

**A Theological Re-interpretation of The Great
Commission in Matthew 28: 16 - 20
In light of the Samoan Ritual “*Ui le 'Ula*”**

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Malua Theological College
Apia

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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August 2013

ABSTRACT

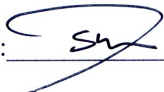
The purpose of this thesis is to theologically re-interpret Jesus' commands, now known as the Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:16-20 (hereinafter referred to as the Great Commission) in light of the Samoan traditional ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*. The aim is to highlight the notion that the Samoan ritual *Ui le 'Ula* is an act of conferring authority and blessings upon the recipient, the untitled man or *taule'ale'a* when one becomes a *matai* or a chief. This ritual signals an entrance into another stage of life with new responsibilities and obligations, within the framework of the *faa-Samoa* (Samoan culture and traditions). In essence, this conferral process resonates with our calling as witnesses in our capacity as *a'oa'o* (theological student) or *faiifeau* (Church Minister) to the message of the gospel alluded to by Matthew.

Consequently, the focus of this project is to theologically address a current Church regulation whereby students holding *matai* titles are required to relinquish their titles prior to entering Malua Theological College (hereinafter referred to as Malua). The author holds the firm belief that a *matai* title represents one's true identity as a Samoan, and that identity ought to remain with the person, even if called into Christ's ministry. The issue of the de-registration of *matai* titles when a person enters Malua therefore takes away that important part of one's cultural identity as a Samoan, that identifies who we are and where we belong, as people of the *fanua*, the *eleele*, or the land.

Most importantly, this thesis will argue that the Samoan traditional ritual of *Ui le 'Ula*, resonates with the theological understanding of the Great Commission. This is reflected in the manner in which Jesus' disciples were commissioned to spread the "good news" with the implied transference of authority and power to continue the work that our Lord has set before us. The same authoritative presence of Christ is bestowed upon the *a'oa'o* once he begins his journey into the ministry, not only as a *matai*, but most importantly as a chosen servant answering one's calling by God. This is the theological essence of the Samoan tradition, *Ui le 'Ula* that this thesis project will attempt to address.

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I, Apela Ah Him, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family; to my parents Finau Fiauvaa Sefo Ah Him and Silafaga Ah Him; to my brothers and sisters, and to all my *aiga*, both here in Samoa and abroad. Your prayers and never-ending support throughout my four years in Malua are remembered with gratitude. It is your words of encouragement that has carried me this far in my journey. To your unselfish love, and faith, I dedicate this work.

May God be forever praised!

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Principal and Faculty of Malua Theological College for the opportunity given to me to undertake theological studies over the last four years. I take this opportunity also to thank especially the Theology Department Faculty, for their advice and guidance throughout the preparation, in thesis seminars, and the compilation of this thesis. I owe a debt of immense gratitude in particular to my supervisors, Reverend Ma'afala Lima and Reverend Olive Tuipoloa Samuelu. Thank you for your support and unwavering guidance throughout the writing process. Your dedication to this thesis in terms of your time and on-going words of advice is greatly appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge all who helped out with the survey, and the questionnaires – *faafetai tele*, for, without your contribution and insights, this thesis would not have made it this far. I would like to thank especially Reverend Elder Poka Maua for the background information provided and your contributions, which have enriched the findings of this project.

To my parents, and all my *aiga*, I express my sincere thanks for all that you have done, in order for me to complete my studies in Malua. I could not have travelled alone in this journey, without the comforting thought of your presence in prayers and thoughts. Last but not least I would like to acknowledge the support and the prayers of my spiritual parents; Reverend Leitualasa and Amelia Malieitulua and our *auaiga* Malua – *faafetai tele* for all that you have done in support of my years in the College. To Reverend Iaeva Amitai and Faletua at CCCS, Safaatoa tai, Lefaga, and Reverend Lama Milford and Faletua at CCCS, Green Bay, New Zealand, *faafetai tele* for your continuous guidance, and the kind words of advice and prayers, which has given me the strength to carry on, and the perseverance to complete this thesis.

Faafetai tele lava ma ia saga faamanuia pea le Atua.

God bless!

List of Abbreviations

CCCS.....	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
MTC.....	Malua Theological College
NRSV.....	New Revised Standard Version, Holy Bible
BEM.....	Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry.

Introduction

For a Samoan male or female to be chosen by his or her *aiga* (family) to hold a *matai* title is one of the greatest honours to be bestowed upon any individual in the *faa-Samoa*. It is a tradition that holds great significance not only for the *matai*, but also for the entire family. It denotes a higher status for the individual, not to mention the greater responsibilities, and the privileges, of being a *matai*, and being in a position to lead the *aiga* in all matters, whether traditional or spiritual. The latter usually revolves around one's involvement in Church affairs, a clear indication of the trust that the community of faith has placed upon the *matai* in terms of leadership and decision-making.

A *matai* is traditionally chosen by members of the extended family, and subsequently, a *saofai* (traditional *matai* bestowal ceremony) is held to formally acknowledge one's entrance into the arena of the village's chiefs and orators. After performing the hardships of *tautua* (service) to one's *aiga*, the individual is now seen as inheriting the right to lead the *aiga* in village, district and Church affairs. The Samoan saying, "*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*"¹ is finally realized by the *matai* holder, a recognition of one's endless commitment to serving the *aiga*. During the *saofai*, the *matai* soon realizes that the role is to be embraced with pride and dignity, as one enters a new chapter in one's lifetime, filled with added responsibilities and undivided dedication to *tautua*. In addition to a *saofai*, the conferral or the bestowal of a *matai* title can also be acknowledged through the traditional ritual *ui le 'ula* or *fa'au'i le 'ula*.²

For the recipient of the *u'la* or the *matai* title, it denotes a sense of being bestowed with the authority, as well as being blessed by the family to hold the *matai* title, but also a privilege to bear the title together with the full errands all throughout his or her entire life. This *matai* status is deemed a life-long commitment to one's family. The *matai* title

¹ The standard measure for entitlement to a title is through *tautua*, i.e regular service and merit. See Tamasailau Suuaalii-Sauni, Iuogafa Tuagalu, "Samoa Jurisprudence and the Samoan Land and Titles Court: The Perspective of a Litigant," in *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance – Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*. eds., Tamasailau M. Suuaalii-Sauni, I'uogafa Tuagalu, Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai, Naomi Fuamatu (Samoa: National University of Samoa, 2008), pg 160.

² *Ui le 'ula* or *Ua fa'au'i le 'ula* is literally translated as "passing on of a necklace." The act denotes the passing on, "*ui*" or "*fa'au'i*" of a *matai* title designated by the "*ula*" or necklace, by a father to his son or upon any other heir to the family's *matai* title. This ritual is usually done at a time when the father feels that his final time on earth is approaching. Passing the *'ula* denotes not only the faith and trust placed by the father upon the recipient, so as to continue the tradition of the *matai* title, but also the acceptance by the recipient of accompanying duties and traditional obligations attached to a *matai*.

can be declared vacant by way of the holder's death, or a court case declaring the title void. Most significantly, one's title is also declared void should one decide to enter Malua Theological College (MTC). An unwritten CCCS regulation³ requires students entering Malua Theological College (MTC) to de-register their *matai* titles prior to being accepted as a student of the College.

This de-registration by-law is an issue that the author intends to address in this thesis, calling upon the CCCS to reconsider its stand on this regulation, in the hope that future students shall maintain their *matai* status whilst attending Malua Theological College (MTC), and beyond. Currently, under the CCCS's *Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau* (Review of General Assembly's Resolutions) ministers are refrained from holding *matai* titles. Upon enquiry, there are no specific reasons given by the Church as to why this regulation was put into place. However, the understanding is that this regulation most probably stems from a wording of a certain section of the CCCS's Constitution, alluding to "certain weaknesses in some of the old customs."⁴ Whatever weaknesses the Church sees in students entering Malua Theological College (MTC) with *matai* titles is unclear. Contrary to the underlying motives behind this regulation, the Church has also hinted at future implications of this regulation by asserting in its Constitution that, "if improved upon the context of the new life of the gospel and Christian understanding, there is no doubt that our old customs, properly revised are still good and therefore still worthy."⁵

This thesis embraces this positive yet unrealized initiative embedded in the CCCS Constitution. It is the author's belief that the removal of *matai* titles prior to entering Malua Theological College (MTC) is deemed to be one of those old customs that warrants a renewed theological articulation. To highlight this belief, together with the hope of making this theological approach a reality, the author introduces the close parallels between the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20 and the Samoan tradition, *Ui le 'Ula* utilizing the contextual approach to theologizing as a guiding mechanism. The methodology chosen for this project is the contextual approach to theology, adopting Stephen Bevans' anthropological model as a guiding factor in

³ *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa* (Apia: Malua, 2011), pg. 18.

⁴ *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa* (Apia: Malua, 2011), pg. 18.

⁵ *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa* (Apia: Malua, 2011), pg. 18. There is also a clause under the Review of General Resolutions that clearly spells the prohibition of *Faifeaus* and *aoaos* from holding *matai* titles. This is discussed in Chapter 3.

articulating a theology that speaks of the uniqueness of the *matai*, not only in the *faa-Samoa*, but also in the ministry.

This thesis is divided into three Chapters. In Chapter One, the author will introduce the contextual approach to theologizing, and in particular, highlighting Bevans' anthropological model of contextual theology, the chosen model for this thesis. A detailed discussion of the traditional ritual *Ui le 'Ula* will also be included in this chapter, outlining its origin and its various definitions, as well as its significance in the *faa-Samoa*. At the heart of the discussions will be the issue of authority and blessings associated with the ritual, and the question of one's identity as a Samoan, and as a servant of the Word. Chapter Two presents the various theological evaluations and understandings accorded to the Great Commission.

