

**The Feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14:13-21): A New Missionary Paradigm for the  
Congregational Christian Church Samoa**

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## Abstract

*Faaaloaloga* or “gifting” as a Samoan traditional practice has always been a fair and equitable exchange of goods from one party to the other as a show of kindness and respect. However, in its contemporary application, the exchange of goods has been far from equitable. More specifically, in its religious context, “God’s Blessings” have become the equitable partner in the bartering of material goods between the pastor and his congregation. The focus of this study is to illustrate how the ‘Feeding of the 5000’ story found in Matthew 14:13-21, is a new mission paradigm for the present Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) in moving forward. Using social rhetorical criticism with the cultural concept of gifting, the feeding of the 5000 story is then analyzed to show how this new mission paradigm is a holistic approach that addresses the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the people. This transformative process then acts as the new paradigm upon which the CCCS missionary enterprise for Samoa and the world needs to be built. Although this study looks at a specific issue within the Samoan custom, this is not to say that this issue represents the general perception of *faaaloaloga*, however, based on my limited experiences and encounters with this cultural practice, what I bring before you is the encounters of this individual and the means by which to further consolidate and make more relevant the CCCS if this too is an experience shared by other faithful members of the present CCCS church in Samoa and abroad. Someone once said that ‘history does not move by the masses of the majority, but by the might of the minority’. To some of the gatekeepers of the Samoan culture this may all be fallacy and conjecture because ‘*faaSamoa*’ in its purity is meant to protect and promote Christianity, however, any encounter that involves the ‘err of humanity’ must also be open to the impure influences wrought on by it that stains and soils culture. In conclusion, this thesis is a new tool in moving forward by which to address CCCS concerns.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Faaaloaloga* is a term in the Samoan language that speaks to the act of respect shown to an individual or group through a process known as “gifting”. It does not necessarily entail that the individual initiating the act receives something in return, however, it is a formal illustration of the importance of ‘others’ in the Samoan culture. The term is derived from the word *faaaloalo*, which means respect. Respect is an important aspect of the Samoan culture, because it speaks to the core of the *faaSamoa* or the Samoan way of life. It is a life that prides itself on the respect of self, others, and one’s surroundings. The term *faaaloaloga* will be used synonymously with its English equivalent “gifting”. Thus the idea of *faaaloaloga* or gifting is the equal exchange of goods between two individuals, parties, or groups. It was noted during John Williams’ voyage to the Navigator Islands (present day Samoa), the exchange of goods by the natives as a sign of care and compassion to fellow visitors, which he then continued in his missionary journeys throughout the Pacific.

The significance of this Samoan practice is that it is a sign of respect, love, compassion, and care shown by Samoans to others, whether natives or foreigners. It entailed an equal and equitable exchange of goods, meaning each side benefitted mutually from this process. However, the issue that I find with the contemporary practice of this Samoan tradition is that it has become more or less one sided, moving away from mutualism to parasitism, especially in the religious setting. For example, if a parishioner were to gift money and goods to the *faiifeau* or pastor, in general the pastor would acknowledge the physical gift with an equal exchange of spiritual blessings filled with flattery and conflated jargon for the kind act shown. From a social perspective, at the end of the day who benefits from this exchange?

In looking at the social setting of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) or *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) in general, the answer to the aforementioned question is obvious. The *faiifeau* lives in a nice house, has nice food, dresses nicely, and drives a nice car. Once we move away from the *faiifeau*, then we start to notice that the parishioners are not as nicely-housed, -fed, or -dressed. It is this disparity that I believe needs addressing if the EFKS church wishes to continue its missionary endeavors of being a vital conduit of spiritual transformation. However, I must make it clear at the outset that this perception is not in any way a generalization of beliefs that is held by all or the majority of Samoans. This understanding of the contemporary application of *faaaloaloga* is based on my own perceptions of what I've seen and experienced growing up within the EFKS church. Furthermore, it is not to say that this practice is only limited to the EFKS as a denomination. I believe that this is an inter-denominational issue, especially in light of the diminishing numbers of parishioners attending the mainline churches (Congregational, Methodist, and Catholic) versus the rapidly expanding Church of Latter Day Saints, the Pentecostal (AOG, Baptist, etc) and the surprising addition of a 'No Religion' category in Samoa.<sup>1</sup>

I plan to use Vernon K. Robbins' Socio-Rhetorical criticism (SRC) to examine Matthew 14:13-21 to illustrate the new missionary paradigm of Jesus that offers a holistic approach to spiritual transformation and revitalization. SRC extracts the meaning of the text by examining values, convictions and beliefs in the world of the text.<sup>2</sup> By so doing, this will illustrate how those values, convictions and beliefs shape meaning that are then compared and contrasted with the

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<sup>1</sup> Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change*, (Suva: PCC, 1994), 167-169

<sup>2</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1

world we live in, in order to make meaning relevant to us.<sup>3</sup> SRC is a mergence of 4 horizons, the *inner-texture*, *inter-texture*, *social and cultural texture* and *ideological texture*.

Inner-texture looks at what is inside the selected text and the world of the text in extracting meaning. Inter-texture compares the text in question with other text in deriving meaning based on similar cultural, political, and economical situations. These first two horizons utilize traditional historical critical methods such as source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and literary criticism in interpreting the world of the text.

The other two horizons, the social/cultural texture and the ideological texture, look at the world of the text and from there extracts meaning based on the readers background and the lens through which he/she views or interprets the text. Ideological texture deals with how the world of the text and the world of the reader are then merged to extract a new theological, social, political, or economical understanding of the said biblical text, or an ideology extracted based on the merging of the three previous horizons in order to derive a new understanding or the prevailing thought of the reader after reading the text.

It is obvious that no one exegetical tool will be exhausted completely, therefore in analyzing Matthew 14: 13-21, I will merge together the inter-texture and social and cultural texture to create a lens by which to view the feeding of the five thousand. By combining the historical methods of exegesis with the social and cultural backgrounds of the author in writing putting together the text, this will open up new interpretations that will allow the reader to fully understand his/her social situation.

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<sup>3</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 26



What this exegetical process will then yield is a lens by which to then make the text more meaningful for us the reader. This SRC analysis will then allow me to tackle the issues plaguing our contemporary EFKS churches. Using socio-rhetorical criticism with the cultural concept of *faaaloaloga*, the feeding of the 5000 story is then analyzed to show how this new mission paradigm or holistic approach addresses the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the people. This transformative process then acts as the new cornerstone upon which the EFKS mission for Samoa and the world is built.

**Chapter One** of this paper will further define and explain socio-rhetorical criticism as a valid exegetical tool for extracting meaningful conclusions from the text for the reader. This is an important methodological process by which a hermeneutical lens is forged to evaluate the significance of a sacred text for the modern day reader. Chapter One will yield the lens by which to understand the sacred biblical text within the contemporary cultural context. **Chapter Two** explains the cultural practice of *faaaloaloga* or gifting in the context of the church, attempting to trace its historical origins and foundations and its development in time to the point in which it has come to be accepted readily as the standard practice of *faiifeaus* (pastor) and their parishioners. **Chapter Three** is the exegetical application of the SRCs inter-texture and social and cultural textures on Matthew 14: 13-21, to see how the socio-rhetorical reading assists in understanding the biblical text from which to extract a contemporary application of *faaaloaloga* in the EFKS. 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) plaguing our EFKS church as it transitions itself to once again be the beacon of missionary success well into the future.

## CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY-SOCIAL RHETORICAL CRITICISM (SRC)

The option of socio-rhetorical criticism as a methodology for biblical criticism of my selected passage and its cultural counterpart was inspired by the works of Vaitusi Nofoaiga<sup>4</sup> and Vernon K. Robbins, the latter whom first introduced the term “socio-rhetorical” into New Testament studies in 1984.<sup>5</sup> The importance of this is that socio-rhetorical criticism (SRC) allows for dialogue between scholars and the various approaches and discipline, but also regarding reception history.<sup>6</sup> In other words, it offers a multi-disciplinarian interpretation analysis by which we have a deeper and fuller understand of text and its reception in history.<sup>7</sup> As I contemplated this aspect of SRC, I’ve come to understand that interpretation is not merely the interpretation of the text based on traditional critical-historical methods, but how these traditional methods allow for dialogue between the reader and text in order to gain a greater and wider understanding of the text for that reader based on his/her values, beliefs, and convictions, i.e. cultural context. Therefore, SRC is an approach to literature that focuses on values, convictions, and beliefs both in the texts we read and in the world in which we live. The approach invites detailed attention to the text itself. In addition, it moves interactively into the world of the people who wrote the texts and into our present world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Biblical Studies Lecturer of the New Testament at Malua Theological College in 2010 and is currently pursuing his PhD at Auckland University

<sup>5</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1

<sup>6</sup> David B. Gowler, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and its Reception”, *JSNT* 33:191, (2010), 192

<sup>7</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry of...*, 11-13

<sup>8</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 1-2

## 1.1 *The Meaning of Socio Rhetorical*

The hyphenated prefix socio- refers to the wealth of knowledge gained from the fields of anthropology and sociology that the socio rhetorical critic brings to the interpretation of a text. Social-scientific approaches-which study social class, social systems, personal and community status, people on the margins, and people in positions of power-have become more and more common and important during the last half of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Socio-rhetorical interpretation allows for the utilization of such resources in the intricate and detailed exegesis of biblical texts.

