

Ecumenism

In an odd turn of events, at a time when American Samoa was challenging the unity of the newly independent CCCS, the Congregational Church of Samoa became involved in the ecumenical movement. The inaugural ecumenical meeting was held at Malua Theological College in April 1961. It was sponsored by the International Missionary Council (IMC) after it was assured by the LMS that church unity was widely supported by the Pacific Churches.¹

Ecumenism was not ‘intrinsic’ to the Pacific region but came via ‘their parent missionary societies in Europe, Australia or New Zealand’.² Therefore, unlike Europe, where ecumenism was a response of the crisis on by the First World War, there was no similar reason for ecumenism in the Pacific.³

- A. The London Missionary Society, however, was itself an ‘ecumenical missionary society’ involving Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists. Samoa’s reputation as a self-sufficient Church under the LMS made it an ideal site for the inaugural ecumenical meeting in 1961.⁴
- B. Malua Theological College, in Samoa was chosen as the location of the first ecumenical meeting because of its large grounds. Largely arising out of the 1961 meeting, ecumenism became an important concern for the Samoan Congregational Church in the 1960s and an opportunity to participate in the world-wide ecclesiastical movement.

The Ecumenical Movement influenced the CCCS in several ways.

- A. Firstly, Toma, the General Secretary of the CCCS, was requested by the IMC after the inaugural ecumenical meeting in Malua in 1961, to be the secretary of the Continuing Committee of the Pacific Council of Churches for a period of five years.⁵ Toma was based in Apia, with an office at Church headquarters.⁶ From 1961 to 1966 Toma was involved in gathering support for a central theological college in the Pacific and a Pacific Council of Churches.⁷
- B. The Church’s direct involvement with the Ecumenical Movement was further enhanced when Fetau Mataafa, the wife of the Prime Minister and an Elder deacon of the Church, was also elected to the Ecumenical Continuation Committee. She was a powerful advocate for women’s involvement in the ecumenical movement and she chaired the second Assembly of the Pacific Council of Churches (PCC) at Davuilevu, Fiji in 1971.
- C. Another effect of the ecumenical movement on the CCCS occurred immediately after the 1961 Malua Conference. The Roman Catholic Theological Seminary joined with the Methodist Theological College and Malua Theological College in fellowship.⁸ One of the

¹Stuart Craig, “Who Is My Neighbour in ... The Pacific”. *CCWM World Mission*, November (1966): 118.

² Charles Forman, *The Voice of Many Waters*. Suva: Lotu Pasifika, 1986, 1.

³ John Mott, “International Missionary Cooperation”. *International Review of Missions* 11, January (1922):44–47. According to Mott missionary societies were keen to join forces because of the decline in finances and to battle nationalism.

⁴ Norman Goodall, “The Church in the South Seas: Looking Towards Reconstruction”. *International Review of Missions* 32.October (1943): 396–399.

⁵ Samoa Church (LMS), “Komiti o Feau Eeseese ma mea tau Tupe 5–10 Iuni 1961”. Apia: Samoa Church (LMS), 1961, 2. 61GPFC27.

⁶Samoa Church (LMS), *The General Assembly of the Samoa Church (LMS) 5–22 June 1961*, 5.61GA8.

⁷“Quiet Revolution in South Pacific Churches”. *Pacific Islands Monthly* 38 August 1964, 61.

⁸“Affirming Our Ecumenical Journey. A Report of a Consultation of the Pacific Conference of Churches”, 70.

positive outcomes of this fellowship was the revision of the Samoan Bible from 1963 until its launch in 1970 General Assembly.

Joint High School 1961

- Discussions began on 4 June 1961 the vice chairman of the Education Sub-committee met with the Methodist Education Committee to building a high school on the Methodist compound at Faleula.⁹
- The General Assembly approved the joint high school, but the Education Sub-committee proposed Leulumoega Fou as the proposed site for the ‘combined school’ rather than the Methodist one at Faleula.¹⁰ It had cost the Church £9,800 to prepare Leulumoega Fou as the joint high school, depriving the adjacent intermediate school at Nuausala of much-needed funds.¹¹
- The teachers would be supplied by both the Congregational and Methodist schools.¹² What were the reasons for the change of location are not clear, the minutes of the 1961 General Assembly simply state:

