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A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of the 'Feeding of the 5000' in Mt. 14:13-21: A Proposed Paradigm for Vai o le Ola Parish in Relations to '*fa'aaloaloga*'

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A Thesis Presented to the

Faculty of Malua Theological College

Samoa

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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November, 2012

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Abstract

Fa'aaloaloga or "gifting" as a Samoan traditional practice in its secular setting has always been a fair and equitable exchange of goods from one party to the other as an illustration of kindness and respect. However, in its church setting such as the Vai o le Ola Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), the exchange of goods has been far from equitable. More specifically, in its application between the *faifeau* (church minister) and the people, "God's Blessings" have become the equitable mean from the *faifeau* for the gifting/*fa'aaloaloga* from his parishioners. The focus of this study is to illustrate how the 'feeding of the 5000' story found in Matthew 14:13-21, contains a mission paradigm for the Vai o le Ola CCCS with implications that may be applicable for the CCCS in America and abroad.

Using Socio-Rhetorical Criticism (SRC) with the cultural concept of *fa'aaloaloga,* the feeding of the 5000 story is analyzed to determine a holistic understanding of *fa'aaloaloga* that should address the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the people. Although this study looks at a specific issue within the parish I grew up in, this, in no way, is a generalization of *fa'aaloaloga* found elsewhere.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for his love, support, guidance, and understanding throughout this whole process. This paper will be forever remembered as a turning point in my life and academic studies. To you be the glory now and forevermore…Amen.

I would like to recognize the following people for without their guidance, encouragement and support none of this would have been possible. First and foremost, my supervisor Rev. Muao Su'a. Thank you for all your guidance and support throughout this process. You have allowed me to complete a very important part of my journey and I will forever be indebted to you always.

I would also like to thank Rev. Alesana Etuati and Rev. Visesio Saga for your time, patience, and expertise in reviewing, reforming, restructuring and re-working all the flaws present in my writing and thinking process. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the wisdom received and guidance provided.

I would also like to thank the Principal Rev. Dr. Afereti Uili, the Vice-Principal Rev. Maafala Lima, and the Chair of the Thesis Committee Rev. Dr. Peletisala Lima for the opportunity to amend and ratify all shortcomings inherent in my writing. Redemption is not about re-proving oneself, instead it's about second chances to learn from past errors and still have the support and guidance from those we have disappointed, to keep pushing forward no matter how far we have fallen.

I would like to thank my parents, Autai and Siulepa Puaina as well as all my family back in America, American Samoa, as well as in Samoa (Rev. Elder Tavita and Tailua Roma

and family); especially my little sister in America, Samantha Puaina. You all have provided valuable resources while we have been here in Malua for the last four years. Thank you for your love and support and we hope to make you all proud with what God has allowed us to do here in Malua and elsewhere after Malua.

Lastly, I would like to thank my beautiful and lovely wife, Neda Fuafuamaanoanoauupu Tavita Puaina. None of this would have been possible without your support these last four years, especially these last three weeks. You have been my solid foundation, the impetus and the force behind all that I have accomplished. Thank you for understanding and putting up with me. I know life hasn't been easy for us, but because of your belief in me and sharing our vision for the future, everything that has happened, has all been worth its weight in gold. I love you and am very proud to be your husband and would like to dedicate this final form of our paper to you.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1Kgs	1Kings
2Kgs	2Kings
AJS	American Journal of Sociology
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
CCCS EFKS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa, use interchangeably with
ed(s)	Editor(s)
EFKS with CCCS	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, use interchangeably
Ex	Exodus
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JSNT	Journal for the Study of New Testament
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
PJT	Pacific Journal of Theology
SRC	Socio-Rhetorical Criticism
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

INTRODUCTION

Fa'aaloaloga is a Samoan term that encapsulates an 'act of respect' shown to an individual or a group through a process known as "gifting". It does not necessarily entail that the person(s) initiating the act of respect receives something in return, however, it is a formal illustration of the importance of 'others' in the Samoan culture. The term is a derivative of the word *fa'aaloalo*, which means 'respect' in English. *Fa'aaloalo* is an important aspect of the Samoan culture, because it speaks to the core of the *fa'aSamoa* or the Samoan way of life. The term *fa'aaloaloga* will be used synonymously with its English equivalent "gifting". The essential value of *fa'aaloaloga* or gifting should be the balanced reciprocity of goods between two individuals, parties, or groups. This important notion of *fa'aaloaloga* was documented during John Williams voyage to the Navigator Islands (present day Samoa).[1] This was interpreted by Williams as a sign of care and compassion to fellow visitors, which Williams continued in his missionary journeys throughout the Pacific.[2]

The significance of this Samoan practice is the sign of respect, love, compassion, and care shown by the Samoans to others including non-Samoans. It entails a reciprocal exchange of goods, meaning each side benefitted mutually from this process. However, the issue that I have encountered with *fa'aaloaloga* at the Vai o le Ola, a CCCS parish in Lakewood, California in the United States of America, is it has become more or less one sided, moving away from the reciprocal value of benefit to a one-sided benefit. In other

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[1] John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, (London: John Snow, 1837), 87.

[2] Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, 88.

words, faaaloaloga at the Vai o le Ola parish is rather uneven. The reciprocity notion is unequal.

For an example, a fellow parishioner gifted money and goods to the *faifeau*, the *faifeau* acknowledged the gift by thanking the parishioner and in return gifted the parishioner with spiritual blessings. From a social perspective, who benefited from this exchange? The answer that I have discovered is that the *faifeau* benefits materially while the parishioner is at a disadvantage. The parishioner must now find a way to make do with less material benefit, since some of it has been gifted to the *faifeau*. At Vai o le Ola, members have complained of the difficulties and financial strains that they have encountered. James Pepe said, "If I think back at the amount of money that I have contributed to the church and the *faifeau*, do you know that I would have had enough to buy us another car, put more food on the table, and provide better for my children's education and our well-being?"[3]

This thesis intends to use Vernon K. Robbins' socio-rhetorical criticism (SRC) to interpret Mt. 14:13-21. The aim is to offer a holistic approach to the understanding of fa'aaloaloga for spiritual transformation and revitalization within the Vai o le Ola church members. Relevant implications from the study would be proposed for the ministry of the CCCS. The utilization of the SRC methodology is to look at the "values, convictions, and beliefs" that are found in a text.[4] This would then allow the interpreter to understand the world he/she lives in, making more relevant a text to his/her social situation.

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[3] James Pepe, Telephone Interview with author, 12 November, 2012. Pepe is the Youth President at the Vai o le Ola parish.

[4] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1.

Chapter One discusses SRC, the methodology used in this study to extract meaningful interpretations from Mt. 14: 13-21 text for the reader. ***Chapter Two*** defines and explains the cultural practice of *fa'aaloaloga*. An etymological study will yield interpretations and applications, as well as a contemporary application found in the Vai o le Ola church as the standard practice of *faifeaus* (parish ministers) and their parishioners. ***Chapter Three*** is the exegetical application of the SRC methodology to Mt. 14: 13-21. It illustrates the socio-rhetorical interpretation by which to extract a contemporary application of *fa'aaloaloga* for Vai o le Ola and the CCCS as a whole. Finally, ***Chapter Four*** is a discussion and conclusion of the findings to see where we move from here. It is a projection forward of possible solutions to problem(s) in the Vai o le Ola parish with implications for the missionary endeavors of the CCCS in Samoa and abroad.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY-SOCIO RHETORICAL CRITICISM (SRC)

The option of using socio-rhetorical criticism as a methodology for the study of Mt. 14:13-21 and its cultural counterpart was inspired by the works of Vernon K. Robbins, who first introduced the 'socio-rhetorical' methodology into New Testament studies in 1984.[5] The importance of SRC is that it allows for a dialogue among scholars and the various approaches and disciplines related to the study of biblical texts.[6] Robbins insists that SRC brings together the disciplines and approaches found in the term *socio* (such as the social scientific methods: anthropology and sociology) with those in the *rhetorical* (social and rhetorical analysis) into conversation with one another. In other words, it offers a multi-disciplinarian interpretative analysis by which to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of a text.[7]

The SRC methodology is not merely an interpretation of a text based on other biblical methodologies of interpretation. Instead it learns from and incorporates other methodologies in order to initiate a dialogue between a reader and a text. This dialogue provides an environment for interpretation based on "conversation rather than simply creat[ing] one dominant mode of discourse."[8] Robbins insists that a dialogue must exist between an interpreter and a text to fully understand the dynamics of the discourse as opposed to the promotion of only one dominant method of reading.[9] Also, since dialogue is vital, a text and an interpreter are highly influenced by their respective contexts. These

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[5] Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 26.

[6] Vernon K. Robbins, "Divine Dialogue and the Lord's Prayer: Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts," *Dialogue* 28, no. 3 (1995), 117-146; David B. Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and its Reception", *JSNT* 33, (2010), 192.

[7] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 11-13.

[8] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 130.

[9] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 130.

contexts are the context of text and the context of the reader of that same text. Therefore, the world in the text, the world of the author of the text, and the world of the reader of a text greatly influences the dialogue and ultimately the interpretation.[10] Hence, SRC is a methodology of studying a biblical text that not only focuses on the worlds in, and of, the text, but it takes into account the world of the contemporary reader. In other words, SRC is analysis of a text that is not limited or focused solely on the "internal wording of a text,"[11] but it also considers to be quite important how outside of a text can draw conclusions pertinent to their lives from the text under scrutiny.

1.1 The Meaning of Socio Rhetorical

The term 'socio-rhetorical' is a compound word. The term 'socio' describes the multi-disciplinary interactions of social scientific studies that are useful to interpret biblical texts, such as anthropology and sociology.[12] The focus on these social-scientific approaches "which study social class, social systems, personal and community status, people on the margins, and people in positions of power"[13] have occupied much attention with biblical scholarship in the latter half of the twentieth century due to the limitations in historical-critical methods.[14] Thus, socio-rhetorical interpretation builds upon these resources in an intricate and detailed exegesis of biblical texts. According to Robbins:

> On the one hand, it behooves anyone who is engaged in such an enterprise to build on previous knowledge rather than to discard it. It would be a mistake, therefore, for a socio-rhetorical approach to bypass insights attained by the wide range of historical-critical approaches that currently exist. Historical-critical methods have yielded treasured insights into biblical literature, and they will continue to do so. The methods of text, source, form and redaction criticism bring the details of ancient manuscripts into view in a manner that deserves, and

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[10] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 14.
[11] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 127.
[12] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 127.
[13] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 128.
[14] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 8.

> must continue to receive, support and respect. In addition, history of religions, tradition criticism and canon criticism each add additional data and understanding.[15]

The term 'rhetorical' in its use by Robins refers to the way "language in a text is a means of communication among people."[16] The precise use of words and its placement within a text to convey the interaction between and among people yields an important clue about the narrative world and the world of the narrative as a gateway for the discovery of meaning for the reader.[17] For example, Robbins illustrates through his socio-rhetorical study of the Lord's Prayer how the placement and repetition of words within a text illustrates a progression in the Matthean community's relationship with God which should become the model of the relationship among themselves.[18] Therefore, rhetorical analysis allows the interpreter to view the characters within a text. The focus is to see how those character's thoughts are strung together in the form of spoken words. These spoken words become the means by which to understand what the author wanted to communicate through the characters within the text. Language is a mode of communication that is important to share and correspond with one another through thoughts, ideas, and intentions; whether positive or negative. For example, in everyday life, language is used interactively to establish, uphold, and maintain relationships. Unfortunately, language is also used to destroy or ruin relationships. Therefore SRC merges the way a community 'uses language'/communicate with the way they live in the world.[19]

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[15] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Christian Discourse*, 14-15.

[16] David B. Gowler, "The Development of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism", in *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Form and Social Rhetoric in Mark*, Vernon K. Robbins and David B. Gowler (eds.), (New York: Peter Lang), 1-35.

[17] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 129.

[18] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 132.

[19] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 2.