The term rhetorical refers to the way language in a text is a means of communication among people.<sup>10</sup> Rhetorical analysis and interpretation give special attention to the subjects and topics a text uses to present thought, speech, stories, and arguments. In everyday life, language is used as a mode of communication in establishing social networks and interaction, i.e., it is used to create friendships, to make enemies, negotiate with family and friends, pursuit of selfish desires, or even to create a sense of security in our surroundings of things to be achieved in this life and the next. Therefore socio-rhetorical criticism is the merging of the way a community uses language with the way that community lives in the world.<sup>11</sup>

This idea of language and its use by a community led to other important concepts and ideas that were later delineated by Robbins as he moved to further develop SRC as a viable tool of exegesis.<sup>12</sup> In the 1990s the focus of SRC for Robbins was on the discovery, analysis and

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<sup>9</sup> David B. Gowler, 'The Development of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism', in Vernon K. Robbins with David B. Gowler (ed.), *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Form and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 1-35

<sup>10</sup> Gowler, "The Development...", 1-35

<sup>11</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 2

<sup>12</sup> Gowler, "Social Rhetorical Interpretation...", 195

interpretation of the ‘textures of texts, meaning that the nature of the text was like that of a rich work of tapestry.<sup>13</sup> When it is viewed from different angles one discovers that it has different textures (configurations, patterns of image, and interwoven strands). In a similar fashion Robbins realized that the same idea held true for biblical text, when viewed from different angles, there are multiple textures of meanings, convictions, values, emotions and actions. Thus the final form of SRC was the development of these five textures by which biblical texts would be interpreted and analyzed: *Inner-texture*, *Inter-texture*, *Social and cultural texture*, *Ideological texture*, and *Sacred texture*.

*Inner-texture* includes linguistic patterns within a text, structural elements of a text, and the specific manner in which a text attempts to persuade its reader. These elements are traditionally part of what is called a ‘close reading’ of a text, the interpretation of the literary-rhetorical features and patterns in a text.<sup>14</sup>

*Inter-texture* designates a text’s representation of, reference to and use of phenomena in the ‘world’ outside the text, including a text’s citations, allusions and reconfigurations of specific texts, events, language, objects, institutions and other specific extra-textual context with which the text interacts.<sup>15</sup>

*Social and cultural texture* is where a text interacts with society and culture by sharing in the general social and cultural attitudes, norms and modes of interaction that are known by everyone

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<sup>13</sup> Gowler, “Social Rhetorical Interpretation...”, 195

<sup>14</sup> Gowler, “Social Rhetorical Interpretation...”, 196

<sup>15</sup> Gowler, “Social Rhetorical Interpretation...”, 196

in a society, and by establishing itself in relationship with the dominant cultural system as either sharing, rejecting, or transforming those attitudes, values and dispositions.<sup>16</sup>

*Ideological texture* concerns the particular alliances and conflicts nurtured and evoked by the language of the text and the language of the interpretation as well as the way the text itself and interpreters of the text position themselves in relation to other individuals and groups. Readers should recognize and interpret the ideological point(s) of view a text evokes, advocates and nurtures, as well as their own ideological point(s) of view as readers.<sup>17</sup>

*Sacred texture* refers to the manner in which a text communicates insights into the relationship between the human and the divine. This texture includes aspects concerning such things as deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, religious community and ethics. This texture is actually a subset of ideological texture.<sup>18</sup>

These textures represent the holistic approach of SRC in trying to resonate and make heard the various voices of the “world of the text” and the “world of the reader” as a dialogical expression and interpretation of faith. However, as is the case with any methodology of biblical criticism, no interpreter will ever use all of the resources of SRC in any one interpretation. The purpose is to build an environment for interpretation that provides interpreters with a basic, overall view of life as we know it and language as we use it.<sup>19</sup> Within this environment, interpreters can decide to work especially energetically on one or two aspects of a text. No complete interpretation of a text is humanly possible, and this is the concession as one begins the exciting task of interpretation.

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<sup>16</sup> Gowler, “Social Rhetorical Interpretation...”, 196

<sup>17</sup> Gowler, “Social Rhetorical Interpretation...”, 196

<sup>18</sup> David B. Gowler, “Heteroglossic Trends in Biblical Studies: Polyphonic Dialogues or Clanging Cymbals?” *RevExp* 97, (2000), 443-66

<sup>19</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry of...*, 13

For this thesis, I will focus specifically on the *Inter-texture* and *Social and Cultural texture* as the point of departure for interpreting and understanding Matthew 14: 13-21, the “Feeding of the 5000” in light of the Samoan practice of *faaalologa* or gifting.

## 1.2 *Inter-Texture:*

Earlier a listing of textures or horizons for SRC was delineated with the intention of providing an overview of the extensive analytic tools available to the SRC exegete. In this section I will elaborate further on the exact form of inter-texture that will be used in my analysis of Matthew 14:13-21.

According to Robbins and Wiley, intertextuality denotes an extremely wide range of textual relationships:

In a broad sense, no text can be anything but derivative. But there are times when texts refer so concretely to other texts that they seem to demand that the audience recognize a connection... But the identification of a textual recollection is only the first step to describing the shape of an intertextual relationship.<sup>20</sup>

In his description of intertexture, Robbins discusses a multitude of ways a text is ‘reconfigured’ (changed and/or altered to fit the author’s purposes); *oral-scribal*, *cultural knowledge*, *social knowledge* and *historical knowledge*. *Oral-scribal intertexture* focuses on how texts represent, reconfigure and refer to other texts, which are further broken down into five basic categories (recitation, recontextualization, reconfiguration, narrative, and thematic) to be further discussed later; *cultural knowledge* includes information that is known only inside a particular group or by direct interaction with that group; *social knowledge* is commonly held by all people of a ‘region’,

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<sup>20</sup> Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Tests in Second Isaiah*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 68

no matter their particular cultural location (social role or institution) and; *historical knowledge* refers to events that have occurred at specific times and locations.<sup>21</sup>

The form of intertexture that I wish to use in analyzing Matthew 14: 13-21 is *oral-scribal*, since the events portrayed in Matthew based on the Two-Source Theory and the Markan Priority point to the fact that Matthew borrowed and condensed the stories of Mark.<sup>22</sup> But outside of Mark there was the “Q” source as well as other first century Mediterranean oral and scribal traditions that influenced Matthews writing. Therefore I will look at three of five basic characters of oral scribal:<sup>23</sup>

1. **Recitation** ‘is the transmission of speech or narrative, either from oral or written tradition, in the exact or different words...’ It can range from the replication of exact words to the utilization of different words in a variety of forms (on a spectrum from most of the words being the same to reciting the narrative in substantially one’s own words) all the way to the more general summarization of the previous text(s).

2. **Recontextualization** includes wording from previous texts without an explicit acknowledgment that these words/texts exist in another text and are being (re)used.

3. **Reconfiguration** utilizes aspects of a previous event/situation to describe a later event in such a way that the former event appears to foreshadow the later event.

Basically these five characteristics are a guideline by which to ensure that SRC’s intertextuality is appropriately applied in the interpretation of an oral or scribal text such as other texts from the Bible, oral traditions such as “Q”, and other scribal writings such as Qumran, Josephus, Flavius, and so forth. This further ensures that SRC’s intertextuality is the appropriate methodological tool utilized in furthering one’s understanding of how specifically a text was modified, whether it was

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<sup>21</sup> Robbins, *The Tapestry of...*, 58-68

<sup>22</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 102

<sup>23</sup> Gowler, “Social Rhetorical Interpretation...”, 196-197

**recitation** (direct borrowing) or **reconfiguration** (prior event to foreshadow a later). As we will see, these two characteristics of intertextuality are important in the feeding miracle as they represent key elements of the miracle: **recitation**, a direct borrowing with some modification for thematic or theological purposes (how Matthew uses Mark and “Q”)<sup>24</sup> and **reconfiguration** as the feeding miracle could have foreshadowed the ‘Eucharist’.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.3 *Social and Cultural Texture*

In conjunction with intertextuality, I have selected social and cultural texture as a merging of two horizons to explore the reading of Matthew 14:13-21 in order to elicit pertinent and vital information that expresses the voice of the text and the reader in a harmonious symphony of understanding and applicability for the modern day audience. The social and cultural texture of a text refers to the social and cultural nature of a text as a text: meaning a text is part of society and culture by the way it views the world; by sharing in the general social and cultural attitudes, norms, and modes of interaction which are known by everyone in a society and by establishing itself as the dominant cultural system as either sharing in its attitudes, values, and dispositions at some level or by rejecting these attitudes, values, and dispositions.<sup>26</sup>