In Chapter Three, the author aims to establish and highlight the theological resonance between the rituals of *Ui le 'Ula* and that of the Great Commission in Matthew. Embedded also in the concluding statements are views gathered from personal interviews conducted with current CCCS ministers, as well as Malua students, garnering their thoughts and feelings towards the issue in question. This leads us into the concluding part of this thesis, where the challenge is laid down for the CCCS to consider these issues in her life as the Church of Christ, sent into mission under the tutelage of the Great Commission. The theological significance of entering the ministry as a disciple of Christ, whilst embracing the traditional *matai* status is what this thesis aims to rediscover, thus highlighting a traditional Samoan saying, “*o matai ua vaeluaina iai le suafa o le Atua.*”⁶

The methodology used in the writing and researching of this thesis is a combination of library research as well as field research through personal interviews and questionnaires, carried out amongst the CCCS community, *faiifeau* and *Aoao Fesoasoani* (Lay Preachers) and current Malua students. The sample base of ten questionnaires were delivered. A response was garnered from each respondent, which was then analysed to provide the data which was utilised in this thesis.

⁶ “*God's name has been bestowed upon the matai.*” Author's own translation.

Chapter 1

The Anthropological Model of Contextual Theology and the Significance of the Samoan Ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*

Introduction

Doing theology with the aim of interpreting and understanding the close relationship between God and humanity, and the task of interpreting the Christian faith in light of one's own context, is one of the core functions of contextual theology. In order to demonstrate this paradigm shift in theological approach, models are introduced as guidelines. For purposes of this project, whilst mindful of word limits accorded to projects of this kind, the anthropological model proposed by Stephen B. Bevans¹ will be discussed as the most appropriate to this level of theological articulation. This will form part of the introductory part of this chapter, followed by a discussion of the traditional ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*, outlining its origins, definitions and significance in the *faa-Samoa*.

1.1 Contextual Theology and the Anthropological Model

1.1.2 Contextual Theology

The significance of contextualization² as a method of doing theology has been at the forefront of theological agendas by Churches, theologians and biblical authors worldwide. According to Lourdino A. Yuzon, the task of theology is to discern “signs” of God's presence and make that presence explicit or manifest.³ In other words, contextualization has to do with making the gospel meaningful and in doing so, making

¹ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture* (New York: Orbis Books), 1992. In his book, Bevans talks of five models of doing contextual theology, namely the Translation Model, the Praxis Model, the Synthetic Model, the Transcendental Model, and the Anthropological Model.

² Lourdino A. Yuzon asserts that there are many, not one, contextual theologies. For instance, Black theology, feminist theology, Minjung theology (Korea), Dalit theology (India), theology of struggle (Philippines), Latin American liberation theology are all contextual theologies that have emerged out of particular historical realities to which the liberative aspects of the Christian message are addressed. See Lourdino A. Yuzon, “Towards a Contextual Theology” in *International Review of Mission* (January 2002, Vol. 91 Issue 360), p102 (Atla Religion Database - 14 July 2013).

³ Lourdino A. Yuzon, “Towards a Contextual Theology” in *International Review of Mission* (January 2002, Vol. 91 Issue 360), p102 (Atla Religion Database - 14 July 2013).

the gospel relevant and discovering the implications of the gospel in a given situation.⁴

So what do we mean by “contextual theology”? Bevans defines it as,

as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the church; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change within that culture, whether brought about by western culture process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation⁵.

In other words, for Bevans, it is a way of understanding the Christian faith not only on the basis of Scripture and tradition – the two main theological sources of reflection of classical/traditional theology – but also on the basis of concrete culturally conditioned human experience.⁶ According to David J Hesselgrave, it has to do with making the gospel meaningful and by making it, the gospel must be relevant and discovering the implications of the gospel in a given situation.⁷ This latter definition has direct relevance to the main goals of this thesis, for it builds upon a cultural concept that has a deeper theological resonance and meaning, once that theological connection is established.

Bevan's definition of what constitutes contextual theology is fully embraced by a number of Pacific and Oceanic theologians.⁸ Bishop Leslie Boseto of the Solomon Islands, who was later quoted by Sione A. Havea as saying that,

theology is a gift of God. It is God's revelation to history and culture, therefore it is an effort to interpret and see with Pacific eyes, and listen with Pacific ears; and, instead of it being foreign, it should become local and in-digenized and contextualized.⁹

Havea himself coined the term "*coconut theology*," where the coconut could symbolize Christ, since it gives life to human beings, and when it is broken new life

⁴ David J Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993), pg 209.

⁵ Bevans, pg 1.

⁶ Lourdino A. Yuzon, p102.

⁷ Hesselgrave, pg 209.

⁸ Other important island thinkers and theologians include Lalomilo Kamu, writing in his book *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (1996). Here he wrestles with the Gospel-culture question. Kamu shares the same interest as Tuwere in the land, seen as mystically related to the people, as something that is life-giving rather than being a commodity that can be bought and sold. But he is clear that the land is not itself divine, *only a gift from God*. For further reading on Pacific theologians, see Charles W. Foreman “Finding our own Voices” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Issue 29, No 3. July 2005, p 115-122.

⁹ Sione 'Amanaki Havea, “Pacific Theology,” in: *Towards a Relevant Pacific Theology*. Theological Consultation, Suva, 8-12 July 1985, 21-24. (ATLA Religion Database – 24 July 2013) cited by Horst

springs forth. The coconut comes to fruition at its own pace and time, resembling the *kairos* of Christ and His time and space.¹⁰ Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, in his book *Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place* (2002), introduced strongly the power of *Vanua*, or land, for the Fijian soul. Land, seen in the Fijian way, includes more than the physical turf. It includes the people and the ways of life that exist on the land.¹¹ Tuwere, more or less focussed on the importance of a relevant living theology that would grow in the native soil.¹² On the local scene, Rev Dr. Upolu Luma Vaai uses the Samoan cultural concept of *fa'aaloalo* or respect as a hermeneutical approach to provide meaning for the Trinity. Vaai explicitly defines the term *fa'aaloalo*, or showing respect, politeness and courtesy to others, as a symbol that defines the relationship between persons, between a person and creation and between a person and God.¹³ Vaai takes this concept into another level as it denotes the *va* or sacredness that clearly sets the space between individuals, people as well between community and gods.¹⁴ In other words,

faa'aloalo originates from God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Because of Christ all things are brought into union with God in the Spirit. The *faa'aloalo* of God through Christ is a single movement from God to us and back to God. It is Christ that is at the centre of the *faa'aloalo* way of the Trinity. Christ is God's *faa'aloalo* for us in the Spirit.¹⁵

Rev. Dr. Ama'amalele Tofaeono, utilizing the concept of the *aiga* or *oikos* in the Greek language, sees in the Bible the purpose of God as the production of "sustainable life in communion and unity of all things in creation. The Samoan concept of *aiga*, or

Rzepkowski, "Stepping Stones to a Pacific Theology: A Report" in *Mission Studies*, 9 no 1 1992, p 40-61 (Atla Religion Database – 10 July 2013).

¹⁰ Charles W. Foreman "Finding our own Voices" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Issue 29 No 3 July 2005, pg 115-122 (ATLA Religion Database – 19 March 2009). See also Randall Prior, "I Am the Coconut of Life: An Evaluation of Coconut Theology" in *Pacific Journal of Theology* (Series II, Vol. 10 1993), pg 26.

¹¹ Charles W. Foreman, pg 115-122.

¹² Ilaitia S. Tuwere, "What is Contextual Theology: A View from Oceania" in *The Pacific Journal of Theology* (Series II, No. 27, 2002), pg 8.

¹³ Upolu, L Vaai. "*Faaaloalo: A Theological Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Trinity from a Samoan Perspective*". (Ph.D dissertation, Griffith University, Brisbane, 2006), pg 58.

¹⁴ Vaai, pg 58.

¹⁵ Vaai, pg 195.

family, which is all-powerful in Samoan social life, includes the whole family of creation.¹⁶ "

The few examples presented above highlights the variety of theological articulations born out of the contextual approach to theologizing. The saying that "all theologies are contextual therefore not neutral"¹⁷ is no more true than what Pacific island theologians are attempting to establish, using local images, metaphors, and language as tools for articulating theology. Thus, the decision to adopt this approach in reading Matthew's Great Commission in light of the ritual *Ui le 'Ula* has its merits, considering the experiences of those whose *matai* titles have been de-registered, in relation to the teachings of the Church. In the words of Angie Pears, doing theology contextually is not an option, nor is it something that interest people from the third world or missionaries that work there but an attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context.¹⁸ The CCCS may well reconsider this as an option that has to be removed from its agenda, in order to fulfil its true calling as the Church of Christ.

1.1.3 The Anthropological Model

For the purposes of this project, understanding the theological resonance between the Great Commission and that of *Ui le 'Ula* is enhanced by employing the anthropological model proposed by Stephen B. Bevans. A model, according to Avery Dulles, is a relatively simple, artificially constructed case, which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated. For Bevans, the main thrust of the anthropological model is to preserve the cultural identity of a person of Christian faith, within a framework where it takes the reality of human experience seriously. Furthermore, this model is anthropological in two senses: the first is "centred on the value and goodness of '*anthropos*' the human person, and how it makes use of the insights of the social science of anthropology."¹⁹ The model takes on a

¹⁶ Charles W. Foreman, p 115-122. See also Tofaeono, Ama'amalele. *Eco-Theology: Aiga – The Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*. Ph.D dissertation, Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag.für Mission und Ökumene, 2000, pg.19.

¹⁷ Samuel Amirtham, John S. Pobee, *Theology by the People: Reflections on Doing Theology in Community* (Switzerland: World Council of Churches Geneva, 1986), pg 20.

¹⁸ Bevans, pg 1.

¹⁹ Bevans, pg 54-69.

holistic approach in Bevan's view, in that it utilises the general aspects of human life as the basis by which a contextual theology is to be judged.²⁰

The second sense perhaps highlights more of what this thesis is aiming to achieve – the main focus being upon the study and analysis of a people's culture. According to Bevans,

within an analysis of a people's culture, especially its symbols, ideas and concepts, can a method or reading of the Bible within the confines of cultural boundaries be found, which reflects not only the people's culture but also their faith expressed within their own cultural definitions. In other words, the anthropological model utilizes the human experience, in the form of culture as the locale of divine revelation and as the foundation for a theology that is equal to theology that is based upon scripture and tradition²¹.

