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**THESIS IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

**THE HEALING POWER OF SAMOA'S ANCESTRAL SPIRITS:  
A RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis project reflects on Traditional Samoan healing practices and re-interprets it in light of the Gospel message. The purpose of this process is to provide a 'Theology of Healing' for the work of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) today.

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*Soifua.*



## INTRODUCTION

The author of this paper introduces oneself as a Christian Samoan, with a strong belief in the traditional practice of Samoan healing, which has greatly impacted the author's life at a very young age. The author's mother a faithful Christian was also a Samoan *taulasea* or traditional healer. She provided her own treatments for children and adults of all ages, using Samoan medicine and other traditional methods. In Samoa when medical doctors can do no more to cure their patient's illness, the family will then take the sick person to a *taulasea*, for example a person like the author's mother for help. The author can recall many occasions of complete strangers turning up at the family house at odd hours of the day, full of worry and despair because of a loved one being very sick.

The author's mother treated various ailments that people turned up with such as *osofa punimoa* or stomach disorder, *osofa tulita* or running stomach, *laoa* or choking, *silailagi se* or carbuncle, to mention a few. She would chant certain words that served the purpose off a healing formula in addition to her massaging the sick person. The use of her bare hands and chants would always mystify me as to what power enabled her to heal a sick person. However, the author firmly believes that this power that aided her and many other traditional Christian healers, like my mother, is the indwelling power of the Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit, which empowers an individual healer to perform such an act as was promised by Jesus in the Gospel of John.<sup>1</sup> This concept involved a spiritual gift given to an individual from God that enables the faithful servants to perform personal spiritual services.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis therefore arises from the author's cultural experience and understanding of traditional Samoan healing, which currently is not accepted and is in fact a banned practice by the Congregation Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) of which the author is a faithful member. This paper is therefore an attempt to reflect upon and reinterpret aspects of traditional Samoan healing practices, in the light of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, so that traditional Samoan healing complements and enhances the Christian faith of Samoan people, rather than contradicts it.

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), John 14:16.

<sup>2</sup> Paul P. Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 270.



Traditional Samoan healing has been detailed in several scholastic works, but each has its own purpose and emphasis. This paper is the authors' re-interpretation of the effects of the Samoan process of healing that the healing power of the ancestral spirits of Samoa have derived through their faithfulness, respectfulness and sacredness. It is not evil; it is the spirit of their god that helps every human person to endure life to the best of his ability. This Spirit of God provided a gift of healing;<sup>3</sup> a friend of Christianity, strong and sweet, working for the common good. This is the same Spirit of God that provides the power of healing and miracles that enables the traditional *taulasea* or shaman, *taulaitu* or priest, to perform healing. As the Apostle Paul says, 'There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. The one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each individually as he wills, inspires all these.'<sup>4</sup>

This paper aims to present a theological perspective of the traditional practice of healing from within the context of Samoa. This will explore the interaction between Gospel and Culture in better understanding healing in the Samoan context.

In the First Chapter, this paper discusses Traditional Samoan Beliefs. It begins by looking at the importance and relevance of Samoan oral tradition, for these traditions contains the peoples understanding in the concept of life after death and their view on ancestral spirits. The rest of the chapter explains the relationship between traditional Samoan healers and these ancestral spirits that aide in bringing about the healing process of a patient.

The Second Chapter reflects upon the arrival of the Gospel message to the Samoan Islands. It looks at the spread of Christianity throughout Samoa and in particular the predominant influence of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in this process. This chapter also discusses the creation of a new role within the Samoan cultural structure, the *Faifeau* or Pastor and concluding with insights to the healing ministry of Jesus.

In the Third Chapter, a discussion commences on the effects of the Gospel message upon traditional Samoan healing and what changes have occurred. Particular focus will be upon the rise of a new Samoan healer.

<sup>3</sup> Enns, 272 – 273.

<sup>4</sup> The Holy Bible, (1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 1).



The forth and final Chapter involves a deliberation on a Samoan theology of healing. Synthesizing the traditional healing beliefs with the Gospel message in order to provide theological insights for the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) to embrace in its ministry work.