*that the High School was to be established in Leulumoega Fou, that Samoan Church (LMS) should offer as its share towards that project the land and houses plus the present teachers, but for the Methodists it has to provide teachers.*¹³

- The fate of the joint high school, however, remained uncertain when it was rocked by the Gordon Cook scandal who was accused of adultery which created ill feelings between the missionaries and Samoan Methodists.¹⁴ It must be remembered that both Methodist and LMS missionaries were actively involved in promoting ecumenical issues, such as the Pacific Theological College in Fiji.¹⁵ The LMS and Methodist missionaries were close associates and naturally sided with Gordon Cook.¹⁶
- Disagreement between Samoan Methodists and European missionaries of the LMS and Methodism created a barrier to inter-Church relations.¹⁷
- The LMS missionaries were also critical of the qualifications of the Methodist school leadership.¹⁸
- By September 1962 the Methodist and LMS discussions about the joint high school were again stalled.¹⁹

⁹ Ekalesia Samoa (LMS), “Komiti o Feau Esee ma mea tau Tupe 5–10 Iuni 1961”. Apia: Samoa Church (LMS), 1961, 2–3. 61GPFC27.

¹⁰ Ekalesia Samoa (LMS), “Komiti o Feau Esee ma mea tau Tupe 5–10 Iuni 1961”, 3i.

¹¹ John Bradshaw, “O le Tala mai le Komiti A’oga i le Komiti Tupe e tusa ma le Tupe ua fia maua i le Tausaga Faa–Letupe 1/4/63–31/3/64”. Apia: Komiti Tupe, 1963, 3. That money would be used for shower, toilet (in one building): dining and cooking building, a nurses room and two additional classrooms.

¹² Ekalesia Samoa (LMS), “Komiti o Feau Esee ma mea tau Tupe 5–10 Iuni 1961”, 3.

¹³ Samoa Church (LMS), *The General Assembly of the Samoan Church (LMS) 5–22 June 1961*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1961, 6–7. 61GA10

¹⁴ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. *Iugafono o le Fono Tele i Malua Me 24–28 1962*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1962, 3. 62FT11. 6. 62FT26.

¹⁵ John Garrett, *Where Nets Were Cast Christianity in Oceania since World War II*, 246.

¹⁶ Clarence Norwood to Stuart Craig, 20 July 1962, 2.

¹⁷ Clarence Norwood to Stuart Craig, 20 July 1962, 1.

¹⁸ Clarence Norwood to Stuart Craig, 10 September 1962, 1.

¹⁹ Clarence Norwood to Stuart Craig, 28 September 1962, 2. Norwood wrote, ‘I am afraid you will not have anything very official to take to Pacific Committee; but things move slowly here; and it is an illusion to suppose that the only slow people are Samoans’.

- By January 1963 there was still no meeting between the Methodists and the ‘Ecumenical Committee of the CCCS’.²⁰
- By 1964 there ‘was no hope of a Joint High School’ when the Methodists started to build their own school at Faleula at a cost of £15,000.²¹ By the time of the 1965 General Assembly, the CCCS had gone cool on the idea of a joint high school.²²

The proposed joint high school project had proved costly for the CCCS. Its failure was an example of the difficulties ecumenism faced in overcoming denominational divisions inherent in Samoan Christianity. Neither denomination wanted to see their schools submit to the domination of the other.

First Ecumenical Meeting

- ❖ On 1 November 1967 the ‘first’ ecumenical meeting between the CCCS, Methodists, Catholics and Anglicans was held at CCCS headquarters in Apia.²³ There were fifteen representatives from these four denominations, six of which came from the CCCS, including Vavae Toma and the General Secretary Etene Saaga.²⁴ The Rev. Elder Luamanuvae Eti of the CCCS was elected as the first chairman of the meeting. Little was achieved other than a discussion of a proposed constitution which outlined the name and aims of the fellowship. Ecumenism moved slowly in the islands though there—the ‘Fellowship of Christian Churches in Samoa’.²⁵
- ❖ Four years later, a second meeting was held. Twenty-six delegates met at the Catholic compound of Monsignor PioTaufinu at Vaialele.²⁶ He also chaired the meeting and for a brief time the ecumenical gathering was initially known as the ‘National Council of Churches in Samoa’ but later reverted back to the ‘Fellowship of Christian Churches in Samoa’.²⁷
- ❖ In September 1971, the Fellowship of Christian Churches in Samoa was officially recognised by the CCCS.²⁸ According to Oka Fauolo the work of the Fellowship was carried out on a voluntary basis, with no permanent office and paid staff.²⁹ It was not until 2000 that a full time paid secretary was employed.³⁰ The lack of permanent paid staff in the Fellowship of Christian Churches was indicative of the failure of commitment to local ecumenical partnerships.