The author believes that a careful analysis of the ritual *Ui le 'Ula* in conjunction with a clear theological reading of the Great Commission will help illuminate the issue at hand – that the status of the *a'oa'o* or *faifeau* will not be hindered but rather enhanced by retaining one's *matai* title. The theological issues surrounding the cultural manifestations of *Ui le 'Ula*, therefore warrants the use of the anthropological model as its guiding mechanism. However, the fact remains that no single model is more relevant or appropriate for contextualizing biblical and theological formulations, a fact that Bevans made clear by stating that each of the models is valid, so none can claim hegemony.²²

1.2 The Tradition Ritual, '*Ui le 'Ula*': Origin, Definitions and Significance

1.2.1 *Ui le 'Ula* – Origin and Definition

Samoa has its own unique set of proverbial expressions, known as *muagagana*, as well as traditional sayings or *alagaupu*.²³ These are derived from various facets of Samoan life, its culture and traditions, its myths and legends, and in the ordinary course of everyday life. In essence, *muagagana*, are sayings that are often associated with the everyday experiences of people; expressions that relate to the art of traditional fishing, hunting, carving, and dancing. On the other hand, *alagaupu* are the more traditional sayings derived mainly from the telling of myths and legends.

²⁰ Bevans, pg 54-69

²¹ Bevans, pg 54-69.

²² Bevans, pg 111.

The phrase or term *Ui le 'Ula* is regarded as a *muagagana*, made up of two separate words “*Ui*” and “*'Ula*.” These two words have numerous meanings in the Samoan language, depending on the context for which they may apply. For example, *Ui* can mean to go along, to take off a taboo, or even denotes a sense of hopelessness but also the term has a sexual connotation as another form passing. The word *'Ula* however generally means a necklace or a garland of flowers, normally used in formal occasions as a welcoming gesture. For purposes of this thesis, the meaning accorded to *Ui* is that passing or handing over, or the conferral of something from one person to another of something, and the word *'Ula* to mean a necklace. The phrase *Ui le 'Ula* therefore denotes “the passing on of a/the necklace,” symbolizing the handing over or the conferral, *Ui* of a/the *matai* title, or *'Ula*.

1.2.2 The Purposes of *Ui le 'Ula*

Ui le 'Ula shares the same guiding principles as that of another Samoan term, *mavaega*. According to Malama Meleisea, a *mavaega* is 'a chief's dying wish concerning the inheritance of his title'.²⁴ The *mavaega* shares the same rationale with that of *ui le 'ula* in the sense that its main focus is on “inheritance,” with the next person in line or the newly appointed custodian of the title “inheriting” the *matai* title from his predecessor. However, a *mavaega* differs somewhat from *ui le 'ula*, because the latter involves mainly the *matai* title or *suafa* alone, whereas the former refers either to the inheriting of family titles or inheritance of family possessions such as land and properties.

However, a key aspect of the tradition of *Ui le 'Ula* is that of determining the next holder or the “steward” of the family title. This individual will continue with the family traditions by taking on the added duties and obligations of a *matai*. The newly appointed holder, normally chosen on the merits of his or her services²⁵ to the previous *matai* and the *aiga*, now becomes the successor and proud wearer of the *'ula*. This culminates with the holding of a special traditional ceremony, officially announcing the *matai* being conferred. Blessings by the family and the village *matais* are also extended upon the newly-appointed holder of the *'ula*. The holder is now in a position to lead the family,

²³ Pratts Grammar, *Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), pg 64.

²⁴ Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), pg 55.

²⁵ The old tradition of “*o le ala i le pule o le tautua*,” or “the way to being in a position of authority is through service” (author’s translation) is not the norm these days.

armed with the *pule* or authority required in order to succeed, until the next one comes along to wear the same '*ula*. According to Masinalupe Tusipa Masinalupe, the tradition of *Ui le 'Ula* denotes all the chiefly authority and blessings bestowed upon someone within the family as the next “steward” of the title. Furthermore, the selection process is inclusive of all members of the *aiga*, depending on what the holder deems to be appropriate.²⁶

1.2.3 Significance of the '*Ula*

Samoa is renowned for its hospitality throughout the world. Welcoming invited guests or strangers usually involves the presentation of garlands of flowers or '*ula*, which also another way of extending our best wishes as such, for the guests and others in their future endeavours. In the traditional ritual itself, acceptance and wearing the '*ula* denotes the mutual acceptance of respected duties and added responsibilities, whilst being urged on by the blessings from the *aiga*, to further their interests in village, district and Church matters. He or she is expected to continue and preserve the high standards that the *aiga* expects of him. The significance of this is best explained by one Taliaoa Suani Magele who acknowledged that “the '*ula* symbolises the '*suafa*' or title in the *faa-Samoa*.”²⁷ The holder is elevated to honorary status, and is expected to act likewise; to honour the *fa'aaloalo* or respect given by the family.

The passing on of the '*ula* is deemed a reward for honesty and unselfish dedication to the *tautua* required by the *aiga*. This is echoed in the words of Finau Fiauvaa Sefo and Tausili Saeli who both asserted that the ritual *Ui le 'Ula* signifies the conferral or the passing on of the title, whilst witnessed to by families and *matais* of the village.²⁸ The presence of *aiga* and village *matais* in the *saofai* reaffirms not only the legitimacy of the '*ula* being conferred, but most importantly, the initiation of authority and blessings from the previous holder unto the recipient. The holding of the *saofai*, once it eventuates marks the final stage of the inauguration process of *Ui le 'Ula*

²⁶ Masinalupe, Tuuu Tusipa Masinalupe, Interview with Author, 2 February, 2013. Masinalupe is the current Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration.

²⁷ Taliaoa Suani Magele, Interview with Author, 14 January, 2013.

²⁸ Finau Fiauvaa Sefo, Interview with Author, 1 February, 2013; Tausili Saeli, Interview with Author, 24th January, 2013.

The ritual can also be interpreted as a way of showing appreciation and gratitude on the part of the title holder to his extended family, prior to conferring the *'ula*. Every *aiga* has its own chiefs or *matai tulafale* (orators) or *matai alii* (paramount chiefs). Once the latter reaches their old age and feels that their time is near, he would assemble his extended family together in a *feiloaiga* (family gathering). During this *feiloaiga*, the holder will express not only his final words, but also offer words of gratitude for the *tautua* he has received from his *aiga* during his own tenure as leader. He will then inform the *feiloaiga* as to who has served the *aiga* with honesty and with integrity. Therefore, his consideration of the person the *'ula* is to be passed unto shall be based upon these factors. The newly appointed *matai* therefore must show the integrity expected of him that will benefit the family as a whole, through his actions and deeds. In doing, so, this will also highlight most importantly his genuine love and care for the family.

Perhaps it is wise to acknowledge herein the fact that the ritual does have its setbacks in that, once the *'ula* is passed on, the previous holder may not be eligible to the said title in the future, especially if it is conferred upon a successor who is not a direct heir of the then holder. Rev Elder Poka Maua alluded to this, as the other side of the ritual, yet made the positive remark that it does not take away the dignity and the pride associated with the ritual, once the *'ula* is poised and dedicated to one's *tautua* in the *aiga*, village and the Church.²⁹

Summary

This thesis was born out of a situation that has taken place within the boundaries of the CCCS, thus merits the adopting the contextual method of theologizing. Moreover, in order to warrant a thesis that delves into a meaningful discussion of theological discourse and facts, there has to be a model on which the project is based upon. For this purpose, the anthropological model devised by Bevans was chosen for its relevance and meaningful in application. Having covered these two important facets in this chapter allows for a clearer path into the later chapters, and only after a clear explanation of the core subject of this thesis – that of the traditional Samoan ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*. This was

²⁹ Rev. Elder Poka Maua, Interview with Author, 12 July, 2013. Rev. Maua is the current CCCS Minister for Savaia-tai, and Elder Minister for the Lefaga and Faleaseela District.

done in the latter part of this chapter, with the hope that a theological foundation for its articulation will be established at the end of the following chapter.

Chapter 2

A Theological Analysis of the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 16 – 20

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have touched upon the various definitions and significance of the Samoan ritual *ui le 'ula*. In addition, the methodology chosen for this “contextual approach” to theologizing, namely Bevan’s anthropological model was identified as the most appropriate and relevant of the proposed models, in addressing the issue central to the argument of this thesis. In establishing such parameters, the attempt now turns towards exploring and highlighting the various theological understanding and critical apprehensions pertaining to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20.

In following this approach, the aim is to further establish and to enhance some of the key theological aspects of the Great Commission, which will form the core arguments of this project in the latter part and conclusion. Thus, the main focus of this chapter is an apprehension of the theological understanding of the Great Commission, firstly as the conferring of authority by Jesus upon the disciples to make the gospel known to the entire world. Secondly, the various discourses on the Great Commission as constituting a form of blessing upon the disciples shall be explored, and finally, the author will attempt to highlight the theological significance of the Great Commission as resembling that of mission and discipleship for all concerned, *matais* and *non-matai* students alike.

2.1 The Great Commission in Matthew 28: 16-20

The theological approach towards this project takes into serious consideration the importance of Matthew’s gospel, in particular the wording of Matthew final chapter, 28:16-20. For Craig S. Keener, Matthew's gospel closes with what Christians have often called the Great Commission. Furthermore, the commission is no afterthought to Matthew's gospel; rather, it summarizes much of the heart of his message.³⁰ The importance of this message is endorsed by James LaGrand, who maintained that the

³⁰ Craig S. Keener, “Matthew’s Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations (Matthew 28:19-20)” in *AJPS* 12:1 (2009), pg 3. (Atla Religion Database - 12 May 2013).

“designation of the concluding sentences of Matthew's Gospel as the Great Commission reminds today's reader of the influence which this text has had on the modern missionary movement and on the ancient legendary accounts of missionary activity by the disciples.”³¹

The mission of the disciples is very much clear in the mindset of the gospel writer. For Matthew, the scope of the task now at hand is towards all the nations of the world, aimed at all human beings, and not just the Gentiles and the Jews. The disciples, as well as the readers of the gospel, are all expected to take part in this universal mission.³² In other words, we have been granted the opportunity to engage ourselves, and to participate fully without any unnecessary hindrances on the part of students as we prepare to answer our calling, to take the gospel of Christ to the world at large. Professor Andrew Louth echoes the significance of this urgency in taking up this “commissioning,” asserting that, “all that is laid on us is to observe Christ's commands — in other words *we* are the *them* of the commission.”³³ In essence, we can identify the “them” alluded to by Louth as signifying the totality and the wholeness of the individual, embarking on the road to God's ministry, commissioned by none other than Christ, with one's identity intact both as a servant and as a *matai*.