In carrying out this project, the majority of the literary sources used were from the Malua Theological College Library. Other relevant literary sources were found in the Nelson Public Library in Apia, the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) *Ia Malamalama* Book Store, and a few from the *Feleti* Barstow Public Library, American Samoa for the research for this paper. Personal interviews were also carried out and informal discussions with students and some of the staff members of the Malua Theological College were useful insights to this project. Furthermore, my own background and experiences, having a strong Samoan cultural and social background as well as my theological studies of four years in the Malua Theological College, have all contributed greatly to the completion of this project.

It is the author's prayer that this paper enlightens unto us the deeper meaning of the true nature of the healing power employed by the Samoan healers. I hope to help the (CCCS) Church come to a realization that this aspect of her ministry can be no longer ignored.

#### 1.1. The Traditional Period

This section refers to the "Traditional Period" as a historical time period well before Christianity first arrived (1830) in Samoa. The Collins Dictionary defines the term Tradition as "oral beliefs or any long established cultural practice passed down from generation to generation".<sup>1</sup> In the Samoan context this period of time represents the history and stories that were passed down orally or by word of mouth referred to by Samoans as "Tala Talo" or Oral Traditions. The method of orally transmitting Samoa's traditional history was widely practiced by its people in the past.

The Samoans believed in the omnipotence of their traditional religion, which was rich, complicated and different from the religious practices of other parts of the Polynesian, for they have many gods (polytheistic).<sup>2</sup> They believed that the powers of their gods and the sacred spirits of their ancestors influenced many of their activities.

<sup>1</sup> William Collins Collins Concise Pocket Dictionary (London: William Collins Sons & Co. 1978), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Malama Meleisea, *Language: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Oceania Printing Ltd. 1987), 15.



## CHAPTER 1

### TRADITIONAL SAMOAN HEALING

#### Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to discuss the Samoan understanding and interpretation of their traditional beliefs and practices of healing, prior to the arrival of the London Missionary Society in 1830. This paper will refer to this period (pre 1800s) in Samoan history as the Traditional Period. In order to address the above intentions, we begin with an explanation of the Samoan Tradition Period prior to missionary contact. This paper will highlight the importance of the formation of Samoan Oral Traditions, followed by a discussion of the Samoan World View. This will lead us to the Samoan belief in life after death and an understanding of ancestral spirits according to Samoan belief systems. Discussion will follow focused on traditional Samoan Communicators and healers. Finally this chapter will then turn to looking at the power of Samoans ancestral spirits.

#### 1.1. The Traditional Period

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<sup>5</sup> William Collins, *Collins Concise English Dictionary*, (London: William Collins Sons & Co, 1978), 797.

<sup>6</sup> Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga*, A Short History of Western Samoa, (Suva: Oceania Printers Ltd, 1987), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Meleisea, 36 – 37.



A more detailed discussion concerning Samoan Myths and Legends will help to disclose more about this traditional period and its relevance to traditional healing.

#### a. Samoan Myths and Legends

Samoan *Tala Tu'u* or Oral narratives can be classified into two main groupings, such as Myths and Legends. Myths and legends tell the stories of the past as handed down from generation to generation.<sup>8</sup> Most of these stories have some historical basis or setting and were most popular during their particular time of origin. These stories may depict certain activities of a particular group or clan of people and have survived throughout the ages in the form of myths and legends. These myths and legends have undergone little changes over time as they are told and retold by people to the successive generations that follow.<sup>9</sup> These great events and experiences of the past are very important, for the people of Samoa today. This is because these historical events help to provide the contemporary world with traditional Samoan wisdom (i.e. truths and values) in aiding people to understand where Samoan's have come from and also providing sources of information in dealing with some of the problems of the present life.<sup>10</sup>

Myths and legends are usually rich in moral values and become the strength of culture and traditions for their continual survival. They are felt in the dreams and the longings of the people and in the imaginations of the modern world.<sup>11</sup> Samoan historian Leulu Felise Vaa states that myth's enables people to take hold and realize the traditional structures of their society.<sup>12</sup>

The term myth is referred to in the Samoan language as *Tala o le Vavau*. The word *tala* means a narrative or story and the word '*vavau*' implies a sense of timelessness as in the Samoan word *faavavau*, which means 'forever into the future. Therefore, *tala o le vavau*, or myths means narratives of the ancient past of Samoa.