1.2 The Five (5) Textures of SRC

This study of language and its use by a community has led to other important concepts and ideas that were later delineated by Robbins as he continues to further develop SRC as a viable tool of exegesis.[20] In the 1990's the focus of SRC for Robbins was on the "discovery, analysis and interpretation of the textures,"[21] meaning that the nature of a text was like that of a rich work of tapestry. According to Robbins, when it is viewed from different angles, one discovers that it has different textures in the form of "configurations, patterns of image, and interwoven strands."[22] Thus, Robbins realized that the same comparison to tapestry held true for a biblical text, when viewed from different angles, a biblical text contains multiple textures and contours that need to be unveiled for further insights into its biblical meaning.[23] Thus the evolvement of SRC was the development of the five 'textures' or contours (see Appendix A) by which biblical texts would be interpreted and analyzed: Inner-texture, Inter-texture, Social and Cultural texture, Ideological texture, and Sacred texture.[24]

1.2.1 Inner-Texture

'Inner-texture' focuses on the communication between the real author and the original intended audience of a text.[25] This is done by investigating the language used in a text, its structure, and how the combination of the two is used within the narrative to convey the real author's message to the intended reader/audience. The findings of traditional literary-

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[20] Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," 195.
[21] Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," 195.
[22] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 18.
[23] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 18.
[24] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 24; Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 120-131: Each of these textures will be defined. But for the purpose of this thesis, greater emphasis will be placed on inter-texture and social and cultural texture.
[25] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 28-29.

critical methods or the 'text-immanent'[26] are useful in elaborating and expanding the SRC interpretation of a text. It conveys that the internal world of the text is interactively communicating with the external world of the author and readers (Mediterranean[27] or contemporary) of a text. Robbins writes:

> socio-rhetorical criticism approaches the inner texture of a text as an interactive environment of authors and readers. Authors create texts in their world; readers create a world of the text in their own world. Socio-rhetorical criticism interactively explores the world of the author, the world of the text and the world of the interpreter to interpret the inner texture of a New Testament text.[28]

In other words, an interpreter is required to articulate the meaning contained in a text. When that happens, the reader becomes an interactive part of the interpretation. He/she then imposes an understanding of a text upon the Mediterranean context of which the text was originally intended, which further enhances the meaning of a text. Inner Texture is made up of these five sub-modes: (l) repetitive/progressive; (2) opening-middle-closing; (3) narrational; (4) argumentative; and (5) aesthetic.[29]

An example of sub-modes of inner-texture can be found in the comparison of the Lord's Prayer between Matthew and Luke Robbins has illustrated.[30] First is the use of repetition to indicate the progression of Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer. The repetitive words, for instance, are: 'our', 'thy', 'give', 'us', 'our', 'kingdom', and 'heaven'.[31] This use of repetition illustrates the progression from the way God is addressed as 'thy' to the

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[26] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 30: The 'text-immanent' refers to the literary and narrative critical analysis that focuses on text, with both the author as producer of the text and the represented world evoked by the text in the background.

[27] Mediterranean as used in this thesis refers to the biblical context used in biblical text.

[28] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 30.

[29] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 46. For the purposes of this paper, I will not go into depth regarding the sub-modes of inner texture. However 1) ***Repetitive/progressive*** deals with how words are repeated and form a progression in thought and emphasis; 2) ***Opening/middle/closing*** looks at how a text is nicely organized or goes through a transition by which there is a beginning, a middle, and an ending; 3) ***Narrational*** looks at how words come together to narrate and develop a story or scene; 4) ***Argumentative*** is the use of words to argue in favor of a position within a text; and 5) ***Aesthetic*** refers to how words are brought together in an artistic blend of beauty and art.

[30] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 131.

[31] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 131.

request of God for 'us' and how 'we' would then turn around and do things for other people.[32]

The opening-middle-closing sub-mode illustrates an orderly opening and closing to Matthew's version of the prayer: "Our father who art in heaven…" and "Thy will be done in heaven…" is closed with "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom."[33] This closing illustrates a progression in thought and it nicely couches the prayer within an opening and closing with the middle containing the people's special relationship to God.[34] Inner-texture focuses on wording within a text to create a conduit by which the interpreter enters the text to extract meaning from the language.

1.2.2 Inter-Texture

Inter-texture refers to the understanding that every text is a "re-writing of other texts."[35] Thus an analysis of the inter-texture of a text are related to it. It is an "interaction of text both oral and written, with one another."[36] That is, 'inter-texture' considers other texts that have influenced or shaped the text under scrutiny. According to Robbins, "inter-texture emphasizes the author as producer of the text over the reader as constructor of the meaning of the text."[37] What this means is that the author is the focus of this 'inter-texture' analysis with his references, allusions, and reconfiguration of other oral or written sources to create the present form of the text that is found in the New Testament. However, it must be noted that the "interpreter begins with verbal signs in the text that

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[32] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 131.
[33] New Revised Standard Version, "The Holy Bible," (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 787.
[34] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 132.
[35] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 30.
[36] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 133.
[37] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 31.

explicitly evoke verbal signs in other texts."[38] This means, what is found in a text points to an external source or origin from which the author drew from, in which the reader may or may not be aware of.

An example of 'inter-texture' is a study by Gail O'Day as cited by Robbins.[39] The study looked at "the ways a new text is created from the metaphors, images, and symbolic world of an earlier text or tradition."[40] According to Robbins, O'Day looked at how Paul remolded 1 Corinthians 1: 26 out of "words, structures and aspects she calls 'substantive theological parallels' that exist in Jeremiah 9: 22–3."[41] Although inner-texture informs analysis of a text, O'Day's study did not begin with 1 Corinthians 1:26, instead, her analysis began with Jeremiah 9:22-23 since her focus was on the 'substantive theological parallels' rather than 'verbal and structural parallels'.[42] In the end her study highlighted the parallels that existed between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament text.

There are four different types of 'intertexture': (l) oral-scribal intertexture; (2) historical intertexture; (3) social intertexture; and (4) cultural intertexture.[43] Each of these inter-textures has its own range of coverage and usage in interpretation. Therefore, they each serve specific functions in revealing how a text "participates in networks of communication that reverberate throughout the world."[44] It simply means that 'these networks of communication' establish boundaries as to which extra-texts are acceptable

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[38] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 31.

[39] Gail R. O'Day, "Jeremiah 9:22–23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26–31: A Study in Intertextuality," *JBL* 109 (1990), 259–67, cited by Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97.

[40] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97.

[41] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97.

[42] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97.

[43] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 96.

[44] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 96.

for biblical critical interpretation. The inter-texture that will be used in this paper is the 'oral-scribal intertexture'.

1.2.2.1 Oral-Scribal Intertexture

Oral-scribal intertexture includes "recitation, recontextualization, and reconfiguration of other texts, both oral and scribal."[45] 'Recitation' refers to exact terms that appear in another text that is re-used within a text of interest. However variances may exist. The author reciting a text for example may omit some words, change few words, or may even paraphrase a recitation in his/her own words. The use of 'recitation' is important in 'inter-texture' interpretation because the variation in the use of oral or written tradition highlights an emphasis or contrast to past accounts.

'Recontextualization' occurs when an exact duplication or variation of another text is done without acknowledging that a similar text appears anywhere else.[46] An example according to Robbins, is 1 Peter 2:3 which recontextualizes Psalms 34:8. The author of 1Peter 2:3 does not mention that part of the verse is taken from another biblical source. '**Taste and see that the Lord is kind**' (Psalms 34:8) compared to "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have **tasted the kindness of the Lord**" (1 Peter 2:3).[47]

'Reconfiguration' refers to how a later text restructures an earlier text.[48] For an example is Luke 4:1–2. The temptation of Jesus took forty days and forty nights. It reconfigures

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[45] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97.
[46] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97.
[47] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 107.
[48] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 107.

Exodus 34:28 when Moses neither ate or drank for forty days and nights, when he went up to Mt. Sinai to get the ten commandments.

1.2.2.2 Historical Intertexture

Historical intertexture 'textualizes' past experience into 'a particular event' or 'a particular period of time'.[49] Historical intertexture looks at specific events and periods of time and inserts into it a historical context from the past. For example, John 9:22 looks at the idea of being 'put out of the synagogue'. According to Robbins, the use by John, takes a past event that was part of the history of the early Christians and made it part of a specific literary event of the text.

1.2.2.3 Social Intertexture

Social intertexture refers to the "use, reference, or representation of various forms of social knowledge."[50] This means the general knowledge that is accessible to all who live in a certain region. For an example in 1 Corinthians 9:20. The passage refers three times to 'Jew(s)' and in all cases they are put side to side with the phrase 'under the law'. The 'social intertexture' established in this example is the common knowledge of the Jews strict adherence to the Laws of Moses.

1.2.2.4 Cultural Intertexture

Cultural intertexture refers to the "reference, allusion, or echo of the "insider" cultural knowledge that is known only by people within a particular culture or by people who

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[49] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 118.

[50] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 127. 'Social knowledge' refers to information gained by each person within a region based on day to day interaction with other people of that region.

have learned about the culture through some kind of interaction with it."[51] What this means is that cultural inter-texture looks at the Greco-Roman and Jewish cultural intertexts that affects the transmission of New Testament texts. According to Robbins, reference and allusion can be seen in Mark 6:15. This passage alludes to the prophet Elijah as is recorded in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2. However, there are references to Elijah found in "certain extra-biblical literature and in scattered references to him in other literature of the time."[52] Therefore by the first century, Elijah was a recognizable figure known to all members of society, rather than just a textual figure found only in the Hebrew Bible.

1.2.3 Social and Cultural Texture

Social and cultural texture of a text "concerns the dynamics of 'voice' as they function among the narrator and the characters in texts."[53] What this means is that the voice in a text represents a culturally grounded response by the characters to the world. This social response is given additional meaning by the reader or audience who reads and interprets a text. Within social and cultural texture, the "interpreter analyzes three sub-modes: (a) social response to the world, (b) social systems and institutions, and (c) cultural alliances and conflicts."[54] These sub-modes look at how society and culture; as well as the

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[51] Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Text*, 58-59.

[52] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 110.

[53] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 34. The 'voice' in a text refers to the medium for the 'consciousness' or 'vision' of the characters and the narrator, who are 'concretizations drawn from a represented
world'.

[54] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 138.

interactions between the 'cultural systems' of society affect people's attitudes and behavior.[55]

1.2.3.1 Social Response to the World

Robbins suggests that 'social and cultural texture' of a text should yield various forms of social responses. He refers to six typologies introduced by Bryan Wilson, which he has incorporated into this SRC texture: conversionist, thaumaturgical, Gnostic, utopian, revolutionist, and reformist.[56] These responses form the basis for specific interaction between a religious believer and the world he/she lives in. For this study of Mt. 14:13-21, the three typologies of interest that will be helpful to my analysis are: thaumaturgical, revolutionist, and conversionist responses. A 'thaumaturgical response' views the world as corrupt and in need of change. Therefore the hope resides in God or God's people as agents of change.[57] A 'revolutionist response' looks at the world as evil and someone has to change it, whether he/she is God or God's agents of change.[58] A 'conversionist' response also sees the world as evil, but the cause of evil are the people. If the people can change, then the world will be changed.

An example according to Robbins of this integrated response (thaumaturgical, revolutionist, and conversionist) can be found in Matthew and Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer illustrates how God responds to the people's request for physical, spiritual, and mental nourishment. At the same time does away with the evil of the world by renewing the world. Finally works together with the people who then turn

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[55] Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," 195.

[56] Bryan Wilson, "A Typology of Sects," in *Sociology of Religion*, Roland Robertson (ed.), (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 361-383, as cited by Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 138.

[57] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 139.

[58] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 139.

around and use their renewed lives to offer assistance physically and spiritually to others.[59]

1.2.3.2 Social Structures and Institutions

Social structures and institutions as sub-modes of 'social and cultural texture' look at common social and cultural topics such as: honor-shame; contracts such as patron-client; challenge-response; exchange systems; peasants; limited goods; and purity codes.[60] These social structures and institutional values highlight the interactions among people. The interactions enhance further the understanding of God through relationships established within the world by participating in social systems and institutions. The aspect of social structures that will be utilized in this paper are: 'patron-client contracts' and 'challenge-response'. A 'patron-client contract' revolves around the premise of an unequal partnership. A patron offers a service and a client repays back those services by other means due to the inability of the client to pay. The usual form of repayment is through the offering of honor or loyalty to the patron. Again, the Lord's Prayer offers a good example of a 'patron-client contract'. According to Robbins, the addition of the doxology at the end of Matthew's version highlights the honor and respect that the client offers God for his services.[61]

The 'challenge-response' social structure is a "method of interaction between people in the Mediterranean culture, a constant tug of war, a game of push and shove where the winner receives honor and the loser shame."[62] An example of this social structure is

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[59] Robibns, "Divind Dialogue," 139.
[60] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 159.
[61] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 140.
[62] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 81.

found in the "feeding of the 5000" in Mt. 14:13-21. Jesus issued the challenge about feeding, the disciples responded with their inability to provide, in turn Jesus counters their inability to provide, by providing the food by which to feed the crowd. In return the crowd responded by honoring Jesus as their leader. This example will be developed further in Chapter 3.

