samoan people have yet to regain their indigenous spirituality in its truest form as it was before the influence of missionaries.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

The EFKS church began in Samoa; and has developed outside of Samoa into a stable institution where Samoan people are able to somewhat imitate village life abroad – the practice of *tautua*, oratory speeches, and traditional exchanges of *ie toga* (fine mats). But even if re-enacted in Aotearoa New Zealand at Samoan churches like the EFKS, it can never quite capture real village life in the Samoa setting. Despite that, the Samoan community, New Zealand-born in particular, must fight on to move forward without giving up looking back on their history to keep them grounded. Enough understanding of where one comes from will surely help with where one hopes to go in the future. And the EFKS in my view is and should continue to be the *cultural intelligence agency* (CIA) for things Samoan. This is important for Samoan spirituality and well-being, after all, the EFKS began its journey to found a pure Samoan church in that the PICC was “not Samoan enough” to cater for their needs.

In retrospect, there is a thin line separating victory and failure. It is critical that before one can really grasp the importance of EFKS churches in Aotearoa New Zealand for the well-being of Samoan people in the twenty-first century, there is a need to be mindful of the misrepresentation that has transpired over the years of Samoan concepts like *tautua* and *tōfā* – especially within the EFKS. This is acutely important because I think these very

⁸¹ For example; Lalomilo Kamu in his work, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*; concludes that the coming of the missionary era transformed the pre-Christian concept of God in Samoa. Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Apia, Samoa: Methodist Printing Press, 1989), 31.

misrepresentations, is one aspect that affect the well-being of families causing them to depart EFKS churches – judging it to encompass ‘too much *fa’aSamoa*’.

CHAPTER 3: NEW ZEALAND-BORN SAMOANS LIVING IN THE ‘GAP’

Identity of New Zealand-born Samoans in Diaspora

The relationship between language and culture is like oxygen to human survival. Without one, the other will not survive.⁸²

To ask a New Zealand-born Samoan youth today the simple question: *o ā mai ou mātua?* (How are your parents?); the common response by many would be: ‘my parents are good, thanks’. Now, the answer is obviously accurate, but clothing it in another language – English in this case – can be considered ambiguous. What is more ambiguous to some is the prospect that the Samoan language is not valued enough by certain circles to the extent where its retention is marginalised – Samoan circles included.⁸³ It is of great concern because many New Zealand-born Samoan youth are likely to have quite capable Samoan to answer in their vocabulary, but preferably choose English instead. I will discuss later in this chapter possible reasons for this conduct together with a more detailed argument to why it remains a significant concern.

In addition, if a New Zealand-born Samoan is exposed to a traditional Samoan custom like the *ava* ceremony; realistically, they would have little understanding, or none at all, of the meaning(s) and narratives associated with such an occasion. Even with familiar traditional cultural practices, such as the exchanging of fine mats (*ie toga*) among two parties; or the burial of the umbilical cord of a Samoan newborn; or simply the sacrificial services or *tautua* of an individual to his family and village – it is very unlikely New Zealand-born Samoan youth of today will have proficient knowledge of the *fa’aSamoa*⁸⁴ or reasons behind these traditions.⁸⁵ This is unfortunate for it tends to influence New Zealand-born Samoan

⁸² Galumalemana Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, “Pasefika languages and Pasefika identities: Contemporary and future Challenges”, in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, ed. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley, Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2001), 197.

⁸³ Salainaoloa Wilson, “Le Tofi ne’i vale tu’ulima: Perceptions of Samoan students, teachers and parents on the place of the Samoan language in New Zealand today” (MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2010), 44-46; Galumalemana Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, “Pasefika languages and Pasefika identities: Contemporary and future Challenges”, in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley, Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2001); Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 171.

⁸⁴ *Fa’aSamoa* is commonly translated simply as the ‘Samoan way’ – which is in reference to Samoan culture. I look at defining *fa’aSamoa* later in the chapter.

⁸⁵ “For the generation born here change is tempered by influence of their parents and their parents’ commitment to a worldview and lifestyle forged in the islands... In the second generation born here this influence will be less pronounced because it will be associated with their grandparents. The third generation... may grow up without

youth to a position where they are in danger of losing their appreciation of the Samoan culture. Furthermore, it seems the more they misconstrue the message of certain Samoan practices, the more their identity is peeled off themselves, to the point that they begin to doubt whether Samoan tradition is relevant⁸⁶ at all for the twenty-first century. Again, I will delve into this topic in more detail later in the chapter.

Preamble on Issues

With the difficulty of language which contributes to setbacks in understanding *fa'aSamoa*, coupled with the challenge of adhering to Samoan traditions because of a disconnection from it; it is no wonder in the twenty-first century one of the common questions for New Zealand-born Samoans in diaspora is, where can one find a place of belonging?⁸⁷

From the indications of the past twenty years of research on Pacific people, and particularly youth; it seems New Zealand-born Samoan youth are still experiencing an identity crisis, which for so long, has been the challenge for the generations before. Although the twenty-first century has seen positive changes over the years with Samoan developments such as the *Aoga Amata* (Samoan Pre-schools), and the initiation of Samoan language as part of curriculum within schools and universities; to this day, the identity crisis of New Zealand-born Samoans in diaspora remains a constant dilemma. It may not involve issues confronted twenty years ago, but all the same it affects the confidence of today's New Zealand-born youth in who they are.

In 1998, Melani Anae's pioneering work; *Fofoa-i-vao-'ese*; described the anxiety many New Zealand-born Samoans feel in their efforts to be accepted in Aotearoa New Zealand, from non-Samoan and Samoan people alike.

... A New Zealand-born Samoan identity experience is encountered as a series of emotional challenges to one's identity as a Samoan and as a New Zealander throughout life. The challenges consist of being made aware that one is not 'Samoan enough', or is '*fia palagi*' (wanting to be like a European) in Samoan

contacts with people who were born and raised in the islands who were committed to and familiar with the island worldview and lifestyle..." Taken from Robert Bedford, Cluny Macpherson and Paul Spoonley, "Pacific Communities in the Information Age" (paper delivered at the "Pacific Vision Conference", Auckland, 1999), 9. Cited in Melani Anae, "The New 'Vikings of the Sunrise': New Zealand-borns in the Information Age", in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, ed. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley, Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2001), 105.

⁸⁶ Tiatia, *Caught between two cultures*.

⁸⁷ Melani Anae, "Towards a NZ-born Samoan identity: some reflections on "labels"", in *Pacific Health Dialogue, Volume 4*, (No. 2), 135-136.

spaces, and also that one is “not a New Zealander”... to *papālagi* people in the wider community.⁸⁸

Similar sentiments are conveyed in Jemaima Tiatia’s work titled, *Caught between two cultures*, where Tiatia communicates the idea that New Zealand-born Samoans have been marginalised by the dominant culture, as well by their own Samoan culture. Shaped by feelings of rejection and subordination from the two respective cultures, New Zealand-born Samoans are persistently in a state of confusion and frustration, since these pressures affect their confidence in their identity, and in a place to belong.⁸⁹

That said, while there are a plethora of complications liable for the crisis facing New Zealand-born Samoans today in regards to identity, such as poverty or economic factors,⁹⁰ education,⁹¹ and family problems⁹² – I will not be discussing each one. However, as hinted from the beginning of this chapter, the two issues I have chosen to write about were the two that not only align best with later chapters, but is significant to my own personal journey as a New Zealand-born Samoan discovering myself as this research and life progresses. The two issues are: [1] language, and [2] understanding – that is, in having sufficient knowledge of the meanings and narratives of the *fa’aSamoa* behind Samoan traditions.

Before we can understand the relationship of Samoan language and the knowledge behind Samoan traditions which is the *fa’aSamoa*, we need to look at the role culture plays in the lives of Samoan communities. Specifically, I look at what Samoan culture is? And why it is important? In doing so I hope to show that Samoan culture occupy a central place in Samoan thought and practice regardless whether living in Samoa or abroad.

⁸⁸ Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 159.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁹⁰ Suicide Prevention Information New Zealand (SPINZ), *Embracing our Samoan Communities* (Auckland: Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2007), 6.

⁹¹ Martin Thrupp, “Improving the schooling chances of New Zealand’s poorest children: policy and community challenges” (Presentation to the “AGM of the Child Poverty Action Group”, Ponsonby, Auckland, 24 July 2006), 1-11.

⁹² Karanina Sumeo, “Crisis in paradise: family violence in Samoan communities”, in *Penina uliuli: contemporary challenges in mental health for Pacific Peoples*, eds. Philip Culbertson, Margaret Agee, and Cabrini Makasiale (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 196-206.

CULTURE

The meaning of culture has been one of the most widely discussed concepts in anthropology, where whole books have been written about this concept. While there is no single definition, a common base underlies some of the many explanations of culture. For example, anthropologist Marvin Harris understands culture as:

... the learned, socially acquired traditions and lifestyles of the members of society, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting...⁹³

Louis Luzbetak describes culture as;

... a plan, consisting of a set of norms, standards and associated beliefs for coping with the various demands of life, shared by a group, learned by the individual, and organized into a lively system of control.⁹⁴

From these two definitions, it is clear that culture has to do with a learned and shared life of members of a group or community. It is a plan for living and a system for action, for continued existence, and for success in life.

Fa'aSamoa

The term Samoan people most often use to refer to their culture is the encompassing concept *fa'aSamoa* which Moreli Niuatoa describes as;

... a “textbook” for ethical and moral guidance. It is a manual of principles for faithful living with one another in peace and harmony; a conduct for a life of reverence.⁹⁵

Kallen's definition of *fa'aSamoa*;

Total phenomenon [that is] at once a world view; a way of life; a cherished heritage; a set of structural principles for ordering social life; a plethora of formidable constraints on behaviour; and an ideological underpinning for strongly positive ethnocultural identification.⁹⁶

⁹³ Marvin Harris, *Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 5.

⁹⁴ Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 157.

⁹⁵ Moreli Jerome Niuatoa, “Fa'a-Samoa – The Epistemology of Samoan Spirituality: A Theological and Psychological Exploration for Religious Education of Spiritual Formation” (PhD Thesis, Claremont School of Theology, 2007), 15.

⁹⁶ Kallen, *The Western Samoan Kinship Bridge: A Study of Migration, Social Change and the New Ethnicity*, 35.

Fa'aSamoa is therefore what Samoan people do, plus philosophical explanations to why Samoan people do what they do, which focus on the attitudes and values of Samoan people.⁹⁷ Unlike other nationalities, the tendency to develop from indigenous traditions to modern lifestyles and outlooks does not transpire as much in Samoa, because both traditional and contemporary attitudes exist side by side simultaneously within each person.⁹⁸

I like to understand *fa'aSamoa* or Samoan culture as a pair of glasses that each Samoan person wears; the lenses they see through to interpret, function and live. Meanwhile language is the fundamental component in maintaining the *fa'aSamoa* given that most of Samoa's history and genealogy is founded on an oral history. So if culture is the blood in the 'body' of being truly Samoan (Samoa *māo'i*), then language is the arteries that provides the infrastructure for culture to be communicated to the 'body'. The relationship of language and culture is summed up lucidly below by Tui Atua Efi;

Indigenous languages are the lifeblood of indigenous cultures. It is what communicates and gives meaning, form and nuance to the social and cultural relationships between individuals, families and other social groupings.⁹⁹

ISSUES

1. Samoan Language barriers

As a minority group in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Samoan people have struggled over the years to keep its language alive in a context where English is the dominant language. Its retention has been a hot topic in the past and continues to be reflected upon incessantly, not only in today's academic circles, but also within the Samoan community. A major reason for this is that the Samoan language is viewed as one of the pillars in identifying a person to be truly Samoan or Samoa *māo'i*.¹⁰⁰ The competency in the language, held by most island-born

⁹⁷ See, Meleiseā, "Ideology in Pacific Studies: A personal view", 140-153.

⁹⁸ Antony Hooper, "Introduction", in *Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific*, ed. Antony Hooper (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, Australian National University, 2000), 3.

⁹⁹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "Clutter in Indigenous Knowledge, Research and History: A Samoan Perspective", in *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Issue 25 (July 2005), 65.

¹⁰⁰ Anthony Solomona, "Fa'aSamoa: A Pacific Methodology for the Emancipation and Redemption of our Youth in South Auckland" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010), 39.

Samoans, is the primary identifier of who is and is not Samoan.¹⁰¹ This in effect, leads to the conclusion that an inability to speak Samoan means that although a Samoan – one is not a Samoa ‘*māo*’i.’ It is difficult to argue against this, seeing that communication through oral language is the fundamental carrier of Samoan peoples’ stories – historical, traditional, spiritual, and mythical. However, what is a Samoa ‘*māo*’i’?

The Head of State of Samoa, Tui Atua Efi, as well as accomplished scholars like Galumalemana Hunkin-Tuiletufuga and Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, all believe that without language the Samoan culture will not survive.¹⁰² Fanaafi Le Tagaloa succinctly wrote;

A leai se gagana, ua leai se aganuu. A leai se aganuu, ona pō lea o le nuu (When you lose your language, you lose your culture and when there is no longer a living culture, darkness descends on the village).¹⁰³

In the Samoan language therefore, rests the hope of the continual life of Samoan culture or the *fa’aSamoa*. This is no truer for Samoan people, especially the elders to whom oral language remains the principal medium in transmitting their cultural stories and narratives from the past, onto people of the present... to pass on to later generations of the future.

The late Reverend Vavae Toma once said that it was only when he prayed in the Samoan language, that he felt good – or a sense of completeness.¹⁰⁴ This was mainly because he believed God created a language for each nationality, and thus the Samoan language was a God given gift.¹⁰⁵ Because English is a vastly different language from Samoan, Toma trusted that English could not provide him the same absolute fulfilment as afforded by the Samoan language – especially in voicing his prayers to God. I feel the same way; it almost seems that there is more power or meaning in Samoan words than English. This is another key aspect of the Samoan language that makes it so precious to the people; the reality that no language other than their own can justifiably capture in words the essence of certain things in this world and beyond, more so when it involves Samoan life (e.g. oral traditions) and beliefs.

¹⁰¹ Melani Anae, “The New ‘Vikings of the Sunrise’: New Zealand-borns in the Information Age”, in *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley, Melani Anae (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd, 2001), 110.

¹⁰² Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi, “More on Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor”, in *Su’esu’e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance - Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, eds. Tamasa’ilau Suaali’i-Sauni, I’uogafa Tuagalu, Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai, and Naomi Fuamatu (Lepapaigalagala: The Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2008) 70-78; Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, “Pasefika languages and Pasefika identities”, 197.

¹⁰³ Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, *O Motugaafa* (Apia: Le Lamepa Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Meripa Weir (ed.), *Tusitusiga O Le Talalelei e Vavae Toma F.S. Ma Ni Tala E Manatua Pea o V.Toma (The Good News by Rev Vavae Toma Plus Memorable Tales of V.Toma)* (Brisbane, Australia, 2000), 276-277.

¹⁰⁵ Weir (ed.), *Tusitusiga O Le Talalelei e Vavae Toma*, 276-277.

This implies that at the heart of the Samoan language is a distinctive quality easily conceptualised as a God-sent gift exclusively for peoples of Samoan descent given their worldview and milieu. Salainaoloa Wilson relays this quality in the Samoan language precisely when she wrote;

... the words of the Samoan language convey more than just communication. They symbolize the respect which is central to the Samoan culture and *faasamoa* by which relationships are maintained between peoples and communities. For example, the *vā fealoa'i* (relationships between people), the institution of the *'āiga* (family) and the relationships within it, are all nurtured through the use of the Samoan language.¹⁰⁶

The Samoan language conveys more than just communication for it is what gives life and meaning to Samoan culture. In a way, similar to Vavae Toma I believe the Samoan language is a gift from God not to be lost or abandoned. Just as one would treasure their child as a gift from *Le Atua* (God), likewise language should be treated the exact same way for it is thought of by many Samoans as their blessing from above. Therefore, the motivation and drive to preserve and maintain the Samoan vernacular in Aotearoa New Zealand is absolutely imperative for the well-being of Samoan people.

My son is three years young, and right now he is immersed in his Samoan language. He attends Seugagogo *Aoga Amata* at EFKS Otahuhu, where everything from lessons to labelling tags is done in the Samoan vernacular. At home, my wife and I are strict speakers of the Samoan language in communicating with our son, the same with both our families. The challenge for my son and other Samoan children lies ahead; the period when they reach primary school and onwards to college, where English becomes the language they are exposed to and immersed in. I guess the interesting question is what is being done on a national level for our children to engage, learn and understand the Samoan language in Aotearoa New Zealand today? For now, the onus is on the parents, families and church community of the child¹⁰⁷.

Learning to speak Samoan in Aotearoa New Zealand is no easy feat, but so is anything else important in this life. Ultimately, the responsibility rests on people whether or not something is important enough for them to fight on and struggle for. I take my hat off to

¹⁰⁶ Wilson, "Le Tofi ne'i vale tu'ulima", 27.

¹⁰⁷ Tanielu, "O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana", 134.

the driven Samoan 'TOA' or warriors that initiated and developed important Samoa-oriented organisations, such as the *Faalāpotopotoga mo le A'oa'oina o le Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa* (FAGASA) and the *Sosaiete Aoga Amata Samoa i Aotearoa* (SAASIA). Both are instrumental in the teaching and maintenance of the Samoan language in Aotearoa New Zealand. The FAGASA Incorporated is a non-profit, independent organisation that nurtures and works to improve the bilingual literacy skills of Samoan students in Aotearoa New Zealand. It was established in 1976 and remains a leading contributor in maintaining the Samoan language and culture in Aotearoa New Zealand today.¹⁰⁸ The second important organisation, SAASIA, has operated for over twenty years, and aims at encouraging the interests of Samoan pre-school children. This includes promoting a positive identity for Samoan people working with Samoan pre-school children and their parents or caregivers.¹⁰⁹

The Samoan community of Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically Auckland and Wellington, are fortunate to have these types of organisations. What is more, the implementation of other Samoan resources like Samoan radio stations 1593AM and 531PI which broadcasts daily in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch; as well as network programmes like *Tangata Pasifika* airing nationally on television and the availability of Samoan newspapers like *Samoa Observer*; there should be little excuse for a Samoan person not knowing to speak their mother tongue. But again, I would emphasise that the responsibility of maintaining the Samoan language rests predominantly on the individual.

Attitudes on the Samoan Language

However, there is a flip-side to everything and by endorsing language competence as a must for all Samoan persons in their impetus to be recognised as Samoa *māo'i*; a very exclusive dimension for some people is portrayed. If anything, this exclusiveness contributes pessimistically to the identity crisis confronting New Zealand-born youths in diaspora. Feiloa'iga Taule'ale'ausumai says;

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁹ The current president of SAASIA is Salā Fa'asaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota; Programme Leader of the National Diploma Teaching ECE Pasifika in the School of Education at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). She is also the daughter of Iolesina Faigamē Tagoilelagi; a pioneer of SAASIA as well as the Pacific Island Early Childhood Council in Aotearoa (PIECCA). www.saasia.org.nz/about-us.html Accessed 18 September 2012.