Elements of social and cultural texture illuminate our understandings of the contexts in which people respond to texts, especially when such contexts are also informed by intertextual analysis and a close reading of inner textual details.<sup>27</sup> For example, Robbins integrated social and cultural texture with intertextual analysis to illustrate how Mark uses both Greco-Roman and biblical

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<sup>24</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 8

<sup>25</sup> Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle...*, 128-129

<sup>26</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse 1*, (Atlanta; Christianbook, 2009), \_

<sup>27</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 39



traditions.<sup>28</sup> Based on this study, he concluded that “Markan rhetorical strategies are illustrative of how rhetorical strategies in general can invoke cultural conventions and expectations in dialogic interaction with intertextual elements”.<sup>29</sup>

What this means for the exegete interested in merging the various horizons of SRC, is that the contours of fabric used to weave the fine tapestry compliments each other in such a way that although the patterns produces various grooves and indentations within the tapestry, those differences when brought together forms the final product or pattern that stands in display of the intricacies and mastery of the finished product. Therefore, inter-texture and social and cultural texture when brought together will provide a greater and more informed understanding and explanation of the text that the author intended for his audience; which we have now undertaken the task to see how that informs us today in our social and cultural setting. In looking at the example used by Robbins of Mark, we can say that the author Mark not only used intertextual elements that relied on sources whether oral-scribal, historical, cultural or thematic; but also merged the Greco-Roman cultural practices of the day to make solid his point that he was trying to get across to his audience, whether the Markan community or his Gentile readers.

The components of social and cultural texture that I will adapt and merge with the oral-scribal texture of inter-texture analysis of SRC are:<sup>30</sup>

***Reformist Response:*** A social response which appear as a type of social rhetoric, it views the world as corrupt because its social structures are corrupt. If the structures can be changed so that the behaviors they sanction are changed, then salvation will be present in the world. This response, then, assumes that evil

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<sup>28</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, “Interpreting the Gospel of Mark as a Jewish Document in a Graeco-Roman World”, in Paul V.M. Flesher (ed.), *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 47-72

<sup>29</sup> Robbins, “Interpreting...”, 47-72

<sup>30</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 70-75

may be dealt with according to supernaturally-given insights about the ways in which social organization should be amended. Investigation of the ways of the world and recommendations for amending it are the essential orientation. The specific alterations to be made are revealed to people whose hearts and minds are open to supernatural influence.

***Challenge-Response:*** Is an agonistic method of interaction between people in Mediterranean culture, a constant tug of war, a game of push and shove where the winner receives honor and the loser shame. It is undertaken by social peers, or equals, and proceeds in several steps: the initial challenge, the perception of the challenge, the reaction to the message.

***Dyadic Contract:*** An implicit contract informally binding pairs of contractants rather than groups. It is based on the informal principle of reciprocity, which is the most significant form of social interaction in the limited-good world of the first century. Reciprocity is an implicit, non-legal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one's sense of honor and shame. In a limited-good world, such contracts can bind persons of equal status (colleague contracts) or persons of different statuses (patron-client contracts). The informal contracts function side by side with the formal contracts of society like buying and selling, marriage, the natural covenant with God, and the like. The dyadic contract cross-cuts the formal contracts of the culture, serving as the glue that holds together for long or short terms, and enabling the social interdependence necessary for life.

***patron-client contract:*** A contract that is initiated by means of a positive challenge, a positive gift. It ties persons of significantly different social statuses; hence the goods and services in the ongoing reciprocal relationship are different. The relationship is asymmetrical since the partners are not social equals. This contract provides things not normally available in the village or urban neighborhood, things that at times are badly needed. In return, the client gives the patron honor and loyalty. Patron-client relationships seem to be implied in the Gospels when people approach Jesus for "mercy." Furthermore, all positive relationships with God are rooted in the perception of patron-client contracts.

These components give a social and cultural definition to the social issues present during the writing of the Gospels. Thus we have insight into the internal causes of social and cultural conflicts based on first Century Mediterranean understanding of social and cultural beliefs and practices. To further illustrate my point of social and cultural texture to induce and make more meaningful the text, I have inserted an example used by Robbins regarding the cultural and social understanding of the “challenge-response” in Mark 15:<sup>31</sup>

There are a series of challenge-responses in Mark 15. The united action of the temple hierarchy in handing Jesus over to Pilate is a challenge by the temple leaders to Pilate the Prefect of Jerusalem. Pilate must respond to their challenge in an appropriate manner or he will put the public status of his position in jeopardy. The challenge consists of "entering the space" of Pilate and delivering Jesus to him. Pilate's initial response to the challenge is to interrogate Jesus (15:3). Before the challenge by the temple leaders reaches any definitive conclusion, the narrative depicts "the crowd" presenting a second challenge to Pilate in the context of narration that informs the reader that it was the custom for Pilate to release a prisoner of their choice during the festival. Pilate responds by asking the crowd to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, whom the narrative describes as a murderous insurrectionist (15:7). Pilate embodies honor when he retorts with a question concerning what evil Jesus has done (15:14). Markan narration makes the resistance of Pilate extremely brief, however. In contrast to Luke (23:4), Pilate never asserts that he finds no guilt in Jesus. Markan narration simply asserts that Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered Jesus to him out of envy (Mark 15:10). It also depicts action of the chief priests to be the cause of the request by the crowd for Pilate to crucify Jesus (15:11). In the end, Pilate responds to the challenges by the temple leaders and the crowd by "pleasing the crowd" through action of flogging Jesus and delivering him to be crucified (15:15).

In the context of the challenges and responses to Pilate by the chief priests and the crowd, Mark 15 presents two challenges to Jesus. The first comes from Pilate when he asks Jesus if he is king of the Jews. Jesus' response "You say so" (15:2) may seem clever or appropriate to the modern reader, but in the terms of

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<sup>31</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 81-82

Mediterranean challenge-response system, this response does not establish or maintain Jesus' honor in the eyes of Pilate. The same is true of his silence in response to the accusations of the chief priests and the people. This silence leaves Pilate in wonderment. Although the nature of Pilate's wonder is not clear, it is certain that neither Jesus' words nor his silence was "honorable." At the end of the interaction, Pilate initiates actions that reveal the extent to which, within this cultural system, Jesus has been dishonored: crucifixion is among the most dishonorable deaths imaginable. The second challenge to Jesus' honor comes while he hangs on the cross, as people who pass by, chief priests and scribes, issue the mocking challenge that he should come down from the cross (15:30, 32). Again, Jesus is silent in the face of these remarks, a silence which itself communicates how deeply dishonored he is within the Mediterranean system. The failure to respond to such a challenge dishonors him. For the reader who accepts the narrational perspective that Jesus is the Messiah, the challenges are of course ironic. The irony is that, while Jesus is thoroughly dishonored within the challenge-response paradigm of Mediterranean culture, his silent acceptance of his humiliating death demonstrates his obedience to the will of God. For the narrator and the reader who accepts the narrational point of view, the very silence that apparently dishonors Jesus is the source of his greatest honor.

By utilizing the SRC's inter-texture and social and cultural texture to read Matthew 14:13-21, I believe that it is possible to access a greater, wider and more informed interpretation of biblical text for the contemporary Samoan reader. By analyzing and exegeting Matthew in this manner, it opens up a holistic understanding of the text and makes it more relevant for the contemporary Samoan reader. A reader that had to re-learn how to understand biblical text through his own hermeneutical lens as a married, hyphenated Samoan-American man in his late thirties attending seminar. I believe the end result of all this is an expression of faith more applicable and meaningful to the contemporary reader. Also, it allows us to mirror our own understanding of text for our context (interpretation and application). This then allows me, the Samoan reader to adapt this reading by correlating it to our contemporary situation. In order to make meaning of our social issues and problems in light of biblical narrative for a more profound and greater

expression of faith. If the non-response of Jesus in Mark 15 was a sign of shame and dishonor for the first century Mediterranean Jew, then we can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that his silence was indeed his greatest honor. For his silence demonstrated his obedience to the will of God.

From this understanding of SRC, I will now turn to the cultural aspect of *faaaloalologa*, expounding on its meaning and significance for the Samoan as the context by which to understand how the SRC reading of the “Feeding of the 5000” miracle found in Matthew 13:14-21 is understood; in order to promote a holistic approach to ministry as a ‘New Missionary Paradigm’ for the CCCS.

## CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL CONCEPT OF *FAAALOALOGA* OR “GIFTING”

In this chapter of my thesis, I will discuss the Samoan concept of *faaaloaloga* or gifting, which according to Samasoni Kupa falls into one of five concepts or practices of the FaaSamoa<sup>32</sup>, under *faaaloalo*.<sup>33</sup> The Samoan term *faaaloaloga* comes from the root word *faaaloalo* which is an amalgamation of the prefix *faa* and the noun *aloalo*. I will discuss this further, but put together the term *faaaloalo* connotes “meeting face to face” and/or “journeying or a safe sea passage for travelling”. In this chapter, I will discuss the etymology of the word *faaaloaloga* from *faaaloalo*, its meanings and cultural applications, review and highlight the five concepts of *faaaloalo* from which will stem my focus on *faaaloaloga* as ‘giving’/‘gifting’, and its application for the Samoan in its social and ecclesial setting.