1.2.3.3 Cultural Alliances and Conflicts

The cultural alliances and conflicts as one of the sub-modes of 'social and cultural texture' consists of: dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, and contraculture.[63] What this final category attempts to do is to interpret a text according to cultural alliances and/or conflicts that have arisen out of an event being depicted in the text. This paper is interested in 'counterculture' alone. According to Robbins, 'counterculture' is based on the premise of invoking an alternative culture that is not based on legislative or violent reforms but one based on a more 'humanistic' way of life.[64] The use of the term humanistic refers to a way of life that is more tolerant to/for all in society. It is an alternative that should span more than a generation and should be marked with the development towards self-sufficiency. An example of counterculture in the 'feeding of the 5000' is where Jesus heals the crowd spiritually by speaking to them. He then heals the crowd physically by providing an abundant supply of food. Thus, the crowd is taught the means of sustaining themselves in the future. Also, the crowd is inclusive of women and children, besides men. The distinctiveness of this alternative culture is defined by the

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[63] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 168-170.
[64] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 142.

sharing and caring for all (men, women, and children) instilling self-sufficiency through their working together for the betterment of all.

1.2.4 Ideological Texture

Although 'ideological texture' is not used in this paper, it is included in the methodology to provide a complete explanation of the five (5) textures of SRC. 'Ideological texture' looks at the ideology that is created and carried forward by the interpreter of the text and its affect on the reader and his/her interactions with others.[65] The importance of this texture is that the reader recognizes the difference between the ideology of the text, the ideology of interpretation and his/her personal ideology, so as not to influence or sway interpretation.

The ideological texture of texts focuses on the interaction between the narrator and characters of a text and the implied reader in the text as well as the real reader/audience.[66] The ways in which the narrators and characters actualize or deliver the message, as well as the way the implied reader in the text and the actual reader/audience receives it is ideology.[67]

The four sub-modes of ideological texture are: the individual locations of writers and readers; the relation to groups; modes of intellectual discourse; and spheres of ideology.[68] The 'individual location of writers and readers' looks what they (writer and readers) bring to a text as far as preconceived ideas, the way they think and what they believe. 'Relation to groups' looks at how membership within a group influences the reading and

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[65] Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," 195.
[66] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 37.
[67] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 37.
[68] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 194.

writers. 'Modes of intellectual discourse' deals with boundaries set by the reader due to personal perspectives. Finally, the 'spheres of ideology' looks at how ideology that is found in a text is analyzed.

An example of ideological texture looks at how God is perceived by Christians.[69] Based on the idea of patronage, where unequal partners engage in an exchange, God is viewed as a personal divine father figure who provides and protects. According to Robbins, no other image would do justice to this patriarchical image of God, because even Jesus referred to God as 'Abba'.[70] The ideological interpretation, the God of the Christians can only be truly and fully understood in masculine terms.[71]

1.2.5 Sacred Texture

Sacred texture is also not used in the analysis of Matthew 14:13-21. However, for thoroughness it is "a subset of the other four textures,"[72] looking at the relationship between humanity and God. It discusses such issues as 'deity', 'holy person', 'spirit being', 'human redemption', 'human commitment', 'religious community', and 'ethics'.[73] This texture was not part of the original textures developed by Robbins in 1996, but was added in his book entitled, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.

An example of the use of sacred texture is found in Mark 15, when Robbins discusses the issue of deity. In God's interactions with Jesus it was noted by Robbins that God answered positively during his baptism and transfiguration, however, during the Garden

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[69] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 144.
[70] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 144.
[71] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 144.
[72] Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," 195.
[73] Robbins, *Exploring Texture of Texts*, 121.

of Gethsemane and while on the cross, God was silent.[74] The question raised is, can God really do all things and if so, why is he inconsistent? The Gospel of Mark reveals that the nature of God being portrayed is one who works implicitly, secretly and contradictory behind the scenes.

The five (5) textures represent an integrative analytic tool of SRC in resonating and making heard the various voices of: the 'text'; the 'world of the text'; the 'reader'; and the 'world of the reader' as a dialogical expression and interpretation of faith. SRC "presents a 'system' approach to interpretation."[75] For example, "if interpreters emphasize 'opposition' in the inner texture of a text, they are likely to investigate intertexture which features texts that this text opposes, social and cultural groups against which this text pits itself and an ideology of separation from other people in the world."[76] In other words, what happens in an earlier texture reverberates throughout the other textures. However, as is the case with any methodology of biblical criticism, the purpose is to build an environment for interpretation that provides the exegete with a basic, overall view of life as we know it and language as we use it.[77] Within this environment, the interpreters can work on one or two aspects of the methodology. Robbins states:

> Few studies will, and perhaps few should, set a goal of explicitly displaying with any one text the full range of strategies displayed in this manuscript. Focusing programmatically on such an extensive range of strategies runs the risk of burying the text in a morass of theory and method.[78]

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[74] Robbins, *Exploring Texture of Texts*, 120-121.

[75] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 40. 'System' refers to the whole of SRC and that presuppositions and strategies in one arena reverberate throughout the entire system.

[76] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 40.

[77] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 13.

[78] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 3.

1.3 Selection of SRC Textures

For this thesis, I will focus specifically on 'oral-scribal inter-texture', as well as 'social and cultural texture'. The specific sub-modes of each texture used in this paper are listed in the chart found in Appendix B. The selection of these two textures (inter-texture and social and cultural texture) over the other three textures (inner-texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture) by no means diminishes the importance of the other textures. As mentioned earlier, components of previous textures reverberate and build upon the next textures.[79] So inner-texture is intrinsically found in inter-texture. Inter-texture is found in social and cultural texture; social and cultural texture in ideological texture and ideological texture within sacred texture. This relationship illustrates the interactive dialogue of each strategy to highlight and emphasize important aspects of interpretation the exegete seeks within a text. However, the specific selection of these two textures is:

1) to illustrate the 'significant theological parallel that exists between oral and written text as a foundation of interpretation and 2) to illustrate how those parallels influences the religious believer/community's social response to the world he/she resides in as a reflection of his/her relationship with God.

The focus of this paper is to illustrate how Matthew's "feeding of the 5000" was informed by other oral-scribal texts in developing the concept of 'holistic (mind, body and soul) healing' based on the influences of Mark which parallels the Elijah and Elisha feedings found in 1 Kings 17:8-16 and 2 Kings 4:42-44. Also, the social and cultural texture will assist in illustrating how those parallel texts influenced the social response by making the unconventional (sharing, loving, caring, healing, giving) the conventional

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[79] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 40.

response by a people in society. This is seen in the sharing of limited goods and services through the imitation of a patron-client interaction that defines God and religious believer/community interactions. Together this interpretation will illustrate how Jesus establishes a missionary paradigm that is holistic and conventional.

The next chapter will discuss the cultural aspect of *fa'aaloalologa* and its use in the Vai Ole Ola CCCS church. Chapter Two looks at the term *fa'aaloaloga*, its meaning, interpretation, and application within the Samoan context. This is the platform by which to understand how the SRC reading of the 'feeding of the 5000' miracle found in Matthew 13:14-21 promotes a holistic approach to ministry.

CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL CONCEPT OF *FA'AALOALOGA* OR 'GIFTING'

This chapter discusses the Samoan concept of *fa'aaloaloga* (gifting). It will discuss the etymology of the word *fa'aaloaloga* from *faaaloalo* (respect) and its meanings and cultural applications. It will also focus on *fa'aaloaloga* (gifting) as one of the causative acts of *fa'aaloalo*[80] and its application for the Samoan in its social and ecclesial (church) setting.

2.1 Etymology of Fa'aaloaloga

Fa'aaloaloga comes from the root word *aloalo*, which has been translated as 'face to face'. When the causative prefix *fa'a* is added to the root word, the term *fa'aaloalo* is formed, from which *fa'aaloaloga* is derived.[81] *Fa'aaloalo* means 'respect', however, the term respect in English does not fully express the deeper meaning or understanding of *fa'aaloalo* in its Samoan context. Thus, the etymology of the word *fa'aaloalo* will show a wide and holistic understanding of how *fa'aaloalo* has been interpreted and applied in the Samoan context.

Fa'aaloalo is the combination of the prefix *fa'a* with the root *aloalo* as mentioned above. *Fa'a* the prefix denotes 'doing something' or 'putting something together'. It is the putting into action of the noun which proceeds it. *Aloalo* is the noun that is translated as 'face to face'.[82] Thus, the word *fa'aaloalo* can be literally translated as 'to be put face to face' or a 'face to face relationship'. Therefore, *fa'aaloalo* is a relational term that

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[80] Samasoni Kupa, "Jesus Christ: The Revelation of 'Faaaloalo', A Christological Perspective of the Samoan concept of 'faaaloalo'", Unpublished Thesis for the fulfillment of the Bachelor of Divinity, Malua Theological College, 2006, 4.

[81] George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 4th Edition, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 27.

[82] Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 27.

describes the self and others through a 'face to face' interaction. However, *faaaloalo* is not only limited to the face but includes the whole body, for the 'face to face' refers to the way one gives expression through his/her face, their body movements and gestures. Faalepo Tuisuga writes that, "[*fa'aaloalo*] is reflected in the social attitude and the outward behavioral expression of the Samoans."[83]

According to Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, "*fa'aaloalo* is *alo mai* (face me) and *alo atu* (face you), face meeting face."[84] It is in this manner that the Samoan lives and experiences life. Efi further elaborates that, "*fa'aaloalo* is a critical value of our Samoan culture that is enacted in conversation with *alofa* (love) to help save or keep face."[85] What this means is that the maintenance of face can genuinely occur when *fa'aaloalo* is in dialogue with love. In other words love is a foundational element in the enactment or expression of *fa'aaloalo*.

The term 'face' is understood a little differently for the Samoans compared to our English counterparts. The latter defines 'face' as an individual or a personal term. According to David Ho, "face is the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct."[86] Face in Samoan is not only limited to the

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[83] Faalepo Aveau Tuisuga, "Ole Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan," A Thesis for the degree Doctor of Philosophy, Melbourne College of Divinity 2009, 92-93; Simanu Aumua Mata'itusi, *A Text for the Advanced Study of Samoan Language and Culture*, (Auckland: Pasefika Press, 2002), 135-145.

[84] Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni, I'uogafa Tuagalu, et.al. (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi In Search of Fragrance: Tui Atua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, (Lepapaigalagala, Samoa: The Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2008), 71.

[85] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 71.

[86] David Yau-Fai Ho, "On the Concept of Face," *AJS*, 81 no. 4 (1996), 883.

self but it includes the others (family, village, and ancestors).[87] In other words, the loss of face is more than just a personal loss. It affects the inter-relationship with others, whom all lose out in this encounter. How the individual is perceived by self and others strongly influences and determines *fa'aaloalo*. Therefore as mentioned earlier by Efi, the 'keeping of face' and 'saving face' is an important relational indicator of *fa'aaloalo*, because "once there is loss of face there cannot be a meeting of faces and therefore the basis of which *fa'aaloalo* is premised, disappears."[88]

The use of the term *fa'aaloalo* or respect from here on out will refer to the relational meaning of *fa'aaloalo* as a 'face to face' relationship. It highlights the self interactions with others in a communal relationship. Therefore, all people involved are affected by *fa'aaloalo* or respect.

Furthermore, *fa'aaloalo* is a 'respect' that is held by and amongst people. It is not just any form of respect, it is a holistic form of respect that includes the respect for the whole relational individual. The English understanding of respect looks at the consideration that is shown to self and others, like the terms 'respect oneself' or 'respect others'.[89] However, for the Samoans it is an all-inclusive respect for the totality of the person. In other words, the person is not only an individual, but an individual in relations with others.[90] How we relate to others begin with our relationship with the self. Respect for the mind, body, and soul is understood and known only in the way we deal and relate with

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[87] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 80.
[88] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 71.
[89] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Respect", <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/> accessed 06 November 2012.
[90] Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, (Suva: Methodist Publishing Press, 1996), 79.

others. Therefore, respect can only be known through our relations with others, as they assist in defining who we are.[91]

Fa'aaloalo can be further understood as having courage to show face to one another, a quality that is valued by Samoans as being an important attribute of who they are as a people. Respect is a two way process in which information is given and received in order to inform and bring about awareness.[92] This awareness according to Efi is an awareness of who we are through the way we interact with others whether it is family, village, society, and the cosmos.[93]

Therefore, *fa'aaloalo* can be understood as the Samoan word for the holistic respect for 'the self' and 'the other' with our joint participation in life as part of God's creation. According to Efi, *fa'aaloalo* is the identifying marker of the Samoan worldwide.[94] Without *fa'aaloalo*, then the fa'aSamoa does not exist.[95] What this means is that *fa'aaloalo* is a key and central component of the Samoan identity. An identity that is reinforced by love, *fa'aaloalo* then represents the core belief or value that holds the Samoan identity together and gives it "essence and meaning."[96] Without *fa'aaloalo*, Samoan lose out on the identity marker that distiguishes them from other ethnic groups such as Africans, Americans, Australians, and so forth.