Language and knowledge of gagana Samoa determines where one could find that sense of belonging and often if one is unable to communicate in Samoan, no matter how hard they try to fit in, somehow they don't.¹¹⁰

Moreover, if we look at the rapid decline in the number of adherents of mainline Samoan churches such as the EFKS,¹¹¹ the PIC, the Samoan Methodist church, and the SDA; Samoan researchers like Taule'ale'ausumai and Laumua Tunufa'i question the unproductive barriers caused by language exclusiveness. Both see it as one major contributor in New Zealand-born youths leaving the PIC and SDA churches.¹¹² Tunufa'i for example, investigates the departure of young New Zealand-born Samoans from Samoan SDA churches in South Auckland. He concluded in his research that the lack of youth participation, such as, not using their talents and skills in the church is largely caused by language-barriers. Furthermore, the difficulty of language restricted the New Zealand-born youth from understanding certain church activities – e.g. minister's sermons – resulting in youths exiting these churches.¹¹³

The unfortunate reality evident in Aotearoa New Zealand today and possibly the future is the recurring pattern of the decline in numbers of Samoan speakers within Samoan communities. Statistics New Zealand 1998, 2001, and 2006, saw a significant decline in the language competency of New Zealand-born Samoans, registering a four percent (4%) decrease in the five year period between 2001 and 2006.¹¹⁴ With fewer and fewer New Zealand-born youth being active speakers of the Samoan vernacular in Aotearoa New Zealand; some scholars, such as Anae advocate that language should not be the only criterion to sift out who is and is not Samoa *māo'i*. Anae acknowledges that language is only one part of a “set of skills”¹¹⁵ necessary in embodying a true Samoan, categorising language alongside genealogy or *aiga* in terms of significance.

The Samoan word *aiga* is translated as ‘family’ in the English vernacular; but unlike the family of Western society, *aiga* in the Samoan tradition extends out beyond the nuclear family, including uncles and aunts, grandparents and cousins. As Tofaeono points out *aiga*

¹¹⁰ Taule'ale'ausumai, *The Word made flesh*, 15.

¹¹¹ Look at Ernst, “Case Studies: Polynesia”, 546.

¹¹² Taule'ale'ausumai, “New Religions, New Identities”, 181; Tunufa'i, “The Price of Spiritual and Social Survival: Investigating the reasons for the departure of young New Zealand-born Samoans from a South Auckland Samoan Seventh-day Adventist Church”, 34-35.

¹¹³ Tunufa'i, “The Price of Spiritual and Social Survival”, 34.

¹¹⁴ Taken from, Wilson, “Le Tofi ne'i vale tu'ulima”, 20.

¹¹⁵ Solomona, “Fa'aSamoa: A Pacific Methodology for the Emancipation and Redemption of our Youth in South Auckland”, 27, 39.

simply means a “household community in blood – close or distant relations”.¹¹⁶ Semisi Ma’ia’i’s definition of *aiga* includes along with family – ‘belonging’;¹¹⁷ for me then, *aiga* is not only a place of belonging in terms of kinship, but it is the foremost setting where belonging in the *fa’aSamoa* is taught and upheld – inclusive of the church. While not Samoan, New Zealand-born Tongan scholar Karlo Mila implies in her poem entitled, *Five poems on not being a real Tongan*; that a person only required Tongan blood within their bodied-selves to be truly Tongan, because genealogy (*aiga*) for her as well, determines everything.¹¹⁸ *Aiga* consequently then, as observed by selected people, is everything. This suggests that one can be seen as truly Samoan without necessarily speaking the language, on the grounds that blood constitutes a Samoa *māo’i*.

Furthermore, in discussing the concern over the pressures on New Zealand-born youth to speak Samoan in vying to be accepted as Samoa *māo’i* by Samoan peers, a participant of Anae’s research was quoted saying, “what about *feeling* Samoan?”¹¹⁹ This implies that ‘feeling’ Samoan or ‘feeling’ Tongan is enough to solidify an identity; a mentality shared by many sub-cultural non-speakers of their mother tongue. We need only to look at how the Samoan community is quick to claim celebrities like Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson, or Robbie Magasiva as Samoa *māo’i* never-mind their inability to speak the language, to validate of sorts ‘feeling’ Samoan is enough to be Samoa *māo’i*. Or are these two gentlemen an exception given their status? In my humble opinion, since language is one of the hardest aspects of the *fa’aSamoa* to maintain, it makes it one of the most important. I agree that genealogy, *aiga*, and ‘feeling’ Samoan does mark one a Samoa *māo’i*. But I think no matter how ‘Samoan’ a person ‘feels’ or their proportion of Samoan blood, they will always be limited without language because language gives meaning to the other “set of skills” including genealogy. In not speaking Samoan, one’s capacity in obtaining sufficient knowledge to understand the meanings of the *fa’aSamoa* behind Samoan traditions will likely fall short.

The ‘Pasifika Languages of Manukau Project’ was conducted in 2005,¹²⁰ and is the

¹¹⁶ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 30-31.

¹¹⁷ Semisi Ma’ia’i, *Tusi’upu Sāmoa: the dictionary of Papaāli’i Dr Semisi Ma’ia’i. Volume 1 Sāmoan to English* (Auckland, Little Island Press, 2010), 2.

¹¹⁸ Karlo Mila, *A Well Written Body* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2008), 13.

¹¹⁹ Anae, “Fofoa-i-vao-‘ese”, 170.

¹²⁰ The aim of this project was to investigate the use of and attitudes to Pacific languages in the Manukau region – including Samoan, and to contribute to their maintenance.

most recent and comprehensive study on the status of Pacific languages in Aotearoa New Zealand. It identified that over sixty-four percent (64%) of Samoan participants believed that speaking Samoan was essential to being Samoa *māo'i*. However, half of this group noted their abilities in speaking Samoan were waning.¹²¹ A discouraging statistic, and it does not help when even within Samoa's *lotoifale* (Samoan inner circles), their own language is not deemed important. It is almost insulting that within these certain Samoan circles there is a lack of support for the preservation of Samoan language.

One example as to why Samoan people would marginalise their own mother tongue is: the preconceptions of some Samoan parents trusting the English vocabulary to be beneficial in their children's future, in terms of a good education and a successful job.¹²² But then there are the typical Samoans that are just '*fia pālagi*' (wanting to be like a European) and refuse to acknowledge their Samoan language. I have island-born Samoan friends that have been living in Aotearoa New Zealand a few years and have to a great extent already lost their Samoan language, and this for me is mainly because they do not value their mother tongue.

Another cause for the marginalisation of the Samoan vernacular by some Samoans is due in part to a pessimism sometimes associated with the language. This negative trait is when Samoan people, often the *matai* (orator chiefs), abuse the Samoan language by manipulating it in order to gain monetary gifts and *ie toga* at ceremonial events like Samoan weddings and funerals. Craig Janes writes;

As one man told me, "I have made my title an orator title because I have to speak for the family and I like getting all those fine mats".¹²³

Even standard celebrations like birthdays and graduations are no longer immune to such negativity today. To be honest, the manipulative abuse of the Samoan language for me is one really ugly affair, especially when it is brought inside church related gatherings which deplorably, occur quite frequently. Except I am mindful and hope that other Samoans (New Zealand-born Samoans especially) are aware as well, that this 'ugliness' is not the *fa'aSamoa*

¹²¹ Donna Starks, Melenaite Taumoeofolau, Allan Bell, and Karen Davis (eds.) *Language as a Marker of Ethnic Identity in New Zealand's Pasifika Communities* (Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, 2005), 2195.

¹²² Carol Odo, "Survey of language use and attitudes in Guam", in *Chamorro Language Issues and Research on Guam: A Book of Readings*, ed. Mary Spencer (Mangilao, Guam: University of Guam, 1987), 132-160; ¹²² Salainaoloa Wilson, "Le Tofi ne'i vale tu'ulima: Perceptions of Samoan students, teachers and parents on the place of the Samoan language in New Zealand today" (MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2010), 44-46

¹²³ Craig R. Janes, *Migration, Social Change, and Health* (California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 91.

way – it is far from it.

I have met a lot of Samoan people in my life (island-born and New Zealand-born) that do not, and cannot speak their Samoan language. I also have numerous family members and Samoan friends that are non-Samoan speakers, all whom may find offence to my belief that without the Samoan vernacular – understanding *fa'aSamoa* is partial. In effect, I believe if understanding is not whole or complete – in terms of understanding by speaking Samoan, one will always be missing out. I will admit that it is a most difficult challenge to upkeep the Samoan language in Aotearoa New Zealand, as I am relentlessly struggling with it myself today... and surely forever. It is no easy feat, but every Samoan person should and must fight to learn and develop their mother tongue, for it is an essential part of who they are.

It is heart-warming and always encouraging when Samoan elderly and island-born Samoans I associate with, appreciate and applaud me for being a fluent speaker of our language. Even more special is when my New Zealand-born Samoan friends acknowledge this fluency, considering they too can relate to how hard it is maintaining the language in a foreign and pluralistic society. Nevertheless, I feel I do not know nearly enough of my language, to fully understand and grasp the insightful world beyond – that is, the Samoan traditions, history and culture that lie behind the Samoan language.

2. Understanding the *Fa'aSamoa*

A name is imperative to identify someone, for example my name 'Sapati' identifies me from the next person. But the meaning behind the name 'Sapati' locates me in a particular context that frames who I am tied to a whole world beyond just the name. Samoan people believe that names are a *pine fa'amau* or a commemoration of significant things in their lives such as past events, land, or genealogy. Therefore, my name 'Sapati' is not just a name, but tells a story; and the conditions whereby the name 'Sapati' came to be – whether it is inherited or the history behind it – is critical in appreciating the name.

For me, this is akin to the association of language and understanding. While language gives identity, the meaning behind the language gives location. In other words, because of my language I have a place; but through my language I know my place. New Zealand-born Samoans who argue that they are truly Samoan and understand *fa'aSamoa* but do not speak

the language are inconsistent. This is because language is the main-key that opens up the world of understanding which in turn sets the conditions that validate language. Thus, the relationship between language and understanding is reciprocal wherein language feeds understanding just as much as understanding is feeding language. This means the more a person knows their Samoan language, the more they become conscious that they know little of it – further stressing the need for one to keep on developing their language in order to grow in understanding.

Māori anthropologist now politician, Pita Sharples, stated in the New Zealand media that “language is the window into my soul”.¹²⁴ The world of *fa’aSamoa* is embedded inside understanding which is itself inside language. That is why I believe understanding *fa’aSamoa* cannot be fully accessed without language, because the two intertwine in a co-existence where one is strengthened, or on the contrary, weakened by the other. I think the common New Zealand-born dictum; “I understand *fa’aSamoa* but can’t speak it”, is incomplete. The scenario is simple; should one not have the ability to speak the Samoan tongue, it is unlikely [s]he will fully understand Samoan traditions and culture.

In her doctorate thesis, Fa’alau drew this conclusion based on data collection from her young Samoan participants;

Being able to speak and understand gave them a feeling of self-confidence to be involved and to be part of their family cultural events not only in their *aiga* but also in school and their church.¹²⁵

So, to know and speak the Samoan language, places one in a position where they are not disadvantaged in missing out on understanding the meanings of *fa’aSamoa*. His Highness Efi said; “meaning is accessible only through the Samoan language”.¹²⁶ Furthermore, by speaking and understanding gives New Zealand-born youth a sense of self-confidence.

Attitudes on Understanding Fa’aSamoa

As I have mentioned, it is unlikely, New Zealand-born youths of today will have capable knowledge of the reasons behind even the most common Samoan traditions, especially if they are unable to speak the language. Nonetheless, some New Zealand-born Samoan youth

¹²⁴ See, Media Statement issued 9 August 2011 at <http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2011/08/my-language-is-the-window-to-my-soul> Accessed 31 October 2012.

¹²⁵ Fa’alau, “Organisation and Dynamics of Family Relations and Implications for the Wellbeing of Samoan Youth in Aotearoa, New Zealand”, 209.

¹²⁶ Tui Atua Efi, “In search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy”, 56.

suppose that because they comprehend the language in varying degrees that they sufficiently understand the *fa'aSamoa*. They live out the *fa'aSamoa* as they know or identify it to be, and feel they should be evaluated accordingly on their actions rather than whether they can speak the language fluently. This implies that actions which identify a person as a Samoan such as *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and *alofa* (love) can sometimes compensate in some way for the lack of linguistic ability to speak Samoan. The popular Samoan saying; *e iloa le Samoa i lana tū ma aga* (a Samoan person can be identified in their stance and conduct), puts forward this idea that understanding *fa'aSamoa* is in some measure determined through action. Solomona says;

Language is still important, however it may not be the first skill set that a New Zealand born Samoan may use to maintain their “Samoanness”. Hence the popularity of significant rituals like *Tatau* (tribal tattooing) or *Siva Samoa* (dance) where expressing and illustrating one’s commitment to their culture is not dependent on one’s oral skills but on their actions.¹²⁷

Solomona also touches on practical aspects like stance, presence and behaviour to be convincing demonstrations of someone who understands the *fa'aSamoa*. This holds truth as I have relatives who cannot speak the language but through their actions articulate understanding the *fa'aSamoa*, in performing all duties Samoan faultlessly. Furthermore, everyday traditional Samoan concepts like *fa'aaloalo* and *alofa* are manifested in the behaviour of the many youths and adults born in New Zealand I have met; bettering that of some I know who are island-born and fluent in the language.

Albeit there is good credibility on the notion that understanding *fa'aSamoa* can be shown and determined through the way one walks, and not on how one talks; the issue here for me is whether the *fa'aSamoa* understood by Samoans born in New Zealand and thereby practiced by them is in fact the proper *fa'aSamoa*? And without knowledge of the Samoan language understanding *fa'aSamoa* is all the more complicated. A friend of mine who was born in New Zealand, despite his Samoan being limited to common words like *malo* (hello) or *tōfā soifua* (goodbye), acts and behaves like an island-born Samoa *māo'i*. He embodies *fa'aaloalo* and *alofa*, and has the ability to perform all his chores and duties as if he was groomed in Samoa. But because he has limited knowledge of the Samoan language, it is near impossible for him to tell apart what is *fa'aSamoa* and what is not. For example, he often

¹²⁷ Solomona, “Fa'aSamoa: A Pacific Methodology for the Emancipation and Redemption of our Youth in South Auckland”, 27.

questions his parent's *tautua* (service) to help family in Samoa via monetary contributions, yet as a sign of pride in his ethnicity, he wears the traditional Samoan tattoo (*tatau*) – which ironically is tribute to a person's *tautua*.

The safeguard of the right and proper *fa'aSamoa* should be prioritised and respected above all else. Inevitably, with understanding comes great responsibilities and I believe understanding (proper) *fa'aSamoa* is only half the battle; it needs to be put into action as well. Proper *fa'aSamoa* should be understood and practiced without any personal agenda(s) to help better the future of all Samoans in diaspora, foremost in church life.

PLACE

The destruction of Jerusalem and the walls of its temple in 586 BCE by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar, created the central folk memory of the diaspora tradition. In other words, this was the origin of the experience of exile and displacement for people – in this case the Jews. In short, having been exiled from the land promised to them by God to the Prophet Moses, the Jewish people thereafter became perpetually dispersed.¹²⁸ The Jews felt isolation and insecurity living in Babylon – a foreign place; wherein they were set adrift from their land, separated from their language, cut off from their roots losing their sense of identity.¹²⁹ Oppressed by an alien ruling class, the Jewish people suffered and seemed destined to never find their place of belonging, so long as they were in exile. The poignancy of displacement is captured in Edward Said's book, *After the Last Sky*, when he says;

Identity - who we are, where we come from, what we are - is difficult to maintain in exile... we are the 'other', an opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement, an exodus. Silence and discretion veil the hurt, slow the body searches, soothe the sting of loss.¹³⁰

In the event of the Babylonian exile, the Jewish people have found different ways to voice their traumatising experiences and stories in literature, art, culture, and prayer.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Robin Cohen, "Diasporas and the State: From Victims to Challenger", in *International Affairs* 72 (3) (July 1996), 509-513.

¹²⁹ Cohen, "Diasporas and the State", 508.

¹³⁰ Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (London: Pantheon, 1986), 16-17.

¹³¹ Arnold Ages, *The diaspora dimension* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 10.

A 'Place' for 'Samoans in New Zealand'

Today, Samoan people living in Aotearoa New Zealand are a community in diaspora. Having been set adrift from their land, language and culture; church became the central place for the Samoan community abroad, especially the early migrants in finding their sense of belonging. Likened to a home away from home, church became the setting where village life was enacted in Aotearoa New Zealand and the foremost nesting place for language maintenance.¹³² Church has a role that encompasses far more than religion in Samoan communities in Aotearoa New Zealand – for it was in the church that they were able to express their true selves.

There have been many reasons documented as to why Samoan people originally left their homeland for Aotearoa New Zealand, such as education; obligation to *aiga*; and economic motivations.¹³³ The three reasons I have specifically named for Samoan emigration are all tied up in *tautua* or service, that is, one's sacrificial *tautua* to not only their *aiga* but for villages¹³⁴ as well. Unmarried women were favoured to migrate overseas than young men, mainly because young women were generally considered to be more committed to their *aiga* and villages in Samoa.¹³⁵ Anecdotally, my mother Fitu Tima was the first of her five siblings which includes two older brothers, to migrate from Samoa to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1973. Amongst other things, she helped bring both her and my father's *aiga* to Aotearoa New Zealand where more work opportunities and better education resources were available at the time. Her remittances also aided the constructions of the EFKS church building in her village of Ulutogia, as well as the community hall where village *fonotaga* (councils/meetings) are conducted today – that is my mother's *tautua*.

There are many migration stories from Samoa to Aotearoa New Zealand, where Samoan families have gained – in regards to resources, and wealth, to better their situation abroad and prior in the islands. But the irony is there are cases where in the process, some

¹³² Siauane, "Fa'aSamoa", 115.

¹³³ Pitt and Macpherson outlined four key motivations: education; obligation to family (both to join relatives in Aotearoa New Zealand but also to support family back in Samoa through remittances); the status associated with living and working overseas; and economics. David C. Pitt and Cluny Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism: the Samoan community in New Zealand* (Auckland: Paul Longman, 1974).

¹³⁴ A Samoan person's *tautua* is not restricted to the village of one's birth; but includes the villages of a person's parents – both mother and father.

¹³⁵ Cluny Macpherson, "From moral community to moral communities: The foundations of migrant social solidarity among Samoans in urban Aotearoa/New Zealand", in *Pacific Studies*, Vol. 25, Nos 1/2 – (March/June 2002), 80.

Samoan people have lost touch of the *fa'aSamoa* – and at least a part of themselves. For many migrant Samoans, they leave their home, adapt to a foreign land, take advantage of new opportunities afforded them and ultimately, find themselves wedged between two worlds. Most affected by the migration of Samoan people to Aotearoa New Zealand is the New Zealand-born Samoan generation(s);

For the generation born here change is tempered by influence of their parents and their parents' commitment to a worldview and lifestyle forged in the islands... In the second generation born here this influence will be less pronounced because it will be associated with their grandparents. The third generation... may grow up without contacts with people who were born and raised in the islands who were committed to and familiar with the island worldview and lifestyle... Following this line of argument, it is clear that what it means to be an islander... will continue to change in the next millennium. The sorts of things that they will want and expect may shift in some important respects. This shift is neither good nor bad but rather is inevitable.¹³⁶

Research has been conducted across disciplines ranging from sociology, and anthropology, by both Pacific and non-Pacific researchers, which voices the perspectives of Pacific people in New Zealand. These studies have found that the perspectives of many of them are commonly fraught and laden with narratives on struggles in finding a place of belonging.¹³⁷ I am able to credit the EFKS and my family for instilling in me my culture and language away from the home. As a result of this and my upbringing, I can confidently say that today, I know who I am. I do not and will not let living away from the homeland be an excuse for not knowing my culture and language. I believe this, after the spirituality and faith of people is a main mission of the EFKS in New Zealand. The EFKS is also our connection to the homeland.