²⁰ Etene Saaga, “Fono a le Komiti o Feau Eseese 14–17 Ianuari 1963”. Apia: Komiti Feau Eseese, 1963, 4. 63KFE 13.

²¹“London Missionary Society Pacific Committee, Monday 12 October 1964”. London: London Missionary Society, 1964, 1. 64PAC59.

²²Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1965*. Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1965, 7. 65FT25 and 65FT26.

²³ “Mafutaga O Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa i Tamaligi Apia 1 Novema 1967”. Apia: Mafutaga Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa, 1967, 1.

²⁴ “Mafutaga O Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa i Tamaligi Apia 1 Novema 1967”, 1. The CCCS representatives were Rev. Elder Luamanuvae Eti, Sarasopa Enari, Vavae Toma, Etene Saaga, Iona Levi and Tapeni Ioelu.

²⁵ “Mafutaga O Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa i Tamaligi Apia 1 Novema 1967”, 1.

²⁶ “Mafutaga O Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa. Fonotaga II Mapuifagalele 22 Iune 1971”. Apia: Mafutaga Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa, 1971, 1-2.

²⁷ “Mafutaga O Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa. Fonotaga II Mapuifagalele 22 Iune 1971”, 2.

²⁸“Iugafono Komiti Feau Eseese 11 Me 1972”. Apia: Komiti Feau Eseese, 1972, 6. 72KFE60 (CCCSA).

²⁹ Interview Oka Fauolo, 18 May 2009.

³⁰ Interview Oka Fauolo, 18 May 2009.

Revision of the Bible

In 1962 the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) were present in Samoa to investigate the reprint of the Samoan Bible, as letters in the original version of the Bible were unclear.³¹ At the same time they met with representatives of the three major denominations to see if a revision of the Bible was necessary. Those involved in this meeting were John Bradshaw and Tapeni Ioelu of the CCCS; Father L. Ross representing the Catholic Church; two representatives of the BFBS, Rev. Harold Moulton who was also the deputy translation secretary of the United Bible Society based in Canberra³² and Rev. P. Thomas from New Zealand. The representative of the Methodist Church, Russell Maddox was unable to attend the meeting but he supported the motion to revise the Samoan Bible.³³ The consensus of the meeting was that a revision of the Bible was indeed required. However, because of the need to quickly publish the updated version, the committee decided that it could only revise the New Testament. A committee involving the three denominations was organised to revise the New Testament. This committee consisted of eight representatives, four from the CCCS, two from the Catholics and two from the Methodists. John Bradshaw became the first chairman of the committee and Kenape Faletoese the secretary.³⁴

The first meeting of this committee was held in Malua on the 4 February 1963.³⁵ Each member of the Committee was given a book of the New Testament to review as well as a copy of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as a reference.³⁶ There were thirteen subsequent meetings at various venues of the Congregational, Methodist and Catholic Churches until the last meeting on 21 September 1963 at the Catholic Church at Vaea. The various locations illustrated the ecumenical spirit with each Church sharing the cost of hosting the meetings. In addition the delegates experienced the various forms of worship of the hosts.³⁷

There were many changes to this committee over the years. Bradshaw returned to the United Kingdom and his place was taken over by Kenape Faletoese.³⁸ Bradshaw continued to work on the revision of the Bible in the United Kingdom, while partially funded by the BFBS.³⁹ When Kenape Faletoese accepted a call to be a pastor in Christchurch, New Zealand, the chairmanship passed to Russell Maddox, President of the Methodist Church.⁴⁰ When Maddox returned to Australia the chairman was again handed to another CCCS member, Rev. Elder Sarasopa Enari.⁴¹ At the end of the revision process the committee was down to seven. Rev. Elder Sarasopa Enari of the CCCS was the

³¹ Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 187.