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[91] Kamu, *The Samoan Culture*, 79.

[92] John Perry and Erna Perry, *The Social Web: An Introduction to Sociology*, (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1973), 119-120; Kupa, "Jesus Christ," 5: Kupa contextualizes Perry's idea of 'self-worth' being determined in a relationship with others.

[93] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 32.

[94] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 72.

[95] Paulo Koria, "Moving Towards a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts", *PJT* 22 (1999), 5.

[96] Koria, "Moving Towards a Pacific Theology," 5-6.

The etymological study reveals that *fa'aaloalo* is a relational term that is in constant communication between the self and others. The maintenance of this good relationship between the self and others defines the 'face to face' encounter. Because the maintenance of face not only affects the individual or self, but all others within that relationship: family, village, ancestors, and cosmos. Therefore, *fa'aaloalo* refers to a 'positive' relational term that defines the individual in communion with others.

2.2 Interpretation and Application of Fa'aaloalo

As the term *fa'aaloalo* has been discussed thus far, the interpretation and application emphasized henceforth will focus on *fa'aaloalo* as a 'positive' relational term. Positive refers to the fact that 'face to face' relationships are founded, nurtured, and maintained by love.[97] That is *fa'aaloalo* is the basis upon which proper conduct and behavior of Samoans stem from.[98] This behavior is epitomized by Efi when he said, "What do I mean by face? I am accountable to my father, my mother, my family and my village...face is the collective face of family, village, and ancestors."[99] Therefore, respect is the maintenance of good relationships because it is not only the individual in this relationship, but all his/her other 'selfs'.

In addition to good relationships, *fa'aaloalo* is also about 'happiness' which is expressed through the sharing of life, love, and respect for the other.[100] Happiness is important for good relationships, because it fosters and maintains the positive exchange of *fa'aaloalo* between the self and others. For the Samoan, this is very important because the

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[97] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 71.
[98] Koria, "Moving Towards," 6; Kupa, "Jesus Christ," 6.
[99] Sualii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manogi*, 72.
[100] Aumua Mata'itasi Simanu, *O Si Manu a Alii*, (Auckland: Pasefika Press, 2002), 122.

maintenance of good familial and social relationship by way of happiness is integral to the Samoan identity.[101] It is in this Samoan understanding of *fa'aaloalo* that we find *fa'aaloaloga* or 'gifting', as one of the causative acts of *fa'aaloalo*.[102]

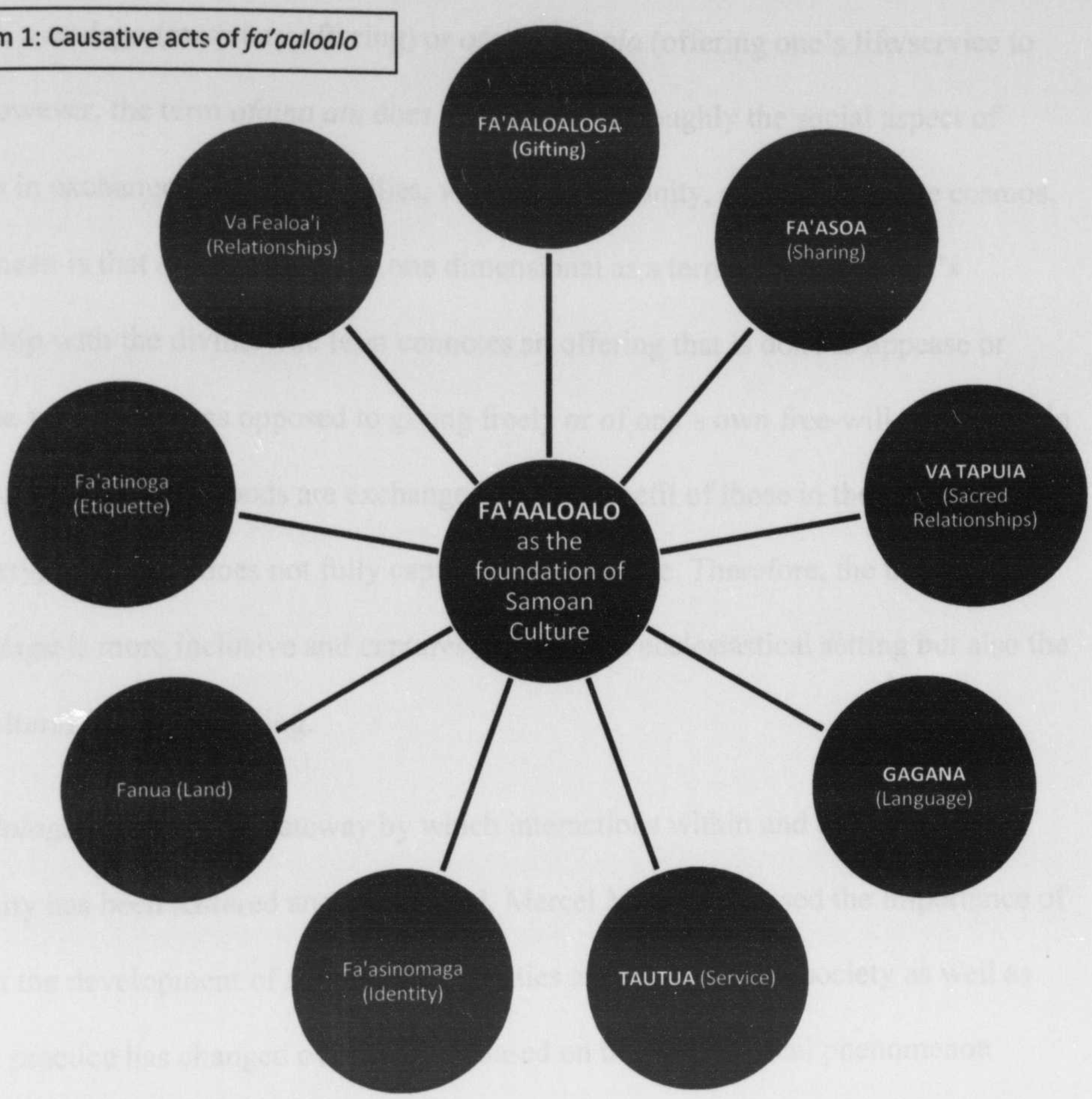
2.3 Fa'aaloaloga, a causative expression of Fa'aaloalo

The causative act refers to the verbal aspect of putting into action the noun *fa'aaloalo*. Diagram 1 below highlights cultural concepts and practices that are extensions of *fa'aaloalo*. This is not to say that these are the only causative acts of *fa'aaloalo*, but the diagram is a general representation of those beliefs and practices which are considered applications of *fa'aaloalo*.[103] Based on Efi's premise that *fa'aaloalo* is foundational to the *fa'aSamoa*, the extensions from the core represent just a few of the causative expressions of *fa'aaloalo* within the Samoan community.[104] Other such extensions can be: Identity (*Fa'asinomaga*), Land (*Fanua*), Etiquette (*Fa'atinoga*), Relationships (*Va Feagai*), and other.

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[101] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'eu'e Manogi*, 80.
[102] Kupa, "Jesus Christ," 8.
[103] Kupa, "Jesus Christ," 8.
[104] Suaalii-Sauni and others (eds), *Su'esu'e Manaogi*, 72; Kupa, "Jesus Christ," 8.

Diagram 1: Causative acts of *fa'aaloalo*



Due to the focus of this study, I will focus on the causative act of *fa'aaloaloga*, as an extension of *fa'aaloalo* (the core of a face to face interaction) which is translated as 'gifting'/'giving' (used interchangeably). 'Gifting' refers to the practice of gifting pleasantries, exchange of goods, or the exchange of services. However, in Samoan general practice, the more common term used to express the idea of gifting or giving is *ofoina atu.*[105] It is literally translated as 'to offer unto' or 'giving to someone'. This term is associated with ecclesiastical (church gathering) giving as in *alofa* (free-will monetary

[105] *ofoina atu* The phrase 'ofoina atu' appears to have the connotation that we are giving or offering to appease God, others or self. Therefore the term used throughout is 'gifting'.

offering), a *taulaga* (monetary offering) or *ofoina lou ola* (offering one's life/service to God). However, the term *ofoina atu* does not express thoroughly the social aspect of giving as in exchanges between families, villages, community, society, even the cosmos. What I mean is that *ofoina atu* seems one dimensional as a term to describe one's relationship with the divine. The term connotes an offering that is done to appease or please the supernatural as opposed to giving freely or of one's own free-will. However, in the social setting where goods are exchanged for the benefit of those in the community and society, *ofoina atu* does not fully capture that exchange. Therefore, the use of *fa'aaloaloga* is more inclusive and captures not only the ecclesiastical setting but also the social/cultural setting of gifting.

Fa'aloalologa has been the gateway by which interactions within and outside of the community has been fostered and maintained. Marcel Mauss discussed the importance of gifting in the development of cultural communities and its impact on society as well as how that practice has changed over time.[106] Based on this sociological phenomenon discussed by Mauss, the focus of the rest of this chapter is to look at the use of *fa'aaloaloga* in its contemporary context at Vai o le Ola CCCS church. Its application in the Vai o le Ola CCCS is far from the 'positive' relational term as described above. This contemporary use of *fa'aaloaloga* must be addressed and transformed so that gifting could once again:

- Lead to the creation of new life, opportunities for growth, and our renewal as a group.

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[106] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W.D. Halls (Abingdon: Routledge Publishers, 1990), 31.

- Confirm relationships and break down barriers so that we can celebrate our diversity which unifies us in Christ.
- Nourish our souls, so that we could inspire and fulfil the hopes of others.
- Allow us to reflect on our dependency on God who transforms and renews us through and with others.
- Allow us to live life to the fullest by sharing love and respect with others.

2.4 The Act of Fa'aaloaloga/Gifting

In general Samoan perception, cultural (societal) and ecclesiastical (religious or church) giving are inseparable and they complement each other.[107] Culture and religion are closely woven for most contemporary Samoans. It represents a way of life that has defined the Samoan since the arrival of the Good News in 1830 as reiterated by Lalomilo Kamu. He writes, "The history of Samoa from the time of the introduction of Christianity, is not complete without reference to the Church."[108] What this means is that there exists an intricate connection between culture and religion in that what occurs in one sphere, must and should occur in the other.

For instance, giving can be understood as an 'act of gratitude' shown for hospitality or services rendered.[109] Giving is also about reciprocity. Where I give and in return you give back.[110] With this understanding, the general Samoan expectation is that in both cultural

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[107] Olive Samuelu, "Salvation in Church Offering? Towards a Theology of Giving in the Context of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa," Unpublished Thesis for the Masters of Theology, Pacific Theological College, 2010, 8; Alo P. Pita, "The Widow's Offering and Jesus' Response (Mark 12:41-44): A Comparative Study to Giving from a Samoan Ecclesiastical Perspective", Unpublished Thesis for the Bachelor of Divinity, Malua Theological College, 2010, 3.

[108] Kamu, *The Samoan Culture*, 152.

[109] Samuelu, "Salvation in Church Offering?" 8.

[110] F. J. H. Grattan, *An Introduction to Samoan Custom*, (Papakura: R. McMillan, 1948), 67.

and church settings, giving should equate. What I mean by equate is that giving should provide mutual benefit for both participants. This is based on the idea of 'reciprocity' and 'act of gratitude'; which are both informed by the maintenance of a positive and happy relationship of *fa'aaloalo*. However, based on my experiences at the Vai o le Ola parish, *fa'aaloaloga* has been far from equitable and mutually beneficial.

2.5 Fa'aaloaloga and the Contemporary Context

Vai o le Ola CCCS is located in Lakewood, California in the United States of America and is guided by Reverend and Mrs. Andrew and Losilosivale Leavasa. There are currently 20 pledged members[111] and well over 400 church members including youth and children. The church was founded in the year 2000 and I have been a member since. I was not a pledged member until 2005 as I was under my parent's pledge, before they left that same year. As both a pledged and non-pledged member, I was able to witness the impact that *fa'aaloaloga* has on the church and its members.