2.2 The Great Commission as Conferral of Authority

Perhaps one of the focal points of this thesis rests upon the conviction that one is duly granted the sole authorization to carry the message of the gospel, without any further hindrances. And therein lies one of the most crucial elements of the Great Commission, being allowed to experience the joy of one's calling, with the affirmation that what authority one has been endowed with, has been blessed by the fact that Jesus Christ has received the said authority from God to be able to do so. This is most clear in 28:18, where Jesus reassures his disciples then and now that all *authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*. In other words, there are no issues whatsoever, for the authority that the Lord spoke of was present from the very beginning of His mission,

³¹ James LaGrand, *The Earliest Mission to All Nations in the Light of Matthew's Gospel* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), pg 235.

³² Kukzin Lee, Francois P. Viljoen, *The Target Group of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66(1), Art. #184 (Atla Religion Database – 10/6/2013).

³³ Andrew Louth, “The Church's Mission: Patristic Presuppositions” in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 44. Nos. 1-4, 1999 (Atla Religion Database – 16/6/2013).

which enabled Him to encounter the people of his time. This thought is taken up by D. A Carson, who wrote that,

the authority of Jesus the Messiah has already been heavily stressed in this gospel (e.g 10:1,7-8, 11:27, and John 13:3,17;2). It is not that anything he does or teaches during the days of his flesh is less authoritative than what he now says and does, even during his ministry his words like God's cannot pass away(24:35).³⁴

Thus, Jesus' words of command may be rightly interpreted as the conferral of authority upon the disciples to take up the challenge of the ministry. The endorsement of this “conferral” is explicit in our Christian beliefs and understanding of the resurrection, a point referred to by Daniel Patte, who asserted that for Matthew,

the resurrection [as] the exaltation of Jesus as Lord of all” vindicates him, revealing that his words and deeds during his ministry have eternal authority. The resurrection is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord of all so that his cause is now universal...the resurrection is the end of an old time and the beginning of a new time..the resurrection is the vindication of the earthly Jesus, whose words and deeds must be call and command...And the resurrection is the act by which Jesus becomes the ever present help of his followers.³⁵

Therefore, one is comforted by the emphatic assurance of Christ’s victory over sin and death, which is another reminder of the “authority” now conferred upon the recipients of the Great Commission. The term “authority,” (28:18) derived from the Greek term *exousia* (ἐξουσία) may be translated as "authority, right, or jurisdiction."³⁶ In hindsight, Jesus, in “commissioning” the disciples to follow in His footsteps embraced all the “rights” and “jurisdiction” accorded to the “source” of the revealer of the message, but most importantly, the weight of the authority accompanying the mission. Thus, the validity of the mission now placed firmly upon the shoulders of the disciples then and us today cannot be faulted by any means, for the “mission” exemplified the notion of authority and respect. To be able to embrace the totality of the mission, the authority guiding it ought to be respected by both the recipients and the messengers, a fact revealed in the writings of 1 Peter 3:21-22, where Jesus sits at the right hand of His father, and that *angels and authorities and powers having been made*

³⁴ D. A Carson, *The Expository Bible Commentary, Matthew, Mark, Luke* (USA: International Bible Society, 1981), pg 594.

³⁵ Daniel Patte, *Reading Matthew 28:16-20 with Others: How It Deconstructs Our Western Concept of Mission* HTS 62(2) 2006 (Atla Religion Database – 18/6/2013) quoting Davies, W D & Allison, D Corinthian,. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, Vol III. London: T&T Clark. (1997, ICC), pg 688.

subject to Him. The words of John 17:1-5³⁷ also echoes the same endorsement. The mission Jesus came to fulfil on earth was carried out with the unquestionable authority of God, the same God whose authority we have witnessed in Jesus' resurrection, which in Gilbert Bilezikian's view, can be "interpreted as a sacrifice and as a victory."³⁸

Therefore the authority that Jesus received is comprehensive in nature and scope, according to Keener. Keener also maintained that it is this authority which is the foundation of the universal mission of the church as well. Without Jesus' authority the mission of the disciples and the church today is doomed to failure. The central command of Jesus to the eleven remaining apostles is to continue making the kind of disciples Jesus made, to continue His mission of proclaiming and demonstrating to the world His authority³⁹.

We are also able to discern from the passage (Matthew 28:16-20) evidence of the three main participles subordinate to the innermost commands of "to make disciples," in particular, the command that the disciples ought to "go out" and proclaim the gospel, and also to make disciples. Furthermore, once people are converted, they ought to be "baptized", a clear indication of the recipients' acceptance and submission to the will of God and then "teach" them to be Christ like in actions, this spells out the process of making disciples.⁴⁰ For Keener, the implications of the command "go" implies a sense of "going ahead," of basically being "on your way," giving it a sense of action⁴¹. This indicates a sense of being proactive in their mission to "go". Keener also asserted that,

because this word evokes Jesus' earlier command to his disciples to go in preaching the kingdom (10:5-7), we can be confident that it is no accident here. In the earlier passage, however, Jesus' disciples are to go only to Israel's lost sheep, and not to Gentile or Samaritan cities (10:5-6), whereas here, the object of "going" has changed. Jesus' followers

³⁶ Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek- English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), pg 135.

³⁷ "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.'" NRSV.

³⁸ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Christianity 101: Your Guide to Eight Basic Christian Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co, 1993), pg 71.

³⁹ Craig S Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Social Rhetorical Commentary*, (New York: William B. Eerdmann's Publishing Company, 2009), pg 718.

⁴⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K: William B. Eerdmann's Publishing Company 2007,) pg 1115.

⁴¹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Social Rhetorical Commentary*, pg 718.

are to make disciples of the "nations," so "going" demands crossing cultural barriers to reach the Gentiles.⁴²

In essence, our calling from God urges us to move forward. It is our prerogative to proclaim the message of salvation with all our confidence and might, and not to be bothered by undue influences, such as the requirement to declare void one's *matai* title prior to being considered as a future servant of the ministry. This will be clarified further in the concluding part of the project.

The call by Matthew for the disciples and all of us to take upon ourselves the commitment in Christ's ministry is given a further boost by the promise of a "protector" and "comforter" – that of Christ, and the ever-present power of the Holy Spirit. This literally gave the disciples the courage to march on without fear of being intimidated, especially in light of the mission to areas beyond the confines of Judaism and the walls of Jerusalem. According to Donald A Hagner, the restriction of Jesus and his disciple's ministry to Israel is in contrast with the wording of Matthew 28:16-20, that is, the gospel's mission to the Gentiles.⁴³ In other words, Christ's command to make disciples of all "nations" was totally new in its scope and range. It indicated the conversion of a much larger group of people.⁴⁴ Therefore, venturing out into the unknown was for the disciples, initially a time of uncertainty, yet they had the reassurance of being led and comforted by the Spirit. They shall not venture alone, but given a guiding light in order for the message to be proclaimed without difficulties or hindrance whilst listening to the voice of Jesus speak that "...*I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus clearly highlighted the fact that He will "always" be with them. This "always" connotation, in Greek morphology means "all the days", even to the consummation of the age. This indeed was a promise made by Jesus for His disciples, which culminates what was introduced earlier in Matthew's gospel, (1:23) where Jesus was announced as "Immanuel" which means "God with us."⁴⁵ Thus, here in the very last Chapter of Matthew, that promised is repeated and confirmed.⁴⁶

⁴² Keener, "*Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations* (Matthew 28:19-20)," pg 4.

⁴³ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew: World Biblical Commentary*, Vol 33A, (Texas: Word, 1993,) pg lxvi.

⁴⁴ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Social Rhetorical Commentary*, pg 718.

⁴⁵ R. T. France, pg 1108.

⁴⁶ Boice, pg 168.

As stated above, the act of reaching out to the “nations” involved the process of transformation, by way of firstly listening and accepting the gospel, followed by the act of baptism. The command was for the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit (28:29). The sacrament of baptism acts as an initiation rite where one is called into the fellowship of the believers, and the community of the faithful. Baptism demonstrates that a believer has decided to forgo the old life and experience a sense of renewal, with a heart that is willing to accept the truth of the gospel. For Michael Green, the true essence of baptism is that Christians are “incorporated by God himself into Christ, his death, his resurrection, his victory, and his endless life.”⁴⁷

Total commitment is thus the main focus of the individual, for in baptism, one identifies with the death of Christ, an expression of faith in the power of God, specifically in his power in raising Christ from the dead.⁴⁸ In other words, once a person experiences the new life subsequent to baptism, the onus is on that individual to show a true heart of commitment for an individual has now, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “become Christ's own possession.”⁴⁹ In the words of the Lima Text on BEM,

Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. Through the gifts of faith, hope and love, baptism has a dynamic which embraces the whole of life.⁵⁰

Baptism, as a form of initiation therefore highlights the true significance of one being re-united with Christ in his life, death and resurrection. Daniel W Ulrich also asserts that baptism marks the initiation into discipleship for those who had repented response to proclamation⁵¹. To make disciples of all nations is indeed a call to seek and to gather the sons and daughters of God in one faith, in one God, and in one baptism. In all, Patte makes a valid submission by asserting that the disciples submit to the authority of Jesus as the universal Lord and are commissioned and empowered to call all other

⁴⁷ Michael Green, *Baptism: Its purpose, Practice and Power* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1987), pg. 48.

⁴⁸ Everett Ferguson, “Baptism and The Moral Life,” in *Christian Studies Journal*, (Vol. 24, 2010), pg 33-42 (Atla Religion Database - 22/6/2013).

⁴⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. ed.(New York: SCM Press Ltd, 1963), pg 232.