Aotearoa New Zealand context

Aotearoa New Zealand is a pluralistic society made up of different and diverse ethnic groups. It is a nation highly influenced by Western worldviews and lifestyle, with increasingly Asian dimensions also. Far removed from the systematic structure and socio-political conditions customary in Samoa, Samoan children born in New Zealand are raised under a dissimilar reality from that of their island-born parents. In saying that, Samoans born in New Zealand

¹³⁶ Robert Bedford, Cluny Macpherson and Paul Spoonley, "Pacific Communities in the Information Age" (paper delivered at the "Pacific Vision Conference", Auckland, 1999), 9. Cited in Anae, "The New 'Vikings of the Sunrise'", 105.

¹³⁷ Taule'ale'ausumai, *The Word made flesh*, 15.

too have their advantages and benefits where their mindsets can be coloured with ideas of a life influenced by the Western world, which at times, can and does conflict with the *fa'aSamoa* their parents adhere to.¹³⁸ However, growing up in an environment where Pacific people are a minority group and considered 'different', there have been cases where Samoans as well as other minority ethnic groups encounter prejudices at various stages of their lives, from racial slurs (verbal and physical) to stereotypical gestures.

I remember at a young age when I was attending primary school, being called a "S.O.S" (Samoan Over-Stayer) by other students was a laughing matter. As I got older, the joke did not stop, it only expanded its list to include such labels like "coconut", and "fob". I was once called a "cannibal" even by a class peer in college. When I entered adulthood, the joke expanded yet again, this time in terms of audience as people from outside of school joined in on the joke. I began to notice how often non-Samoan – or non-Pacific people – would cross to the other side of the street when approaching me.¹³⁹

The 'Gap'

It is challenging to find a place of refuge from any sort of negativity in an alien environment and a Western environment, as this exists in my own ethnic community at occasions also.¹⁴⁰ I admitted how heart-warming it is for me when complimented by Samoans on speaking the language. Well, equally, it is heart-breaking when they criticise errors I may randomly make in pronunciation of Samoan words. I welcome help and advice but not judgement or mockery. I had an elderly Samoan associate sarcastically say to me, with an audience present, that my son spoke better Samoan than I. What may have been intended as a joke and a laughing matter to this associate made me feel more pride than shame. I am proud that my son speaks the Samoan language much better than I did at his age. The generation who made sacrifices for our people and children have lived and passed. Today we have much better

¹³⁸ For example, individualistic (Western worldview) versus communal (Samoan worldview). "I think us being born in New Zealand, we've been very much influenced by the *pālagi* life-style. I guess sometimes that can come across very selfish and self-centred. I've noticed that my cousins that come from Samoa, as they come into my family situation, they're serving, and just giving of themselves. Samoan kids have come from a real community and a family thing and are very comfortable around a lot of people, and very social. We sort of tend to be more individualistic or just like with close friends". A view from a participant in Anae's research cited in, Anae, "Fofoa-i-vao-'ese", 276.

¹³⁹ Karlo Mila's article on growing up brown in Aotearoa New Zealand brings up a lot of different issues and notions around racial slurs. See, Karlo Mila, "Racist slurs still part of growing up brown in New Zealand", in *Opinion, Dominion Post* (Wellington, June 4, 2010). <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/opinion.3775481/Racist-slurs-still-part-of-growing-up-brown-in-NZ> Accessed 11 October 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Tiatia communicates the idea that New Zealand born Samoans have been marginalised by the dominant culture, as well by their own Samoan culture. Tiatia, *Caught between two cultures*.

support, access, awareness and acknowledgement of our culture and language. It is my duty as a parent to pass this gift on to my son.

Suspended on the edges of two different worlds, it seems the plight for many New Samoan youth born in New Zealand is not finding a secured place either within the Western culture and the Samoan culture. To draw a line down the middle separating these two cultures, I imagine many New Zealand-born Samoans would position themselves in-between the two distinctive worlds in a place I call the ‘gap’. In writing about a place for New Zealand-born in diaspora, Kallen puts forward as a new identity the notion of ‘hybrid’¹⁴¹ or “linked”¹⁴² children – that is; New Zealand-born Samoans are not fully Samoan, nor fully New Zealander... but both.¹⁴³ In agreement, Taule’ale’ausumai says on New Zealand-born Samoans;

... Being bi-cultural means that one does not strictly belong to the *palagi* or Samoan culture because one belongs to both.¹⁴⁴

For me, by not identifying as fully Samoan or fully New Zealander, but a hybrid, means that New Zealand-born Samoans in a way are living in the gap and have to be more Samoan than the island-born, and more *pālāgi* (more European) than Europeans to fit in.

Jon Austin points out that home should be imagined as a place of plurality and difference (hybridised space), rather than a purist space, which is limited and limiting.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, a place of belonging for diasporic New Zealand-born Samoans in my view is not a place but rather places: as in both Samoan and New Zealander. As a Samoan child born in Aotearoa New Zealand – a foreign place, this empowering poem by Lemalu Tate Simi titled *Identity*, continues to be the encouragement that helps me realise to appreciate both accessible cultures in knowing that I can benefit more by collaborating the two, than discriminating against one;

¹⁴¹ The concept of a ‘hybrid’ identity is not exclusive to Samoan youth; for example, Belinda Borell describes Māori youth as “hybrid”. See, Belinda Borell, “Living in the City Ain’t So Bad: Cultural Identity for Young Maori in South Auckland”, in *New Zealand identities: Departures and destinations*, eds. James Liu, Tim McCreanor, Tracey McIntosh, and Teresia Teaiwa (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 191-206.

¹⁴² Kallen, *The Western Samoan Kinship Bridge: A Study of Migration, Social Change and the New Ethnicity*, 59.

¹⁴³ Taule’ale’ausumai, *The Word made flesh*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ See, Jon Austin, “Space, Place & Home”, in *Culture and Identity*, ed. Jon Austin (New South Wales: Pearson, 2005), 111.

Educate yourself enough
So you may understand
The ways of other people
But not too much
That you may lose
Your understanding
Of your own

Try things pālagi
Not so you may become pālagi
But so you may see the value
Of things Samoan
Learn to speak Samoan
not so you may sound Samoan
but so you may
feel the essence
of being Samoan

Above all
Be aware and proud
Of what you are
So you may spare yourself
The agony of those who are asking
“Who am I?”¹⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

I will reiterate that no-one is any less Samoan than someone who is fluent in the Samoan language, only that they are disadvantaged in not understanding proper *fa'aSamoa* due to the limitation of their linguistic ability. But there does not need to be an issue around identity crisis for New Zealand-born Samoans in diaspora. If anything, by being a child of the gap, a New Zealand-born is at an advantage by becoming a hybrid product potentially knowledgeable in multiple cultures rather than one. Perhaps, the only crisis here is that the New Zealand-born generation think that they are in a crisis, due in part to categorising labels and stereotypes projected by a Western society.

¹⁴⁶ Similarly, here is a fragment of Mahatma Ghandi's comment on the defective influence of the English language on Indian people in the 1920s; "... I would have our young men and young women with literary tastes to learn as much English and other world languages as they like, and expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and the world. But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his/her mother tongue, or to feel that he or she can not think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular". (*Young Indian*, 1919-22, p. 482-484).

I have confidence in who I am as a Samoan because I can communicate in my language; and more importantly, I am growing in knowing my place in Aotearoa, by endlessly feeding my understanding of the proper *fa'aSamoa*. I admit I am somewhat disadvantaged because my Samoan language will never be absolute, but what is 'absolute'? And who is 'absolute'? By learning my Samoan culture, my sense of belonging becomes all the more certain as this significant part of my-self is developed. This is why for me; the EFKS church and its traditions is vitally important. Its emphasis on culture is what will keep members at EFKS churches as they experience well-being through understanding the value and spirituality of *fa'aSamoa*. Moreover, proficient understanding will minimise room for exploitation and corruption that stem from improper *fa'aSamoa* among other things, which hinders Samoan people's service or *tautua* to God – affecting their well-being in the process.

CHAPTER 4: TAUTUA

O le ala i le pule o le tautua

He who is appointed receives his authority from our Lord in accordance with his obedience to Him, the Head of the Church. The exercise of his authority shall be dependent upon the views of those under his care, and in accordance with his integrity in fulfilling the Will of God. This means that a Christian cannot exercise authority as the representative of Jesus Christ in respect of other people unless his authority is that of a servant, and that his integrity is clearly evident to the people.¹⁴⁷

The *fa'aSamoa* is a traditional governance system that still oversees all facets of present Samoan life: social, political, economic, and even church life. One of its fundamental tenets is *tautua* or basically to provide service. The essence of *tautua* relies heavily on obedience, loyalty and mutual respect – but foremost in *alofa* or love. Later in the chapter *alofa* will be defined more fully, but at the outset I will simply mention that *alofa* is a requirement for *tautua* since it demands a full life commitment to offering service for the benefit of another.¹⁴⁸ Pesetā Sēloti's perspective on the institution of *tautua* within Samoan life is that;

Tautua or self service, is not just an ideal; it is an institutionalised norm with enormous pragmatic value in the *matai* system. The Samoan philosophy of life is indeed practical, and manifestly applicable in every area of daily living... *Tautua* provides the main training grounds for grooming future successful *matai*. Without *tautua*, the vitality and richness of social interactions, which uniquely define Samoan society would be lost.¹⁴⁹

A major reason Samoan people place great conviction in the importance of his service or her *tautua*, is because of every Samoan person's incontrovertible right to communal property, and entitlement to village chiefly titles (*suafa*¹⁵⁰ *matai*) – two very significant and definitive elements in Samoan life. In many cases, the well-being of Samoan people is plausibly invested in customary land which is part and parcel with chiefly titles like his Highness Efi wrote;

¹⁴⁷ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa: The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2006), 7.

¹⁴⁸ Auva'a, "A Theological study of Tautua (service)", 26.

¹⁴⁹ Pesetā T. Sēloti, "Pipi'imale'ele'ele: Bonding with the Land", in *Changes in the Matai System: O Suiga i le Fa'amatai*, ed. Asofou So'o (Le Papaigalagala, Apia, Samoa: The Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2007), 94-95.

¹⁵⁰ The literal English translation of *suafa* is 'name'; but *suafa* means more than just a name, it is a title based on history, dignity, and of village legends and stories. Each title has specific meaning with family clans because it has the essence of a deified ancestor.

A *matai* and his family without land is a *va'alelea*, meaning a rudderless and sailless boat at the mercy of the winds and currents.¹⁵¹

Given the substantial responsibilities that come with chiefly titles – like *aiga* properties or land (*fanua*), not everyone is made a *matai*. For this reason, *tautua* is both a priority and a classroom. In preparation for the day a *tautua* person¹⁵² is bestowed with a *suafa*; that *taule'ale'a* must learn through the practice of service to their *matai*. But learning is half the battle, the *taule'ale'a* is only able to carry a *suafa* honourably if *alofa* is in his/her heart. This is important because once they become *matai* themselves; they will be well equipped to undertake responsibilities for the well-being of the *aiga* (immediate and extended) – setting a good example for the next in kin.

TAUTUA

Tautua abroad

Not so long ago young Samoans would have provided service to *aiga* through working the *ma'umaga* (plantation), preparing food for the elderly, or providing *ie toga* or *olofa* (material resources) if needed by family or *matai*. But today, in the twenty-first century, Samoans can 'arguably' fulfil their *tautua* requirements through migration and the opportunities it offers for *aiga* abroad and back home. According to Macpherson, and as I too have mentioned in the previous chapter, *tautua* was more or less the driving force behind the earlier migration wave of Samoan immigrants to Aotearoa New Zealand from the 1940s.¹⁵³

With the growth of the industrial sector in the cities of Aotearoa New Zealand throughout the 1950s and 1960s,¹⁵⁴ Samoan migrants began to settle here especially after finding employment in unskilled work places such as factories and manufacturing warehouses. Consequently, by earning money or some sort of income regularly, a Samoan person was in a position to carry out their *tautua* overseas, mainly through ongoing

¹⁵¹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, *Englishing My Samoan: A collection of Speeches and Letters* (Apia: The University of the South Pacific, 1995), 118.

¹⁵² A *tautua* person is called a *taule'ale'a* – meaning; an untitled person.

¹⁵³ Cluny Macpherson, "Changing Patterns of Commitment to Island Homelands: A Case Study of Western Samoa", in *Pacific Studies*, 17, 3 (1994), 87.

¹⁵⁴ Macpherson, "One Trunk Sends Out Many Branches", 70.

remittances to *aiga* and villages in Samoa. A young Samoan gentleman noted in Macpherson's study;

My brothers go to the plantation to collect coconuts for copra. I go to collect money in the factory. It's the same thing: another way to serve the family.¹⁵⁵

That is to say, Samoan people are expected to serve or *tautua* their *aiga* regardless whether they are in Samoa, or living in a diasporic community like Aotearoa New Zealand.

I intentionally suggested that the Samoan community overseas 'arguably' execute their *tautua*. I say 'arguably' because Samoans abroad are not treated as equals to Samoans at home in certain matters. For example, Samoans residing overseas are not legally eligible to vote and even run as candidates in Samoa's national General Election. Yet, remittances provided by Samoans outside of Samoa in fulfilment of their *tautua*, amount to millions of *tālā* Samoa that help its economy each year. Similarly, the EFKS in Aotearoa New Zealand contributes prominently in annual money collections¹⁵⁶ that help EFKS expenditure; and yet, funds are rarely granted by the EFKS body (its office is in Samoa) to EFKS initiations in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is precisely why I consider it important for the Samoans born in New Zealand to understand the essence of *tautua* and what *tautua* requires; and (*ma lo'u fa'aaloalo lava*¹⁵⁷) for the Samoans in the homeland to be reminded of it.

Understanding Tautua

Part of giving respect to one's elders and *matai* is giving selfless service, and in the Samoan culture or *fa'aSamoa*, a person's service is commonly referred to as *tautua*. Literally, *tautua* simply means 'service' or 'to serve' as mentioned above. It is the responsibility of an untitled person – the *aumaga*¹⁵⁸ or a *taule'ale'a*, to dutifully serve his *matai*, *aiga*, and *nu'u* (village). *Tautua* is the service of a child to his or her parents too. I will point out that *tautua* in the EFKS or any context for that matter, is a Samoan person's *tautua* to God manifested in their relations and actions towards others (and other living 'things' like the environment). In addition, *tautua* is a concept not only applicable to the untitled but also to the titled. The saying; '*e iloa le matai i le au tautua*', literally means the status of the *matai* or titled chief is

¹⁵⁵ Cluny Macpherson, "Changing Patterns of Commitment to Island Homelands", 89.

¹⁵⁶ EFKS yearly money collections or offering is referred to as *taulaga* – which I will specify on later in the chapter.

¹⁵⁷ Translation: "and with all due respect".

¹⁵⁸ *aumaga*: institution of untitled men or *taulele'a*.

measured by the quality and quantity of service afforded him by those who serve. The measure for *tautua* is therefore performance – the performance of the chief and of those who serve him. Thus, the action(s) of any Samoan person is figuratively understood as his or her *tautua*.

On the institution of *tautua*, Tuisuga-le-taua says;

... *tautua* is a sacred reality of life, which not only legitimises one's existence within the Samoan family and community but also is the educational forum whereby a true Samoan shall become acquainted with the *faasamoa* and learn how to live like a Samoan.¹⁵⁹

This entails that *tautua* is experiential and pragmatic so therefore cannot be learnt inside a classroom, but is rather a learning process through participation. In other words, while actively performing *tautua*, one is simultaneously gaining knowledge, wisdom or *tōfā* in the practice. I will be discussing the concept of *tōfā* in the following chapter. Furthermore, Tu'ua suggests that the meaning of *tautua* is made clear in the course that Samoans can only obtain a chiefly title when they carry out *tautua* to the *matai*.¹⁶⁰ The outcome therefore of one's diligent *tautua*, is the bestowment of a *suafa matai* that brings along with it a position of leadership within the Samoan community where his/her *tōfā* is applied.

It seems comparable to the relationship of a master and his apprentice, where while serving his master the apprentice is at the same time learning the trade. After years of practical engagement under the observation of his master, the apprentice is awarded a certificate that qualifies him to be a tradesman or master himself. In the same manner, the way to attain *pule* (authority) or leadership, *tōfā* and power in the *fa'aSamoa*, is to be a serving servant first under the *matai* – master. This transition is captured in the often quoted Samoan saying;

O le ala 'i le pule o le tautua – The way to (gain) authority is through (faithful) service (i.e. the way to become a *matai* is first to serve a *matai* faithfully).¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Fa'alepo Aveau Tuisuga-le-taua, "O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: a Hermeneutical critical analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan context" (PhD Thesis. Theology, Melbourne College of Divinity, Australia, 2009), 133.

¹⁶⁰ Tipalelupe Lālāosalafai To'atasi Tu'ua, "The concept of 'tautua' (service or to serve) in the Sāmoan Methodist Church in New Zealand" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2005), 84.

¹⁶¹ George B. Milner, *Samoa Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 245. My own English translation of the Samoan Proverb reads; 'to be a leader you must first serve' (i.e. the way to become a *matai* is first to serve a *matai* faithfully).

A mythological origin of Tautua

Various Samoan people consider the concept of *tautua* to be fundamentally founded on the Samoan mythological story about Fatu and his nine brothers. Impacted by jealousy, the nine – who were all named Tui¹⁶² – toss their brother Fatu into the deep ocean sea.¹⁶³ Fatu is turned into a rock, and is later found in his transformed state and placed outside at the back or *tua* of the family house in what is reflected as the *umu kuka* (kitchen). The significance of Fatu and the (Samoan) kitchen in the sustenance of life is explained by Filemoni-Tofaeono;

This rock became a medium of life-giving in the sense that almost all chores done in preparation of food were dependent on Fatu.¹⁶⁴

Hence, Fatu is the rock *i tua* or at the back of the house where all the cooking and preparation of food is performed on. The import of this arrangement has to do with well-being; that is, the lives of the *aiga* and *matai* are dependent on food made available through the rock that is Fatu. In Fereti Tutuila's study, he implies that the embodying of *tautua* on Fatu reveals that all *tautua* or services belongs to his back. In other words, all activities and duties touch or hit (*tau*) Fatu's back (*tua*).¹⁶⁵

From this, we can gather that *tautua* is not only a mandatory commitment for Samoan people in providing stability to their *aiga* and villages; but it also carries blessings in the form of *matai* titles and the different privileges and prerogatives that come with it like *fanua*, and *tōfā*. My mother as previously pointed out in the preceding chapter, personifies the concept of *tautua*. In the year 1983, she was gifted the title *Tautualelei* from the highest *matai* of Ulutogia after a consensus by members of the *aiga*. This was a blessing done in honour for her many years of *tautua* for her family and to her *nu'u* or village. With her *matai* title, *le fetalaiga ia Tautualelei* is acknowledged by her *aiga*, and Samoan peers as a leader. She has the responsibility and a never-ending *tautua* to continue as a commendable role model for her village, and Samoan community.

¹⁶² Erich Shultz, "The Journal of the Polynesian Society", vol. 59, No. 2 (June, 1950), 126.

¹⁶³ Hence the Samoan proverb: *Ua tō i moana* or *Ua tōfatumoanaina*. Meaning; "Fatu perished in the sea". This proverb is applied to a loss that excites our commiseration or to anything that has been lost or forgotten. Taken from, Shultz, "The Journal of the Polynesian Society", 126.

¹⁶⁴ Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono, "A new dimension of ministry: the role of the church in relation to the problem of alcohol in American Samoa" (MA Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1993), 52.