### 2.1 *Etymology of Faaaloaloga*

*Faaaloaloga* comes from the root word *faaaloalo*, which has traditionally been translated as ‘respect’, however, respect does not do justice or adequately expresses the totality of this Samoan term. Thus, looking at the etymological composition of the word *faaaloalo* will provide a more holistic and better understanding of what *faaaloalo* means to the Samoan.

*Faaaloalo* as mentioned earlier is the combination of the prefix *faa* with the noun *aloalo*.<sup>34</sup> *Faa* denotes the causative act of ‘doing something’ or ‘putting something together’ and *aloalo* means ‘face to face’. Combined the word literally can be translated as ‘to be put face to face’ or a ‘face to face relationship’. *Faaaloalo* is not only limited to the face but includes the whole body, for

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<sup>32</sup> *FaaSamoa* means to do what is Samoan or the Samoan way of life

<sup>33</sup> Samasoni Kupa, “Jesus Christ: The Revelation of ‘Faaaloalo’, A Christological Perspective of the Samoan concept of ‘faaaloalo’”, *Thesis for the fulfilment of the Bachelors of Divinity*, (Malua: Malua Theological College, 2006), 4

<sup>34</sup> Rev. George Pratt, *Pratt’s Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 27

the ‘face to face’ refers to the way one gives expression through face, their body movements and gestures.<sup>35</sup>

The concept of face is different for the Samoan compared to its English counterpart. Face in Samoan is self, family, village and ancestors; not the individual or personal face.<sup>36</sup> For the ‘keeping of face’ and ‘saving face’ is important in *faaaloalo*. According to his Highness Head of State Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese, “once there is a loss of face, there cannot be a meeting of faces and therefore the basis of which *faaaloalo* is premised, disappears.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore the loss of face is more than just a personal loss, it encompasses both self and others whom all lose out in this encounter.

Furthermore, *faaaloalo* is respect that is held by people, but not just any form of respect, it is a holistic form of respect that includes the respect for mind, body, soul. It’s not the usual English understanding of respect, but for the Samoan it is an all-inclusive respect for the totality of the person.

This term can be further understood as having courage to show face to each other, a quality that is valued by Samoans as being an important attribute; as respect is a two way process in which information is given and received in order to inform and bring about awareness.<sup>38</sup>

*Faaaloalo* is the Samoan word for the utmost regard and respect for ‘the other’ and for one’s self and our participation in life as part of God’s creation. This defines the Samoan worldwide,

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<sup>35</sup> Simanu Aumua Mata’itusi, *A Text for the Advanced Study of Samoan Language and Culture*, (Auckland: Pasefika Press, 2002), 135-145

<sup>36</sup> Tama Sailau M. Suaalii-Sauni, Iuogafa Tuagalu, et al., (eds), *Su’esu’e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance: Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, (Lepapaigalagala: The Centre for Samoan Studies (NUS), 2009), 80

<sup>37</sup> Tama Sailau M. Suaalii-Sauni et al., *Su’esu’e Manog...*, 71

<sup>38</sup> Kupa, “Jesus Christ...”, 5

because without *faaaloalo*, then the FaaSamoa does not exist.<sup>39</sup> Faaaloalo is the core belief or value that holds the Samoan identity together and gives it essence, creed, and meaning.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.2 *Interpretation and Application of faaaloalo:*

The Samoan interpretation and application therefore of such a word is varied and multi-textured. However, the interpretation I would like to focus on is how *faaaloalo* is based on good relationships.<sup>41</sup> What I mean by this, is that *faaaloalo* is the basis from which proper conduct and behaviour of Samoans stem. As I mentioned earlier concerning face to face in reference to his Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese, “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”.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, respect is the maintenance of good relationships because it is not only the individual in this relationship, but all his/her other “selves”.

In addition to good relationships, *faaaloalo* is also about ‘happiness’, which is found in this relationship. When we speak about face to face, it expresses the happiness through the sharing of life, love, and respect for the other.<sup>43</sup> It is through *faaaloalo* that this happiness and good relationship is maintained. For the Samoan, this is a very important because the maintenance of good familial and social relationship through happiness is integral to the Samoan identity.<sup>44</sup> It is in this Samoan identity that we will find *faaaloaloga* or ‘gifting’, the act of *faaaloalo*.

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<sup>39</sup> Suaalii-Sauni et al., *Su’esu’e Manogi...*, 72

<sup>40</sup> Paulo Koria, “Moving Towards a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts”, *PJT*, Series II, Issue 22, (1999), 5-6

<sup>41</sup> Kupa, “Jesus Christ...”, 6

<sup>42</sup> Suaalii-Sauni et al., *Su’esu’e Manogi...*, 72

<sup>43</sup> Aumua Mata’itasi Simanu, *O Si Manu a Alii*, (Auckland:Pasefika Press, 2002), 122

<sup>44</sup> Suaalii-Sauni et al., *Su’eu’e Manogi...*, 80



### 2.3 *Faaaloaloga, a causative expression of Faaaloalo:*

If the Samoan is known world-wide for his/her *faaaloalo*,<sup>45</sup> then *faaaloalo* must be at the heart of the FaaSamoa. The diagram below highlights cultural concepts and practices that are extensions of *faaaloalo* based on the works of Samasoni Kupa:<sup>46</sup>



Due to limitations in this study, I will only focus on the aspect of *faaaloaloga* or gifting, however, this diagram is just a limited representation of the much larger and more intricate extensions of *faaaloalo*.

The use of the term *faaaloaloga* is intentionally done in order to illustrate that the term is an extension of the *faaaloalo* (the core of a face to face interaction), which I have translated as ‘gifting’; whether it’s the gifting of pleasantries, exchange of goods, exchange of services, etc. By maintaining the root word *faaaloalo*, the meaning is not lost. However, in general Samoan practice, the more common term used to express the idea of gifting and or giving is *ofoina atu*,

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<sup>45</sup> Koria, “Moving Towards...”, 6

<sup>46</sup> Kupa, “Jesus Christ...”, 8

literally translated means to offer unto or giving to someone. This term is generally associated with ecclesiastical giving as in a *taulaga* (monetary offering) or (offering ones service to God). Although important, I would like to broaden the term and be more inclusive. The term *faaaloaloga*, I believe captures not only the ecclesiastical but also the social/cultural setting of gifting. The term *ofoina atu* is somewhat misleading for me, because it appears to have the connotation that we are giving or offering to appease God, others, or self. This may be an underlying motive, but it is not the true purpose and this is what this thesis will try to address in looking at how gifting has changed and where it should be.<sup>47</sup>

- Gifting should enable us to participate in the creation of new life and new opportunities for growth and renewal as a people and community.
- Gifting should affirm our relationships and break down the barriers that separate us, so that we might experience afresh the joy of our gifted diversity as part of our unity in Christ.
- Gifting should nourish our being and enables us to experience the depth of our souls, contributing to the fulfilment of the hope of others.
- Gifting should offer us the opportunity to reflect and ponder anew the important things in life as well as our deep sense of belonging and dependency on God. It should transform and renew us through and with others.
- Finally, gifting is done so that love and respect may be shared and life may be lived to the fullest and our joy may be complete.

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<sup>47</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W.D. Halls (Abingdon: Routledge Publishers, 1990), 31

## 2.4 *The Act of Faaaloaloga/Gifting:*

In general Samoan perception, cultural and ecclesiastical giving is inseparable and complements each other.<sup>48</sup> What this means is that the intricate connection between culture and religion is so fine that there has been a mergence of both concepts since the arrival of Christianity in Samoa in 1830.

The pre-Christian understanding of gifting was seen firsthand by John Williams, when to his surprise the natives greeted him and his companions in 1830 with a wealth of goods and food items during their initial meeting and when they departed. In return Williams gifted the Samoan natives with trinkets, spoons, beads, and European goods (unaware of the protocol, but adhered to earlier practices learned in Tahiti).<sup>49</sup> This mutual exchange of good was highly regarded by Williams and became the form of interaction that the missionaries continued to practice with the Samoan natives. It is well understood that the Samoan history pre-Christianity was not documented until the arrival of the missionaries in 1830, but based on practices and oral traditions as well as John Williams writings, Samoans practiced *faaaloaloga* before the missionaries, but because of missionary influence this practice would soon undergo changes and it is the dynamics of these changes that have affected the contemporary understanding of *faaaloaloga*.