⁵⁰ Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry, Results of the Ecumenical Reflection upon Baptism so far, M.E. Brinkman, Progress in Unity? Fifty Years of Theology within the World Council of Churches: 1945-1995. A Study Guide (Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographies Grand Rapids: Peeters/Eerdmans, 1995), pg 85-100.

people to become disciples who themselves submit to Jesus' authority, a submission marked by baptism, the ritual of entry in Matthew's church.⁵²

The other key aspect of Matthew's structure of the commands is that of teaching. For the disciples and for us Christians of today, we are commanded to teach those whom we are destined to encounter on mission, in all matters of the gospel and faith. The act of teaching, according to Keener and the imposition of an implied duty to teach was practiced and taught long before any initiation ritual.⁵³ Therefore, it was imperative that Jesus had to include this important feature of ministry work in His commands, especially when the mission boundaries are likely to be extended beyond the confines of Jerusalem, crossing over into Gentile territory.

The mission, accompanied by its authoritative commands is sound and clear, according to Patte, who also endorsed the notion that the mission began with a grounding of the mission in the authority of the sender, and that authority has been duly conferred upon the disciples of the Word. Furthermore, the Christian mission, for all its Christological grounding, also presupposes the enlightenment of those who are sent; disciples have been shown to be qualified for this mission...and are thus ready, equipped with the necessary qualification, the right kind of "knowledge," motivated, and especially enabled to carry out their mission.⁵⁴ The disciples and Christians of today have received our calling from Jesus as the authoritative bringer of revelation, through his teaching in words and in deeds.⁵⁵

2.3 The Great Commission as Blessings

When Christ commissioned the eleven disciples to follow in His footsteps, and declared that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him, this denotes not only His utmost authority, but it can also be explored as a sign of blessings. The Greek word 'eulogeo' (εὐλογέω) is translated as "to bless" or "blessing," "invoke (divine) favour" on or for something or "bestow favour," (as used in Ephesians 1:3) or "pass"

⁵¹ Daniel W Ulrich, "The Missional Audience of the Gospel of Matthew," in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol 69, No 1/ January 2007.

⁵² Daniel Patte, *Reading Matthew 28:16-20 with Others: How It Deconstructs Our Western Concept of Mission* HTS 62(2) 2006 (Atla Religion Database – 18/6/2013) quoting Davies, W D & Allison, D *Corinthian, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, Vol III. London: T&T Clark. (1997, ICC), pg 688.

⁵³ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Social Rhetorical Commentary*, pg 718.

⁵⁴ Patte, pg 688.

(as used in Hebrew 6: 14).⁵⁶ The connotations of Jesus' commands and the subsequent sending out of the disciples embraces a deeper meaning of the word as used in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In other words, His divine presence at each and every step of the way reiterates this theological apprehension of a person being sent on a mission as a blessed individual. They may experience doubts at some stage in their journeys, but what does qualify them for this mission is that they have been blessed by none other than Christ. For Patte, this qualifies them as persons ready to go on mission, a mission which demands to acknowledge that it is not the disciples with their knowledge and training and special qualifications who make disciples; rather it is God or the risen Christ who acts through them in this missionary activity, and is indeed with them throughout their mission⁵⁷

The disciples ought to go forth in total confidence to proclaiming the good news of salvation, and to continue the work of Jesus in earnest, thus extending the same blessings bestowed upon them by Christ to the world. The irony is that despite the uncertainties of His last days with His disciples and the subsequent deserting of Jesus led by Peter, the Lord ensures that the commands are filled with the divine blessings needed for the mission to be a success.

There is a close parallel between Matthew 28:16-20 and the story of Paul's conversion. On the road to Damascus, (Acts 9) God chose him to continue with the mission He has started and taken up by His disciples upon His ascension. Paul experienced the blessings of being chosen as the pioneer for the Gentile mission, despite His own shortcomings. Like the disciples before Him, Paul did not hesitate to embrace His calling as the continuation of God's work in the world, and most importantly, Gods' call to be an apostle to the Gentiles⁵⁸ His mission also mirrors what the disciples were commanded to do, which is to convert, baptize, and lead people to the path of salvation and a renewed life in Christ. According to Katharine D Sakenfeld, Paul had in him some rather special talents – a form of blessing and a gift from God – the ability to speak as though he had been taught long in the teachings of Christ. He was seen as a great orator,

⁵⁵ Patte, pg 686.

⁵⁶ Frederick William Danker, pg 154.

⁵⁷ Patte, 24.

⁵⁸ Katharine D Sakenfeld et al., *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 4, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), pg 407.

highly skilled in rhetoric and language of persuasion and public discourse⁵⁹ making his work a great success.

2.4 The Great Commission as Mission and Discipleship

The desire for Christ to make His will known to the world at large depended much on those whom He had associated with whilst on earth. Biblical writers of the New Testament, especially the gospel writers spoke of this association at length, with Jesus teaching them on the ways of the kingdom, and later on, the purpose of His ministry. Now, the onus is on the eleven disciples to carry on with the work already started by their now-departed companion.

The word disciple is a translation of the Greek word (mathetes) "μαθητες" translated as "disciples" meaning 'a follower,' to become a 'pupil,' a learner.⁶⁰; The word disciples therefore denotes a person who follows one's teaching, or one who learn through instruction under a teacher. So therefore 'disciple' was not only a pupil, but an adherent of the teacher.⁶¹ Hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher. Peculiar to the gospel of Matthew is that a disciple is both a learner and a follower, and that a disciple takes Jesus as his teacher and learns from him⁶². Thus, the life of a disciple is rather different from others, due to the attachment to Jesus.

Jesus' disciples are people whose lives have been committed to the service of the Master, who not only took time to teach but who died for them and rose again.⁶³ Therefore, the disciples were to be sent out as those with the knowledge of what they had been taught, and with authority to proclaim the message of the gospel, and to follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). They were to speak of what they had been authorized to say, with authority so as to make disciples of all nations. As Richard Longenecker has

⁵⁹ Sakenfeld et al., pg 408.

⁶⁰ Louw & Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domain*, Vol 2, (New York: United Bible, 1989), pg 155.

⁶¹ Fredrick William Danker, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd eds, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pg 609.

⁶² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), pg 746.

⁶³ Morris, pg 746.

stated, discipleship has been for centuries a way of thinking and speaking about the nature of the Christian life.⁶⁴

The command of Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations clearly denotes the call to discipleship. The disciples and for us Christians of today as witnesses have all been given the mandate to proclaim the gospel to the world at large. In the words of James Montgomery Boice discipleship means forsaking everything in order to follow Christ,⁶⁵ and those disciples calls for personal commitment which may in turn be costly in whatever ways or means to the faithful.⁶⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer says that because of all the authority given to Jesus' disciples, they were to lead the "nations" to faith through preaching of the gospel, bring them into the fellowship of the church through the initiatory rite of baptism, and then within that fellowship, continue to teach all that Jesus had commanded them.⁶⁷

Discipleship thus calls for a faithful teacher of the gospel, a personal witness of the risen Christ. It requires total obedience and commitment, full submission to one's calling, given to a life of service and humility. According to Bonhoeffer, it literally means that there is absolutely no point of return, but for a mission that can only be fulfilled when one reaches the end. In other words, when Christ calls upon an individual to take on the responsibilities of a disciple, it is a life-long commitment, a vocation where death is its only end.⁶⁸ Boice added that discipleship is not simply just a door to be entered, but rather a path to follow and that the disciple can only prove the validity of his discipleship by following that path to the very end.⁶⁹ Thus, a disciple is expected to persevere, and be willing to face the hardships encountered along the way. Christ expects His own followers, now endowed with the proper authority, to serve with humility and love. The command to "go" forth also denotes a life of servant-hood, and not to be served – that is the true essence of being a true disciple.

⁶⁴ Richard N. Longenecker, (ed.), *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1996) pg 1, quoted by Douglas Pratt in "Christian Discipleship and Interfaith Engagement" (*PACIFICA* 22, (October 2009), 318. (Atla Religion Database – 16/6/2013).

⁶⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Christ Call to Discipleship*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), pg 13.

⁶⁶ Boice, pg 17.

⁶⁷ Boice, pg 159.

⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, pg 7.

⁶⁹ Boice, pg 22.

Summary

Jesus' commands to his disciples to go out into the world, to proclaim the gospel, to baptize and to teach was granted with divine authority by the Lord Himself. The success of the Great Commission, as we are now experiencing in our time was due largely to the manifestation of that authority, as the disciples, the apostles, and those who carried on with the spreading of the gospel. The disciples were also blessed with the guidance and the presence of the Holy Spirit, which enables the work to be fulfilled, despite the many challenges and the difficulties they encountered. Being blessed them; the others duly received that same blessing by being baptized and exploring the gospel message further into the "nations." Perhaps the most comforting part of what had transpired since the "going out" is the growth of the ministry, as more and more disciples are discovered, and they themselves continue with what Jesus had wanted from His own disciples.

Chapter 3

***Ui le U'la* as Resemblance of the Great Commission: A Contextual Exposition**

Introduction

In the last two Chapters, the task was to introduce and highlight the issue at hand, as well as the methodology chosen for this task. In addition, a description of the significance of the ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*, and a theological analysis of the Great Commission were also dealt with. In this Chapter, an attempt will be made to establish the theological resonance and parallels between the Great Commission and that of *Ui le 'Ula*. This theological connection will be emphasized by addressing the notions of authority and blessings, initiation into servant-hood to the community and the Church, the issue of discipleship, as well as the question of identity – all rooted in the Great Commission, yet clearly illuminated in the manifestation of the ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*. Therefore, establishing these important elements of theo-cultural significance will help formulate a conclusion, that sets in motion a challenge for the CCCS to reconsider its position on the de-registration of *matais*.