³² Kiliona Mafaufau, *A Proposal for the Translation of the Greek New Testament into Samoa*. (MTh, Pacific Theological College, August 1992) 15.

³³ Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 187.

³⁴ Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 188. The four CCCS members were Rev. Dr. John Bradshaw of the CCCS who was the chairman, Kenape Faletoese the secretary, Sarasopa Enari and Tiresa Malietoa. The two Catholic delegates were Father L. Beauchemin and Father L. Ross. The two Methodist representatives were Rev. Russell Maddox and Rev. Lene Milo; EFKS. *Tusi o I'ugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978*. 1, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1979, 64AT16.

³⁵ Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 188.

³⁶ Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 190.

³⁷ Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 189.

³⁸ EFKS. *Tusi o I'ugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978*. 1, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1979, 63 EC6 concerns the farewell of missionary Bradshaw. The Elders Committee want the farewell celebrations for Bradshaw at the beginning of November 1963..

³⁹ "London Missionary Society. Pacific Committee. Monday 22 June 1964". London: LMS, 1964, 2-3. 64PAC31.

⁴⁰ EFKS. *Tusi o I'ugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978*. 1, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1979, 64AT12.

⁴¹ EFKS. *Tusi o I'ugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978*. 1, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1979, 64AT16; Sarasopa Enari, "O le Tusi Paia Samoa". *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969, 188.

chairman. Father Leamy, the only Catholic in the committee, was the secretary. There were still four CCCS members in the committee and two Methodists.

There were several reasons for the revision of the Samoan Bible other than to make the printing clearer. One reason was to change the Samoan translation of Greek words into everyday words. Typical words that were changed involved Greek and Roman units of measurements.⁴² For example:

- A. In Matthew 20:5 the first translation read ‘...He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing’. The sixth and ninth hour were ancient Roman measurements of time equivalent to 12 noon and 3pm. afternoon. The committee revised it to ‘... He went out again about 12 and 3 in the afternoon.’⁴³
- B. The revision also simplified the numbering system of the older Samoan version replacing the cumbersome Roman numerals with Arabic numerals throughout the Bible.
- C. In light of the growing Jehovah’s Witnesses in Samoa the committee decided to replace references to ‘Jehovah’ with ‘Lord’.⁴⁴

In 1969 the revised version of the Samoan Bible was already printed and ready to be used. The Elders Committee wanted a special service to commemorate the completion of the new version of the Bible which was passed by the General Assembly.⁴⁵ The Assembly decided to launch the revised version of the Samoan Bible at the 1970 General Assembly at American Samoa.

The next revision of the Samoan New Testament was ‘reorganised in 1972 and was to be a new translation using popular language and aimed at young people.’⁴⁶ James Moorhead of the United Bible Society reported that one of the key translators of this revision, Rev. Oka Fauolo, claimed that Samoan was very similar to the original languages in structure.⁴⁷ The other member was SiaualaAmituanai from the Methodist Church of Samoa. Both men were full-time translators who were involved with basic translation work. They were trained in translation principles and techniques at Translators Institutes run by the Bible Society.⁴⁸

The New translation of the NT which was done in 1972-75 covered all the NT books except Jude and Revelation. The work of the Samoan translators seems now to have come to a stop.

⁴² Sarasopa Enari, “O le Tusi Paia Samoa”. *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969,189-190.

⁴³ Sarasopa Enari, “O le Tusi Paia Samoa”. *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969,190. Another word of Greek origin is ‘*choenix*’ The older Samoan translation uses ‘*choenix*’ in Revelation 6:6 “I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “ A *choenix* of wheat for a denarius, and three *choenix* of barley for a denarius! Don’t’ damage the oil and the wine”. In the revised Samoan version ‘*choenix*’ is replaced by ‘quart’ resulting in the following translation, ‘ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures , saying, “ A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages and do not damage the oil and the wine”.

⁴⁴ Sarasopa Enari, “O le Tusi Paia Samoa”. *O le Sulu Samoa*, Oketopa 1969,190.