The ideal use of *fa'aaloaloga* as mentioned earlier refers to the equal and mutual exchange of goods. In this paper it excludes the free-will offering (*alofa*) which is given to the *faifeau* every month to sustain and provide for him and his families well-being. The reason I have excluded the *alofa* from *fa'aaloaloga* is because *alofa* is comparable to a paycheck for a job. The *alofa* is the process by which the *faifeau* is provided a monthly income by the church for his pastoral services performed for the church.

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[111] Pledged membership refers to those members that have pledged to support and participate in all aspects of the church, religiously and fiscally through pledged donations and giving.

According to Fa'aea Tulifau, "the *alofa* is another form of *fa'aaloaloga*, because we our showing our respect and love for the *faifeau* through the gifting of money to support the *faifeau* and his family like an '8 to 5' job."[112]

Likewise Simeata'a Misa'alefua concurred, "the *alofa* is our *fa'aaloalo* to the *faifeau* for the services he has provided to the church and its members for the month. It is like a paycheck received when you work."[113]

James Pepe on the other hand said, "I do not see *alofa* as *fa'aaloaloga*, it is more a must. Something that has to be done and is not based on an exchange. Whether the *faifeau* preaches all month or uses a *tofi* (guest preacher) every Sunday of the month, he is still given an *alofa* to compensate him as the *faifeau* of our church. So to me that is not *fa'aaloaloga*, it is a paycheck."[114]

Ray Jennings said, "*alofa* is *fa'aaloaloga*, because we are showing our respects to the *faifeau* for his services. It is different from the other *fa'aaloaloga* that we do in which we give to the *faifeau*, but all we get back is, 'God Bless You'."[115] I probed further and Jennings said, "I mean, different in that the *alofa* is given to the *faifeau* for doing his job as a *faifeau*, so in a sense we are getting something back. But the other *fa'aaloaloga's* such as birthdays, *toana'i* or meals throughout the week, *asiasiga* (member visitations), weddings, and funerals. Those are all extras that still fall under his job as *faifeau.* Those

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[112] Faaea Tulifau, Telephone Interview with author, 12 November, 2012. Tulifau is one of the lay preachers at the Vai o le Ola parish.

[113] Simeata'a Misa'alefua, Telephone Interview with author, 12 November, 2012. Misa'alefua is one of the elder mothers at the Vai o le Ola parish.

[114] James Pepe, Telephone Interview with author, 13 November, 2012. Pepe is the Youth President at Vai o le Ola parish.

[115] Ray Jennings, Telephone Interview with author, 13 November, 2012. Jennings is one of the youth members at Vai o le Ola parish.

extras should be covered by the *alofa* but yet we still give, and in return all we get back is God's blessings."[116]

Based on the information provided from these interviews, *alofa* is an equitable exchange of services. Therefore, anything outside of the *alofa* that is gifted to the *faifeau* will be referred to as *fa'aaloaloga,* the exchange between church members and the *faifeau.*

In America, money is a vital part of *fa'aaloaloga*. Money is also a vital part of survival, because everything revolves around the use and exchange of it. This is the form of exchange that is commonly used at Vai o le Ola, since goods are also purchased with money. Also, Tulifau said, "Money is used today because it makes the exchange less complicated and less wasteful. All you do is put money in an envelope and then give it to them, allowing them to do whatever they want to do with the money."[117]

Money is used and exchanged by every family since they have house payments, car payments, and additional bills that depend on the availability of money. Food is another important commodity that is bought with money. Money is also needed to purchase petroleum for cars, and the cost of transportation (bus, train, or carpool) to get to and from work and home. The possession and use of money is very important, because the mismanagement of money leads to other social problems such as poverty, homelessness, drinking, drugs, and others. Therefore the majority of *fa'aaloaloga* that is done involves the exchange of money due to convenience for all involved.

In the practice of *fa'aaloaloga* at Vai Ole Ola, the *faifeau* and his wife would receive a monetary gift from a church member, depending on the event or occasion, the

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[116] Jennings, Phone interview.
[117] Tulifau, Phone Interview.

fa'aaloaloga could vary from $100 US dollars to as high as $5,000 US dollars. Initially, when the church first started, the *faifeau* stopped all *fa'aaloaloga* outside of the *alofa* that he would get. The *faifeau* believed that this would eventually cause a burden to the church, especially since the church was just getting started. However, the members insisted that he accept their gifts as Tulifau said, "we believe that we give to the *faifeau* and in return we would receive blessings."[118] Misaalefua said, "giving to the *faifeau* is based on our own free choice, we don't have to give, but we give because that's what we were taught by our parents and today we know why, because of his blessings."[119]

The *faifeau* eventually waivered and allowed the people to continue with the practice. However, gifting started to become expensive and eventually burdensome. What initially started off as a good gesture to the *faifeau* became a competition between the members as to who could outdo the other. It got so bad that according to Tulifau, a fellow lay preacher asked how much Tulifau's *fa'aaloaloga* to the *faifeau* was. Later, Tulifau found out that the same lay preacher gave $200 more than what he had given.[120]

According to Pepe, the competition in giving becomes so bad that church members start to give beyond their means.[121] But this is not new says Misa'alefua, since it is a part of the Samoan nature. However, she said that giving should not be based on pride, but a genuine yearning to give.[122]

The influence of competition has turned *fa'aaloaloga* from a sense of responsibility and service to care for the *faifeau* into something that has become an additional burden on top

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[118] Tulifau, Phone Interview.
[119] Misa'alefua, Phone Interview.
[120] Tulifau, Phone Interview.
[121] Pepe, Phone Interview.
[122] Misa'alefua, Phone interview.

of any and all other burdens carried by a church member. In my interview with Pepe, he said that in one week's time, he gave well over $1,800 in *fa'aaloaloga* to the *faifeau* as an example of how costly giving can be.[123] This situation described by Pepe is just one of many stories regarding the extreme cases of *fa'aaloaloga*.

At the Vai o le Ola parish, *fa'aaloaloga* proceeds as follows: a church member gifts the *faifeau* and in return the *faifeau* thanks the church member and concludes his thanks with a spiritual blessing for all that was given to him and his family. One of the questions I asked my four (4) phone interviews: Who does *fa'aaloaloga* benefit? The responses were as followed:

Based on the responses received, the older church members such as Tulifau and Misa'alefua responded by saying both, because the spiritual reward is greater than the physical or material reward that was given to the *faifeau*. However, the younger church members Pepe and Jennings said that the *faifeau* benefits in what they believed to be an 'unbalanced' exchange of material goods. However, this in no way diminishes the spiritual blessings, it only goes to point out socially, who benefits from the goods being exchanged.

I then asked, is there a problem with the *faifeau* getting more of the material goods than the church members who are gifting? The following were their responses:

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[123] Pepe, Phone Interview.

Tulifau said there is no problem as long as the person knows how to budget. But it does cause stress when money is tight, but in the end, it always works out as God watches over us and provides for all our needs.[124]

Misa'alefua answered that it is a problem, but we have to know our roles and responsibilities. We provide for God's servant and in return God provides for us. She truly believes that she has been blessed by the Lord for giving to the *faifeau*. She stated, "I give the best and the most, even though I am left with nothing."[125]

Pepe said, "To me the problem is that the *faifeau* needs to know and recognize the needs and problems that exist within the church. He cannot just turn a blind eye, but must be able to respond to what is before him. If he just blessed them for their thoughtfulness, but returned their gift so that they could feed themselves and their families, I think it would serve those involved and the church better. It shows that the *faifeau* cares."[126]

Jennings said, "The uneven exchange is a problem. I hear my parents arguing all the time about how much money they are going to give to the *faifeau*. Remember, we have to wake up and go to work 5 to 6 days a week for 8 to 10 hour shifts, just to take care of ourselves. Then on top of that take care of family responsibilities then try to share it with the *faifeau* for his *alofa* and all the other gifting events."[127]

The above responses illustrate the spectrum in understanding in the interpretation and application of *fa'aaloaloga* at the Vai o le Ola parish; from an older person's perspective to a younger person's perspective. The older person sees the gifting as spiritual blessings,

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[124] Tulifau, Phone Interview.
[125] Misa'alefua, Phone Interview.
[126] Pepe, Phone Interview.
[127] Jennings, Phone Interview.

while the younger person sees it as a burden. However, Misa'alefua an elder mother at the church said *fa'aaloaloga* does cause a problem, but justifies the social disparity for the spiritual reward that she has received throughout her life.[128] What this mean is that there is an unbalanced exchange of material goods. However, it is compensated by others, especially the older members of the church, for the spiritual rewards that come out of such gifting. The point highlighted is that there is a social disparity between the giver and the recipient and vice versa when it comes to material goods. This social disparity is the issue with the *fa'aaloaloga* that is being referred to within this thesis.

When one benefit from the exchange materially while the others strain, there is a problem in the practice. Whether it is the giver or receive that is at fault, the end result, someone loses out on the benefits physically which than affects them spiritually. What is meant by this is, when the stomach is empty, no amount of spiritual nourishment will do away with the growling and hunger pangs consuming the individual. Thus, the spiritual life becomes affected. When the spirit is affected, then it affects the promotion and evangelization of the Gospel that is supposed to nourish the body, mind and soul. Yet how can the Gospel provide a holistic remedy when the individual is hungry or has a social need that is not being addressed?

This is the departure point into Mt. 14:13-21, in which an SRC interpretation offers an alternative paradigm. A paradigm which equates spiritual needs with social needs by providing a holistic approach to ministry, addressing the mind, body, and spirit. Since the ministers are the lynch pins of missionary enterprise, it is important to understand the

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[128] Misa'alefua, Phone Interview.

contemporary perception and application of this cultural practice at the Vai o le Ola parish and its implications for the CCCS in America, as well as for the CCCS in general.

Chapter 3 will provide the SRC interpretation to guide the holistic paradigm being proposed to assist in the contemporary application of *fa'aaloaloga*. This interpretation will illustrate how Matthew presents Jesus as the agent of change by which to change the disciples and the crowd, so that they too can be agents of change for the world.

CHAPTER 3: SRC INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 14: 13-21

This chapter will merge SRC's 'inter-texture' and 'social and cultural texture' (see Appendix B) to inform *fa'aaloaloga*, as the impetus of change. A change that will foster a holistic approach to mission as a paradigm for the Vai o le Ola parish with implications for the CCCS in America and abroad.

3.1 Inter-Texture Analysis

The focus on 'oral-scribal inter-texture' is to highlight the 'significant theological parallels' that exists between biblical texts: Matthew and Mark; Matthew and Kings; and Matthew and Exodus to interpret Matthew's feeding miracle. This textual analysis illustrates that layers exist in which the 'feeding miracle' 'recites', 'recontextualizes' and 'reconfigures' the feeding stories from the Old Testament, especially the story of Elisha's feeding miracle (2Kgs. 4:42-44) with similar parallels found in the stories of Moses and the people of Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16) and Elijah's feeding miracle (1Kgs. 17:8-16).[129] Furthermore, inter-texture analysis also reveals that Jesus enacts a traditional Jewish practice and belief that God's will is that 'all hungry people be fed' (Psalms 22:26; Job 22:5-11; Isaac 58:6-7; Ezekiel 18:5-9 & 34:2-3; Sirach 34:25-27; and Mt. 5:6, 6:11, 12:1-8).[130] Inter-texture shows that a much greater purpose lies behind Matthew's alteration of his version of the 'feeding miracle' from the other Gospel writers.

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[129] R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 559; Ched Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 206-207; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 221-222; Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, BTCB (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 139.

[130] Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 305.