3.1 *Ui le U'la*: A Conferral of Authority

The ritual, *Ui le 'Ula* as stated earlier denotes the conferral of authority to the next heir of the title, thus introducing the new holder to another stage in life. This is a life of a committed and unselfish servant-hood, not to mention the personal sacrifices to the *aiga*, the community, and the Church. This conferral of authority, according to Tolofuaivaolelei Falemoe, is a communal agreement between the *aiga* and the holder, to pass the title on to the successor agreed upon, who will then carry the obligations and duties of becoming the next *matai*.⁷⁰ In the *faa-Samoa*, the *pule* (authority) is bestowed only upon those who have earned it through their *tautua* rendered to the *aiga*. Such a

⁷⁰ Tolofuaivaolelei Falemoe, Interview with Author, 5 July, 2013. Falemoe is a former Speaker of Parliament, and current Minister of Women's Affairs, Community and Social Development.

decision also exemplifies the worthiness of the successor or the heir to the *matai* title, who regards it as an honour, and an opportunity to continue with the *tautua*, though to a different level, and in a different capacity.

The *saofa'i* once it eventuates marks the formal acceptance of a new *matai* into the *saofa'iga a matai* or the seating of chiefs and orators.⁷¹ The ceremony commences with a prayer service and blessings bestowed upon the new *matai* by the *faifeau*. This is then followed by the traditional formalities of speeches, and an *ava* ceremony followed by a feast. Once completed, the new *matai* is henceforth called by their new *matai* names, signaling the commencement of his reign, armed with the *pule*, and the blessings of the Divine and the secular or his *aiga*. In the words of Dr Fanaafi Aiono,

when an heir is bestowed with the *matai* title the person immediately assumes the responsibilities of being the trustee for the family properties, the protector and promoter of the *aiga* welfare. The *matai* is the representatives and elector of the *aiga* on the *fono a le nuu* (village council). The *matai* is also the head of the *aiga* and the *atua o lelei nei* and priest.⁷²

Thus, the authority bestowed upon the new *matai* denotes the authority to begin anew in a life of servant-hood, whilst leading the *aiga*. This includes the authority to teach, mould and nurture the lives of his or her *aiga*, and others. The authority conferred calls for the *matai* to exercise humility and love, and to maintain peace and harmony. Most importantly, the *matai* duly understands that the onus is on him to serve and not to be served. The authority also denotes the continuation of the work performed by previous *matais*, thus maintaining the unity of the family, the village, and most importantly, the Church.

It is clear from the above explanations that the ritual *Ui le 'Ula* does resonate with Jesus' commands in the Great Commission, in the sense that both represent a sense of continuity enhanced by a great sense of authority. In other words, Jesus gave the commands for His disciples to continue with God's work into the world, and that his command is accompanied by divine authorization granted by His Father. This resonates with the rationale behind the ritual *Ui le 'Ula*, in that the newly-crowned *matai* takes, and acts upon the authority conferred by his *aiga*, to continue with family traditions

⁷¹ A *matai's* position and status is reflected in seating arrangements or the *saofaiga* of the village *matais* in a meeting place or *fono*. Each seating holds a significant meaning allocated to it, in terms of the place or *faasinomaga*, and status of the *matai* within the village.

handed down through the ages, by accepting the duties and obligations of a *matai*. For the Lord's disciples, the command was to go out and make disciples, to baptize and to teach; to continue the work that Christ has conferred upon them, with authority. To recall the story of Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings 2, where the mantle of Elijah symbolises the authority conferred to Elisha to continue the work of Elijah as prophet to Israel. Elisha parts the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, a clear indication of conferral of authority, and blessings.⁷³ Katherine, D Sakenfeld says that this transmission of power was signified by receiving, touching or grasping a mantle,⁷⁴ an action that mirrors the conferral process manifested in *Ui le 'Ula*. The *matai* upon being blessed heads out into the world of family and village affairs, as well as the Church, comforted by the presence of the authority poised in the *'ula*.

Furthermore, the blessing bestowed upon the holder by elders of the *aiga* resembles the same scenario with Jesus and His disciples. Like the new *matai*, the disciples were expected to follow in the footsteps of Christ, to uphold the tradition and the message of the gospel. The bestowal of authority upon the disciples resonates with the *pule* conferred upon the *matai*; authority to perform one's duties and obligations with a humble attitude, and love. To exercise the *tautua* in earnest and love implies the urgency in keeping one's *aiga* and the village intact, just as the disciples were to gather people together in faith, and follow Christ's footsteps.

Thus, the commissioning of the disciples and the *matai* in *Ui le 'Ula* share the same authoritative foundation, reflecting the call to unselfish commitment and dedication of the person's entire self, to face the challenges that their predecessors had walked – in Jesus and the elders of the *aiga*. This authority did not call upon the Twelve to do away with their family or religious status for that matter. Yet the CCCS sees fit to re-shape this “divine authority” by imposing their “authority” on how Christ's servants should prepare for the ministry. This lies at the problem of this thesis, where a remedy is sought on the part of the CCCS, to fully realize one's calling or “*valaauina*” in the fullness of Christ's authority.

⁷² Aiono Dr. Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, *The Samoan Culture and Government: In Culture and Democracy in the South Pacific*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1992), pg 120.

⁷³ Chales M Laymon, *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible: Introduction and Commentary for Each Book of the Bible Including the Apocrypha*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), pg 197.

⁷⁴ Katherine, D Sakenfeld, eds., *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible Vol 3*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), pg 791.

3.2 *Ui le 'Ula: Initiating One's Tautua to the Aiga, the Community and the Church*

The ritual *Ui le 'Ula* as alluded to earlier, acts as an initiation process into another stage in a person's life. From being a *non-matai* to being handed the '*ula*, one is now called to lead one's *aiga*, performing the *tautua* as part of that initiation. The initiation as such also resonates with Jesus commands embedded in the Great Commission, where those who have accepted the good news receive baptism as part of the initiation into the *aiga* of God (family of God). God is the origin of this initiation process, an act which parallels the *aiga* or the elder's role in initiating the new *matai* into his designated role as steward of family traditions and heritage or *measina*.

Baptism, as initiation into the family of God also has its own pre-requisite in line with Church protocols. A person's name is brought into a Church meeting for approval, only after a certain probationary period being looked after by the *Faifeau*, the congregation, and one's *aiga*. Entrance into the *aiga* of God requires total spiritual nourishment and preparations, which more or less resonates with all the criterias required off an incumbent prior to the *ula* being conferred. *Tautua* is at the forefront of such criterias, endorse by the support and agreement of one's *aiga*. The *saofai* is indeed the resemblance of one's baptism, as the *matai* gets to officially enter the sphere of the *saofaiga*, the house of the chiefs and orators, or the *fale o matai*. Therefore, just as baptism allows a person to enter the *aiga* of God, so does a *matai* as he or she joins the *saofaiga*.

Another point of resonance worth considering is the fact that both involve the receiving of gifts, for we are all receivers in both – the entrance into God's family and the *saofaiga*. Root and Saarinen noted that in the case of baptism, it is an act which cannot be attained by the individual on one's own recognisance, for one cannot baptize oneself, and that baptism must be received from another person.⁷⁵ This parallels the ritual *Ui le 'Ula*, as one receives the gift from one's *aiga*, not in his or her own accord, in order to conduct the role of leadership with pride and dignity. It is indeed an initiation to a life-giving commitment in terms of sacrifice, and to perform the *tautua* wholeheartedly.

⁷⁵Michael Root and Risto, Saarinen, „*Baptism and the Unity of the Church*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), pg 18

3.3 *Ui le 'Ula: A Life of Discipleship*

A disciple is a close follower of Jesus, and it denotes a life of undeserving commitment and obedience to the Lord's teachings.⁷⁶ It also signals one's firm response to being called, and have one's life and path redirected towards Christ. Jesus knew that His time on earth was near, and needed people to continue the mission, people who could be entrusted with the message of salvation. To serve the wishes of the Lord and fulfil His commands are both key ingredients in being a disciple, and to be totally committed to the task ahead. The call to follow in the Lord's footsteps involves a lot of sacrifice, and the cost of discipleship may be great as well. According to C.S. Keener, a true disciple must value Jesus above security, above financial security, and above all social obligations.⁷⁷

The same attitude and approach to being a disciple also resonates with that of *Ui le 'Ula*, in the sense that the *matai* is now expected to continue the work of the previous holder in the same manner. The cost involved is also immense, where the *matai* is expected to tolerate the pain and hardship, both from within his *aiga* and beyond, whilst offering his *tautua*. This is a life that could be expressed more in terms of self denial, where the *matai* offers full commitment for the sake and survival of his or her *aiga*. The *matai* will likely to surrender his own personal interests and commitment, to the dedication of his life in serving the *aiga*, the community and the Church.

Reverend Elder Poka Maua⁷⁸ asserted that the cost of discipleship is best described by the Samoan word *fa'amafiti*, or the act of being turned inside out⁷⁹ as one might do to a dress before washing. The word *fa'amafiti* has a deeper meaning, for it normally relates to an unselfish and an unwavering sense of commitment and self denial, once the change takes place. This is the essence of the ritual *Ui le 'Ula*; an implication that the successor to the title is fully committed to turning a new leaf; a

⁷⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), pg 1119.

⁷⁷ Keener, "Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations (Matthew 28:19-20)," pg 16.

⁷⁸ Reverend Elder Poka Maua, Interview with Author, 12 July, 2013. Reverend Maua stated that the word *fa'amafiti* may be translated from the Greek word 'matheteis' meaning disciples. The word *fa'amafiti* denotes the idea of self denial where a person makes a complete change in submitting to total commitment and dedication to something at hand. In the case of *Ui le 'Ula* the *matai* therefore denies one-self and offers total commitment in serving his or her *aiga*. The disciples on the other hand submit to the will of God by agreeing to bear the cost of being a disciple.

⁷⁹ Pratts Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language, pg 98.

change in attitude and beliefs, in order to carry the family's tradition forward. This is truly the resemblance of being a disciple – to carry not only the message of the gospel, but also the load of pressure, and to endure the challenges at bay.