¹⁶⁵ Fereti Tutuila, "A critical analysis of the meaning of *tautua* (service) in the lives of Faife'au Samoa (Samoan Ministers): Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS)" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2009), 8.

Etymology of Tautua

Tautua is a word formed by two syllables: *tau* and *tua*. The first syllable *tau* is versatile and multi-functional; for example it can be used as a particle to denote, or as a classificatory particle, and it can be used as a prefix particle also.¹⁶⁶ *Tau* as a word has several meanings and to follow are a couple of examples, together with a sketch on how I intend to collectively employ these two selected meanings to the overall concept of *tautua*:

TAU

The first meaning of *tau* I use in this thesis is; “*to arrive at or to achieve*”.¹⁶⁷ This meaning by Pratt is somewhat ambiguous in that ‘to arrive at’, can be treated separately from ‘to achieve’. When a traveller reaches their expected destination, the Samoan *ua tau lau o le fa’amoemoe* (to arrive at) can be used here. On the other hand, ‘to arrive at’ is not applicable in other contexts like a child graduating from college whereby *ua tau lau o le fa’amoemoe* (to achieve) is generally applied. But that is the beauty of the Samoan vernacular where one word or sentence can have more than one meaning. Looking past this separateness, the common denominator here is the principle of a future tense – that is, the intended destination. This is one face of *tau* I articulate across to the structure of *tautua*; *tau* as in an accomplishment, or in a sense of a fulfilment of – aspirations, goals, or dreams.

Tau can also mean; “*to fight*” – I am not inclined to engage *tau* in respect ‘to fight’ in the context of a confrontation between one person with another. But rather my stance is alongside Tutuila’s explanation of *tau*;

... for the *tautua* (person) to have the courageous heart of a warrior in terms of not giving up easily in all his dealings within the overarching living out of *tautua*.¹⁶⁸

Before the whistle blows for any rugby game involving Samoa, their national rugby team known as the ‘Manu’ performs the *Siva Tau* which is a Samoan war dance – a tradition from time immemorial. Commentators generally project the *Siva Tau* as a throwing down of a gauntlet to evoke fear in the opposition; but this is not the sole intension of the *Siva Tau*. Attention is centred more on the ‘Manu’ players themselves, issuing a personal challenge to

¹⁶⁶ George Pratt, *A grammar and dictionary of the Samoan language*, ed. Rev. S. J. Whitmee (London: Trübner and Company, 1878), 45-47.

¹⁶⁷ Pratt, *A grammar and dictionary of the Samoan language*, 45.

¹⁶⁸ Tutuila, “A critical analysis of the meaning of *tautua* (service), 15.

pour everything they have out on the field in representing (or *tautua*) their nation and people proudly, even if it means jeopardising one's well-being. This is precisely Tutuila's appropriation of *tau*, the fighting spirit in a person prevalent in perseverance, rather than in putting on a pair of boxing gloves.

Instead of 'to fight', I want to acknowledge *tau* in the structure of *tautua* as meaning 'to fight on'; that is, to motion or press forward in any sort of situation. This is important because not every battle fought is won, and it is at times of defeat where those that fight on are expected to persevere and press on – (*malo le tau*¹⁶⁹), while those that fight and fail usually throw in the towel.

The second half or second syllable of *tautua*, is the word *tua* which itself is fraught with meanings. Again, I give a few examples of the various meanings of *tua* and as well offer my own usage of these meanings relevant for the purposes of this study. I would just like to note in advance the familiarity of the gist of *tua* to the mythological story of Fatu.

TUA

Firstly, the word *tua* can mean; “*at the back*” – a location or position like literally being at the back seat of a car or at the back in the kitchen. The traditional setting of any *aiga* home within a Samoan village is that the *maota* or *laoa* (house) of a *matai* is always located at front. The *taule'ale'a* on the other hand, stays at a separate *fale* (place) at the rear – which comprises the kitchen. In fulfilment of his *tautua* the *taule'ale'a* performs his daily duties from the position of *i tua* or ‘at the back’ (Fatu's place was *i tua*), in serving the *matai* in the front house. To modernise this mentality; any young Samoan is expected to sit at the back seat of a car and make available the front seat for the mature or elderly Samoan person.

Secondly, *tua* can be translated as; “*to depend upon*”. This meaning is in reference to a reliable and dependable person. For example, in the relationship between a *matai* and *taule'ale'a*, the *matai*'s satisfaction is dependent upon the *taule'ale'a*'s diligent services (*tautua*) and attention. That is, a *taule'ale'a* is figuratively the ‘rock’ (Fatu's transformed state) a *matai* leans on and depends upon, or relies on for well-being.

¹⁶⁹ translation: “well done for fighting on”.

Lastly, *tua* can mean; “*past*”, as in the literal sense of a location of time within the linear timeframe: ‘past’-present-future. I feel the meaning of *tua* as (in the) ‘past’ can serve as a common denominator for the first two meanings mentioned. To explain this, a person has to literally turn to look behind not merely just to see who is at the back in the kitchen (1), but to decide whether who they see behind them is dependable and reliable to lean on (2). The collective aspect here is the notion of turning to look back on the awareness of an object behind. This notion can be reconstructed in *tua* meaning ‘past’ by understanding history as the object behind, and how Samoan people ought to decide whether to look back on it and depend upon it for future well-being.

Branches of Tautua

Before mentioning some of the different forms of *tautua* known to Samoan customs, I must remind the grave importance of *alofa* in the execution of *tautua*. The *fa’aSamoa* is founded on the principle *alofa*, which means to ‘love’ as cited earlier. But *alofa* far exceeds just simply meaning – ‘love’. The essence of *alofa* can be understood when looking at the two syllables that form the word *alofa* – *alo* and *fa*.

Alo can be translated as “belly”;¹⁷⁰ and *fa* is the number “four”. By combining the two meanings elucidates the holistic nature of *alofa*. To explain briefly, “belly” or stomach symbolises the direction where one is facing – forward, backward, or either side (left and right). The numeral “four” represents the four directions accessible for a person to turn or face. *Alofa* then is the giving out of love unselfishly – not just to the front or back or either side – but in all and any direction. This metaphorically translates to showing *alofa* to any person and everybody, meaning *alofa* is not spared... but shared. In practice *alofa* can be shown as one’s *tautua* to *aiga*, *matai* and village, and is defined by one’s actions.¹⁷¹

Alofa is not only the root of all other Samoan concepts like *tautua*, obedience, and *fa’aaloalo* (respect),¹⁷² but I like to identify *alofa* is also the ribbon that ties together all these Samoan concepts. *Alofa* is then, not just a vital ingredient for *tautua*, but is the most important, since every component that makes a person Samoan (e.g. *fa’aaloalo*, *tautua*) is

¹⁷⁰ George Pratt, *A Samoan Dictionary: English and Samoan, and Samoan and English: with a short grammar of the Samoan dialect* (London Missionary Society’s Press, 1862).

¹⁷¹ Siauane, “Fa’aSamoa”, 28.

¹⁷² On the significance of *alofa*, Tui Atua Efi declares; “Once *alofa* is established, then, like the proverbial yam plant, many shoots will sprout. Service, respect, courtesy, consideration, sacrifice, is founded on *alofa*”. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi, *Faasamoa speaks to my heart and soul*. Pasifika Medical Association Conference, Auckland. Unpublished (2000), 1.

potentially not possible without *alofa*. For instance, *alofa* is enormously necessary for *tautua* considering that it requires the sacrifice of a person's time, energy, money, resources, and even life in extreme cases – for the well-being of another. Therefore, it is important to understand the different forms of *tautua* not only to edify the *alofa* a Samoan person must possess in the fulfilment of *tautua*; but also the significance of Samoan history in the lives of its people.

The first arrangement of *tautua* I would indicate is *tautua matavela* (*mata* means 'eyes' – *vela* means 'cooked'), which translates as service with (a) burning eyes or face.¹⁷³ *Tautua matavela* reflects service mostly oriented in and from the kitchen or *umu kuka* in preparing food for the *matai* and *aiga*. Unlike today, in the past, four or more Samoan families would share one kitchen and the arduous responsibility of cooking for the multiple households rested on the *aumaga* or group of *taulele'a*.¹⁷⁴ All day long the *aumaga* would prepare food over hot blazing rocks, and in the process their faces are burnt from the heat – hence, *tautua matavela* or service with a burning face. For me, *tautua matavela* is a symbol of a person's *alofa* shown through the placing of the welfare of others above their own in fulfilling their *tautua*.

The second chosen arrangement of *tautua* is *tautua tuāvae*, which Tuisuga-le-taua defines as service executed by the legs.¹⁷⁵ *Tautua tuāvae* refers to services rendered with distinction and integrity in hospitality. My father Iopu Tima taught us that whenever my we are to serve food when guests are present, only one person attends the diners while the rest remain in the kitchen. It is the responsibility of this single attendant to offer a most hospitable *tautua* by running back and forth fetching this and that until every person has towelled their hands dry after finishing their meal. I remember also as a first year student at Malua Theological College, I was expected to *tautua tuāvae* to fourth year students who are the *matai*-esque figures within Malua's hierarchical system. This meant I ran here and there all throughout my first year. For me, *tautua tuāvae* symbolises *alofa* in the respect that hospitality is equally distributed to any person and not restricted for family circles alone.

¹⁷³ Tuisuga-le-taua, "O le Tofa Liliu", 132.

¹⁷⁴ Tofaeono Tavale Tanuvasa, *O le Ala i le Pule o le Tautua* (Auckland: PIERC Education, 1999), 144.

¹⁷⁵ Tuisuga-le-taua, "O le Tofa Liliu", 132.

Then there is the extreme *tautua toto* or service with blood,¹⁷⁶ which is the final arrangement I talk about. In this form of *tautua*, the commitment of *tautua* avowed by the *taule'ale'a* means [s]he is even expected to offer his/her life as sacrifice to save and protect the *aiga*. *Mau-a-Pule* also known as the Mau¹⁷⁷ Movement, epitomises this concept *tautua toto*. The event called 'Black Saturday' lives on in every Samoan person's heart. During a peaceful march in the streets of Apia in the year 1929, New Zealand police fired gunshots that fatally killed Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III who was the inspirational leader of the Mau, and other Samoans.¹⁷⁸ As its slogan, '*Samoa mo Samoa*' (Samoa for Samoa), members of the Mau served to free their nation from foreign rule, even to the extent of spilling their blood – *tautua toto*.

His Highness Tui Atua Efi proposes that a person achieves blessings in the place of *tautua* and underlines that it is not a place of defeat or loss, but rather *tautua* is a place of humility and gratitude.¹⁷⁹ This was reflected on the occasion the Mau leader Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III was shot. Before taking his final breath Field reports that Lealofi III responded only in peace;

My blood has been spilt for Samoa. I am proud to give it. Do not dream of avenging it, as it was spilt in maintaining peace. If I die, peace must be maintained at any price.¹⁸⁰

This is true *tautua*. For me, *tautua toto* is a sign of unconditional *alofa* to the utmost as exemplified by *Mau-a-Pule*. This arrangement is a mark of strength and integrity to endure just about anything – even death – for the betterment and well-being of another.

Tautua in EFKS context

To simplify the concept of *tautua* in the context of the EFKS, it is identified in an assortment of practical activities such as deacons mowing church property lawns; mother's providing flowers to decorate the pulpit as well as tidying inside the church; or a youth participating in playing the piano for the singing of church hymns. Moreover, it is a person's *tautua* too being initiated as an active member of the church choir; or becoming a part of the *Mafutaga a*

¹⁷⁶ Tavita Maliko, "The Hierarchy of Voice: The Context of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa 'C.C.C.S' in New Zealand" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2000), 209.

¹⁷⁷ The word 'Mau' means 'opinion' or 'testimony' denoting 'strength' in Samoan.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Field, *Mau: Samoa's Struggle for Freedom* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed Ltd, 1984), 147-159.

¹⁷⁹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, *Talanoaga na loma ma Ga'opo'a* (Apia, Samoa: Pacific Printers and Publishers Ltd, 2000), 5.

¹⁸⁰ Field, *Mau*, 157.

Tinā (women fellowship) / *Mafutaga a Tamā* (men fellowship) / *Autalavou* (youth group); and even to serve or *tautua* as a Sunday school teacher.

But perhaps, more so today than it was in the past, *tautua* in the EFKS for some people is commonly branded in a member's tithe offering(s) to things church related – whether it is money for the minister and his family; or in what is called *atiina'e*, which is money used to upkeep church facilities, payment of bills and permits. In addition, twice every year each individual EFKS congregation is obligated to contribute large money collections to the EFKS body in what is known as *taulaga*. Capital raised through *taulaga* is budgeted for many services including the improvement of the EFKS church and its infrastructure; the state of EFKS schools like Maluafou – and its tertiary institution Malua Theological College; the operations of its central office in Tāmali; and missionary work.¹⁸¹

Although money is not a primary objective of the EFKS mission; there has been a shift in the meaning of *tautua* that somewhat blurs this emphasis. Over the years, *tautua* has shifted away from *tautua* through participation – giving myself (*tautua matavela*, *tautua tuāvae*, *tautua toto*), to *tautua* through capital – which is, giving my money. For instance, *tautua* as a Sunday school teacher in the EFKS for the twenty-first century includes how much bonus tickets one buys in a fundraiser familiar in Samoan circles called *ponesi*.¹⁸² Thus, so long as a teacher's bonus tickets are paid, his *tautua* will not be undermined in spite of whether he is preparing informative lessons for his students every Sunday morning, or not. But obviously, under the influence of a Western society which may in some cases restrict people from attending church services due to work obligations – will their money contributions be acceptable then as replacement of their participatory *tautua*? After all, this is the same understanding with the *tautua* of Samoan communities abroad to *aiga* and villages back in the homeland.

Inexorably, monetary offering(s) and anything EFKS-related that involves money such as *ponesi* and toll tickets,¹⁸³ is a constant issue which has become one of the causes for

¹⁸¹ Ernst, "Case Studies: Polynesia", 548-549.

¹⁸² *Ponesi*: transliteration of the English word 'bonus'. This activity involves selling tickets numbering from 1-40 at the price of twenty or more dollars a ticket depending on how much profit the *ponesi* initiator desires to collect. The bonus number drawn from the Lotto draw on Saturday night is the winning number, and the person with the winning ticket collects the wins of the *ponesi*.

¹⁸³ Toll tickets: The selling of tickets distributed in fundraising for an occasion or event. Many congregations implement the method of selling toll tickets to raise money for building their church, or church hall for example.

the departure of members and families from EFKS churches.¹⁸⁴ Tavita Maliko challenges the minister's role enquiring on aspects such as theological messages being preached to be a condition for people leaving over money.¹⁸⁵ Maliko's participants have it in mind that the particular kind of *tautua* preached in sermons is abusive in every spiritual sense of the word since it advocates 'suffering' as a prerequisite for *tautua*.¹⁸⁶ Members of the congregation are expected to obligatorily serve their respective churches by sacrificing their finances, time, and well-being. Meaning, in upholding their *tautua* for the 'supposed' glorification of God; one's power bill and rent money, at worst, one's dinner or children's lunches – are put on hold, while their pay-check is allocated for the *faiifeau's alofa* "love for the pastor"¹⁸⁷ (the term used for money offerings to a minister).

In an interview with Manfred Ernst; former General Secretary of the EFKS Nove Vaila'au acknowledged in 1992 that;

... some *faiife'au* live in luxurious houses, own more than one flashy car of expensive make, and a large piece of land with, maybe, an already furnished house rented out, and their children have degrees of a high level; and all this, mostly, is at the expense of the congregation.¹⁸⁸

Salu Epati supposed;

... the church somehow has become an extra burden in demanding too much from the people without helping them to find security.¹⁸⁹

What has been suggested is that the state of the *faiifeau* and his family's interests are in order, at the price of the well-being of the community a *faiifeau* was appointed to serve.

It caught my interest recent articles from newspapers like the *Samoa Times*, which suggests money-orientation in the EFKS has not changed but has become even more demanding today than it was in preceding years. For example, in 2010, one article reports

¹⁸⁴ Autagavaia Tipi Autagavaia, "16 taavale fou Faamati EFKS, Pulega a Faleata", in *Samoa Times* (Auckland, 14 April, 2010). <http://www.samoatimes.co.nz/2010/04/14/16-taavale-fou-faamati-efks-pulega-a-faleata/> Accessed 14 November 2012.

¹⁸⁵ Maliko is not the first to critique EFKS protocols and activities from an insider's perspective; "Over the years a good number of CCCS ministers have written theses at Malua Theological College or at the regional Pacific Theological College in which they sometimes quite openly criticise certain aspects of the life and running of the CCCS". Manfred Ernst, "Case Studies: Polynesia", 549.

¹⁸⁶ See, Maliko, "The Hierarchy of Voice", 215.

¹⁸⁷ Ernst, "Case Studies: Polynesia", 549.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 549.

¹⁸⁹ Salu Epati, "Unemployment: Looking at Unemployment in Western Samoa in the Samoan Way of Life (*Fa'a Samoa*) and the Role of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa" (BD Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1982), 96.

that sixteen EFKS churches from the district (*Pulega*) of Faleata in Samoa raised an estimated 1.4 million Samoan *tālā* – done in fulfilment of *tautua*. In glorifying God; EFKS women (*Mafutaga a Tinā*) from *Pulega* Faleata executed their *tautua* to the sixteen *faiifeau* of the district by gifting each a brand new vehicle in the annual event *fa'amati*.¹⁹⁰ Back in the 1960s and 1970s it was *fala* (mats), mosquito nets, coffee tables, and pillow cases were presented for *fa'amati*. Also only some years ago, it was silverware, cutlery, and bed sheets. Now, at present; it is vehicles, money in envelopes (*teutusi*¹⁹¹), wardrobes for *faiifeau* and wife, as well as clothing for their children are being presented at *fa'amati* – all in the name of *tautua*. This is the most extravagant example I have come across and although I acknowledge that this may be due to changing times and modern ways, it still highlights the question of whether this event caused short term or long term financial hardship for families. If so, this to me would be abusing the notion of *tautua*.

It appears as if the concept of *tautua* has over time transitioned away from stabilising families as is intended, to becoming a factor in breaking (weakening) families gestured in the many struggling Samoan households in Aotearoa New Zealand today – which includes EFKS members. But my question is; Is maintaining the payments of *ponesi* tickets consistently... *tautua*? Is using solely money for a *faiifeau*... *tautua*? Is giving monetary offerings only... *tautua*? Can *tautua* be measured by money offering? For me personally, the pure meaning of *tautua* has somewhere throughout the years been corrupted in its transition to meet the means of a materialistic bias¹⁹² that benefits the well-being of a selected minority, and not the majority (community). To build off what Tui Atua Efi said;

People should be discouraged from giving more than they can afford by way of parading a misguided generosity on the lame excuse that it is *fa'a Samoa*.¹⁹³

I think with perceptive knowledge of the true meaning and reasons of *tautua* one would be aware that *tautua* in the *fa'a Samoa* is not measured by money as it seems to be paraded by some people. *Tautua* means far more than capital. Money is important, but *tautua* would

¹⁹⁰ Autagavaia, “16 taavale fou Faamati EFKS, Pulega a Faleata”. <http://www.samoatimes.co.nz/2010/04/14/16-taavale-fou-faamati-efks-pulega-a-faleata> Accessed 14 November 2012.

¹⁹¹ *Teutusi* can amount from anywhere between 100 to 500 dollars, or even beyond. It is a *tautua* fulfilled as a gesture of respect for the servants of God.