3.1.1 Recitation

Mk (6:30-31): He said to them come away
Mt (14:13): heard then withdrew

Mk (6:33): many saw and hurried
Mt (14:13): crowds heard and followed

Mk (6:34): **had compassion**…for they were like sheep without a shepherd…began to teach
Mt (14:14): **had compassion**…cured their sick

Mk (6:35): grew late and **this is a deserted place**
Mt (14:15): evening and **this is a deserted place**

Mk (6:37): "**You give them something to eat**"
Mt (14:16): "They need not go away; **you give them something to eat**"

Mk (6:38): **five** and **two fish**
Mt (14:17): **five** loaves and the **two fish**

Mk (6:39): **Then he ordered them** [disciples] **to sit** them in groups
Mt (14:19): **Then he ordered them** [crowd] **to sit** down

Mk (6:41): **looked up to heaven..blessed and broke the loaves..gave them to his disciples**
Mt (14:19): **looked up to heaven..blessed and broke the loaves..gave them to the disciples**

Mk (6:43): and **they took up twelve baskets full** of **broken pieces** and of fish
Mt (14:20): and **they took up** what was left over of the **broken pieces, twelve baskets full**

Mk (6:44): those who had eaten the loaves numbered **five thousand men**
Mt (14:21): those who ate were about **five thousand men**, besides women and children

Bold-represents the similarities found in the passage.
[ ]-refers to who Jesus was speaking too

Firstly, Matthew recites almost word for word some of Mark's thoughts as seen with the words in bold above. Examples include: 'compassion'; 'deserted place'; 'you give them something to eat'; 'then he ordered them'; 'looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the

loaves'; 'they took up twelve baskets full'; and 'five thousand men'. This word for word recitation of the account confirms and reaffirms that these were poignant statements attributed to Jesus. Even though some of these statements, as I will show below, can be traced back to earlier biblical prophets such as Elisha, by the New Testament time; however, Jesus becomes the author of these words and therefore they have been Christianized.[131]

Secondly, as mentioned above, both Mark's, and Matthew's Jesus recite Elisha as found in 2Kgs. 4: 42-44:

> A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left'." He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord. (NRSV)

However, in referencing Elisha it is understood that Mark, whom Matthew recited from, formulated his feeding story 'with several images from the Hebrew scriptures…the Exodus account of Yahweh's sustenance of Israel in the wilderness'[132] as well as the 'feeding miracle of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1Kgs. 17:11-13'.[133] Therefore, it is the Elisha story that Mark recites, which Matthew has also recited. In the feeding miracle conducted by Elisha, 100 men were fed from "twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain" (2Kgs. 4:42). Recitation occurs when Mark and Matthew uses Elisha's command 'give it to the people and let them eat' (2Kgs. 4:42, 43). Both Mark and Matthew presents Jesus saying, "you give them something to eat" (Mt. 14:16). As well as

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[131] The term Christianized, although anachronistic refers to how the eschatological believers of Jesus, the Christians, will or have read and interpreted these words as originating from Christ and not from its original Jewish source, Elisha.

[132] Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 206.

[133] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 221.

in Elisha's statement, 'they shall eat and have some left' (2Kgs. 4:43) that was recited by Matthew as 'all ate…what was left over…twelve baskets full' (Mt. 14:20). Again the usefulness of the sub-mode 'recitation' lies in its ability to take Old Testament passages attributed to well-respected Jewish prophets/authoritative figures and attribute it to Jesus for the New Testament community, as one of his memorable sayings. These memorable sayings become the point of comparison by which Jesus is shown to be greater in status and authority than his predecessor Elisha. The same notion can be seen in other Old Testament texts in which feeding miracles were conducted: Moses (Ex16) and Elijah (1Kgs 17:8-16) feeding miracles (Moses, Elijah, and Elisha).[134]

The use of 'recitation' connects a New Testament text to past similar events. What this means for the reader is that prior presuppositions attached to the similar events of the past are re-called. Those presuppositions are then confirmed, transformed, or renewed by the new experience and/or event being enacted by Jesus and the characters within the text. It is here that recitations are recontextualized, "when words from other written and oral texts are used in a special context, as in the speech of Jesus."[135]

3.1.2 Recontextualization

Recontextualization reveals the author's purpose in using oral and/or written text in such a specialized manner. Recontextualization can first be understood in the comparison of Mark and Matthew. Although the narrative depicted is the feeding miracle that is found in all four Gospels, its presentation within each Gospel varies based on the author's purpose.

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[134] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 221.
[135] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 134.

Firstly, Matthew recontextualizes Mark's feeding story by having his version of the feeding story following Herod Antipas's banquet in which Jesus hears that John the Baptist is dead.[136] Here the points of comparison between the two banquets are set to illustrate the much greater banquet that Jesus presides over. What is meant by this is that Herod Antipas' banquet is filled with the elite of society, immorality, deceit, and death, whereas Jesus' feeding is filled with the crowd, compassion with the healing of the sick, an overabundance of food, and anticipates God's ultimate future life for those who embrace it.

Secondly, Matthew focuses on healing and not teaching which Mark attaches to the feeding miracle. The healing is based on compassion. The Greek term used by both Mark and Matthew is *ἐσπλαγχνίσθη*, meaning, "his inner parts [entrails and bowels] are moved" [137] or "have one's 'guts' torn out."[138] What this means is that Jesus was so moved 'inwardly' by the crowd that he acted and "cured their sick." (Mt 14:14) This can be further understood in comparison to Herod's banquet. "Jesus provides food for those without food solely because they are hungry. Herod provides food for those who are not without food as a demonstration of his power."[139] Jesus feeds because of compassion. It is a demonstration of a way of life that contrasts the greed and envy of self-glorification that is explicit in Herod Antipas' banquet.

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[136] The literary context of Mark is different from Matthew. Mark's 'feeding of the 5000' begins with the return of the disciples from their mission as they were explaining to Jesus what happened.

[137] Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Kurg, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 326; W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985), 116; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 561.

[138] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 206.

[139] Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 139.

Thirdly the use of the wilderness as the setting of the feeding by Jesus is in stark contrast to the banquet hall of the king's palace for Herod Antipas' feast. According to Old Testament traditions and writings, it was in the wilderness that the people of Israel found God.[140] Likewise, it is also in the wilderness that the crowd which followed Jesus found him and many were healed. This can be further elaborated to represent hope, reassurance and redemption that can be found in Jesus during the lowest, dreariest and darkest times of one's life. Furthermore, the use of the wilderness recalls how God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness (Ex.16), Elijah's feeding miracle with the widow of Zarephath (1Kgs. 17:11-13) and the feeding of 100 men by Elisha (2Kgs. 4:42-44). By emphasizing wilderness, again the comparison of Jesus to Moses is rekindled and recontextualized to emphasize "Jesus' authority over nature as well as over human conditions."[141]

Lastly is the use of the Last Supper language by Matthew. The phrases, "looked up to heaven...blessed and broke the loaves...gave them to his disciples", Matthew recited from Mark are familiar terms of the Lord's supper passage. It depicts a recontextualization of traditional Jewish practices. According to Daniel Harrington, "Jesus performs the role of the father at a typical Jewish meal. The blessing a traditional Jewish blessing (see footnote 142) before meals."[142] However, according to Rudolf Schnackenburg, the failure of Matthew to mention the distribution of fish opens up a real discussion of the recontextualization of the feeding miracle as a foreshadowing of the Last Supper.[143] In addition, the precise placement of the 'eucharistic formula' in the narrative of Matthew

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[140] D. C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 165-169; B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son*, (Lund: Gleerup, 1966), 42-43.

[141] France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 560.

[142] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 219-220. The traditional Jewish blessing is as follows: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."

[143] Rudolf Schnackenberg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.

and the exact sequence of verbs used by all four Gospel writers according to France is not 'accidental', but "reflects the wording of the eucharistic formula with which their readers were by now familiar."[144] In other words, Matthew has recontextualized the 'feeding miracle' as presented by Mark and his other sources, as well as other oral and written inter-texts to point forward to the Eucharist. The Eucharist in turn points forward to the messianic banquet where God institutes His kingdom and reign, as the reconfiguration of those other Biblical texts.

3.1.3 Reconfiguration

According to Robbins, "the end result of recontextualization is reconfiguration of the thought and action the words evoked in other context."[145] In other words, the end result of recontextualization is what new meanings are developed by the author in the new context the oral and written texts are being transformed into. According to Donald Hagner, the primary purpose of Matthew in the inclusion of the feeding miracle is to depict the 'messianic provision' as a present fulfillment and foreshadows what is to come.[146] What this means is that the 'messianic banquet' is here through the works of Jesus Christ as seen in the 'feeding of the 5000', with its ultimate fulfillment to come in the return of Jesus through the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

This represents the reconfiguration of the 'feeding miracle' which Harrington also concurs with by stating, "the central theme of Matthew 14:13-21 is the banquet over which Jesus presides."[147] France also reiterates this same idea, "The feeding of the crowd

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[144] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 558.
[145] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 134.
[146] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* WBC vol 33B (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1995), 419.
[147] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 222.

is therefore presented as a 'foretaste' of the central act of worship of the emergent Christian community, even though the menu was not quite the same. And since the Last Supper was itself a foretaste of the messianic banquet (Mt. 26:29), that dimension too, can legitimately be discerned in this story."[148]

The reconfiguration by Matthew of Mark's 'feeding of the 5000' point towards the 'messianic banquet' as the a feast of overabundance, where all who are invited are provided for spiritually and physically. It illustrates a community coming together to share of themselves and their spirit so that all invited can find the same joy, peace, and love that embodies the fellowship and ultimately the world.

Based on the SRC inter-texture of Mt. 14:13-21, the following interpretations have been deduced:

1) The recitation from biblical text (Old Testament) Christianizes the ideas borrowed and attributes them as poignant and memorable sayings of Jesus.
    a) Jesus is seen to be greater than the prominent Jewish leaders and prophets like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.
2) The feeding miracle foreshadows the 'messianic banquet' whereby God's will is fulfilled in the provisions for the hungry.
    a) Through Jesus' actions, God acts to sustain creation until the establishment of his new creation whereby there is an abundance of food for all.

The above interpretations illustrate that the 'feeding of the 5000' by Matthew exhibits an extensive inter-textual relationship to the Old Testament especially in one's relationship

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[148] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 558-559.

to God through his agents and how the agents in turn provided for a need. This inter-textual relationship will be further analyzed in the Social and Cultural texture that will look at the responses of the characters in the text to the world and how that is reflected to the reader and the audience.

3.2 Social and Cultural Texture Analysis

The 'social and cultural texture' (see Appendix B) opens up the interpretation process by promoting the understanding that the divine influence of Jesus can change hearts, minds, and souls. This change would then allow for salvation to exist in the world that is no longer corrupt, but filled with "compassion, sufficiency and shared resources."[149]

3.2.1 Social Response to the World

In this paper, the 'social response to the world' looks at the three types of social responses: thaumaturgical, revolutionist, and conversionist. According to Robbins, it is common within religious discourse to inter-relate two or three kinds of social responses to one another.[150] The 'thaumaturgical response' found in the 'feeding miracle' is the curing of the sick and the feeding of the large crowd including the disciples with such little provisions so late in the evening. The presupposition here is that the crowd including the disciples must be opened to the supernatural influences that go against scientific reality that God through Jesus will be able to bring about a miracle.

The 'revolutionist response' which influences the 'thaumaturgical response' is reflected in the Matthean text when the crowd 'heard' and 'followed'. They heard that Jesus the

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[149] Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 305.
[150] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 138.

miracle worker was making his way by boat across the river and they (crowd) followed on foot so that Jesus could institute change in their present physical/spiritual/mental situations as well as later on in their social situation (poverty).

Likewise the revolutionist response is also informed by the conversionist response. If the source of the corruption is eliminated (people's evil ways) then the world can be changed, whereby allowing for salvation to find its place in the world. The conversionist response is found in Matthew's presentation of Jesus' 'feeding of the 5000' as well as throughout the Gospel in Jesus' healing and teaching narratives. What I mean is that the spiritual feeding found in Jesus' initial interactions with the crowd by way of curing the sick is reinforced later by a physical feeding. Although the narrative does not extrinsically mention the people's response, it is inferred in their acts of hearing and following. They travelled a long distance by foot to be with Jesus. It is that same response that kept them in the wilderness with Jesus until the evening, with no food and lodging. Their reception of Jesus' spiritual feeding and ultimately his miraculous physical feeding has instituted a change in the people, which should lead to a change in their world.

It should also be noted that these same responses characterize the disciples as well because they are as much part of the narrative as the crowd. However, the point of interest in the disciples' portrayal by Matthew is that the disciples are depicted in a more positive and obedient light.[151] The depiction of the disciples in Matthew illustrates that the disciples are future agents of God's work because of their obedience to Jesus. If the disciples are agents through obedience, then the crowd too can become agents of

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[151] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 222.

obedience which will lead to change and so forth. Thus it allows change to alter the evil world by having more good than bad people.

3.2.2 Social Systems and Institutions

The next sub-mode of 'social and cultural texture' is how people participate in 'social systems and institutions'. The two social systems utilized in the interpretation of Mt. 14:13-21 are the 'challenge-response system' and the 'patron-client system' of the Mediterranean world. The two go hand in hand as the end result is the 'bestowal of honor' upon Jesus.

The 'challenge response system' in the 'feeding of the 5000' looks at the interaction between the disciples and Jesus when it was 'evening'. The initial challenge was instituted by the disciples who wanted to send the crowd away because it was a 'deserted place' and 'the hour is late'. In response Jesus states, "they need not go away, you give them something to eat" (Mt 14:16). The response by the disciples is that "we have nothing but five loaves and two fish" (Mt 14:17). Then Jesus responded to this by saying, "bring them here to me."(Mt 14:18) Here, Jesus takes over as the host or patron of the meal. I concur with Carter that, "Jesus, aided by God's power and the disciples does God's will of feeding the hungry."[152] The disciples' obedience and observance of the 'feeding miracle' brought honor to Jesus for he was able to multiply the five loaves and two fish to feed well over 5000 people including women and children. In the

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[152] Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 307.