3.4 *Ui le 'Ula: The CCCS Regulations In Relation to the De-registration of Matai Titles*

The CCCS Constitution quoted earlier promotes a language of “revision” of old customs which may be useful in the life of the Church and the Ministry. On the other hand, there is still the question of a clause in the *Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau of the CCCS*⁸⁰ or Review of General Resolutions of the CCCS to the contrary. The clause clearly prohibits both a *Faifeau* who works in a parish and an *a'oa'o* from holding *matai* titles. There are no clear reasons given in either of the Church's protocols, yet upon enquiring, the feeling is that they were due mainly to the social and political influences the *fa'amatai* has on the ministry. Rev. Elder Poka Maua believed that the decision to have a *aoao* and later on a *faifeau* to relinquish their titles prior entering Malua Theological College was a decision made by the Elders of the Church, the *Au Toeaina*, due to possible cultural social and the political interference of the *fa'a-matai* on the ministry. This was to ensure that at no time did any conflict of interests arise between the *Faifeau* and his parish due to any family connections within the village. The decision therefore was based on the significance that the *Au Toeaina* see in a *Faifeau's* calling, something that ought to be taken seriously without any impediments.

Rev Fa'apaia Tariu, on the other hand stated that the regulation appears to aim at protecting the *Faifeau* from taking the traditional roles and commitment normally accorded to a *matai* to one's parish whilst in the ministry.⁸¹ In other words, no one can serve two masters at the same time. Nevertheless, *Ui le 'Ula* denotes the continuation of responsibilities; a calling where the heir vows to fulfil his or her duties to the family, the

⁸⁰ “*E sa se faifeau ua tausi se nuu, po se ua nofo i lona aiga ona igoa i se igoa matai, po'o se suafa o lona aiga. Ia gata mai i le tofi o le lauga faifeau o e o loo igoa a matai nei, ae afai e manao pea i le Tofi Faifeau, ia tuu e ia lona igoa matai.*” “A *faifeau* serving in a village, or staying at home awaiting a calling, is prohibited from being addressed using his *matai* title, or a title from his family. Those still with *matai* titles shall be entitled to preaching duties only; however if one wishes to retain his *Faifeau* status, then he ought to declare his *matai* void.” Author's own translation (See *Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau*, Ekalesia Faalapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2011), pg 25.

⁸¹ Rev Faapaia Tariu, Interview with Author, 15 August, 2013. Rev. Tariu is the CCCS Minister at Vailoa, Faleata. Rev. Tariu asserted that *matai* status (now void) help deals with some of the problems that encounters in the ministry.

district and the Church agrees to bear all the burdens of being a *matai*. It's a real honour to carry the title wherever it goes and the traditional ties, *faasinomaga*, of a *matai* to a particular family is an important part of our *measina*. Declaring that title void prior to entering Malua raises a tricky question: "Is the social and political stance of the *fa'amatai* not Christian, and therefore seen as a barrier in the ministry?"

The author believes that there are merits in relinquishing *matai* titles of *Faifeaus* and *a'oa'o* in terms of the ministry in general. However, there are demarcations in place, more like the rule of natural law, where the two do not mix. Yet, a *faifeau* or a *a'oa'o* is fully aware of their circumstances. Aiono Dr Fanaafi takes up this point, when she asserted that,

there is the *va- tapuia* between brother and sister, the *va- tapuia* between between the parent (especially father /mother) and offspring, there is a *va- tapuia* between male and female, between male and male- female and female; there is a *va-tapuia* between host and guest; there is a *va-tapuia* between *matai*, there is a *va-tapuia* between the dead and the living, there is the *va-tapuia* between man and his environment- sea and sky, flora and fauna; then there is a *va-tapuia* between the created and the Creator.⁸²

It is therefore the need to embrace and to treasure the intrinsic value of the *faa-Samoa* that is at the core of this thesis. To retain one's identity is of utmost importance. One may ask the question whether the *matai* status may even grant the men of the Word the confidence, whence called upon by a village. In hindsight, de-registering *matai* titles removes part of one's identity, identities of *aiga*, and identity of being a Samoan *matai*.

In taking up Fanaafi's claims above, the author sees a possible way forward which may lead the CCCS to reconsider its stance. The notion of *va-tapuia* also implies people's responsibilities and that there are set limitations for responsibilities that one must have. The author contends that there is an implicit *va-tapuia* between the *faamatai* and the *Faifeau*. This *va-tapuia* sets the boundaries, limitations, and priorities that a *Faifeau* with a *matai* title ought to act within the ministry. Entering Malua, and the ministry for that matter as a *matai*, is a treasure that must be preserved; to maintain our Christian and cultural identity whilst still maintaining that *va-tapuia*. The priority however must remain with the former at all times, as we continue with our roles as *tautua* to God. Having said all that, it is clear that the whole argument revolves around a "fusion of two horizons" – the roles of the *matai* and that of the *Faifeau*, seeking a compromise in order for the two to work together, in God's ministry.

⁸² Aiono Dr. Fanaafi Le Tagalua, pg 18.

The above point leads directly into the much-debated issue of gospel and culture. A Samoan has pride in one's *tu ma aga i fanua*, or culture and traditions, for it is our cultural heritage that identifies who we are and where we belong. With the introduction of Christianity, the merging of gospel and the *faa-Samoa* resulted in the now widely accepted phenomenal saying, "*e o faatasi le aganuu ma le talalelei*," the gospel and culture working together in harmony. Consequently, some people have duly enhanced this theo-cultural marriage by insisting that, "*e mamalu le talalelei ona o le aganuu, e mamalu foi le aganuu ona o le talalelei*."⁸³ The irony however is that the de-registration of *matai* titles does not reflect the intentions behind this affirmation. For Falemoe, that is a serious miscarriage of justice, for it is the *fa'amatai* that gives the gospel its rightful momentum.⁸⁴

It is the author's understanding that the CCCS may have also taken into account the implications of some biblical texts, when deciding on the *matai* de-registration issue then. Jesus rebuttal of people who put their hands on the plow, and then looking back to their old life (Luke 9:62); the refusal by Jesus to allow a young man to bury his father (Matthew 8:22-23); and Jesus' orders for those who wish to follow Him, to leave all their personal wealth behind (Matthew 16:24; 19:21). These and other ethical teaching of Jesus speaks of self-denial, and total commitment to one's calling. Jesus however, did not particularly single out the removal of one's place or status in society or even the temple. The call was for His listeners to place their priorities right. When a person is called into the ministry therein, one needs to know his priority, the *va-tapuia*, which includes what one values the most, and what his priorities are. This is clearly illustrated in the aftermath of Jesus' arrest, where His disciples abandoned Him, giving Simon the Cyrene the opportunity to carry the cross of Christ. Our Lord understands a person's situation well, and likewise moulds us into becoming better servants of the ministry. In other words, Jesus knows the existence of the *va-tapuia* between the ministry He has authorized us to continue, and the implications of our nature as human persons – persons born with God-given identities. Being called into the ministry as bearers of the Great Commission is determined by one's un-selfish dedication and commitment to doing God's work, not whether one holds a *matai* title or not. One's priorities are the

⁸³ "*The gospel is secured because of culture; culture is secured because of the gospel.*" Author's own translation. The general feeling is that gospel and culture are inseparable, more so in the case of our *faa-Samoa* and the reverence we give to Christianity and our Christian values.

⁸⁴ Tolofuaivaolelei Falemoe, Interview with Author, 5 July, 2013.

key factors, not some social or political influences. The comforting call made by our Lord was for His disciples to “go forward, go out” into the world; there was not a hint of any prohibitions of any sort, whether personal or not.

The de-registration regulation therefore is an issue that the Church needs to revisit, in order to reflect the theological perceptions of the Great Commission. A *matai* is called into servant-hood, after receiving the *'ula*, in the same way that a *Faifeau* or *a'oa'o* is called into the ministry by God. A number of respondents prefer the status quo to remain. Poasa Toaivao and Filemoni Crawley both uphold the current regulation, arguing that it is better to leave one's *matai* title behind, because of commitment and the influences that the *fa'amatai* might have on the ministry.⁸⁵ Other respondents begged to differ, arguing that there is nothing wrong with a *matai Faifeau*. A *matai* also symbolizes one's family identity and traditions, endorsed by the common saying that “o tofi uma e mai le Atua, O le matai o le tofi mai le Atua, o measina a aiga ma nuu.”⁸⁶ In reality, a vocation from God allows a person, such as a *matai* to pursue another calling as a *Faifeau*. Another respondent, Pati Crichton, who relinquished his title before entering Malua, opposes the regulation, stating that one's calling does not necessarily mean that we can just surrender our *faasinomaga*, or completely deny our identity as stewards of our family's *measina*. Come his retirement age, he hopes to continue his *tautua*, as both a retired *Faifeau*, and a Samoan *matai*, which by right are both blessings from God.⁸⁷ Karanita Petaia also de-registered his three titles prior to entering Malua. He says that God gives humanity the freewill to choose; hence the Church must also do the same, because both callings are equally important and that the experience of being a *matai* can also be an advantage.⁸⁸

Reverend Iaeva Amitai alluded to a point that the CCCS may need to revisit this issue, and it involves the number of titles that a family was allowed to hold in the past, compared to today. The current regulation may have been valid in the past, because tradition requires that only one person holds the *aiga's matai* title. If that person decides

⁸⁵ Questionnaires dated 21 June, 2013; held by Author. Both respondents are 3rd Year Students of Malua. Rev Faapaia Tariu shares the same sentiment as the Respondent. Rev Tariu wears his *ulafala* or garland at social and Church gatherings. When asked, he replied that it is a sign of His appreciation of our *faa-Samoa*, while at the same time honouring God, the origin and giver of culture. He may agree with the current regulations, however, in hindsight, it does not mean that he wishes to ignore the importance of our *tu ma aga i fanua*. Interview with Author, 15 August, 2013.

⁸⁶ *All positions, vocations and identities are God's. Matais are our calling and vocation from God, treasured by families and villages.* Author's own translation.