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<sup>48</sup> Alo P. Pita, "The Widow's Offering and Jesus' Response (Mark 12:41-44): A Comparative Study to Giving from a Samoan Ecclesiastical Perspective", A Thesis in fulfillment of the Bachelor of Divinity, (Malua: Malua Theological College, 2010), 3

<sup>49</sup> John Williams, *A Narrative or Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, (London: John Snow, 1837), 87

This is not to say that Samoans pre-Christianity gifted for altruistic reasons. Samoans as a social unit share common values and ideas; sorrows and pains so that in the event that a *faalavelave*<sup>50</sup> occurs, they come together as one people to assist where they can. This is where the exchange of gifts, goods, and pleasantries will take place in order to solidify social bonds and strengthen social relationships. However, pre-Christian religious gifting for their many gods was done for guidance, food, and protection against their enemies. Everything was attributed to their gods, ie, famines, death, curses, and blessings. Samoans believed that any blessing they received was from their deities, whether they benefitted or not.<sup>51</sup>

The arrival of the missionaries did not change or impact too drastically the social and cultural practice of gifting as it is still adhered to today (with some contemporary updates); however, its ecclesiastical interpretation took on a new meaning. With the slow and steady spread of Christianity into Samoa, most pre-Christian practices and rituals were removed.<sup>52</sup> Thus the gifting to their many gods was replaced with gifting to the one true God, through the *taulaga*<sup>53</sup> and the local teachers/missionary. This is an important aspect which I would like to address. It is in this perspective that I see the change in *faaaloaloga*.

When the missionaries arrived, as I mentioned earlier, their initial contacts with *faaaloaloga* was to reciprocate this exchange of goods and gifts with that of their own, whether they were European goods or so forth. Thus the exchange was equal and mutually beneficial to both sides.

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<sup>50</sup> *Faalavelave* is defined as a familial interruption of routine duties and obligations of daily living, i.e. (funerals, weddings, title bestowments, arrival of a new pastor, dedication of a new house, and others)

<sup>51</sup> Elia Taase, *The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa: The Origin and Development of an Indigenous Church, 1830-1961*, (Michigan: Bell and Howell Company, 1998), 56-60

<sup>52</sup> John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies University of the South Pacific, 1982), 123-124

<sup>53</sup> *Taulaga* means a sacred offering. In the CCCS there are four annual offerings that Church members make: *Taulaga Talalelei*, *Taulaga Au Taumafai*, *Taulaga Au Leoleo*, and *Taulaga Samoa*. I am using *taulaga* in its general sense as an offering by the people to the church which encompasses all of the above

What is interesting is that this equal exchange was done at all levels: missionaries' initial contact with natives, as they taught and evangelized the Gospel, as well as in their living arrangements.<sup>54</sup>

When the white missionaries arrived with the Gospel, they also arrived with the concept of equal exchange as their interpretation of the face to face encounter. They paid respect with respect.

Previously in the religious or spiritual realm, pre-Christianity, the natives gifting with their gods was a uni-directional giving, in which *faaaloaloga* was shown to their deities, but in return, the causative effect of their offering or giving to their god was the reciprocation of the natives' gift (spiritual rewards or punishments).<sup>55</sup>

Based on this understanding, the pre-Christian concept of gifting was based on the idea of works. If you did good works and offered unto the gods their fair share, in return you will be blessed. One's gifting also determined how the gods would respond, if the response was a curse or a defeat in battle or a bad harvest, then it was interpreted that the gods were not pleased with the offering or the gifting was not sufficient or good enough.

When the missionaries arrived, that understanding was replaced by Christian virtues and principles that were based on God's golden law espoused by Jesus, "love God and love others". When the natives gifted, the missionaries gifted back in return as in the social practice of face to face, where the maintenance of face, social bond, and happiness was promoted. In this setting, the pre-Christian concept of gifting to their gods (i.e., Christian missionaries) was initially replaced by the missionary's equal and equitable exchange of *faaaloalo*.

I believe this concept reverted back when the missionaries began to use native teachers. The reason I say this is that missionaries were being paid and supplied by the missionary society back

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<sup>54</sup> R.P. Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900: The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970), 72-73

<sup>55</sup> Ta'ase, *The Congregational Christian*, 56-60

in London, however, when the need dictated that missionary enterprise had to include and use the natives, thus was formed Malua Theological College to train the trainers that would go out to the field.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the white missionaries, the native trained teachers had to be housed and supplied by the villages and villagers in which they were assigned.<sup>57</sup> Because the missionaries did not allow a native teacher to teach in his own village, the native teachers were now dependent on the villages and villagers for survival in their evangelical cause. There is a wealth of literature that points to the disparity in care between the native teachers and missionaries,<sup>58</sup> which to my interpretation and understanding, led to the revival of the pre-Christian practice of *faaaloaloga* 'gifting' in which the exchange was uni-directional and unlike the bi-directional social setting of *faaaloaloga*.

What I mean by uni-directional is that the exchange of goods was one direction, from the village/villagers to the teachers and in return, the commodity the village/villagers received were God's blessings and knowledge through formal education and learning to read the Bible and write.<sup>59</sup> Initially, this exchange was deemed equitable because the people benefitted socially through the education they received and the basic knowledge that assisted them within their village setting.

However, as time progressed, the exchange became less tangible in the sense of social usefulness, especially when the spiritual blessings was all that was being exchanged for goods received. From formal education, the blessings became spiritual blessings of God's goodness and

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<sup>56</sup> Raeburn Lange, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry in the Cook Islands and Samoa*, (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1997), 20

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 23-24

<sup>58</sup> Garrett, *To Live Among...*, 124-125; Gilson, *Samoa 1830...*, 128; Lange, *The Origins of the...*, 24

<sup>59</sup> Lange, *The Origins of the...*, 24

care and mercy for all their kindness, “*ia liligi atu faamanuiaga a le Atua. Mea uma ua faagaogaoina ona o lo outou silasila i le Atua ma lona finagalo, ia faatumutumu atu i le Atua*”.<sup>60</sup>

What this now sets up is the return to pre-Christian practices by the native teachers, in which works was now what determined blessings. The more one gave the greater and more pronounced the blessings. The villages and villagers gave to the teachers, who later became the ministers of those villages and in return the equitable exchange of goods became less equitable when viewed through the social needs of the people and their social setting.<sup>61</sup> It is this unequal exchange of *faaaloaloga* that is the basis of my inquiry with this thesis. This is the departure point into Matthew 14:13-21 to see how Jesus provides a new Mission Paradigm that equates the spiritual needs with social needs in order to provide a holistic approach to ministry that addresses the mind, body, and spirit.

What this means to the reader is that missionary activity by native teachers reverted to the pre-Christian practice inadvertently because now the people were gifting to the native teachers/ministers because they were their spiritual fathers through which blessings and spiritual providence sprung. In a sense, the ministers took on the role of the pre-Christian deities, being the gateway to God’s blessings.<sup>62</sup> The Samoan people looked upon them in this manner and from a social perspective, *faaaloaloga* became uni-directional, with the pastors receiving the goods and services of the people and in return the people were gifted with spiritual blessings and promises of good tiding for their good works, but no real and tangible worth to provide for the social needs of their families and communities.

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<sup>60</sup> Literal interpretation, “*May the good Lord pour his blessings upon you. All that you have given out of love and respect for God and his ministry, may it be given back to you manifold*”

<sup>61</sup> Lange, *The Origins of the...*, 23-24

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

It is this perspective I wish to explore especially for the EFKS. Since the ministers are the lynch pins of missionary enterprise, it is important to understand this cultural practice in terms of ecclesiastical significance. If the spiritual needs of the people are our only concern and their physical needs go unaddressed, what does that say about the future of the EFKS? This may be the issue at hand, pointing to the declining number of EFKS membership according to Manfred Ernst<sup>63</sup>, because we aren't addressing the social needs of the people. This is just the tip of the iceberg concerning contemporary applications that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

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<sup>63</sup>

Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 167-169



### CHAPTER 3: SOCIO-RHETORICAL EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 14: 13-21

The horizons of socio-rhetorical criticism that will be used to analyze and interpret Matthew's version of the 'Feeding of the 5000' are inter-texture and social and cultural texture. The merging of these two horizons will adequately open up the text for greater contemporary understanding and awareness. Especially for the Samoan reader interested in looking at how EFKS's missionary paradigm should reflect a holistic approach that addresses both the spiritual and physical needs of the individual, especially in the area of *faaaloaloga*; where gifting should be understood as an equal exchange of goods and services for mutual beneficence. This chapter will merge SRC's inter-texture and social and cultural texture. Based on this interpretive lens, analyze and exegete the passage verse by verse in order to extract the hidden social and cultural implications based on the variance of words, terms, and first century socio-cultural concepts and terms used by Mark and reflected upon by Matthew. I will then conduct specific word searches and correlate the social and cultural meanings of passages to its specific use by Matthew for his audience and/or community. Based on this SRC interpretation, extrapolate its contemporary meanings for the Samoan EFKS church member and his/her understanding of *faaaloaloga*.