Mediterranean society, honor was one of the most highly prized gifts a client could give to a patron.[153]

In the same light, the 'patron-client system' also portrays honor that is given to Jesus for the services that he renders. In the feeding narrative, the 'patron-client system' explains why such a massive crowd followed Jesus out into the wilderness for healing and then ultimately for nourishment. It indicates that, in Jesus, they found hope, freedom, and redemption from their situations. The use of healing stories by Matthew in his narrative also illustrates that the people realized in Jesus an opportunity to be freed of their spiritual and physical impediments that have limited their social evolvement.[154] The crowd sought Jesus for assistance when they followed him to a wilderness. While there, Jesus provided services in curing all the sick. In return, the crowd honored Jesus by remaining with him in the wilderness. Their loyalty displayed their honor as they remained in the wilderness with nothing to eat, instead of departing after they were healed. In response to this new need, Jesus provides an additional service. He feeds the large crowd with enough food that there was an abundance left over. In response, as inferred by Jesus' quick dismissal of the disciples and dispersion of the crowd in (Mt 14:22), as well as the portrayal of the 'feeding of the 5000' narrative by other Gospel writers, the crowd showed honor to Jesus by wanting him to be their leader.[155]

Through these social systems and institutions, "Jesus enacted an alternative system that was marked by compassion, sufficiency and shared resources."[156] The institution of this

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[153] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 140.
[154] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 561.
[155] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 564.
[156] Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 305.

new system brought him honor and the call by the people to institute God's reign now by being their leader.

3.2.3 Cultural Alliances and Conflict

The last sub-mode of 'social and cultural texture' that is used to analyze the 'feeding of the 5000' is 'cultural alliances and conflict'. The focus of the 'feeding miracle' would align it with the 'counter-culture'[157] alliance. According to Robbins, "countercultures are 'alternative minicultures which make provisions for both sexes and a wide range of age groups, which are capable of influencing people over their entire life span."[158] The reason I point this out is to highlight the inclusion of 'women and children' by Matthew. According to some scholars, the gathering of five thousand men connotes a political revolution or movement.[159] However, Matthew attempts to soften or remove the connotation of a political movement by including women and children. By so doing, his inclusion promotes a heterogeneous society that is inclusive of all despite race, sex, or age. This new society would then promote an alternative way of living such as caring, sharing, and helping one another.

The distinctiveness of this counterculture alliance lies in the 'humanistic society' that is being promoted through the compassionate acts and deeds of Jesus, which were mimicked by the disciples and the crowd.[160] In addition, the inclusion of women and

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[157] Robbins, "Divine Dialogue," 142: Counterculture is interested in creating a better society, but not by legislative reform or by violent opposition to the dominant culture. Instead, to provide an alternative, and to hope that the dominant society will 'see the light' and adopt a more 'humanistic' way of life.

[158] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 169.

[159] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 564; David Fiensy, "Leaders of Mass Movements and the Leader of the Jesus Movement," *JSNT* 74, (1999), 3-27; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2000), 24.

[160] Hauerwas, *Matthew*, 139.

children highlights the inclusiveness of this society, a far cry from the patriarchical Mediterranean society of the 1st Century.

Based on the SRC 'social and cultural texture' of Mt. 14:13-21, the following interpretations have been deduced:

1. God is active in our world through Jesus Christ by providing spiritual and physical nourishments; eliminating corruption from the world; and transforming people so that they could share their lives and spirits with other
2. Jesus enacts an alternative system that was marked by compassion, sufficiency and shared resources
3. The promotion of an inclusive (women and children) more 'humanistic' society

3.3 Merging the SRC Textures

When 'inter-texture' and 'social and cultural texture' are brought together the following interpretation of the "feeding of the 5000" found in Mt. 14:13-21 is created:

- The 'feeding miracle' foreshadows the 'messianic banquet' that has and will be instituted by Jesus. It is an inclusive banquet of 'abundance', built on compassion, self-sufficiency, and sharing of life and spirit.
- The authority of Jesus supersedes all other prominent leaders in the Bible as the agent of change for humanity and the world, allowing for salvation to exist.

The merged SRC interpretation provides an inclusive and holistic approach to mission based on the deeds and acts of Jesus Christ as God's agent of change. This inclusive and holistic approach addresses the physical and spiritual nourishment of all people. In

response, the transformed individual's pay honor to Jesus by promoting this alternative cultural system to the world through the sharing of their resources and their spirit. Thereby eliminating evil and corruption and allowing salvation to exist in the world.

In other words, what the feeding of the five thousand illustrates is a mission paradigm that is built on compassion, self-sufficiency, and sharing of resources. Jesus enacts God's will by feeding those who are hungry (spiritually and physically). Through Jesus' deeds, God responds faithfully to sustain creation until the new creation is inaugurated with the 'messianic banquet' of abundance. It is this transformed living that becomes the basis of social interactions and social response to the world; allowing for love, peace and happiness by way of salvation to exist harmoniously in the world.

The transformative process found in the 'feeding of the 5000' of Mt. 14:13-21 needs to be infused into the Vai o le Ola CCCS church mission. This transformative process of compassion, self-sufficiency, and sharing of resources will change the church members and in turn they will turn around and change the world.

The next chapter will discuss how the merged SRC interpretation of Matthew's 'feeding of the 5000' will influence and guide the cultural practice of *fa'aaloaloga* practiced at Vai o le Ola parish. The SRC guided interpretation together with *fa'aaloaloga* provides a missionary paradigm designed to transform the Vai o le Ola parish with implications for the CCCS in America and abroad.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION

This final chapter brings together the SRC analysis of Matthew 14:13-21 and the contemporary Samoan issue of *fa'aaloaloga* in order to see the inter-connectedness of thoughts and ideas in bringing about ecclesiastical transformation in practice and belief for the Vai o le Ola CCCS. The issue at hand is the application and use of *fa'aaloaloga* within the church, especially in the interaction between the *faifeau* and the *tagata lotu* (church member).

4.1 The Issue

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the premise of *fa'aaloaloga* is a 'face to face' interaction that maintains good relationships and ensures happiness. This is one of the utmost values in Samoan social relationships. In this 'face to face' relationship, gifting is conducted as a means to promote good relationships and happiness. Thus the exchange of gifts should be a fair and mutually beneficial trade-off as a sign of respect between both parties. However, when the exchange becomes less favorable and one benefits more than the other, then the relationship encounters problems. When this problem continues to persist, the social impact with the unequal exchange of gifting on the church members or *faifeau* could be irreparable. The ultimate end of such dissatisfaction and lack of fulfillment within the church is the severing of connections and relationships with the church.

This is the issue witnessed at the Vai o le Ola parish between the church members and the pastor. I speak personally of this issue because it has been voiced more than once by many at my local parish, as well as a similar situation within other CCCS churches. The

issue straining the pastor and church member relationship in how *fa'aaloaloga* is practiced.

The reason this issue persists is because of the social disparity that exists between the giver and receiver. When the pastor receives the goods (food, cash, services) in return the church member receives spiritual blessings. For the church member there is no tangible or immediate benefit. It is not to say that people gift with the expectation that in return they will receive an equal or a mutually beneficial return in order to maintain the 'happiness' in their 'positive relationship. The question is: 1) Socially, do all parties benefit from this transaction? 2) If not, what can be done? 3) How will this solution benefit the Vai o le Ola parish and the CCCS?

These are the questions that I have wrestled with and have turned to the SRC interpretation of Matthew's 'feeding of the 5000' narrative in addressing *fa'aaloaloga* at the Vai o le Ola parish, in order to gain valuable insights for the future well being of the church.

4.2 Addressing the Issue(s)

Firstly, Jesus was 'inwardly stirred'/filled with compassion. There needs to be an affirmation that a problem exists, that there is a need not being met. In the same breath, we must be inwardly moved by the situation before us, recognizing that there is an issue/problem. Recognizing the problem with the crowd, Jesus moved to action to cure their sick. If there is a social disparity that exists in the *fa'aaloaloga* that is practiced between the *faifeau* and the church members, someone must move to change. This illustrates the recontextualization and reconfiguration used by Matthew to adopt his

'feeding of the 5000' to fit his theological aim. This is also witnessed in the social response of the SRC by which the people need to be the agents of the change to change the world. Therefore, as the leader of the church, the *faifeau* must recognize that there is a problem and intervene with compassion.

A possible solution is a case by case handling of *fa'aaloaloga*. If the *faifeau* realizes that the church just completed a major fundraising function, or that a family is undergoing financial problems, their *fa'aaloaloga* should be handled with sensitivity. Accept the gesture but return the gift due to the strain being encountered as a show of care and compassion for what they are going through. This will go a long way in changing a person, in which they in-turn will become a positive model of change for the church and the world.

Secondly, Jesus acted, by feeding them. Jesus did not wait for them to confess their problem or whether or not they had faith in him or were hungry, before he acted. His response was to help the people overcome their issues and problems. This is expressed in the 'revolutionist and conversionist' response to the world. In this response change of the world occurs because of the change instituted in people. As the *faifeau*, we are the servants or agents of change, who are to serve and not to be served. We are not higher or lower in the church hierarchy, but are all equal partners in the ministry of God. As the *faifeau*, the goal is to strive for spiritual change that leads to physical change by which all can attain salvation and promote it through their shared experiences and spirit. The *faifeau* as the spiritual leader of the church must act and not wait for the symptoms to develop into a sickness before reacting. As spiritual leaders, the *faifeau* must be proactive to the needs and the wants of the church as opposed to reactive to what is occurring.

A possible alternative to assist in this area is to be attentive to the needs of the church. The *faifeau* should be involved in all faucets of the life of its members. The *faifeau* must be proactive and engaged in the life of its members. Visitations of the members should not be limited to home visits, but also reflected in school visits and lunch visits with church members to show a proactive approach to ministry. By knowing the member's social environment (outside of the church), the *faifeau* is more aware of the other social issues that are then transferred into the church settings, affecting and impacting *fa'aaloaloga*.

Thirdly, Jesus broke down all social, cultural and religious barriers, structures or obstacles that stood in the way of him performing his duties. Jesus did not exclude himself from an interactive relationship with the crowd. He did not allow the disciples despair define their situation. He also did not exclude anyone from the feeding. According to Matthew, "those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Mt 14:21) As leaders of the church, the *faifeau* should not be defined or confined by contemporary interpretations of traditional cultural or religious practices. If they are broke, then the *faifeau* must be firm and courageous to fix it so that the church can thrive. This is viewed in the SRC 'social and cultural texture' sub-mode of 'counterculture'. This countercultural alliance is a cultural system whereby all are equal partners working together for the betterment of the community, breaking down social, cultural, and religious structures. This is not achieved through legislation or politics, but is achieved through the striving together of the whole community towards self-sufficiency and self-propagation through the actions of its member. This illustrates a holistic process of change.

A possible solution for the Vai o le Ola parish is to change how *fa'aaloaloga* is understood in its contemporary context. The people should be educated and informed so that they can turn around and make informed decisions. It is through knowing and understanding that a greater appreciation of *fa'aaloaloga* can be experienced. By being aware of an interpretation of *fa'aaloaloga* as the maintenance of a 'positive relationship' through the face to face interaction, the people will then appreciate the value and worth of their gift. This will then transform the cultural practice by making it more meaningful in its contemporary setting for the church member.

Fourthly, Jesus was bold and firm with his response in challenging the disciples' understanding and in organizing the crowd for the blessings to come. In the end Jesus was rewarded with the crowd's loyalty and honor. Just as we should not be afraid to take a stand and make a change where there is a need because in the long term all will benefit. This 'challenge-response' approach allowed for the people to grow in their response to Jesus. This is the same method that should be used in the contemporary church setting. The challenge is not to cause the church members to stumble, but to see how the church members would respond to the challenge.

Fa'aaloaloga has presented a challenge to the *faifeau* and the church members. The church members have responded with grumbling and grievances of the in-balanced exchange. In response to this challenge, the *faifeau* needs to take a look at how *fa'aaloaloga* has become a stumbling block to the church members. The *faifeau's* response to the people's challenge will be the difference in their being agents of change. In this case, a possible solution for the *faifeau* is to re-initiate the *fa'aaloaloga* whereby the church members are being gifted and showered with *fa'aaloaloga* through material

gifts and goods on the behalf of the *faifeau* and his family. In this light, the onus is now on the people to respond to this new interpretation. Also, it is a sign of respect on the behalf of the *faifeau* for his members and their prior gifting to him throughout the year.