¹⁹² His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi begged the question; “Is it possible that appealing to the competitive instinct to motivate large contributions tends to emphasise things material at the expense of things spiritual, orienting Christianity perhaps unwittingly to a materialistic bias?” Tui Atua Efi, *Englishing My Samoan*, 51.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

lack meaning altogether if it is defined by money. Anyone with a big bank account would not be required to invest their time, effort, and energy in service but just simply sign over a cheque if money offerings identified *tautua*.

Imagine two Sunday school teachers are given the responsibility of a class play. One teacher executes her *tautua* by not only contributing money, but through participation. In participating she endures stress, sweat and even tears directing the children in the few weeks leading up to an event such as White Sunday or Easter. The other teacher however only shows up on the day the play is performed, but as his *tautua*, donates the largest sum of money to the church on behalf of the class. You decide on which of the two is bona fide *tautua*, but I consider money to be the easier option. I believe that to fight on and suffer for a purpose that influences well-being and fellowship has far greater value and worth than having the highest money contributions read out every Sabbath at church. So even if the other teacher's money contribution is extravagantly more than the one that invested their time and emotions in the project, the latter will no doubt experience more joy in understanding the students' accomplishment having shared the journey with them.

Siauane drew on this conclusion as a summary of data collected at her *talanoaga* or interviews with participants of her research;

The majority of NZB [New Zealand-born] participants in both Group A and Group B and some SBS [Samoan-born Samoans] respondents in Group B recognise that the giving of either money or fine mats is significant, but just as important is donating time and effort. The most important thing is participation.¹⁹⁴

I always feel upset when individuals within my church community see themselves as faithless servants of the Lord when they fail to give money or in their eyes 'insufficient money' for EFKS commitments. For me, true glorification of God is achievable through spiritual *tautua* more than through a materialistic *tautua* because at the end of the day, it is about giving what is in your heart. It is much more meaningful to serve God through offering hospitable support for others (e.g. prayer), and servant hood (presence); than just money from one's pocket. A materialistic *tautua* is appropriate also since money is the currency of this world. But for money to mean more than just money; it must be offered under Godly intentions – but

¹⁹⁴ Siauane, "Fa'aSamoa", 73.

not to buy God's favour. Additionally, offering money must be done to honour and glorify God... but not people.

Proverbs 16:2 reads; "All one's ways may be pure in one's own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit". In chapter 6 I discuss my theology, but very briefly, a theological reflection on Christ's notion of true service would underline that Jesus never once commanded people – especially people he had helped, to bow down to him. Other than pleasing the Will of His Father, Jesus did not expect anything including money payments for his service or *tautua* (physical and spiritual) in maintaining the well-being of communities he came across.

Spiritual Tautua

Spiritual *tautua* for me is implemented by way of meditation; that is, in prayers, the recitations of Scripture and the singing of Christian songs. Even though it is his domain; spiritual *tautua* is not restricted to the *fai'feau* since it is an incentive for the well-being of the church community at large, foremost for the elderly and sick. My uncle Fuimaono Fa'avesi died in December 2012 at eighty-four years old; before his passing I used to visit him on a regular basis. We talked most of my visits. Because he was partially blind, I often had to read the Bible (Samoan translation) to him; and sometimes I did a short prayer before leaving. This is spiritual *tautua* and for me this is much more rewarding than a material-oriented *tautua*. It would have been so easy for me just to drop in to hand his daughter (his caregiver) twenty dollars to buy him dinner; but spiritual nourishment is much more sentimental that I believe absolves healing (via spiritually) not only for my uncle while he was alive – but for me. This interactive exchange of well-being is what gives meaning to *tautua*.

Following this; members of the EFKS (especially the youth) that perceive *tautua* in church as mainly tithe and money offerings, must be educated and informed today – or reminded – on the true essence of *tautua* to understand it's worth and value. There is a much deeper meaning to service, especially around one's spiritual *tautua* for the betterment of another. Not only that, if done in the right manner and spirit, *tautua* would un-discriminatively bring by well-being and not hardship. The focus of *tautua* is always God.

CONCLUSION

Criticism around money and the EFKS – from both insiders and outsiders – is often directed at either the church for its protocols; or the *fa'aSamoa*. But people should be most critical of... is people. One reason is their motives behind money offerings. Financial giving to the EFKS is undeniably a part of *tautua*; but what is concerning though is when it is done in the spirit of competition.¹⁹⁵ Secondly, the *tōfā* of those in leadership roles within the hierarchical system of both the *fa'aSamoa* and EFKS is another reason I place more responsibility on people. If *tōfā* or wisdom is fraudulent, self-oriented, and unwise; well-being can never be equally accessible for everyone. Fa'avesi believed; *o le Tōfā e manuia ai le EFKS. O le Tōfā e malepe ai fo'i*.¹⁹⁶ That is, “wisdom will either strengthen the EFKS... or break it”.

Fifty years ago, Samoan *TOA* like Fa'avesi and Taala took on the responsibilities of fighting to initiate a place for the EFKS in Aotearoa New Zealand; and the responsibility of fighting on to strengthen the EFKS in the next fifty years, will be fought by its youth of today... and tomorrow. Hence, I feel the younger generation should be moulded through the direction and supervision of the older sector of the congregation – since it is they (elders, leaders, ministers) that are trusted to have *tōfā* and spiritual maturity. Similar to the learning relationship between a *taulele'a* and *matai*, the young people of the EFKS should be tutored and trained in the *fa'aSamoa* by those blessed with *tōfā* in order to distinguish true *tautua* from what is not. This is imperative because when responsibilities are shifted onto the next generation in the years to come, the youth will rise responsibly to and in their roles with integrity and commitment.

... and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

- Matthew 20:27-28

¹⁹⁵ Each congregation collects the money for the *faiifeau* every fortnight or once a month. Vaila'au (1992, interview by Ernst) described this as being “done in the competitive manner of the chiefs, under whose name the family contribution is publicly announced: the *Alofa mo le faiifeau*. Taken from, Ernst, “Case Studies: Polynesia”, 549.

¹⁹⁶ translation: “Wisdom is what would bless the EFKS with success. Equally, Wisdom is what could break it as well”. Or simply ‘*tōfā* will either strengthen a church or break it’. Personal communication with Fuimaono Fa'avesi – a very wise Samoan elder. Fa'avesi was one of the first lay preachers of the EFKS in Aotearoa New Zealand, and a pioneer of building EFKS churches in South Auckland. Fuimaono Fa'avesi died during the writing of this thesis – rested in love, 1 December 2012.

CHAPTER 5: TŌFĀ

O le Tōfā e manuia ai le EFKS. O le Tōfā e malepe ai fo'i

Ua tātā i le tua o Fatutoa le lai o Puava.

The back of Fatutoa was touched gently by the winds of Puava.¹⁹⁷

His Highness Tui Atua Efi tells the Samoan narrative of Fatutoa who decides to commence on a voyage to Tonga, in an attempt to get away from his spiritual and cultural home of Samoa. But just before Fatutoa leaves, his *aiga* – who have transformed collectively into a gentle wind – touch Fatutoa on the back and say to him;

You must go back, your family needs you and you can only find haven in your spiritual home...¹⁹⁸

Similarly, Fatutoa – who was touched gently on the back by the winds (*aiga*), His Highness who was himself contemplating leaving Samoa, was touched by his *aiga* through the intervention of his elder Ga'opo'a which led him to stay.

Ga'opo'a did not transform into a gentle wind, but the point here is that every Samoan person groomed in the *fa'aSamoa* knows the importance of ancestors;

Ga'opo'a was not talking to me. He was talking to the gods of my fathers who inhabit my psyche. He was talking to my ancestors, living and dead, who murmur admonition to my soul.¹⁹⁹

Although deceased, Samoan people believe that their ancestors or *aiga* of the past, continue to speak to them. Perhaps, this is what Albert Wendt might have meant by his eloquent lines; “our Dead are the splendid robes our souls wear”.²⁰⁰ According to Tui Atua Efi, this conversation between the living and the dead forms the spiritual essence of a Samoan person providing direction to their lives. As we say in Samoan;

... “Ua tata i le tua o Fatutoa le lai o Puava” (the back of Fatutoa was touched gently by the winds of Puava). The healing is not out there, nor is it outside us. The healing comes from our spiritual home. The healing comes from within.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Tui Atua Efi, “In search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy”, 50.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 50.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 50.

²⁰⁰ Albert Wendt, “Parents and Children”. <http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/authors/wendt/parents.asp> Accessed 14 November 2012.

²⁰¹ Tui Atua Efi, “In search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy”, 50.

Interestingly, a significant amount of work and research has focused on the Samoan church's role in language maintenance;²⁰² not only locally in Aotearoa New Zealand, but as well the diasporic Samoan community dispersed internationally.²⁰³ However, little work and study has been done around 'spiritual maintenance'. This is somewhat baffling since spirituality is a core element synonymous with not only church; but the well-being of Samoan people seeing as healing for them comes from within – “our spiritual home”.²⁰⁴ It is the counsel of past ancestors or *tuaā ua mavae* that provides healing for Samoa, by means of an inimitable wisdom passed on to the living known as *tōfā*.

TŌFĀ

In the traditional Samoan setting, the criteria established for leadership within the *aiga* are of a very high standard. First and foremost, to be a leader, one is expected to have knowledge and wisdom. A leader with wisdom is of great importance in so that proper decisions are made which can benefit the community one is responsible over. The wisdom of *matai* therefore is blessed and considered to have depth²⁰⁵ as is the transfer of this wisdom to the *tautua* person or *taulele'a*. In his research, Fa'au'uga Logovae examined the concept of wisdom, namely *tōfā* – and concluded by saying that *tōfā* is a concept related to *matai* because *tōfā* is more than the knowledge acquired by an individual;

[It is] the result of many years of observation, gathering, scrutinizing, developing, improving and analysing of culture.²⁰⁶

Tōfā or wisdom then, is not something that can be purchased from a store, or even attained through reading books; it is received particularly from and through a life of service – *tautua*. Meaning simply that practical experience, full-time attendance and participation are required conditions to gain *tōfā*. This does not mean that every person who executes *tautua* will achieve *tōfā* because anybody can ably perform *tautua* – but not everyone can do justice to their *matai* title and status. That is why only a selected few are made *matai*.

²⁰² Tanielu, “O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana”.

²⁰³ Fa'afetai Lesa, “The impact of Samoan Christian churches on Samoan language competency and cultural identity” (PhD Thesis in Education, University of Hawai'i, 2009).

²⁰⁴ Tui Atua Efi, “In search of Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor in Social Policy”, 50.

²⁰⁵ Tui Atua Efi, “Clutter in Indigenous Knowledge”, 63.

²⁰⁶ Faau'uga Logovae, “Wisdom in the Samoan Context with Special Reference to the Matai System: A Theological Interpretation” (Bachelor of Divinity thesis, Pacific Theological College, Suva, 1982), 5-6.

Tōfā comes with great responsibilities for it is a blessing not only for the one who obtains *tōfā* – but every person under it. Evidently, *tautua* is how a person can reach a *matai* title; but *alofa* is what a person needs... to be a *matai*. As I pointed out before *alofa* is what separates genuine *tautua* from one that is not. The same with whether a *matai* is doing justice to *tōfā* or not. Despite this distinction, the two concepts *tautua* and *tōfā* are most certainly relational because they reciprocally give life to one another. Perhaps the only uncertainty here is which of the two comes first – the chicken or the egg?

Tōfā is essential for *tautua* in that there exists a cyclic process whereby *tōfā* is transferred unto a *tautua* (*taule'ale'a*) after years of observation during their time of service to the *matai*. Furthermore, once a *tautua* person is acknowledged and blessed with *tōfā* upon obtaining a *matai* title, [s]he can in turn be at a position to instil the *tōfā* unto another potential *tautua* provided they serve the *aiga* diligently – thus the cycle carries on. This means that *tōfā* is fundamental in well-being for the reason that if *tōfā* is used manipulatively for wrong and impurity, *tautua* will likewise be impure and wrong which leads to ruin. On the other hand, if the usage of *tōfā* is clothed in *alofa*, compassion and sincerity, *tautua* will side with these qualities inciting well-being in its wake. Matthew 5:8 reads; “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”. It does not matter whether a person has *tōfā*, without *alofa* in one’s heart, other things like money will be prioritised to fill the empty void in their hearts. This means that a person, who is not enough without *tōfā*, is not enough with it.

To use the relationship of a master and his apprentice from chapter four as demonstration here on the importance of this distribution sequence; if the master (trainer) has a good pure heart, the training he gives out will be good and pure; and if the training is good the apprentice will become a good tradesman as a result. But if after many years the apprentice has observed everything other than the trade in training for, the apprentice will still end up a qualified tradesman on record – but an unqualified tutor, and which as expected, means danger for the apprentice in training under the newly (*supposedly*) qualified tradesman.

Another connection between the concepts *tōfā* and *tautua* is the notion of ‘looking back’ (*tua*) but ‘moving forward’ (*tau*). It is the Samoan principle that if after a village or church meeting a consensus could not be reached, each delegate (*matai* or church member – e.g. deacon) will be encouraged to *moe manatunatu* – that is “to sleep with a dream

dialogue”²⁰⁷ (*tōfā* is the formal word for “sleep”), until the next day or scheduled meeting. This is done on the belief that the dead or ancestors of the past give spiritual support to the decision making processes of the living.²⁰⁸ Hence when a *matai* or deacon sleeps there is a dialogue between them and their ancestors, and this channel of communication is identified as *moe manatunatu*. The point is, the *tautua* notion of looking to the ‘past’ whilst fighting to move forward applies also to *tōfā* – a *matai* looks to ancestors of the past for mantic wisdom in order to make decisions in the present, to press forward in fighting on persistently for a better tomorrow.

Understanding Tōfā

Tōfā simply conceptualises wisdom even though the word *tōfā* itself implies different meanings. For instance; *tōfā* is a respectful term of address preceding the title of an orator *matai* or *tulāfale* – e.g. *Tōfā Tautualelei*. Moreover as Logovae explains, the mere presence of a *tulāfale* is a sign of his/her *tōfā*,²⁰⁹ that is, of their prudence. This implies that holding a leadership position such as that of orator or *matai* has certain obligations attached to it – specifically to think things over carefully and to exercise prudence and caution. Other meanings of the word *tōfā* is “to sleep” as mentioned earlier; and “good-bye”. *Tōfā* is also used as a designation of the most important *ie toga* received by a *matai*.²¹⁰

All of these different meanings of *tōfā* are somehow related to wisdom. For example, *tōfā* as suggested is the term for ‘wisdom’ and can equally mean “to sleep” – used here in reference to the sleep of *matai*. This sleep is significant for while asleep the *matai* is informed by God and ancestors – *moe manatunatu*. The wisdom or *tōfā* gained from this dialogue informs *fono* or council deliberations;

Through *moe manatunatu* the gods and ancestors are able to assist the chief and orator, not only in decisions concerning the self, but also in decisions relating to family and community.²¹¹

Obviously, there is a strong spiritual essence present in *tōfā* that characterises it as almost divine. To touch the head of a *matai* even is a serious breach of *tapu* or sacredness, because

²⁰⁷ Tui Atua Efi, “In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion”, 9.

²⁰⁸ Tui Atua Efi, “Resident, Residence, Residency in Samoan Custom”, 16.

²⁰⁹ Logovae, “Wisdom in the Samoan Context”, 23.

²¹⁰ Elise Huffer and Ropate Qalo, “Have We Been Thinking Upside-Down? The Contemporary Emergence of Pacific Theoretical Thought”, in *The Contemporary Pacific*, Volume 16:1 (2004), 93.

²¹¹ Tui Atua Efi, “In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion”, 10.

the head is the residence of divine discernment and so should not be disrespected. Tui Atua Efi says;

The divinity of the head gives rise to the Samoan saying: *o le faiva o mafaufau o le fa'atonutonu ma le fa'asoasoa*, which means: 'the function and purpose of the mind is to discern evidence and make good judgements...'²¹²

Samoan people understand *tōfā* as wisdom from God and therefore regard well-being to embrace one whom has attained *tōfā*... or is nurtured under *tōfā*.

Every time I hear Samoan people speak of *tōfā* it is as if they are referring to a person. Such as, if at the conclusion of a meeting a consensus has not been found people tend to say to each other; 'for our next council, remember to bring along *tōfā*'. Astonished is too small a word to describe the awe I have of *tōfā*. I do not admit understanding the concept of *tōfā* in its totality, but it helps to know the different layers of *tōfā* to fathom its spiritual significance in the lives of Samoan people.

Branches of Tōfā

The concept of *tōfā* has several streams. The first one I refer to is *tōfā saili* or *tōfā liuliu*. The term *liuliu* in Samoan literally means to turn over and over again.²¹³ The belief is that when a *matai* is asleep or in the trance of *moe manatunatu*; [s]he will not find rest, tossing and turning upon the *ali* (the traditional wooden item used as a pillow), and coughing throughout the night as [s]he consults the ancestors of the past – or a higher power (God) – for counsel. *Tōfā saili* or *tōfā liuliu* then is the process of intensive contemplation and deep thinking in order that one may reach an understanding of something, or arrive at a decision or ideas.²¹⁴

Before his passing, uncle Fa'avesi never once withheld his wisdom and knowledge. He would share with me his experiences in church affairs, village matters, *aiga* commitments; and tutored me in the *fa'aSamoa* and my faith in God especially. He was not one to keep his knowledge to himself but poured it all out for my benefit and growth. This is *tōfā tatala*. There is a Samoan saying; *e sasa'a faaoti le utu o le faimea* – this means simply, give everything, pour out everything. I am unsure if this is practiced today but the Samoan tradition of old was that before the time a *matai* passes on to the next life, [s]he will pass all

²¹² Ibid., 9.

²¹³ Tuisuga-le-taau, "O le Tofa Liliu", 49.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

his/her *tōfā* and knowledge to the next of kin by literally breathing his/her blessing into the open mouth of his/her successor.²¹⁵ This is *tōfā tatala* or *tōfā sasa'a* – the giving out and sharing of all of one's knowledge and *tōfā* to another.

The next arrangement of *tōfā* is *tōfā mamao*, which is basically envisioning the future. The word *mamao* is translated as “far” – therefore *tōfā mamao* is the far-sighted wisdom of the *matai*, or the long view of the *faiifeau* or a leader for strategy and vision. According to a Samoan scholar who spoke to Huffer and So'o;

... the term *tōfā mamao* is used to indicate even greater wisdom, such as being able to judge the consequences of an action, that is, a prophetic quality of looking into the future.²¹⁶

The role of *matai* is to prophetically look ahead and strategise for the maintenance of well-being of *aiga*; it is the same also for *faiifeau* toward the congregation, and leaders of any gathering or organisation. It is the *tōfā mamao* of Samoan leaders that are the sails that direct, stir and guide the journeys of its people.

My maternal grandmother Leiuā Falavia Fuimaono celebrated her ninety-ninth birthday in 2012, and has been a servant of the EFKS throughout much of her life. Respect is paid where it is due, and people acknowledge my grandmother's *tautua* to the church and *aiga* as a feat they themselves aspire to, *auā ua afu*²¹⁷ *lana tautua* (because her service has been performed well over many years). Hence the Samoan saying;

“*O le faiva o le Tamaali'i o le gāsese*”, which means: ‘it is the mark of the chief and the progeny of chief to perform or serve well’.²¹⁸

Because of Leiuā's commitment and the longevity of her *tautua*, it is acknowledged that with her age and experience that her *tōfā* is mature and seasoned – *ua matua le tōfā*.