#### **3.1     *Merging inter- and social and cultural- textures:***

The concept of **inter-texture** that will be used in this interpretation is **oral-scribal** (how texts represent, reconfigure and refer to other texts, in this case Mark); looking specifically at the characteristics of *recitation*, *recontextualization*, and *reconfiguration*. This will be merged with the **social and cultural textures** of *reformist*, *challenge-response*, and *dyadic contracts* (*patron-client contracts*); socio-cultural values present in first century Palestine's melting pot of Greco-Roman Judaism. These components of social and cultural texture are important in

eliciting a greater understanding of why people acted and behaved the way they did according to New Testament Gospel writings.

The interpretation will look at how the Gospel of Matthew is a *recitation, recontextualization* and *reconfiguration* of the Gospel of Mark using a redaction process (key words and specific phrases) in collaboration with a specific social and cultural idea(s): *reformist, challenge-response*, and *dyadic contracts (patron-client contracts)* to address a specific need in Matthew's community. That need will be made obvious in the analytical process (a new missionary paradigm) in order to understand the contemporary Samoan use of *faaaloaloga*; leading to a new ecclesiastical interpretation as the impetus for transforming the EFKS mission enterprise in moving forward.

### ***Inter-textual Texture: Side by Side view of Mark 6:30-44 & Matthew 14:13-21***

<p><b>Mark 6:30-44 "Feeding the Five Thousand"</b>  <sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, "come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup>When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; <sup>36</sup>send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." <sup>37</sup>But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" <sup>38</sup>And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." <sup>39</sup>Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. <sup>41</sup>Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>And all ate and were filled; <sup>43</sup>and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup>Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.</p>	<p><b>Matthew 14:13-21 "Feeding the Five Thousand"</b>  <sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus heard this, <u>he</u> withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by <u>himself</u>. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup>When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and <u>cured their sick</u>.  <sup>15</sup><u>When it was evening</u>, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."  <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to them, "<u>They need not go away</u>; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup>They replied,          "We have nothing here but five loaves and the two fish."  <sup>18</sup><u>And he said, "Bring them here to me."</u>  <sup>19</sup>Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.  <u>Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds.</u>  <sup>20</sup>And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup>And those who ate were about five thousand men, <i>besides women and children</i>.</p>
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This side by side view will help to isolate the difference in Matthew's use of Mark's narrative. It is well documented according to the 'two-source hypothesis' by many New Testament scholars that Matthew used material from Mark (nearly 2/3 of his stories, often word for word) and a collection of traditions designated 'Q'.<sup>64</sup> Based on this foundational understanding, the interpretation of Matthew's version of the 'feeding the five thousand' is derived from Mark and 'Q' with Matthew redacting Mark's version to fit his specific social, political, or theological perspective.

### 3.1.1 *Recitation*

Based on ***recitation*** (*narrative in the exact or different words*)<sup>65</sup>, it is visible from the side by side view that Matthew redacts Mark's narrative and only adds a few variations to it. Matthew's narrative illustrates many similarities in wording and phrasing, with the insertion of a few different words as seen with the underline and ***italicized bold*** styles in the side by side view.

### 3.1.2 *Recontextualization*

This change in wording and phrasing is important, because it illustrates that Matthew has something else in mind compared to Mark. Thus we can say that Matthew is also within his recitation, recontextualizing (*wording from other texts without acknowledgment that they exist in another text and are being (re)used*)<sup>66</sup> the usage of Mark's narrative to fit his specific need. The ***recontextualization*** of Mark's feeding miracle with a few changes passes Matthew's narrative as an original account by one of the eyewitnesses (disciple/follower), whether for authenticity or validity illustrates the importance of this event to Matthew's overall narrative. In hindsight, since

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<sup>64</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73 & 79

<sup>65</sup> Gowler, "Social Rhetorical Interpretation...", 196-197

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

we are aware of the existence of all the Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John), it further solidifies the importance of this feeding miracle to the composition of the evangelists narrative, for them to all share this one and only miracle between them.<sup>67</sup>

In the **recontextualization** and **recitation** of the feeding miracle from Mark, Matthew introduces minor twists and changes to the narrative in order to illustrate his specific purpose. For example, in Matthew's narrative, the feeding of the five thousand was not a chance for Jesus and his disciples to get away after the disciples returned from their missionary endeavors as written in Mark, but it was a chance for Jesus by himself to get away after hearing the bad news of John the Baptist being beheaded. In addition to this, after having compassion for the people, Jesus cured their sick in Matthew as opposed to teaching them many things, highlighting the purpose of the miracle for Matthew. Finally, the addition of women and children to the five thousand men present illustrates that the feeding miracle fed more than five thousand people with twelve basket full leftover. This illustrates the enormity of the feeding miracle.

### 3.1.3 **Reconfiguration**

The feeding miracle is also a **reconfiguration** (*uses aspects of a previous event/situation to describe a later event in such a way that the former event appears to foreshadow the later event*)<sup>68</sup> of an important doctrinal and sacramental event for the Christian believer. An important point that needs to be mentioned here is that Matthew is believed to have written his Gospel as an important polemical tool or manuscript of worship for the early Christian believers.<sup>69</sup> With this in mind, it is interesting how he uses the feeding miracle as a foreshadowing of the last

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<sup>67</sup> R.T. France, "The Gospel of Matthew", *NICONT*, (Grand Rapids; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 558

<sup>68</sup> Gowler, "Social Rhetorical Interpretation...", 196-197

<sup>69</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 45 & 53

supper, based on the exact use of terms found in the feeding supper (highlighted terms in the side by side view).<sup>70</sup> The phrase “when it was evening” (14:15) is the first of a number of generally recognized echoes of the Last Supper in this story (26:20). The words that concern taking, blessing, breaking and giving the bread also seem to clearly foreshadow the Last Supper (26:20-29).<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, this cannot be easily dismissed by the assertion that they are found in any Jewish meal, because if we look at the order of the important terms such as taking, blessing, breaking, and giving; they are the same as those found in the Last Supper.<sup>72</sup>

Analysis of information gained from an SRC inter-textual reading of this passage highlights three important issues for me as a reader:

1. Jesus acted out of compassion and not according to the individual’s faith
2. Jesus emphasizes healing in this version of the miracle
3. The feeding miracle speaks of the messianic banquet in the kingdom of heaven that is not to come, but is here already.

In previous miracle encounters between Jesus and the people, his actions stemmed from the faith or lack of faith of those he encountered. However, in this pericope he acts out of compassion, *ἐσπλαγγνίσθη*, meaning, “his entrails and bowels are moved”, or “pity/compassion”.<sup>73</sup> This term exudes a much greater connotation than just his heart being moved, because the Greek term for heart is *καρδια* (from which comes the term cardio/heart). This illustrates that Jesus’ whole inner being was deeply moved or deeply touched and inspired by their situation, especially if they followed him so far on foot and out to the wilderness. It is also pretty ironic that it was in the

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<sup>70</sup> France, “The Gospel of Matthew”, 558; Twelftree. *Jesus the Miracle...*, 129

<sup>71</sup> France, “The Gospel of Matthew”, 558

<sup>72</sup> Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle...*, 129

<sup>73</sup> France, “The Gospel of Matthew”, 561

barren and desolate wilderness (a place where Jesus was tempted by Satan 4:1-11), where the people found Jesus and hope. According to OT traditions and writings, it was in the wilderness that the people of Israel found God<sup>74</sup> and likewise it is also in the wilderness that those following Jesus found solace, rest, and healing. 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.

Being deeply moved (*ἐσπλαγγίσθη*), Jesus reacts and his actions are to heal, *ἐθεράπευσεν*, 'to render service and attendance', 'to cure', 'to restore', 'to make whole'. In Mark's version, Jesus teaches (*διδάσκειν*), 'to instruct', 'to teach', or 'to inform'. The difference between the two choices of words is the emphasis on the theological concepts of 'from above' and 'from below'. What I mean, 'from above' looks at understanding God from the transcendent, spiritual, divine, and heavenly perspective; however, 'from below' addresses theology from the eminent, earthly, social, and worldly perspective. Thus, *διδάσκειν* keeps our understanding of God in the 'from above' realm; thoughts, concepts, ideas, and knowledge; while *ἐθεράπευσεν* elicits a 'from below' understanding; actions, concrete examples, applications, and practice. Teaching addresses the mind and spirit, but lacks the third component in the tripartite relationship of "wholeness", the physical. Healing on the other hand addresses all three components of "wholeness": the mind, body, and soul; a holistic approach to ministry.

Lastly is the similarities found between the feeding miracle and the messianic banquet. As we mentioned earlier with the terms 'when it was evening'. 'taking', 'blessing', 'breaking', and 'giving'; the same terms found in the Last Supper. Also the term for 'sit', *ἀνακλιθῆναι*, is also

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<sup>74</sup> 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

translated as ‘recline’, which usually refers to the practice of reclining on couches in a *triclinium* in the Greek and Roman world and which in the Jewish context can suggest a more formal or special meal.<sup>75</sup> The connection being reflected in this interpretation of Matthew’s narrative is a festive banquet, where everyone is carefully seated, attended to and provided for. Jesus provides for the needs of the people and all they have to do is to seek him, follow him, and journey with him to the remotest and most desolate places of their lives and there they will have an encounter with Jesus that will not only restore, but transform their lives.