Lastly, Jesus provided a holistic approach to the feeding. Jesus not only fed the crowd spiritually but physically as well. Jesus addressed the whole person. He not only cured their illnesses, he also provided for their physical well being through the feeding miracle. There was not only enough to feed 5000 women and children that were present, but there was also an overabundance that filled 12 baskets. By doing this, Jesus not only demonstrated his supernatural and divine gifts, but he also alluded to an eschatological feast whereby all who participate will not only have their needs fulfilled, but will have also much more left over. This is an incorporation of the thaumaturgical, revolutionist, and conversionist of 'social and cultural intertexture'. In this social response, there is not only an emphasis on a divine intervention, but the belief by the crowd that the divine intervention exists within them. What this means is that the openness of the people to the supernatural influences of Jesus allowed them to be the means of change whereby they instituted the feeding through the sharing of all their resources and their spirit. What this means for the issue of *fa'aaloaloga*, is that if the people can come to terms with the problem before them, through the influential works of the *faifeau*, this would allow for them to be the conduit of holistic change whereby, they institute the necessary changes to improve and make better the system.

For an example, if the problem of *fa'aaloaloga* exists in the unbalanced or social disparity in the material goods being gifted, the people need to be more aware of their social needs and gift according to their own means. What this mean is that the people

need to recognize their limitations in the act of *fa'aaloaloga*. The church membes need to gift within their means and gift with a clean and open heart to the 'face to face relationship' being stressed by *fa'aaloaloga*. Once this happens, then the people themselves become that agent of change for the church and ultimately for their world.

In the SRC Interpretation of Mt. 14:13-21, Jesus was the conduit by which God's sovereignty and authority was revealed to the crowd through the 'feeding of the 5000'. Likewise in the Samoan cultural context of *fa'aaloaloga*, the *faifeau* and the church members are the new agents of change. They represent the new paradigm instituted by Jesus at the feeding by which all are brought into a rightful relationship with God. This relationship establishes within a world the route by which salvation can come to exist and passage into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is in the Kingdom of Heaven where we find the 'messianic banquet' of overabundance foreshadowed in Matthew's presentation of the 'feeding of the 5000'.

4.3 Application

What Matthew unveils with his 'feeding of the 5000' narrative is a missionary paradigm to be implemented not only in the Vai o le Ola parish but for other CCCS churches as well. In relations to *fa'aaloaloga*, the *faifeau* is the key to the restoration, revitalization, and transformation of church members. In tow, the church members are also vital components of that change, for they too are agents of change through their response to *fa'aaloaloga*. Together, the *faifeau* and the church members must recognize the contemporary problems that exist in the practice of *fa'aaloaloga* at the Vai o le Ola

parish; then act, be bold, unafraid, and provide a holistic approach by which to bring about change in mind, body, and soul of all involved.

In *fa'aaloaloga*, all involved have their parts to play. The sharing and providing of resources are an illustration of God's love that changes people so that they too could be agents of change. It is one thing to give, but giving must be done from a clean and honest heart. The purpose behind giving is to assist those, so they too could be agents of giving as a way to promote God's love. This mutually beneficial 'positive relationship' must exist if *fa'aaloaloga* is to be meaningful and relevant in the Vai o le Ola CCCS church and elsewhere.

In the practice of *fa'aaloaloga*, if there is a disparity which exists in the exchange, the *faifeau* must respond and address the problem. To the church members, this illustrates the concern and interest on the part of the *faifeau* as inwardly stirred to action. If being proactive means to change the practice of *fa'aaloaloga* so that both sides benefit, this is what needs to be done. The *faifeau* like Jesus in the 'feeding of the 5000' found in Matthew, has to take charge as the host of the feeding and ensure that the needs of all members are addressed.

The *faifeau* must be bold to take the road less travelled and step out of his comfort zone and fix those things that are broken in order to promote the greatest good. Therefore, addressing *fa'aaloaloga*/'gifting' by ensuring that both sides benefit would bring about a change that: 1) Enables people to participate in the creation of new life and new opportunities for growth and renewal; 2) Affirm positive relationships and break down the barriers that separate us; 3) Enables the people to experience compassion that is then

passed forward as a fulfillment of hope for others; 4) Allows us to share our resources and our spirits in helping others; and 5) Empowers the people to become agents of change in order to change the world through God's transformative love

These values are important and illustrate the extent to what this missionary paradigm can do in transforming *fa'aaloaloga* that is practiced at the Vai Ole Ola CCCS church. Furthermore, it offers a pragmatic and useful resource in looking at other social issues affecting the church. I believe that this issue with *fa'aaloaloga* is not only isolated to the Vai Ole Ola parish. There are other CCCS churches in America and abroad that experience their own social issues regarding traditional cultural practices and their contemporary applications. What this SRC/*fa'aaloaloga* merged approach illustrates is that culture is an open system that must be opened to change. The presuppositions we have about traditional cultural practices must be open to reinterpretation and reapplication in order for it to be relevant and useful throughout the ages.

Those presuppositions about *fa'aaloaloga* must be in dialogue with the presuppositions discovered from the 'feeding of 5000' as presented by Matthew. This conversation must then yield a richer and greater interpretation for the reader. As the reader, I believe this merged interpretation illustrates that traditional cultural practices must be open to change, if its application does not benefit all involved. It is not to say the practice is broken, but the interpretation of the practice must undergo changes in order for it to find relevance today.

This is the implication for other CCCS churches in America and abroad. The merging of cultural and religious practice must benefit all involved. What this means is that the

church and culture must be able to instill God's love, joy, and happiness in all who participate. If it doesn't, there must not be any fear or hesitation to change it so that all benefit. A change so that all may be able to share of themselves and their spirit in order to bring about social change that is reflected in community, society, and eventually the world.

CONCLUSION:

This thesis has wrestled with *fa'aaloaloga* and its effect on the Vai o le Ola CCCS mission endeavors. Through the SRC interpretive lens, Jesus illustrated in the 'feeding of the 5000' story presented by Matthew how people are potential agents of change. No miraculous or supernatural interventions were needed to bring about a change to the disciples and the crowd. All that was needed was a spiritual awareness of the divine influences brought about during their interactions with Jesus. In turn that spiritual transformation changed the disciples and the crowed, whereby they became the conduits of change through the sharing of their resources and their spirit.

The empowering of the disciples and the crowds to be vehicles of change illustrates the communal effort behind this missionary paradigm. This communal effort is only possible when the foundation is the life and works of Jesus. Jesus' influence on the crowd and disciples led to the overabundance in food that provided for well over 5000 people including the women and children. It is this great miraculous feat that is the hope of all who come together in Jesus' name and fellowship with one another.

This is the same interpretive understanding of Mt. 14:13-21 that must be contextualized at the Vai o le Ola parish regarding *fa'aaloaloga*. The *faifeau* is the initial agent of change for the church members. He must be the conduit by which the spiritual and physical nourishment of the church members are addressed. The *faifeau* needs to communicate the teachings of Christ to the church members so that they are made aware of the possibilities of change that exists within them. So that eventually, they too can be potential agents of change. In the long run, the church members and the faifeau will

provide that transformative and influential change to their world, whereby salvation can exist in the world.

The SRC interpretation and *fa'aaloaloga* reveals that the eschatological people of God do not need for God to come down and display his awesome power and authority to right the wrong and change the world so that salvation may exist. Instead the merged interpretations illustrate that the agents of change are the believers (*faifeau* and church members). We, as the crowd and the disciples, are God's agents to promote his love, joy, and happiness in the world. Since *fa'aaloaloga* is about positive relationships through the promotion of respect, love, and happiness; so must we continue to promote such practices and beliefs in our 'face to face' encounters with others. This view of life would lead to a change in the world, in order to make the world a better place. Thus it allows salvation to exist and the 'messianic banquet' to take place so that no one is ever in need.

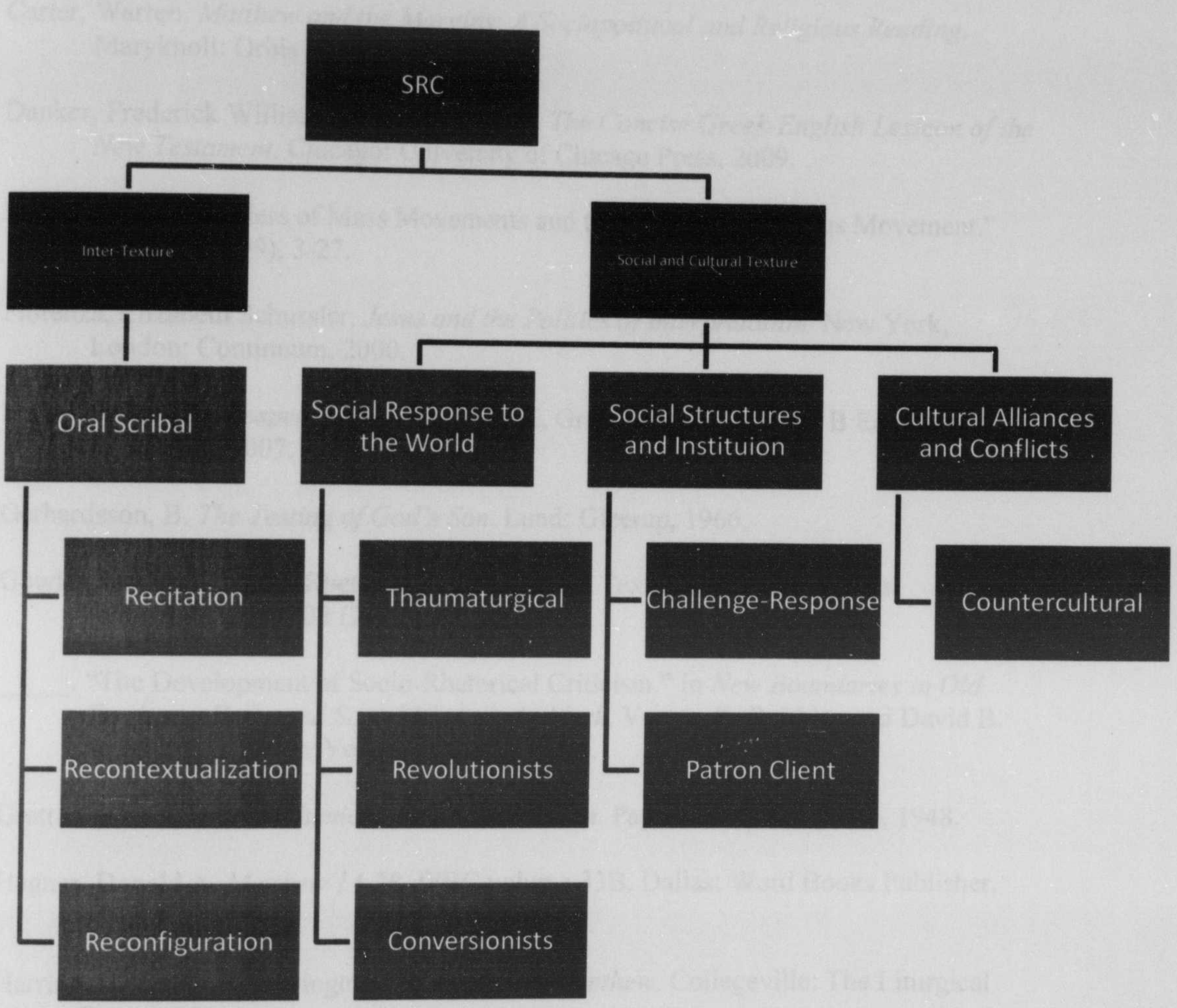
My hope in the writing process is to contribute in the maintenance and promotion of the Vai o le Ola CCCS church with implications for the greater CCCS as it moves well into the 21st Century. I truly understand and concur with the thought that time has changed and that we need to change with it. However, change does not mean that we alter our identity, traditions and practices that have been the backbone of our institutions. Instead, it means that our ways have to be open to the inspirations and revelations of God. Our social structures should not be so rigid and fixed, but open to new ideas, new changes, and new ways. In order to inspire those to continue in their relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ. We should take to heart the Samoan adage, "*E sui faiga, ae tumau le faavae*", which means, "the methods and processes may be different, but the foundation remains the same." This speaks to the issue at hand and puts into perspective the fact that

nothing stays the same forever and that change is inevitable, as long as the foundation remains the same. That foundation is and should always be God, whom we know in Jesus, the one who fed the people, the people in need.

APPENDIX A: Flowchart of SRC Textures



APPENDIX B: Proposed SRC Methodology



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