⁸⁷ Questionnaire held by Author, Dated 21 June 2013. Respondent is a 4th Year Student of Malua.

to enter Malua, then someone has to take over. In today's *faa-Samoa*, multiple holders of the same title share the same load in terms of *tautua* to the family, instead of just one *matai*. This allows for keeping one's *matai* title when entering Malua, without the hassles of de-registration.⁸⁹

A *matai* title is a family treasure or *measina*. It is every Samoan's calling to embrace the identity of the *matai*, and those who are chosen as *matais* wear the 'Ula with pride and dignity. It is part of our identity wherever we go. The *matai* title has been blessed and given the authoritative status, through prayers and the laying of hands during the *saofai*, to officially endorse the beginning of one's entrance into the *saofaiga*. This laying of hands mirrors the same procedures that *a'oa'os* and *Faifeaus* go through, firstly when entering Malua, and after serving a probationary period, during the Ordination Ceremony. This ceremony is performed by the Elders, who are given the authority to officially mark the beginning of one's journey of faith into the ministry. Prior to the introduction of the Pension Scheme, these *Faifeaus* were called to the villages as a lifetime vocation, with most of them buried at their parishes. Today, *Faifeaus* leave parishes when they reach their pension age, thus giving them the opportunity to resume their roles as *matais* within their respective *aigas*. Retaining the *matai* title need not therefore be a concern for the CCCS.

Summary

The Great Commission as recorded by Matthew 28:16-20 presents a number of theological points of parallels and resonance with the traditional ritual, *Ui le 'Ula*. The authority and blessings conferred upon the wearer of the 'ula, the initiation element present in the ritual itself, and the issue of discipleship, a *matai* being a disciple in the performing of his duties, are theological manifestations of the Great Commission embedded in the articulation of the *Ui le 'Ula*. It is also clear that there is a demarcation of duties, which in the author's view has raised concerns within the CCCS, where the *matai* status may interfere with the workings of the ministry. The logic of the *va-tapuia* in the *faa-Samoa* ensures that this ought not to be the case. In essence, rather than being

⁸⁸ Questionnaire held by Author, Dated 21st, June, 2013. Respondent is a 4th Year Student of Malua.

⁸⁹ Rev Iaeva Amitai, Interview with Author, 19 July, 2013. The same point was also emphasized by Tolofuaivaolelei Falemoe and Rev. Ma'afala Limā.

a hindrance, the argument favours the retaining of *matai* titles, for not only is it one's identity as a Samoan, but also the identity of one's aiga, and the steward of the family's *measina*. The response from the survey undertaken reveals two different viewpoints, the most (70%) favouring the retaining of the status quo. Others (30%) have alluded to the benefits of being a *matai* while out in the ministry, for it allows the *Faifeau* to appreciate the *va-tapuia*, and the *va-fealoaloai* or mutual respect within the village he has been called to. The latter group identified the identity, *faasinomaga* issue as the deciding element should the CCCS decide to reconsider its position, especially if it wants to continue parading the saying, "*E malu le aganuu ona o le Talalelei, e malu foi le Talalelei ona o le Aganuu.*"

Conclusion

The forgoing discussion of what constitutes the ritual *Ui le 'Ula*, and the theological analysis of the Great Commission in Chapter 2, presents a clear picture of the theological resonance between the two. In other words, understanding the origins of a *matai* bestowed through the ritual *Ui le 'Ula* also resonates with the calling of the disciples by Jesus, to continue the work that He has started on earth, to take the message of the gospel into the world as the *tautua* of God. The *matai* is indeed that disciple, the disciple of the *aiga*, armed with the blessings and the *pule* bestowed upon him by his *aiga*, and most importantly, the presence of the *Faifeau* at the *saofa'i* enhances that divine presence of Christ's authoritative commands. The ritual also resembles the issue of being initiated into the *saofaiga*, and the opportunity to lead the *aiga* in matters of the village and the district. The Great Commission reveals the wishes of the Christ for the world to be baptized, for others to be called into the *aiga* of God, just as the *matai* enters the frame of decision-making and leadership in the *saofaiga*.

Maintaining one's identity is one key element of the ritual, coupled with the roles that a *matai* plays in his or her *aiga*. The author contends that these roles ought to remain, even if called into the ministry as a *Faifeau*, and an *aoao*. It may also become an important feature in one's performance of duties, which is also the more reasons why the de-registration of *matais* ought to be reconsidered. As time changes, the CCCS should therefore revised its laws and constitution in accordance with our *faa-Samoa*, in order to highlight the significance of one's vocation, authorized by none other than Jesus Himself, the origin of our *valaauina*. This authority or *pule* ought to be revisited by the CCCS so as to reconsider the notion of relinquishing the *matai* titles. Entrance into the ministry is duly endorsed by that authority being conferred, which authorizes the vocation that an *aoao* or a *Faifeau* is called to, that of servanthood. This servanthood shall be embraced in full by the *aoao* and the *Faifeau*, with the *matai* titles intact, for it is the Lord himself which gave us that command to go forward, as fully committed servants of the Word.

Therefore, Jesus' commands in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16 -20 therefore has great relevance in the manifestations of the ritual, *Ui le U'la*. This is reflected in the parallels and resonance present in the questions of authority, one's calling as a disciple, being initiated and called into God's ministry, and the issue of one's identity, a *matai* that is called to perform the work of Christ, in one's capacity as a

Samoan *matai*. The disciples were called as servants, committed servants to that effect, and at the same time offering themselves in wholeness, which is also the more reason for the *aoao* and the *Faifeau* to maintain their identities as Samoan *matais* in the ministry. That is indeed the unity that our Lord is hoping for His disciples, and of us today, to continue in the ministry. This cannot be fully realized with the maintaining of the status quo. It is a call for the CCCS to reconsider its position, more in line with their current change of policies, which has allowed the laity, the deacons and *Aoao Feoasoani* to have the traditional *tatau* or tattoo. The theological implications and resonance of the Great Commission and the ritual *Ui le 'Ula* speaks volumes of the path that the CCCS ministry ought to follow.

Appendix

Questionnaire - Samoan

Igoa Muamua _____ Fa'aiu _____
Tausaga _____ Alii/ Tamaitai _____

Famolemole tali I fesili o le a taua i lalo:

1. Sa e umia se suafa matai o lou aiga? Ioe Leai
2. Afai o le Ioe faamolemole faailoa mai le suafa sa e umia.

3. O fea le afioaga e iai le suafa matai sa e umia?

4. O le suafa matai sa e umia o se matai alii po se matai tulafale?

5. Na Ui lau 'Ula I se tasi o lou aiga e faaauau le suafa matai ina ua talia oe e te ulufale mai I Malua pe leai? Faailoa mai mafuaaga .
6. O le faamoemoe o lenei pepa e finauina le iugafono o iai nei le Ekalesia I le aveeseina lea o suafa matai o I latou uma ua faamanuiaina, e ulufale mai I le Kolisi Faafaifeau. O le faamoemoe o le finauina o lenei mataupu, ina ia talia le ulufale mai I le Kolisi Faafaifeau ma le Suafa matai e aunoa ma le aveeseina faaletulafono.

Afai o le Suafa matai o lou faasinomaga lea i totonu o lou aiga. Afai foi o loo faapea e o faatassi le talalelei ma leaganuu.

Aisea e faamatuu ai suafa matai? E te talia le aveeseina o lou Suafa matai?

Afai o lou finagalo e te ioeina le iugafono pe Leai, faamolemole faailoa manino mai lou finagalo ni mafuaaga ua e taliaina ai pe te teena ai foi le iugafono.

Questionnaire - English

First Name_____ Last Name_____

Age _____ Gender_____

Please answer the following questions:

1. Did you hold a *matai* title of your family? Yes No

2. If your answer is Yes please identify the name of the title that you hold.

3. To whom, and in what family did you inherit the title from?

4. What is the status of the title that you previously held - an orator (*tulafale*) or a paramount chief (*alii*)?

5. Was the traditional ritual of *Ui le 'Ula* performed to pass the title onto a new title holder, once it was confirmed you were to attend Malua? Please answer Yes or No, also include the reasons behind your reasoning?

6. The purpose of this Research Paper is to challenge the CCCS constitution regarding the relinquishing of *Matai* titles of *aoao*, prior entering Malua Theological College. The purpose of pursuing this issue is for the CCCS to reconsider the bylaw. If *matai* titles are part of your identity to your family, and if gospel and culture go hand in hand, why relinquish your title?

Do you accept the bylaw? If your answer is Yes or No, please explain your reasons why you either accept or reject it?

Glossary

Au- Toeaina.....	Elders of the Church
A'oa'o.....	A preacher or student of a Theological School
Aganuu.....	Culture and traditions
Aiga Potopoto...	Extended Family
Aiga.....	Family
Ava.....	Kava
Alagaupu.....	Traditional Sayings
Fa'amafiti.....	To turn something inside out
Fa'amaligitoto....	Cause to shed blood
Fa'asinomaga.....	Identity
Faifeau.....	Pastor, Reverend or Minister
Fono	Meeting
Muagagana.....	Proverbial Sayings
Matai.....	Head of the Family or Chief
Mavaega.....	A parting command, engagement or promise
Measina.....	A family's tradition and heritage or treasure
Pule.....	Authority
Talalelei.....	Gospel or the message of the gospel
Taule'ale'a.....	Untitled man
Tautua.....	Servant or the act of serving
U'la.....	Necklace or a garland of flowers
Vala'auina.....	Calling or vocation
Va.....	Space or sacred
Va- Fealoaloai....	Mutual respect

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Masinalupe Tusipa Masinalupe, Personal Interview, 05th, February, 2013.

Taliaoa Suani Magele, Personal Interview, 14th, January, 2013.

Tausili Saeli, Personal Interview, 24th, January, 2013.

Finau Fiauvaa Sefo, Personal Interview, 01st February, 2013.

Fiauvaa Siuai, Personal Interview, 03rd, February, 2013.

Tafa Taamu, Personal Interview, 04th, February, 2013.

Rev Elder Poka Maua, Personal Interview, 12th July, 2013.

Rev Iaeva Amitai, Personal Interview, 19th, July, 2013.

Rev Lama Milford, Personal Interview, 03rd, June, 2013.

Rev Ma'afala Lima, Theology Departmental Seminars, 14th March 2013.

Questionnaires - Malua Theological College Students

2013 Year 4 Students

Karanita Petaia

Pati Crichton

Iakopo Manutai

2013 Year 3 Students

Poasa Toaivao

Filemoni Crawley

Alaifetu Faaeteete

2013 Year 2 Student

Tavita Evagalia

2013 Year 1 Students

Melepone Isara

Auatama Tafaeono

Fatilua Fatilua