The few examples I have emphasised above show the spirituality of *tōfā* which is linked to a divine quintessence. In addition, there are spiritual concepts that derive from *tōfā* as well like *liutōfāga* (the re-entombment of the deceased), which capture the beyond-ness

²¹⁵ Tui Atua Efī, “In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion”, 9-10.

²¹⁶ Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o, “Beyond Governance in Samoa: Understanding Samoan Political Thought”, in *The Contemporary Pacific*, Volume 17: 2 (2005), 316.

²¹⁷ *afu* literally means ‘sweat’ or ‘perspire’, but in this context ‘sweat’ is used metaphorically to mean long duration.

²¹⁸ Tui Atua Efī, “In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion”, 9.

and spirituality power of the concept *tōfā*. Although the diverse strands of *tōfā* may differ in appropriation, they all trace back to wisdom as its source – its point of departure.

The purpose of *tōfā* is to maintain and protect the well-being of villages and *aiga* – which today converts over to the duty and protection of a *faiifeau* over members of the congregation. *Tōfā* therefore is fearless and has to be oriented in courage and should never be withheld or withdrawn. Leaders that do not withdraw expressing their *tōfā* to avoid confrontations are fulfilling their responsibilities of maintaining and protecting the welfare of its communities. On the contrary, *tōfā* without discipline and lacking *alofa* is wasteful and self-defeating.

Exploring ‘O le Tōfā e manuia ai le EFKS. O le Tōfā e malepe ai fo’i’

It was in 2012 that I asked uncle Fa’avesi during one of my visits, for his perspective on the future well-being of our (his and my) beloved EFKS church. To which he said; *o le Tōfā e manuia ai le EFKS – o le Tōfā e malepe ai fo’i* (“wisdom will either strengthen the EFKS... or break it”). These powerful words were spoken as his *tōfā tatala* and will stay with me always. Not only is this phrase important in my own journey in faith as a Christian, but it can well serve as a great reminder for the EFKS church, its leaders and its members.

It is standard within all Samoan communities that after any work is accomplished or a decision is made or an event completed, it is always asked; *a o ai le au fai tōfā?* (so who were the wise leaders/decision makers?). Whether it is to applaud or to criticise, accountability for how any Samoan function turns out rests on the *tōfā* of leaders – the decision makers. For instance, when everything for a Samoan traditional wedding falls in place on the day, people would applaud the *aiga* and ask; *o ai le au fai tōfā?* The same question would be asked also, even if at a Samoan funeral the preparations of *aiga* in mourning fail to be on par with the expectations of people; *a o ai le au fai tōfā?* – who were the wise leaders or decision makers? This is precisely why *tōfā* is so important and seldom ever attributed to youth due to the insurmountable responsibilities that come with *tōfā*, especially around the maintenance of well-being and protection of any Samoan circle(s).

The EFKS is congregational in structure and thereby implements the democratic method of a voting system to decide matters. From subject deliberations of individual congregations, all the way up to the summit of the General Assembly, a voting system is

employed to find a consensus. I do not intend to challenge the constitution of the EFKS here but to raise an awareness of one side of the democratic method where it is to arrive at a conclusion based on the highest number of raised hands which does not necessarily make it the wisest of outcome. People without *tōfā* can easily put their hand up to motion or pass a decree not realising the affect it will have on their well-being. What is worst, people can vote based on personal agendas and biases – even on influences of peers; and not on what is the wisest choice for everybody. This is also discussed by Ponifasio who is a pastor in Auckland.²¹⁹

However, at a traditional Samoan *fono* or meeting – *aiga* or village councils; it is only when the *tōfā* of all *matai* in attendance is amalgamated and one (*ua tasi i ai le tōfā*), that a consensus is met. Even if there are fifty delegates seated at a council, the *tōfā* that is restricted for *matai* only is the basis for a conclusion; and not based on the majority of hands raised in voting – even if there are just two *matai* present. Again, I state clearly my sole intention is to raise a significant point on *tōfā* as to me, the *tōfā* system is logical and maybe more effective than a voting system since it is the *au fai tōfā* – that is, the wise leaders – who are trusted to have the wisdom from God (and ancestors) and therefore the ability to make proper decisions.

In the context of the EFKS, the distinguished charter of Reverend Elders (*susuga i toeiina*) should be and are indeed the *au fai tōfā* in the relationship of church ministers and members of EFKS. Members are available to support and action whatever is decided on, but ideally it should come from the table of Reverend Elders – their *tōfā saili*, and *tōfā mamao* – the resolution of church matters and affairs. There are special cases, especially if it involves updating the constitution; that the *tōfā* of Reverend Elders is what is relied upon for a ruling, and not on the show of hands. The main reason I think the approach of relying on *tōfā* is best to make wise choices, is because by relying on ballots people are drawing on their own feelings and knowledge; but by seeking counsel from ancestors and spirits through *moe manatunatu* or a dream, people are drawing beyond themselves but on to a higher power that is God.

²¹⁹ Look at, Lui Ponifasio, “E afua mai mauga le manuia o le nuu”, in *Samoa Times* (Auckland, 28 Fepuari 2011). <http://www.samoatimes.co.nz/2011/02/27/e-afua-mai-mauga-le-manuia-o-le-nuu-28-fepuari-2011/> Accessed 17 January 2013.

Even though *tōfā* is a Godly gift – it can be an apparatus to build or to break. The majority of this research gives out the idea that *tōfā* is unlikely obtained without *tautua*, because for me participation is key for gaining *tōfā*. But today, *suafa matai* are being bestowed upon people that have privileges like wealth, celebrity statuses and power – regardless whether they have served or *tautua* the *aiga* and village. One positive aspect of this exchange of course is that it may influence these privileged people to learn and develop their *fa’asamoa* in preparation to fulfil their *matai* obligations. And by acquiring understanding of *fa’aSamoa* from pragmatic experience and action a person that was once unfamiliar with things Samoan will thereafter appreciate their Samoan culture as the more they learn. Having said that free from a history of *tautua* it is inconceivable that these privileged people have supposedly been blessed with *tōfā* that comes together with *matai* titles. And that is concerning. Can privileged people without a history of *tautua* have the *tōfā* to make proper and wise decisions that better their *aiga*? I personally think not.

It is the same with certain *faiifeau* for that matter. Because of political reasons like family affiliations or village alliances, some *faiifeau* are called to shepherd a congregation without even serving or fulfilling *tautua* under another *faiifeau* and EFKS parish beforehand. This may not be problematic at all but it does raise doubt over whether a *faiifeau* is fully equipped and qualified to lead followers, if *faiifeau* has not experienced firsthand the struggles EFKS members’ live through every day in executing their *tautua*.

Attitudes on Tōfā

Like with *tautua*, the problem I identify with *tōfā* is again... people themselves. The well-being of any Samoan community can never thrive if *matai*, *faiifeau*, or leaders are lacking in *alofa*. Since *tōfā* is a divine blessing from God, it itself is never wrong. Every wrong linked to *tōfā* would be the fault of people who put their own selfish desires and needs, ahead of pleasing God – by helping others. The hallmark of any good hearted leader with *tōfā* is integrity and compassion; whereas propaganda and corruption is the doings of a person without *alofa* and divorced from God – unworthy of *tōfā*. I share the opinion of my uncle that *tōfā* is what stands between a stronger EFKS... and a weakened one. This is because Samoan people, especially the young, look up to their leaders – who are armoured with *tōfā* – for guidance and direction; but in particular strength.

JESUS IS TŌFĀ

As I have stated earlier whenever I listen to Samoan people speak of *tōfā* it is as if they are referring to a living person – ‘bring along *tōfā*’ (*sau ma aumai le tōfā*); ‘where is *tōfā* at’ (*o fea o i ai le tōfā*); search for *tōfā*’ (*saili le tōfā*). Especially when a person has exceeded their own capabilities that *tōfā* is most vital. It appears somewhat then that when things are not going well, or if answers and solutions are needed – look to *tōfā*. In my Christian faith, when days are miserable and life frustrating, it is Jesus whom I seek and ask for in my prayers. Appropriately, the notion of *tōfā* or wisdom as a person corresponds well with Jesus Christ.

Biblical Exegesis

The first verses of the Holy Bible reads; “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). These opening words of the book of Genesis is translated from the Hebrew ‘תִּשְׁאֵרֶבֶת’ (*berē’shît*) – which derives from the word ‘אֶרֶץ’ (*rē’sh*); meaning “head”, “source”, or “beginning”.²²⁰ But experts in Hebrew exegesis like Shlomo Yitzchaki (also known as Rashi), and Nachmanides (also known as Ramban), agree that “in the beginning”, is not an acceptable translation of *berē’shît*. There are various hints that the sages or rabbis of pre-Talmudic times recognised some ambiguity in understanding these first few words as well.

Interestingly, the Jewish Bible – the Targum – which is the Old Testament in the Aramaic language, includes ‘wisdom’ in the translation of *berē’shît*. So instead of “in the beginning God created...”, the Targum translation reads; “*With wisdom* did God create and perfect the heavens and the earth” (Jewish Targum). By this, I am reminded of the ‘wisdom that existed before creation’ the book of Proverbs speaks about;

Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth – when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world’s first bits of soil. When he established the heavens, I was there... (Proverbs 8:23-27)

In resonance with Proverbs 8:23-27, we read in John 1:1-2; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God”. Questions on who exactly the other entity ‘He’ was pre-existing with God before and at

²²⁰ Jacob Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew: English and Hebrew Edition* (Oxford University Press, 1959).

creation can be resolved by reading further down the chapter until verse 14, where the writer of the Gospel of John persists on to say; “And the Word became flesh”. The same John whom authorship of the Gospel is accredited to writes in Revelation 19:13; “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God”.

Many Christians believe that it was Christ who existed beside God at creation – not as a creation of God but as co-creator of the world. I have faith that Christ is the wisdom mentioned in Proverbs as well as the Word that existed in the beginning as accounted by the writer of John. Jesus Christ is indeed the personification of wisdom – and for me personally, Jesus is *tōfā*. The Apostle Paul addressed the church in Corinthians; “He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God...” (1 Corinthians 1:30a).

CONCLUSION

At a time where membership numbers in the EFKS is declining and where spirituality is often said to be not of priority in the church by the Samoan media and people in its newspapers; it might be useful to appeal to Samoan wisdom (*tōfā*) as a means of addressing this issue. This is especially important as one of the growing reasons for families departing EFKS is many people’s quasi-desperation for well-being. When Jacob was in trouble, confused, and unsettled, God helped Jacob by appearing to him in a dream²²¹ giving Jacob counsel and empowerment. Jacob was later able to make proper and wise decisions in caring for his own well-being and the well-being of others.

The primary role of the EFKS church is to give people spiritual guidance. The responsibility of providing spiritual guidance does not rest solely on the shoulders of the *faiifeau*, it is just as much the duty of the elderly and mature community also. As I have emphasised, *tōfā* is available for any *tautua* person who has *alofa*. Reason being, *tōfā* is a God-sent blessing to be used for the protection of communities. And the protection of EFKS members can only be manifested if *tōfā* is genuine through the control of *alofa*. *Tōfā* is what Samoan people of pre-Christian time depended on... and is something Samoan communities of the twenty-first century must commit to if looking to better their lives today – mentally,

²²¹ Genesis 28:10-15.

physically and spiritually. When Jesus exercised his *tōfā* he empowered people; motivated people; and he especially healed people.

How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

- Proverbs 16:16

CHAPTER 6: E.F.K.S – PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae

Has the church a duty to identify the new issues and relate them to the Christian message? If it has, is it performing this duty effectively? Has the church a duty to articulate a vision of how things ought to be, bearing in mind the new realities and the issues they spawn?²²²

- His Highness, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi.

If the state of affairs of the EFKS today impinges on well-being, it is largely due to people as I have inferred throughout this thesis. People can equally initiate and maintain well-being as it is the people who are accountable for change. There is a Samoan proverb: *a ua sala uta, ia tonu tai* (when a mistake has been made inland, it should be rectified at the seaside).²²³ Meaning, when two people are engaged in an undertaking and one makes a mistake, the other can still save the situation by setting things right again. Thus, people themselves can take on the responsibility of positive action when and where necessary in rectifying suspect EFKS protocols to meet the interests of its communities.

From the perspective of an EFKS servant, theology should be the underpinning crux of anything EFKS – its structure, protocols, constitution, and practices. Terence Veling theorises;

Theology is always shaped by and embodied in the practices of historical, cultural, and linguistic communities.²²⁴

Theology is manifested in practice; that is, a person's understanding of God is shown in their actions. This is important for the EFKS in terms of how people should serve or *tautua* in view that the theology practiced by members of the EFKS has to be done for the glorification of God – and not people. It is common and familiar for EFKS leaders and people to say after a service or good works is performed “*Tau ina ia maua ai se viiga mo le Atua*” (*For the glorification of God*). Therefore, should the theology alive today in the EFKS be suspect, more so in terms of its practice; a need for a new direction in the application of theology may be required.

²²² Tui Atua Efi, *Englishing My Samoan*, 50-51.

²²³ Shultz, “The Journal of the Polynesian Society”, 113.

²²⁴ Terence Veling, *Practical theology : On earth as it is in heaven* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 6.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

What is Practical Theology?

It is suggested in the book edited by Woodward and Pattison, *Pastoral and Practical Theology*, that a simple way to explain practical theology is emphasising the first part of its name²²⁵ – practical. To think practical means involving practice or action. Practical theology then can be understood as a theoretical activity that builds on a practical basis. In other words, it is the study of theology so that it can be acted on, and is relevant to everyday concerns and situations. Woodward and Pattison view practical theology;

... as a place where religious beliefs and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions, and actions and conducts dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical and practically transforming.²²⁶

Therefore, practical theology is the application of theology in a way that is intended to make it beneficial and useful for the context or world a person is in. This is what sets it apart from other disciplines in theological education – its grounded theological reflection. Rather than attempting to explain abstract theological problems, practical theologians aim to deal with issues that are a part of life in the world.

The emphasis of practical theology is on how all the teachings of the Bible should be reflected in the way people conduct their lives in the present world, as Veling articulates;

... practical theology is perhaps seeking to reclaim – a certain reintegration of theology into the weave and fabric of human living, in which theology becomes a “practice” or way of life.²²⁷

This is identified by Duce and Strange also;

Practical Theology has the task of interpreting scriptures for the life of the church today, in its structure, in its practice, its ethics and pastoral care... Practical Theology is application of God’s revelation to the individual and the church.²²⁸

Therefore, a practical theologian is not simply to contemplate or comprehend theological doctrines and teachings but to move beyond that to applying those principles in everyday life and situations. Furthermore, since practical theology is a dialogue between theology

²²⁵ James Woodward, Stephen Pattison, John Patton, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2000), 7.

²²⁶ Woodward, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 7.

²²⁷ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 3.

²²⁸ Philip Duce and Daniel Strange, *Keeping Your Balance: Approaching theological and Religious Studies* (Leicester: Inter-varsity, 2001), 76, 77.

(scripture, tradition, reason and experience) and the world (culture, issues); both theology and the twenty-first century world need to listen to each other, and to work and respond constructively to each other.

Importance of Practical Theology

In principle, the sphere for practical theology is almost infinite, any subject that is of practical contemporary human and religious concern may become the focus for practical theological attention.²²⁹ That is, no topic or issue occurring today in the twenty-first century is outside the potential of applying practical theology. According to Gerben Heitink;

The exercise of practical theology does not have the church, but rather, society as its horizon.²³⁰

As a problem posing theology, it specifically deals with life and recovers the theology of the past and constructively develops theology for the future.²³¹ In other words, it is the doing of theology that is first informed by the real situation of people and then allowing theologians – by a careful hermeneutical process, to reflect theologically on those situations and problems, and then revisit the situation to carefully transform and improve it. If practical theological activity fails to take in to account the realities of contemporary human condition, “it is arguable that it forsakes an important part of its identity and value”.²³²

My Hermeneutical Position

The lens I read from is the position of a Samoan person – or from a Samoan perspective. On the reason that I am not yet a *faiifeau* while writing this, I read not as a *faiifeau* or intend to see things from the point of view of a *faiifeau*²³³. In saying that, I approach my subject regarding the EFKS church in the twenty-first century as an insider as I am part of the institution. At the same time, I am an outsider in some respects, given that I am young, born in New

²²⁹ Woodward, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 8.

²³⁰ Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1999), 9.

²³¹ Veling’s description of the future focus element of practical theology; “... it is a theology that is given over to a passion for what could yet be, what is still in-the-making, in process, not yet, still coming (“Thy kingdom come!”)”. Taken from Veling, *Practical Theology*, 7.

²³² Woodward, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 8.

²³³ The main part of this thesis was written when I was an a’oa’o Malua. My wife Meiolandre & I were initiated to be the ministers of EFKS Taeaofua in Mangere 23 February 2012 - 5 days before this thesis was submitted.

Zealand and raised both in New Zealand and Australia. While I do not ever feel that this part of my life brings about discrimination from EFKS people, being New Zealand-born in some ways still marks me an outsider – especially considering my Western education and learning.

To incorporate the first part of Anae’s poem;

I am a Samoan – but not a Samoan. To my *aiga* in Samoa, I am a *palagi* [foreigner]. I am a New Zealander – but not a New Zealander.²³⁴

I may be limited because I was not born and raised in Samoa but I feel both the Samoan and Western worldviews contribute significantly to my thoughts and identity... as well as my theology. In saying this, I like to see myself as a product or a fusion of two horizons and that I have the best of both worlds. Although incompletely Samoan, and incompletely New Zealander in the eyes of society if you will; through the fusion of these two horizons I am uniquely who I am which I qualify to be of equivalent to being a complete Samoan... or a complete New Zealander respectively. Unlike the poem of Anae above, I do not consider myself any ‘less Samoan’ because I was not born in Samoa. I am who I am - I am Samoan first and foremost and most importantly a child of God.

My background in theological and biblical studies is the window of my location; my *fa’aSamoa*, and cultural orientation, as well as my Western education is the door; but the key to my perspectival location is the understanding I have of God – where a relationship with Jesus as *tōfā* becomes the nurturing and counselling spirit I seek in *moe manatunatu*.

EKALESIA FA’APOTOPOTOGA KERISIANO SAMOA

On the fourth of December 2012, the EFKS church began its celebrations in commemoration of fifty years since its establishment in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1962. These celebrations went on for two weeks – beginning in Wellington, than Christchurch, and closing in Auckland. As reported by the *Samoa Times*; one of the many invited speakers at the official opening was New Zealand cabinet minister Hekia Parata. Unaware of what EFKS meant;

²³⁴ Melanie Anae, “O a’u/I: my identity journey”, in *Making our place: growing up PI in New Zealand*, (eds) Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop and Gabrielle Sisifo Makisi (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2003), 90.

Parata spoke as if EFKS was a word.²³⁵ Many of the 231,000 Samoan people living in Aotearoa New Zealand would have informed Parata that EFKS is the acronym for Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa – the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS).²³⁶ I myself would have said to Parata, as well as remind other Samoans, that EFKS means a whole lot more than Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa.

In the twenty-first century, I feel that there are two types of people that attend EFKS churches in Aotearoa New Zealand. One is obligated to go, and the other knows there is just no traditional Samoan church subsisting today – but the EFKS. Not to segregate the EFKS in divisions, but the latter is beyond doubt in reference to mostly the elderly; whereas the former are nominal Christians which will include all ages from children right through to mature adults – single and married. For a stronger and prosperous EFKS in the years ahead, I think the task is to set a balance between these distinctive sides so that both feel it a privilege attending church than anything else. This can be achieved by modernising EFKS traditions without straying away from it as I show later in the chapter. As the Samoan proverb states “*E sui faiga, ae tumau fa’avae*”.