⁴⁵ EFKS, Tusi o l’ugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978.1, 69 EC 59. Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa 26–30 May 1969 Minutes of General Assembly Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1969,9. 69FT20.

⁴⁶ Kiliona Mafaufau, *A Proposal for the Translation of the Greek New Testament into Samoa*. (MTh, Pacific Theological College, August 1992) 16

⁴⁷ Kiliona Mafaufau, *A Proposal for the Translation of the Greek New Testament into Samoa*. (MTh, Pacific Theological College, August 1992) 16.

⁴⁸ Kiliona Mafaufau, *A Proposal for the Translation of the Greek New Testament into Samoa*. (MTh, Pacific Theological College, August 1992) 16

Joint School Theological Schools 1975-1979.

Through its involvement in the Fellowship of Christian Churches in Samoa or the *Mafutaga Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa* (MEKS), the CCCS was able to initiate programmes that encouraged greater interdenominational cooperation. The most successful of these programmes was the very popular Christian education programme involving Bible studies, Samoan language and culture studies and Christian ethics.⁴⁹

The MEKS's most ambitious programme was the proposal for a Joint Theological College for the three main denominations in Samoa.⁵⁰ From the beginning, however, there were disagreements between the Catholics and CCCS over the structure of the college.

- A. The Catholics wanted 'to have the three Colleges remain where they are, but to have them furnish teachers for an ecumenical Institute in Apia'.⁵¹
- B. Malua Theological College's Principal, Masalosalo Sopoaga, supported the rather expensive option of a new site. He believed that bringing all three colleges onto one area would improve interdenominational dialogue and cooperation.⁵²
- C. The Methodists, for their part, supported Malua and initially agreed that a combined theological college should be built at Malua because the grounds and facilities were in good condition having been recently renovated.⁵³
- D. However, it did not take long for the Methodists to change their minds and to search out another site for school.⁵⁴ When a new site was found by the Methodists the question of financing became a problem. Neither Malua nor the Methodists had the funds to finance such a project by themselves.
- E. Consequently, the prospects of a joint theological college faded.⁵⁵ Oka Fauolo, long-time chairman and former secretary of the Fellowship of Churches, pointed to the competitive nature between the Methodists and CCCS.⁵⁶

It is very difficult. It is not difficult theologically but it is difficult personally.... It is not easy for Methodists to set up a theological college in Malua. Just as it is not easy for the Congregationalists to set up a theological college in Piula (Methodist Theological College).⁵⁷

By 1979 it was becoming most unlikely that the Joint Theological College would become a reality.⁵⁸ The CCCS was already heavily committed to the university and the commencement of the John Williams Building.⁵⁹ According to Fauolo inter-denominational competition was the main reason that there was no joint theological school between the Methodists and Congregationalists.⁶⁰

⁴⁹ "Mafutaga O Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa Nai Tala o Fonotaga. Fonotaga III Lalovaea 30 Setema 1971. Fonotaga IV Lalaovaea 10 Fepuari 1972", 1.

⁵⁰ Mila Sapolu to Mataafa Fiame, 20 May 1975 (CCCSA); Lawrence Bender to Oka Fauolo, 11 October 1976 (CCCSA).

⁵¹ Lawrence Bender to Oka Fauolo, 11 October 1976 (CCCSA).

⁵² Masalosalo Sopoaga to President of Fellowship of Christian Churches in Samoa, 12 April 1977 (CCCSA).

⁵³ Interview with Oka Fauolo 30 April 2009.

⁵⁴ Interview with Oka Fauolo 30 April 2009.

⁵⁵ Interview with Oka Fauolo 30 April 2009.

⁵⁶ "Komiti a Sui o Lotu i Samoa Apia 31 Me 1976". Apia: Mafutaga o Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa, 1976, 1.

⁵⁷ Interview with Oka Fauolo 30 April 2009.

⁵⁸ "Iugafono o le Fono Tele a le Mafutaga 1979. Apia 27/4/79". Apia: Mafutaga o Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa, 1979, 2. 79MEKS8.

⁵⁹ "Iugafono o le Fono Tele 1978". Apia: EFKS, 1978, 3. FT7820, FT7821.

⁶⁰ Interview with Oka Fauolo 30 April 2009.