### **3.2 Social and Cultural Texture:**

In this section, I will look at the social and cultural texture of SRC, especially the reformist, the challenge-response, and the ‘patron-client’ perspectives in order to open up this passage and extract important issues being raised within the narrative world and from the world of the narrative in order to gain a deeper and greater understanding of this passage for the contemporary reader.

#### **3.2.1 Reformist**

The first social and cultural texture that I would like to address is the *reformist* (it views the world as corrupt because its social structures are corrupt. If the structures can be changed so that the behaviors they sanction are changed, then salvation will be present in the world. The specific alterations are revealed to people whose hearts and minds are open to supernatural influence).<sup>76</sup> This is of great importance, especially looking at Jesus’ ministry. Like Matthew points out and continues to promote, Jesus does not come to do away with the Law, but to fulfill

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<sup>75</sup>

France, “The Gospel of Matthew”, 562

<sup>76</sup>

Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 70-75

the Law.<sup>77</sup> The social and cultural reform that Jesus had in mind went against the traditional Jewish understanding of making a far journey. It is believed that when one journeys afar, he/she has to take enough rations for the day's journey, one seldom leaves unprepared for long journeys.<sup>78</sup> This is what caused the stir amongst the disciples, because they were unprepared to accommodate such a large gathering. Their minds were confined to previously maintained structures and because of that, they only had five bread and two fish. If the disciples' hearts and minds were opened to the supernatural influences of Jesus' authority, they would not have hesitated but would have done as was commanded by Jesus. Another thing of interest here is that the disciples wanted to dismiss the crowds to the nearby villages. I find this pretty interesting, because if the crowd was as large as five thousand men, not including women and children, then how would the nearby villages be able to host such a large gathering at such a late time? It appeared as though the disciples wanted to pawn the crowd off onto some else to deal with, because they could not deal with the crowd themselves. Another social structure that Jesus wanted to address and do away with, especially when considering that the poor (working class, slaves, and unemployed) within the Eastern Mediterranean during the first century made up 90% of the population, and yet Rome and Israel had no answers for their social situation.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.2.2 *Challenge-Response*

The second social and cultural texture is ***challenge-response*** (*An agonistic method of interaction between people in Mediterranean culture, a constant tug of war, a game of push and shove where the winner receives honor and the loser shame. It proceeds in several steps: the initial*

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<sup>77</sup> France, "The Gospel of Matthew", 10-14

<sup>78</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 86

<sup>79</sup> James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 20, 64-65



*challenge, the perception of the challenge, and the reaction to the message*).<sup>80</sup> In looking at the feeding miracle, the initial challenge was made by the disciples “you dismiss” (ἀπόλυσον, 2<sup>nd</sup> person, singular, aorist imperative), as in demanding Jesus to dismiss the people into the nearby villages to buy food for themselves since it was late. Jesus did not perceive the challenge well, as he stated, “do not send them away; you give them something to eat”. The disciple’s challenge was met by a command from Jesus “you give” (δότε, 2<sup>nd</sup> person, plural, aorist imperative). In a challenge, so as not to be shamed and lose face in front of others a response must be given, and thus Jesus responded, but like the reformist understanding earlier, it wasn’t a response so much as to save face, more like a corrective to a faulty understanding. In response to Jesus’ command, the disciples reiterate in a less authoritative manner “we do not have” (οὐκ ἔχομεν, 1<sup>st</sup> person, plural, active, indicative), illustrating that maybe they may have been a little too abrupt or rash initially, now that they have been put in their place, this is what they should have said. In response to the disciples statement, Jesus says, “Bring them here to me” (φέρετέ, 2<sup>nd</sup> person, plural, active, imperative), a final authoritative command to complete their riposte. By having the last say, because the disciples do not answer back, Jesus has maintained his honor and is viewed as being having the right perspective and/or stance. However, the lack of reply by the disciples does not necessarily mean that they were shamed by Jesus, but by not responding, they too were honored by bearing witness to the miraculous event that unfolded. Their non-responsiveness was their submissiveness before God, as Jesus illustrated his authority over nature and produced enough food to feed well over five thousand people.

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<sup>80</sup>

Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 70-75

### 3.2.3 Patron-Client

The last social and cultural texture that I will discuss is the **dyadic contract** of '*patron-client*' (*It is based on the informal principle of reciprocity. In a limited-good world, such contracts can bind persons of different statuses (patron-client contracts). A patron-client contract is initiated by means of a positive challenge, a positive gift. It ties persons of significantly different social statuses; this contract provides things not normally available in the village or urban neighborhood and in return, the client gives the patron honor and loyalty*).<sup>81</sup> In the feeding narrative this interaction is important, as it provides an explanation as to why such a massive crowd followed Jesus out into the wilderness, unprepared for the journey. It seems to indicate that in Jesus they found hope, freedom, and redemption from their chronic despair and anything else was inconsequential. The use of only healing by Matthew in his narrative also illustrates that the people saw in Jesus an opportunity to be freed of their spiritual and physical impediments that have limited their social evolvment.<sup>82</sup> . However, what they were about to witness was more than they had bargained for.

An argument can be made here that the miracle was not necessarily a supernatural miracle, but because of Jesus' positive gift of healing, the people responded back with honor and loyalty, and that could be seen in their sharing of their rations, since long journeys presupposed that the people came prepared with enough rations for a day's trip. If between twelve disciples and Jesus they were able to come up with five bread and two fish, roughly five thousand people would equate to approximately 385 times the disciples and Jesus' rations, making the total number of bread and fish come out to: 1925 bread and 770 fish. This is a pretty impressive amount, maybe

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<sup>81</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Textures...*, 70-75  
<sup>82</sup> France, "The Gospel of Matthew", 561

illustrating why the crowd had no reaction to the miracle produced by Jesus.<sup>83</sup> However, the honor and loyalty that is shown to Jesus is the large crowd's acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven. The healing and feeding miracle performed by Jesus with a Eucharistic parallel, provide a mission paradigm that utilizes a holistic approach of mind, body, and soul. Because Jesus was able to provide the people with 'wholeness' they so longed for, the loyalty and honor bestowed upon Jesus has led some New Testament scholars to believe that the crowd wanted Jesus to be their political leader, their king, someone to lead their political uprising/revolt.<sup>84</sup> Their loyalty to follow and accept Jesus' teachings and healings as a sign of his authority as the Son of Man, the Messiah or the Christ is witnessed as the large crowds follow Jesus as he makes his Triumphal Journey towards Jerusalem.

Analysis of the *social and cultural textures* of SRC yields three important issues for me:

1. Reformation of current social structures
2. Jesus' authority and recognition by the disciples
3. The crowds loyalty and honor in following Christ

When this is then combined and merged with the *inter-textual* analysis:

1. Jesus acted out of compassion and not according to the individual's faith
2. Jesus emphasizes healing in this version of the miracle
3. The feeding miracle speaks of the messianic banquet in the kingdom of heaven that is not to come, but is here already.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 563

<sup>84</sup> David Fiensy, "Leaders of Mass Movements and the Leader of the Jesus Movement," *JSNT*. Issue 74, (1999), 3-27; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2000); Visio Saga, *Jesus' Triumphal Entry An Ill-Fated Challenge to Authority: A Social-Historical Analysis Mark 11:1-11*, Thesis for the Masters of Theology in Biblical Studies, (Suva: Pacific Theological College Printing, 2008)

### 3.3 *Merging the SRC Lenses*

The result of this merged SRC lens is a reformation of current social structures based on compassion and an emphasis on holistic healing: mind, body, and soul. What is meant is that the crowd sought Jesus because of healing and not because of their faith in him as the Son of Man as depicted by Matthew's focus on healing; but after their restoration and transformation, they saw Jesus for who he actually is, the Messiah. This recognition by the people would not have been possible, if they did not receive the holistic healing found in the wilderness. A place where life does not thrive, but only despair and loneliness, yet according to Matthew, it was there that the people found life and received a glimpse of life eternally.

This merged horizon reveals Jesus' authority and recognition by all (disciples and crowd); whose loyalty and honor in following the Christ stemmed from the eschatological picture of a messianic banquet depicted by the feeding miracle. The feeding miracle is the only miracle that is common between all four Gospel writers, with the irony being that the word choice and order of the words used are exactly the same as those used by Jesus at the Last Supper. To put these words in the mouth of Jesus in the exact same order that would be used later, Matthew *reconfigures* this narrative so that his audience or his community would recognize the social and religious implications of this *dyadic- 'patron-client 'contract*, to bring loyalty and honor upon Jesus by the crowd who in return bears witness to the Kingdom of Heaven in the wilderness, where Israel found God with Moses and now have found God with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, this merged SRC lens of the feeding of the five thousand miracle in Matthew, depicts the Son of Man inwardly moved to heal the whole individual (mind, body and soul) who thus responds with loyalty and honor as adherents to Kingdom of Heaven living now, with its final

consummation to come during the Messianic Age. This is of great interest, because Matthew speaks heavily about the Kingdom of Heaven being here, but not fully realized until the Parousia.<sup>85</sup> Fulfillment is also another key theme used by Matthew, thus Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the hopes of all nations (Savior/Messiah/Christ). His ministry therefore reverses previously understood social and cultural practices and beliefs, in order to bring about holistic healing.