According to recent statistics, the population of EFKS numbers still ranks highest against other church denominations within the Samoan community.²³⁷ But compared to years past, the number has dropped, and the status of EFKS as the leading religious establishment is growing fainter by the year. In 2006, Ernst theorised that if the trend of the huge movement out of the EFKS continues;

... in another 40 years from now [that is, 2006] the CCCS [EFKS] will have lost its dominant status... and will have become just a medium sized church amongst others.²³⁸

On a positive note, the EFKS remains the dominant church within Samoan communities, and this in itself is a significant landmark.

²³⁵ Aigaletaule’ale’a F. Tauafiāfi, “E.F.K.S: The next fifty years”, in *Samoa Times* (Auckland, 28 December, 2012). <http://samoobserver.ws/local-news/other/samoans-abroad/2643-efks-the-next-fifty-years/> Accessed 23 January 2013.

²³⁶ Tauafiāfi, “The next fifty years”, <http://samoobserver.ws/local-news/other/samoans-abroad/2643-efks-the-next-fifty-years/> Accessed 23 January 2013.

²³⁷ “The Church population (aged 5+) stands at a total 160,961 with males 83,013 and females 77,948”... “The percentage of people attending EFKS (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa) ranked highest at 31.8”. Statistics taken from Unumoe Esera, “Congregationalists still ahead Population Census Analytics say”, in *Talamua Media & Publications* (Samoa, October, 2012). <http://www.talamua.com/congregationalists-still-ahead-population-census-analytics-say> Accessed 14 February 2013.

²³⁸ Ernst, “Case Studies”, 546.

To follow, I employ and engage the acronym ‘EFKS’, to present two contrasting pictures of the EFKS church for the twenty-first century. One is based on information communicated by past works and news articles which seems to be the projection so many people today share as well. And the second presentation is more idealistic and abstract, but all the same, it is the condition I believe the EFKS should be at considering its mission for God, and for it to flourish still come another fifty years.

I opened this chapter affirming my standpoint that EFKS for me means more than just Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa – and one might ask as to what exactly would make EFKS qualify more than just the elaborate-meaning of its acronym. Here, below, are two representations (earthly and empowerment) of the EFKS, together with an illustration of my response if and when asked of why I think EFKS means a whole lot more than just Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa.

Earthly First Keriso(Christ) Second

Samoan people, in particular the elders, are all in a sense practical theologians. For them, everything in life is always attributed to God since the spirit is a core part of the Samoan person. The centrality of spirituality for Samoan people is generally because of the faith of pre-Christian Samoa that all creation – land, animals, sea, and all other living things, shared in common a divine ancestry line beginning at the procreating God *Tagaloa*.²³⁹ Therefore, Samoa of pre-Christian time held firm to their belief that there exists a spirit linking humans, to nature, to animals. Samoan people honour this connection by trying to maintain balance and equilibrium throughout all creation – caring for the well-being of all living things just as much as their own.

During a conversation with a lecturer from Malua Theological College, he suggested that Samoan people were far more spiritual pre-Christian time – than the spiritual state that they are at today. Perhaps, the two issues I intend to discuss might somehow contribute to why various people feel that the spiritual life of Samoa is fading away, including the spirituality of those within the EFKS context. The two issues; ‘money’ and ‘irrelevancy’, are

²³⁹ See, Tui Atua Efi, “Whispers and Vanities in Samoan Indigenous Religious Culture”, 4.

not new issues, but unless acted on effectively, should be addressed again and again until they no longer pose a problem for the EFKS.

Money

In reference to Pacific people, particularly the Samoan communities, the New Zealand Herald reported in 2007;

As financial pressures from churches grew, many young people moved to churches that made fewer financial demands on their members while meeting their spiritual needs.²⁴⁰

As I mentioned previously – specifically in the *tautua* and *tōfā* chapters, the influence of money is a growing concern amongst EFKS congregations and community, and is one of several reasons families leave the church. Some people perceive the EFKS today as money oriented while the spiritual side of its ministry is less prominent.²⁴¹ This is a concerning issue since well-being for Samoan people exists when their relationship with God is in a state of mental, physical, emotional and spiritual balance.

Teutusi

The infamous *teutusi* or ‘white envelope’ has in time, become a general part of EFKS gatherings. Inside this white envelope (*teutusi*) will contain cash offerings amounting anything from fifty up to hundreds of dollars inside. The *teutusi* is presented as a gift to the *faiifeau* complimentary of the *aiga* or/and members. At most EFKS events, *teutusi* will always accompany the words of thanks and gratitude of *aiga* as a sign of courtesy and respect (*fa’aaloalo*) for the *faiifeau*.

An article from the *Samoa Observer* accused *faiifeau* of prioritising money to the extent that it decided the actions of *faiifeau*; the extract from the article below implies that *teutusi* is what motivates some *faiifeau* to attend events, even drawing in *faiifeau* who were not invited;

... the people who benefit the most from all our culture of *fa’alavelave* are church ministers. Whether it’s a wedding, funeral, *saofai*, birthday or whatever, a simple

²⁴⁰ “Migration to other churches” (New Zealand Herald, 26 June 2007) http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10447937 Accessed 25 January 2013.

²⁴¹ “In this critical situation in the life of the people, one easily sees the failure of the ministry and the mission of the church.” Taken from Epati, “Unemployment: Looking at Unemployment in Western Samoa in the Samoan Way of Life”, 97.

prayer by a church minister is one of the most expensive rituals in Samoa these days. It will cost you no less than a \$100 (which is like the cheapest prayer) even if it's to thank God for the food you prepared.²⁴²

With *teutusi* being part of EFKS rituals, sceptical individuals see its usage and purpose on the borderline of respect; and a man-made practice *aiga* are brainwashed to carry out. But what needs to be reminded is this; firstly, it would be disrespectful for a *faiifeau* to dismiss gifts from *aiga* (including *teutusi*) since these gifts are a symbol of *fa'aaloalo* and *tautua* shown by *aiga* in honouring their leaders – this is the *fa'aSamoa*. To state \$100 is the cheapest prayer is to state that prayers are charged and prayers cost. I believe this notion is to be far from the *fa'aSamoa*.

Secondly, by looking back in history at the *fa'aSamoa* and its virtuous culture of giving, there is a narrative behind this exchange of *teutusi* between two parties than just *aiga* giving... and *faiifeau* receiving. At any EFKS gathering where *teutusi* is distributed, a *faiifeau* will likely include in his thanking speech these words; *e lē o mea ia* (it is not these things). With these words – *e lē o mea ia*, a *faiifeau* is reminding people that 'these things' (in reference to *teutusi* and material gifts such as *toga*) is not the main purpose – because material gifts will decay and rot. What is most important is the spirit behind the giving since the spirit will never perish. Thus, Samoan people believe that it is a reciprocal process where through the spirit behind giving *teutusi* or physical gifts to the *faiifeau* as part of families' *tautua* to God; in return God may give His blessings to families via the prayers of *faiifeau*. The spirit of giving rather than what is being given is the most important part. This is similar to the *koha* of the Maori culture.

Present/Presence

In regards to an authentic *tautua* in the twenty-first century, *teutusi* and money appear to have level status with a participatory *tautua* in the EFKS. Meaning, if monetary offerings of families to the church and *faiifeau* are consistent and sufficient – it will in some way compensate for families and members that are unable or unwilling to participate physically in EFKS activities. Depending on where a person's heart lies, monetary *tautua* such as *teutusi* should not be an issue but rather the objectives and agendas behind it. Monetary giving to the EFKS is definitely a part of *tautua*; but what is concerning though is when it is done in the

²⁴² Mata'afa Heni Lesa, "Where is the church?", in *Samoa Observer* (Samoa, 13 January, 2013), 2. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/editorial/2889-where-is-the-church?tmpl=component&> Accessed 15 February 2013.

spirit of competition.²⁴³ Anecdotally, the trouble here is that the members who make giving money a contest are the same people that complain and begin blaming the church for their financial hardships. They most likely end up leaving, accusing the EFKS to lack in spiritual nourishment.

Members of the EFKS should be reminded on spiritual *tautua* which requires a person's 'presence' as *tautua*. In saying that, I understand 'presence' here to mean beyond its physical meaning; for instance, through prayers and meditation over a sick friend, a person can be present in spirit without being corporally present. This exchange is somewhat similar to offering *teutusi* without physically attending church. Further along this chapter in the subsection: *service* – I use the Genesis account of Cain and Abel's offerings to God, to elaborate on what separates these two faces of *tautua*. That said, whether it is monetary or spiritual *tautua* for the EFKS – it will be always in the spirit or from the heart that weighs how authentic a person's *tautua* is.

Under the impact of Westernisation and globalisation, currency is what makes today's world go round – and subsequently, *teutusi* has become a motif of sorts in the EFKS. If a person is not intact spiritually, money could take first place in a person's life whereby everything they do will be centred on money. Based on different reports of *faiifeau* being rested from their vocation over money related incidents – it appears that it is challenging for *faiifeau* to stay liberated from money's gravitational pull, especially in a capitalist²⁴⁴ environment where capital is the means for almost everything. Struggles against the impeding power of money is nothing new for men of God, the early missionaries were warned of money and its corruptive power as a source that may hinder the mission during the nineteenth century.²⁴⁵

Irrelevancy

While other denominations are adapting to the way of life in the twenty-first century by incorporating necessary methods to cater for the time, there are EFKS parishes that remains

²⁴³ Each congregation collects the money for the *faiifeau* every fortnight or once a month. Vaila'au (1992, interview by Ernst) described this as being "done in the competitive manner of the chiefs, under whose name the family contribution is publicly announced: the *Alofa mo le faiifeau*. Taken from, Ernst, "Case Studies: Polynesia", 549.

²⁴⁴ "Capitalism is an economic system based on the private ownership of capital goods and the means of production, with the creation of goods and services for profit". Taken from, Chris Jenks (ed), *Core Sociological Dichotomies* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1998), 383.

²⁴⁵ George Archibald Lundie, *Missionary Life in Samoa* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Sons, 1841), 287.

static and immobile.²⁴⁶ Especially in the technological age where everything today including learning is done digitally; the EFKS seems stagnant and dull by ignoring relevant changes opting to keep steadfast to its traditional genesis.²⁴⁷ This is a delicate issue as the EFKS church and its services are often complimented on being mamalu (sacred and dignified). There is fear that the use of technology would diminish the ‘mamalu’ of the church. This is a challenge the EFKS can address as opposed to ruling it out.

Over the years a good number of EFKS ministers have written theses in which they quite openly criticise the EFKS church for being resistant to change. Some examples out of many are the following citations taken from Epati’s thesis written at the Pacific Theological College in 1982;

“... the ministry is evidently, for instance, falling behind the speed and tempo of changes today.” “The ministry of the church in Samoa is already appearing old fashioned, and out-of-touch with the majority of the population.” “The time has come for the church to revise its ministry and mission in ways and methods applicable and relevant to the changes of the modern life”.²⁴⁸

Also Taule’aleausumai says about mainline churches which include the EFKS;

There has been in the past and still remains even in the present, a reluctance for some churches to move forward and accept change as it comes.²⁴⁹

The projection here of the EFKS is that it is a ‘fish out of water’; that is, out of date – its mode of worship, dress-code, youth programs, and even sermons to name a few. What is more, it suggests that the EFKS church is resistant to change.

Numerous Samoan youth have judged the religiosity of mainline churches like the EFKS as variously traditional, boring, ritualistic and marked by a preoccupation with performing the correct procedures in a faith which is only “skin-deep”²⁵⁰ – it is perhaps orthopraxy over orthodoxy, when both are needed. Tiatia says;

... the Church itself has been an issue, where the youth find that the services are too monotonous and reflective of the ways of the ‘homeland’. Whilst this

²⁴⁶ For example, Ernst, “Case Studies”, 550.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 550.

²⁴⁸ Epati, “Unemployment: Looking at Unemployment in Western Samoa in the Samoan Way of Life”, 96-98.

²⁴⁹ Taule’ale’ausumai, *The Word made flesh*, 31.

²⁵⁰ Taule’ale’ausumai, “New Religions, New Identities”, 181.

primarily satisfies island-born members, it in turn alienates those who are born in New Zealand.²⁵¹

Change is easier said than done in matters of the EFKS – particularly when it involves breaking away from ways the church has been accustomed to for so long. Of course there is no guarantee that change would halt the decline in EFKS membership; but at least by voicing out, the vision of members is brought to the fore.

In his 2006 findings, Ernst details that;

... despite a growing awareness amongst the leadership of the church, especially a recognition of the drastic decline in members, not many changes have taken place within the last 10 years and since the first critical case study on Samoa was published by the Pacific Conference of Churches.²⁵²

In a sense the church is pinned to a corner contemplating whether it should silently allow the on-going decline in the years to come by preserving its traditions, or should it try to introduce some changes. The problem some people have with change is that they are so focussed on what they think they will lose or what they have to give up. What people should be focussing on is what they have to gain and the opportunities that come with new challenges. For change to happen in the EFKS, it would be more effective to begin with smaller changes than aiming to make major changes. In saying that, subtle changes within the EFKS have already begun.

In 2012 youth delegates for the EFKS General Assembly have been introduced in compliance with discussions on change in the area of youth participation in decision-making processes of the EFKS. Another example is the presentation of gifts to *faiifeau*. Tofaeono details clearly the formal proceeding of the presentation of gifts to *faiifeau* at gatherings like funerals, weddings, covenantal unions;

All pastors who are present will be given a *sua* (act of respect). Usually in a *sua* presentation, a woman will come with a coconut with a dollar as a lid on the top of it and the yards of cloths wrapped on her body and place it in front of the pastor, followed by a traditional tray of food such as taro and a chicken/or meat, a cooked pig of medium or large size, *ie toga* (fine-mats), and an amount of money – not less than fifty or hundred or more in an envelope. After this, words of thanksgiving are exchanged and then people are dismissed.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 15.

²⁵² Ernst, “Case Studies”, 550.

²⁵³ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 142-143.

Today, sometimes a 500ml bottle of soda or fizzy drink replaces a coconut in presenting the *sua*. Although change has taken place in this practice, the meaning behind the ritual remains unchanged. Another change common today is less use of food such as cooked pigs, or chopped cow pieces in a traditional presentation or *fa'aalologa*; *teutusi* is used instead to fulfil this part of the procedure – and people find that by converting food to *teutusi* makes their preparations easier. The main point here is that the doings and details of *fa'aSamoa* may change – for convenience reasons and so forth; but what constitutes *fa'aSamoa* or the meanings behind Samoan traditions do not change. Hence, *E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae*.²⁵⁴

His Highness, Tui Atua Efi encourages;

Has the church a duty to identify the new issues and relate them to the Christian message? If it has, is it performing this duty effectively? Has the church a duty to articulate a vision of how things ought to be, bearing in mind the new realities and the issues they spawn?²⁵⁵

The reality is, it does not matter whether people are committed to change or not, for change is a property of time – it is inevitable. And ideally, change is for better, and not for worst. Today, one major noticeable change is the charter of *faiifeau* emerging for the twenty-first century. The next wave of *faiifeau* are not only fluent in both the English and Samoan languages, but are familiar with Western influences – and more being outside-born (e.g. New Zealand-born). Very rarely is an outside-born *faiifeau* appointed to look after an EFKS congregation; perhaps twenty years ago Malua Theological College was made up of only Samoan-born students. It is only recently that outside-born Samoans have entered the ministry. And at a time where questions are often asked about the relevancy of certain EFKS traditions and activities, perhaps the new generation of *faiifeau* can input contemporary and innovative ideas for the adaptation of the old order of the EFKS and its privileges to the twenty-first century. The aim for this however and the ultimate goal is that *e tumau fa'avae*. This can be seen as a risk of complete change and overlooking the foundation or constitution of an EFKS practice. As I am known as a young servant of God, born outside of Samoa, it is a challenge for me too that whatever contemporary and innovative idea that may be used do not stir away from the essence of the EFKS. As the Reverend Elder Tanielu Mamea

²⁵⁴ Roughly translated to, *Change happens, but the foundation remains*. This refers to the change of practise but that the basis or underpinning of this practise remains the same.

²⁵⁵ Tui Atua Efi, *Englishing My Samoan*, 50-51.

preached to the congregation and to my wife & I at our initiation on the 23 February 2013, ‘We are here to entertain the will of God, not the will of people.’

The Samoan saying goes; *e sau le fuata ma lona lou*²⁵⁶ – basically meaning, a new tool for a new harvest. Nothing is taken away from *faiifeau* of today, and those of the past that are now at rest. The New Zealand-born Samoans make up a good percentage of members today with the EFKS abroad, where there is a reality that this number may increase through the years. Here, it could be that the exposure to Western education, *tautua* and *tōfā*, as well as the participation and contribution of outside-born *faiifeau*, it may well be a value that serves to benefit the EFKS in the twenty-first century, especially for parishes outside of Samoa.

Attitudes on Change

Change is firstly inevitable; and secondly, change can harm just as much as it can help. Within a number of local EFKS parishes today, youth items such as spiritual dance (*siva fa'aevagelia*) has been replaced with a more contemporary style - upbeat and hip. Change here is beneficial in meeting the interests of youth for the twenty-first century, but my only worry is that it seems this approach is one directional – straight ahead. This is a reflection in that instead of an immediate replacement of EFKS norms with more contemporary modes or fashion; change should be more in the form of implementing a compromise between EFKS traditions of old with the twenty-first century. This way, Samoa is looking ahead while simultaneously looking back – that is, looking back in history to move forward with time. And this to me is significant for strengthening the identity of New Zealand-born youth of the EFKS, since the youth will be exposed to influences of both cultures. Fulu says;

E o faatasi le tala lelei ma le aganuu (the Gospel goes hand-in-hand with [Samoan] culture), and that *e faalagolago le tala lelei i le aganuu* (the Gospel depends or leans onto culture).²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Translation: “When the breadfruit harvest comes, the *lou* will be found, too”. Erich Shultz, *Samoan Proverbial Expressions. Alagā'upu fa'a-Samoa* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1980), 50. Meaning; The *lou* is a long pole with a crook at the end, used in gathering breadfruit. After the harvest the pole will be laid aside or thrown away. For the next harvest or a new *lou* will be used to gather breadfruit. Hence, there is a *lou* for every harvest.

²⁵⁷ Mose Taua'i Fulu, ‘Power and Authority in the Churches of the Pastoral Epistles’, 129.

Change should not mean breaking away from EFKS traditions which is built largely on the *fa'aSamoa*; but changes in the form of adding zest and colour to EFKS traditions by modernising its practice, may perhaps be what keep both youth and elderly contented.

I notice a change in the level of Samoan language employed in some EFKS churches in Aotearoa New Zealand, where a good percentage of sermons preached today are bilingual. If this is done based on language barriers and the concerns raised by Taule'ale'ausumai²⁵⁸ and Tunufa'i²⁵⁹ – for example, around youth departure due to the limitations of their linguistic abilities. One possible remedy to issues caused by language barriers is for people to refrain from speaking complex Samoan that is difficult for the young to comprehend (including the *faifeau*), but rather use basic and simple language that is easily understood. I have no problem with bilingualism – I only question how much Samoan people will rely on it in order to reach the youth. If speaking English is what it takes to get through to EFKS youth, than that in itself is a problem as it shifts away from what the EFKS church is.