In other words, what the feeding of the five thousand illustrates is a new mission paradigm that would bring large crowds to Jesus for holistic healing and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven through their loyalty and honor of Jesus. The response of the people was greatly magnified by the holistic healing that they received. Therefore, in order for something of this magnitude to occur, changes must take place in approach and methodology to missionary endeavors. If a genuine inwardly concern or compassion stirs one to action that is holistic, in return the people will respond with honor and loyalty to the message and the messenger with the end result being more people for the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is this transformative process found in the “Feeding Miracle” of Matthew 14:13-21 that needs to be infused in the EFKS missionary enterprise and ecclesiastical practices in order for our religious denominational belief to maintain its relevance in moving forward. In the next chapter, I will discuss further how the merging of this new understanding and insight from an SRC reading of Matthew’s ‘Feeding of the 5000’ together with the cultural practice of *faaaloaloga*/gifting from Chapter 2, provides a new missionary paradigm designed to transform and maintain the EFKS’ relevance as a viable religious denomination that caters to the whole

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<sup>85</sup>

France, “The Gospel of Matthew”, 102

person; mind, body and soul, in order to win and solidify membership for the Kingdom of Heaven.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION

This final chapter brings together the Socio-Rhetorical Criticism's (SRC) analysis of Matthew 14:13-21 and the contemporary Samoan issue of *faaaloaloga* in order to see the interconnectedness of thoughts and ideas in bringing about ecclesiastical transformation in practice and belief for the EFKS. The issue at hand is the application and use of *faaaloaloga* within the church, especially in the interaction between the *faifeau* (pastor) and the *tagata lotu* (congregation/members).

### 4.1 *The Issue(s)*

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, the premise of *faaaloaloga* is a face to face interaction that maintains good relationships and ensures happiness. This is of the utmost importance in Samoan social relationships. In this face to face relationship, gifting is conducted as a means to ensure good relationships and happiness. Thus the exchange of gifts is a fair and equitable trade-off as a sign of respect between both parties, however, when that exchange becomes less favorable or is no longer equal, then the relationship encounters problems. When these problems continue to persist, then it leads to dissatisfaction and ultimately, the severing of such relationships and connections.

This is the issue seen in most EFKS churches, especially between pastors and church members. I speak generally of this issue because it has been voiced more than once by many EFKS church members abroad (United States of America) and in Samoa; friends and visiting church members during the *Fonotele* (General Assembly) for the last three years, since I've been in Malua. The issue straining the pastor and church member relationship in terms of *faaaloaloga* is the question of where is the equality or fairness in the gifting, when the pastor receives the goods (food, cash,

services) and in return the church member receives spiritual blessings? For the church member there is no tangible or immediate benefit. It's not to say people gift with the expectation that in return they'll receive equal or fair share, but to ensure 'good relationships' and 'happiness', shouldn't that be the expectation? Socially, have all parties benefitted from this transaction? If not, what can we do? If not us who, and if not now when?

These are the questions that I've wrestled with and have turned to Matthew's narrative of the feeding of the five thousand to provide some insight as to how to resolve this issue for me and for the EFKS church in moving forward.

#### **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 being unmet. A wise person once said that the first step to recovery is the admission that there is a problem. In the same breathe, we must be inwardly moved by the situation before us, recognizing that there is an issue/problem.

Secondly, Jesus acted, "he healed their sick" and fed them. Jesus didn't 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. Likewise, we too are to act and not wait for a problem to avail and identify itself before we get moving.

Thirdly, Jesus broke down all social, cultural and religious barriers, structures or obstacles that stood in the way of him performing his duties (social and cultural norms, disciples' preconceived beliefs, and the crowd's magnitude). We shouldn't be defined or confined by traditional cultural or religious practices that are impractical and rigid (not open to change).



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.

Fifthly, Jesus provided a holistic approach to healing. He not only fed them spiritually but also physically. His addressment of the crowd and the disciples' needs were holistic. He addressed the tripartite nature of the individual: mind, body, and soul. This is also the approach that we need to have in order to ensure the 'wholeness' of the individual. By doing so, we effect the greatest change in people's lives.

Lastly, all this is done to glorify God, as Jesus illustrated God's abundant love that filled twelve baskets. Jesus was the conduit by which God's sovereignty and authority was revealed in the Kingdom of Heaven fellowship that's here and fulfilled in Jesus' second coming. Likewise, we are to be the conduits by which the people come to have a relationship with God and passage into the Kingdom of Heaven.

### **4.3    *Application***

What Matthew unveils with his feeding of the five thousand narrative is a new missionary paradigm to be implemented in the EFKS in moving forward. In relations to *faaaloaloga*, the pastors are the 'lynchpins'<sup>86</sup>, the key to the restoration, revitalization, and transformation of its EFKS members. They have to recognize the problem, act, be bold, unafraid, provide a holistic approach, and make available the Kingdom of Heaven to its members through his inspired acts.

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<sup>86</sup>

Ernst, *Winds of...*, 167-169

Regarding *faaaloaloga*, if the people believe that the transaction is not equal, the pastor must respond to that need by addressing it. Therefore, to be concerned shows interest and to have interest shows that one cares and is ‘inwardly stirred’ to action. If acting means to change this traditional understanding of *faaaloaloga* with not only spiritual blessings but include physical blessings through the reciprocity of goods, money and services, than that’s where the ministry and mission must go. We must be bold to take the road less travelled and step out of our comfort zones and mix things up in order to perform the greatest good. Therefore, by restoring the equitable exchange of *faaaloaloga*’ gifting’, then it should: 1) Enable us to participate in the creation of new life and new opportunities for growth and renewal; 2) Affirm our relationships and break down the barriers that separate us; 3) Nourish and enable us to experience compassion in order to contribute to the fulfillment of the hope of others; 4) Help us to reflect and ponder anew the important things in life as well as our deep sense of belonging and dependency on God, transforming and renewing us through and with others; and 5) Allow us to share in the love and respect so that life may be lived to the fullest.

These values are important and illustrate the extent to what this new missionary paradigm can do not only for this issue of *faaaloaloga*, but for other ecclesiastical issues hindering the progression and spread of the EFKS church not only in Samoa, but throughout the world. The EFKS stands at the precipice of globalization and whether we choose to acknowledge that Samoa is not affected by what goes on around the world, we must concede that the times are changing and if we do not pay attention to what is going on around us, we too may become an obsolete institution of faith.

By taking this holistic approach and addressing the whole individual, it offers greater acknowledgment and acceptance of the Word of God and the Kingdom of Heaven by all. In

return the individuals offer their loyalty and honor which extends to family, friends, community, and beyond. This new missionary paradigm truly opens up the possibility for many to find a reservation at the Messianic Banquet with Jesus, making our ministry relevant and transformative.

## CONCLUSION:

This thesis has wrestled with an important issue that affects the future of the EFKS missionary enterprise. What I mean, is that this issue of *faaaloaloga* may be one of the root causes of the dwindling numbers within the EFKS church. If the people are dissatisfied and don't believe that their needs are being addressed by the church, then their only recourse is to leave and go somewhere else. According to Manfred Ernst, that somewhere else seems to be the Church of Latter Day Saints, the Pentecostal Churches such as the Assembly of God and more shockingly, the No Religion category.<sup>87</sup>

This has to be the concern of the church and whether the issues that I've raised affects these numbers or not, the point being, there is a void in the lives of the people of the EFKS, when our members are adding to the numbers of these rapidly expanding categories. By implementing some of the thoughts and ideas that stemmed from a socio-rhetorical reading of Matthew 14:13-21, I believe that a new missionary paradigm can infuse new hope and a new vision for the EFKS church in moving forward, especially since the EFKS has moved abroad to New Zealand, Australia, America and Hawaii.

My hope in the writing process is to toss in my own stones into the building of a solid foundation for the EFKS as it moves well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I truly understand and concur with the thought that the times have changed and that we need to change with it. However, change does not mean that we have to lose our identity, tradition and practices that have been the backbone of our institution. It means that our ways have to be open to the inspirations and revelations of God. We should not confine or limit ourselves to a certain structure or certain methodology, but be

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<sup>87</sup>

Ernst, *Winds of...*, 167-169

open to new ideas and new ways of inspiring those to continue or to have a relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ. If we 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 core of the issue 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 and that is a Samoa founded on God.

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