In advancing their methods of teaching, many education institutions employ tools that stimulate the visual senses of its students as well as their sense of listening. Similarly, the EFKS should take use this and invest in utilising modern equipment which stimulates audio and visual senses of its members. Perhaps, by introducing slideshows on projection screens to complement sermons or bible study classes may well help seize the attention of youth especially. Moreover, employing telecommunication resources such as uploading a parish webpage and so forth may again attract the interests of its youth. By doing this, relinquishes the dependent need of the EFKS to use the English vernacular to engage the younger audience of its congregations. This is important because in looking back to the many reasons the EFKS started in Aotearoa New Zealand; finding a place to express and communicate the Samoan language outside of home – was one major reason.

Influenced by popular (Western) culture, another change apparent in various EFKS churches is the style for which songs are performed today by church choirs and youth groups in church. Again, how does one critically assess how pop culture might shape the church's theology? I am often asked by people why do we not sing and praise the Lord with loud voices, my answer to that is that we *tapua'i* with '*filemu*' (worship in peace) with '*fa'aeteete*'

²⁵⁸ Taule'ale'ausumai, "New Religions, New Identities", 181.

²⁵⁹ Tunufa'i, "The Price of Spiritual and Social Survival", 34.

(caution) and with the compositions of old school and new school Samoan LMS peses.²⁶⁰ This is similar to the kilikiti (cricket) sport of Samoa, the spectators and supporters also *tapua'i* with '*filemu*' (worship in peace). There is no shouting, cheering or clapping. This is the makeup of the Samoan culture – peace and humility. An elder once said and I will always remember is that “You do not need to scream or shout for God to hear you.”

In and with time, changes are expected and should be anticipated. Theologically, Clive Staples Lewis – better known as C.S. Lewis, is one scholar who theoretically understood God to exist “outside of time”.²⁶¹ Unlike people, God is not in time and therefore He does not experience change; that is, the almighty God is perfect and does not require change. This understanding befits the words in Malachi 3:6; “For I the LORD do not change”. But change is necessary in our world and the environment we live in since we are not perfect. Therefore, I believe people require change in order to develop and grow into a state pleasing to God – and change, as in expanding horizons rather than in the sense of assimilation.

Empowerment Fellowship Knowledge Service

Empowerment

I view empowerment as a state that is incomplete if it is not a shared experience with others. Meaning, empowerment is a collaborative power that is created with others, not experienced as an individual. Jim Cummins states;

... empowerment can be defined as the collaborative creation of power... [it is not a] fixed quantity but is generated through interaction with others.²⁶²

Empowerment then is not imposed on or exercised over others, but is an experience felt by every person present – thus, the practice of theology should always be aligned to a communal

²⁶⁰ Taule'ale'ausumai, “New Religions, New Identities”, 181.

²⁶¹ Peter Schakel, *Is Your Lord Large Enough? How C. S. Lewis Expands Our View of God* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 22.

²⁶² Jim Cummins, *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000), 44.

well-being, and not on an individual. Cummins continues to elaborate that empowerment is “created and shared within the space that minds and identities meet”.²⁶³

Jesus moved his audience everywhere he taught. He empowered each of his disciples so intensely that they were motivated to leave their lives as they knew it to follow him. Jesus empowered the sick by healing them, which is, restoring their well-being. He did not empower people by elevating himself or through belittling others, but he proclaimed the importance of a life of service to others in empowering people. Moreover, Jesus never once committed to empower just himself; he was always empowering others around him – even sinners.

The EFKS church should be a place where whatever mood or attitude a person feels prior to arriving at church is insignificant; it should not matter as every person should all be sharing the same feeling of empowerment from the Spirit of God when leaving church. Once I am inside church I feel a sudden peace and a quiet comfort, regardless of how I felt before getting there. And if the church service – from the sermon to the singing of hymns are warming – I cannot help but leave church feeling empowered. I believe empowerment is needed not only for the sake of those caught between cultures, but as well parents and grown-ups. If the EFKS can ably empower its members – restoring and renewing their well-being, this may well motivate some people to abstain from negative addictions in life. Even introducing members to resources outside church like outreach programs, and rehabilitation centres, is empowering people – especially individuals who are fighting addictions common in Samoan families such as gambling, and alcohol, to name a few. By empowering people, not only will it benefit the EFKS church, but society as well.

Fellowship

The EFKS Constitution reads;

Every member is required to work whole-heartedly in accordance with the guidance of God for the welfare of others, bear witness to others and encourage them so that they too may be redeemed by Jesus Christ. All members should work together in cooperation in charitable work and render assistance to the downcast, the weak, the sick and the deserted.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Cummins, *Language, Power, and Pedagogy*, 44.

²⁶⁴ EFKS, *O le Fa'avae o le Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa: The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2006), 6.

Fellowship and gathering are two different things. Some people imagine that the gathering of members and their children, of visiting families and friends – rubbing shoulders with one another at church... is a relationship. But a quick *malo le soifua* (good morning) before service commences, and an even quicker *tofa soifua* (goodbye) when leaving church, is not a healthy relationship. For the relationship of a married couple to have any meaning, both parties have to mutually input their whole persons into the union – their strengths, weaknesses, and personalities – not just a quick preview. Likewise, church relationships should amass a network of people that are aware of each other’s strengths and weaknesses. This is important in so that person ‘A’ can help person ‘B’ in areas person ‘B’ is not strong (and vice versa) – that is *tautua*. This is fellowship.

Not to paint the bigger and the more intact EFKS congregations black. But personally, the essence of fellowship seems to manifest more in EFKS churches with small numbers, than the much bigger congregations numbering over fifty or more families. In my experience, small churches see it as a grand achievement the inclusion of even just one extra member to its growing Christian family. And given that the numbers are fewer in small churches, it is much easier for members to communicate and build healthy relationships. Moreover, unlike in big congregations, the likelihood of promoting a youth to church roles like presidency or secretary of *autalavou* (youth group) is greater at smaller churches since there are less people to select from.

Fellowship is important. God created humans to have someone to fellowship with. Moreover, in God’s relationship with people, He has detailed knowledge of each person. He is aware of people’s strengths and potential, as well as their weaknesses; “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29.11). God is ever-presently ready to help, carry, teach, and remind people in any and all walks of life if ever in need. This relationship is mutual in the sense that people can obtain a detailed knowledge of God through Scripture. People can understand the things that are of the Will of God, and things that are not pleasing to God as outlined in the Bible.

Knowledge

The general approach in Malua Theological College is that a person cannot grow spiritually if they do not hurt physically – that is, experiencing hard physical labour. In the *fa’aSamoa*, the

meaning of knowledge would be less meaningful if not obtained through practical means. This implies a person has more chances of understanding the true meaning of what is being taught, by experiencing it in life. The process of *tautua* to gain *tōfā* follows this pattern. I think in the relationship of *fai-feau* and congregation, members may not grasp entirely the understanding or meaning of their *tautua* in and for church, if they do not experience first-hand the struggle and toils performing *tautua*.

A person who has served diligently (church, *aiga*, family) is always complimented as such; *e iloa lava i lana tautala sa tautua* (it is obvious in how he speaks he has served). Meaning, after so many years of practical engagement, *tautua* develops from physical labour to becoming a way of life – in the process, the knowledge of a *tautua* person about *tautua* grows and develops as well. If members of the EFKS consistently follow the example of *tautua* set by Jesus, it will advance from a consciously executed practice – to a way of life. That is, gaining more knowledge on Christ will come through a lived or practical experience rather than just through reading Scriptures. And the more a person develops their knowledge in Christ, the more it becomes second nature living as a Christian.

One of the important factors of having knowledge is that it broadens a person's awareness and understanding. Limited knowledge however sets perimeters around what a person knows and what they do not know. American poet Maya Angelou said; "When you know better you do better". Thus, a person limits the room for negative influences by broadening their knowledge. In the EFKS, having knowledge on the importance of fellowship, empowerment, and service, increases the hope of keeping alive these church qualities with the opportunity of making them a way of life through consistent practical application.

Service

By looking at how Jesus served other people, and his teachings about service and servanthood; for example, Mark 9:35; "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" – lies the picture of what I think God encourages people to do in fellowship with one another. I read Jesus' declaration to mean, *tautua* reaps blessings; especially *tautua* done with a pure and clean heart in maintaining the well-being of others.

Reading Cain and Abel's offerings to God in Genesis 4:1-7, I interpret the brothers' offerings as a presentation of their 'presence' to God more than just – gift presents. The Hebrew term used for offering is, 'מנחה' (*minhah*²⁶⁵), which is a general word for "present".²⁶⁶ This for me then, is a connotation of offering not as a prototype of cultic sacrifices but more a gift; and a gift somewhat implies an extension of the essential self of a person. Meaning, represented by their gifts, both Cain and Abel offered their distinct identities – their 'presence' before God.

The degree of conflict between the brothers intensifies when God rejects Cain's present. Although many scholars have proposed different explanations as to why God disqualified Cain's offering²⁶⁷ – I question Cain's spirit. Hebrews 11:4 reads; "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's". Gifts presented to the *fai feau* is a practice EFKS is well-known for within Samoan communities – but the interesting question is just what sort of gift is acceptable to God? That said, there is a common debate in the Samoan understanding of giving within the EFKS, between *fai mea sili* (do your best) and *fai mea lelei* (do good) and *fai le mea e mafai* (do what you can). I will not delve into this debate as it is open to interpretation by the individual.

I believe service is a feeling that in the end it does not matter how much one gives or does as it is how you feel at the end that determines what 'your service' is. Within the EFKS church, if a mother serves by decorating the church and feels satisfaction and happiness at the end, then that is service. If another mother completes the same task but complains and is unhappy about her time and effort used, then that is *not* service. This is the same for a father or any other adult who on Sundays may decide to stay home and not attend church or its commitments but instead gives money to his family to give to the church. This too, is *not tautua* or service.

²⁶⁵ Most scholars trace *minha* back to an Arabic root meaning "to lend someone something" for a period of time so that the borrower can have free use of the loan. In Hebrew, however, the idea loaning is lost, and it comes to mean "gift," "tribute." Bruce K. Waltke, "Cain and His Offering", in *Westminster Theological Journal* 48. (1986), 367.

²⁶⁶ Towner, *Genesis*, 58.

²⁶⁷ For example, Candlish wrote; "To appear before God, with whatever gifts, without atoning blood, as Cain did – was infidelity". Robert S. Candlish, *Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1979), 94.

CONCLUSION

The question of ‘what keeps people at EFKS churches’ differ to some extent from ‘what will keep people at the EFKS’. Again, my intention is not to separate or divide members within EFKS churches. But the former can reflect the elderly who are more traditional and conservative which would suggest then that ‘what keeps them at the EFKS’ is because it is one of the foremost setting where *fa’aSamoa* is upheld. Meaning, the EFKS need not change. However, the latter question, ‘what will keep people at the EFKS’ can be related more to the young. As a solution for youth departure from the EFKS (for reasons such as too much *fa’aSamoa* in church), implementing change by modifying certain EFKS traditions will possibly be ‘what keeps people at EFKS’. Meaning, the EFKS need (relevant) change. For the future of the EFKS to flourish therefore, a balance between these two audiences and their needs is required.

Members and *faiifeau* of EFKS congregations, should be content looking ‘back’ (*tua*) to the ‘past’ (*tua*) in terms of celebrating their history by remaining faithful to their Samoan culture, language and traditions. The stories and beliefs that have shaped Samoan people should be depended upon as their sustenance of life – alike how Fatu in his transformed state was to his *aiga* in the Samoan legend. Meanwhile, EFKS people must ‘fight on’ (*tau*) and press forward at the same time by being open for relevant changes that they see fit will help keep the *sā*²⁶⁸ of the EFKS afloat in the waters of Aotearoa New Zealand, twenty-first century. In light of change, change without restrictions can be dangerous for the EFKS. Accordingly, the reliance on *tōfā* is significantly critical in providing balance for without the wisdom of EFKS leaders to oversee things – youth may unintentionally overstep lines that are not meant to be crossed due to their limitations in experience, and knowledge of *fa’aSamoa*.

Jesus as *tōfā* should be the underlying basis of the EFKS, and for its members. By depending on the counsel and guidance of Jesus, people can make the EFKS become a place where empowerment, fellowship, knowledge, and genuine service are not superficial... but real. A healthy relationship with Jesus will better illuminate the value of these characteristics present within the EFKS – motivating its members to live it. For people to put to practice all of the tasks informed to them by Jesus while in the state of *moe manatunatu*, can eventually

²⁶⁸ The use of the Samoan word *sā* here is connoting a means of transport – car, bus, canoe, motorcycle, etc.; specifically, the *sā* in this context is to designate ‘boat’.

lead to these tasks becoming more a way of life if they are performed consistently – and this is the seed for well-being to be able to branch out to communities.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

- Colossians 3:2

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Ua togi pa tau i le ave

Tatala le fili alii (Let the men's braids be undone).

In exploring the Samoan journeys of the past and connecting it with that of today we can begin to understand the centrality of spirituality and culture to the well-being of a Samoan person. The spiritual essence of Samoan people which plays a big part in the exertion of well-being has without question been altered as external influences and changes of circumstances (such as relocation outside of Samoa) – in one way or another has rearranged the lives and norms of Samoan people. Change is inevitable as in and with time, the indigenous spirituality of Samoa continues to change. Queries around whether the transforming state of spirituality can be one major cause for the lack of well-being experienced by Samoan communities today has some logic, especially with Samoan people in New Zealand resorting to other means to restore well-being.

As alluded to earlier, prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries and foreign influences,²⁶⁹ Samoan people were spiritually and holistically-oriented where well-being was achievable when equilibrium was maintained across the different and diverse spirits of the spiritual and physical worlds. In terms of experiencing well-being on a personal and individual level, a Samoan person was to have order and balance within their tripartite selves – *fa'aleagaga* (spiritual), *fa'aletino* (physical), and *fa'alemafaufau* (mental). If any one of the three dimensions was lacking in some way, its effect would wash over to the other two dimensions – causing instability. Therefore, well-being within the self for a Samoan individual requires well-being in the body, mind, and the spirit.²⁷⁰

This is an important note, as the arrival of Christianity which introduced Samoa to Western worldviews and lifestyle saw the Christian missionaries establish their belief in the Trinitarian God to Samoa. The notion of spirituality and well-being which was the authoritative force in Samoa where the purpose of Christian missions to Samoa was not set to deliberately denigrate or annihilate Samoan culture or the *fa'aSamoa*. However, through Samoa's acceptance of Christianity, it inevitably involved the dismissal of some of its

²⁶⁹ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 44-57.

²⁷⁰ Tui Atua Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion", 9.

cultural and traditional practices which had major spiritual wrappings, such as the *tatau*. In light of this, the process of Christianisation and the ministry of the church has been the means by which other customs have been maintained and nurtured in such a way that the young people of the EFKS church today can experience the essence of their own Samoan culture – which may not otherwise have occurred. For instance, the Samoan language – from the period of the printing of the first Samoan Christian Bible in 1845,²⁷¹ even up to now the Bible in the Samoan translation is the guiding beacon for the Samoan language.

The migration of Samoan people and families to lands alien to them – including Aotearoa New Zealand, presented another transition stage in the journey of spirituality and well-being as Samoan people knew it. By being immersed in a predominant Western culture and a pluralistic society, Samoa's indigenous spirituality again took on further transfigurations in an effort to adapt to an unfamiliar context. While the foreign understanding of spirituality of the host nation escalated as Samoan communities settled in Aotearoa New Zealand, the gradual erosion of indigenous spirituality continued – the Samoan culture and language as well began to erode in the process. However, it is uplifting in that there are EFKS people as well as Samoan researchers and scholars who are determined to maintain and promote the Samoan language and culture in Aotearoa New Zealand as this to them, is also part of their well-being and the well-being of Samoan communities.

The present should not be divorced from the past, and the context briefly drawn above is the framework where the relationship of the EFKS church and its members should be mindful of to maintain their well-being for the twenty-first century – particularly the well-being of New Zealand-born Samoan youth and the generation of EFKS church leaders of tomorrow. Considering the incessant journey of indigenous spirituality it is easy to understand why Samoan churches like the EFKS is significant in the lives of Samoan people (especially those living abroad) given that it provides a place for the practice of Samoan culture.

This study was premised on the search for rational and practical answers to the chief thesis question; how can the EFKS church be relevant for the twenty-first century while preserving the spiritual and cultural well-being of Samoans in Aotearoa New Zealand? I

²⁷¹ Fauolo, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Lavea'i*, 75.

found that by inverting the question from, ‘why are Samoan people leaving the EFKS’ – to ‘what keeps them in the EFKS’; I became more aware of how compared to its overall significance – the liabilities of the EFKS is little and has less weight in the wider scope of things – foremost concerning the well-being of Samoan people. But being mindful of the inevitable that the strengths or positives of the EFKS can in turn be what hinders its mission as well. This research has provided an opportunity to highlight the values of the EFKS church that can both advantage and disadvantage its people when used well and with *tōfā* or not.

It is encouraging to read about and see the EFKS youth and generation in Aotearoa New Zealand be proud and confident in whom they are. They are Samoan children of God, not New Zealand-born Samoan children trying to seek their place in society. *Tautua* and *tōfā* play major roles and are of great value in the EFKS where without *alofa* there is no *tautua* or *tōfā*. These two concepts are both relied heavily on for the well-being of families, the church and one’s self. This thesis has only touched on the richness and depth of *tautua* and *tōfā*, but it is the hope that this thesis has given an outline for these notions so that there is more acknowledgement and awareness of how vitally important they both are on being great servants of God.

I also wanted to show the two sides of the EFKS that are often spoken about by the Samoan community as well as the church community in Samoa and Aotearoa. The two contrasting pictures of the EFKS I had described included “**E**arthly **F**irst **K**eriso **S**econd” and “**E**mpowerment **F**ellowship **K**nowledge **S**ervice”. I used acronyms as to make the illustration as simple as possible so that there is an acute understanding of what the EFKS entails as well as the challenges and blessings that it faces. When the EFKS is criticised, it can only use this opportunity to evaluate its role in the well-being of its people. As said, it is important to look back to move forward. The concepts of *tautua* and *tōfā* are only two of many dimensions of the EFKS that contribute to the well-being of its members in Aotearoa.

The keynote for almost anything in the *fa’aSamoa* is ‘caution’ (*fa’aeteete*). I pray that I have shown no disrespect to anyone especially my EFKS *aiga a le Atua* in the manner I have approached this thesis, especially questions asked around sensitive issues to do with church. Nearing the end of this thesis journey, I admit it was an endless battle. My father asked me the other day how it was all going; I said: *e koko guku ae lea fusu lava* – basically

meaning I am still fighting. Well, the fighting is over and the battle is done. Before the arrival of Christian missionaries to Samoa, the local men wore their hair long. Samoan men braided their hair when preparing for war; and they let it down when war ended. Hence the Samoan saying; *tatala le fili alii* (Let the men's braids be undone/let your hair down). The thesis battle and journey is done. I have let my hair down.

Faafetai le Atua / Thank you God

I pray that the EFKS flourish today and in the future and that its leaders, congregations, members, and children experience well-being in glorifying God with pure and clean hearts. That said, the journey for me has reached its conclusion. All glory to my heavenly Father for I was twice armed fighting with faith, and because of You (God) I have arrived to the end – *ua togi pa tau i le ave*.²⁷²

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

- 2 Timothy 4:7

²⁷² Samoan Proverb meaning 'it is accomplished'. "*O le 'upu na maua mai le togialugaga i Ulutaotogia, ua taulau o le fa'amoemoe*". Taken from, Tanuvasa Tofaeono Tavale, *Fuelavelave* (Auckland: Wordsell Press, 1999), 458.

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