<sup>8</sup> Collins, 797.

<sup>9</sup> C. Cyril Eastwood, *Life and Thought in the Ancient World*, (London: University of London, 1964), 5. See also Featunai B. Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoa," BD Thesis: Pacific Theological College, Suva, 1991, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992), XI & XV.

<sup>11</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, (London: Collins Clear Type Press, 1960), 23 - 27.

<sup>12</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, "The Parable of a Samoa Divine," (MA Thesis: Australia National University, 1987), 74. See also Liuaana, 2.



Stories that were revered and greatly respected for they explain the existence of their divine Being and the cosmos of which the people were part of.<sup>13</sup>

The Samoan understanding of myths is clearly distinguished from '*tala anamua*' or legends. Samoan legends deal with narratives that are of the not so distant past, (eg. Stories that covered a period prior to the arrival of Christianity, like the origins of the *kava* plant), while myths are stories that deal with the far-distant past. Thus, myths formed a relationship or connection between the past and the future, legends do not make such a connection between the past and the future for it conveys only the historical sense.<sup>14</sup>

Myths, as stories of the Samoan ancient times explain how the supernatural beings, gods, ancestors, and the Samoan people and all the cosmic components of the universe came to co-exist and continue to survive in the world.<sup>15</sup> Lualua Meni on the subject believes that Samoa's sacred spirits represented the existence and presence of the power of the one almighty and everlasting God. The God of Creation in history is present in every age and generation. His creation and nature implies care and love through the generous work of his Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

#### b. Samoan World View

Clifford Geertz gives an idea of a worldview in any given culture as, "a peoples picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order."<sup>17</sup> This highlights the importance of the concept of 'worldview' within any given society, for it explains and expresses the particular culture of that society. Therefore, any challenges to the people's assumptions are considered a direct threat to their existing worldview, and inevitably their culture. So people and societies endeavour to resist such challenges because the questions that may emerge could threaten to destroy their understanding of reality, their culture, and their very existence within it.

The most common structure of the Samoan traditional World View was a three-tiered world that comprised of the heavens, the earth and the underworld.

<sup>13</sup> Kamu, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Kamu, 7 – 8.

<sup>15</sup> Amaamalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology, Aiga-the Household of Life*, (Neuendettelsan: Freimund Druckerei, 2000), 22 – 24.

<sup>16</sup> Rev. Lualua Meni, "Interviewed with author," 2 February 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1973), 127.



Although their different levels of existence separate the three from one another, the three-tiered formation is in fact contained in one realm. This reveals Samoa's mentality of the past, the understanding that everything becomes merged in the reality of existence. An experience meaning humans, animals, trees, rocks and so forth all belonging to and interacting in one community at large. Samoan myths reveal the interactions of the three-tiered realm.<sup>18</sup>

George Turners cosmogony myth of creation provides an understanding as to the contents of these tiers, and the Samoan thoughts about the existence of the world:

There was first of all a *Leai* nothing. Thence sprung *Nanamu*, fragrance. Then *Efuefu*, dust. Then *Iloa*, perceivable. Then *Maua*, obtainable. Then *Eleele*, earth. Then *Maatanoa*, small stone. Then *Mauga*, mountains. Then *Mauga*, married *Malaeliua*, changeable meeting place, and had a daughter name *Fasiefu*, piece of dust. She married *Lave I Fulufulutolo*, down of the sugar cane and to her was born three sons, *Mua* First; *Uso* Brother; *Talu* and their sister *Sulitonu* true heir.<sup>19</sup>

The myth story above states no clear mention of the existence of the three-tiered world, but this does not mean that Samoa had no understanding of the *Luga* or above and *Lalo* or below. The first tier was known as *Luga* or above, and referred to as the sky. The second tier was known as *Lalo* or below, and referred to as the sea; the two boundaries are believed to be solid and within one realm.<sup>20</sup> The mountains are considered as a connecting pillar to the heavens and the sea as a connecting platform to the underworld.<sup>21</sup> The third tier was known as *Pulotu*, and according to Samoan myths, *Pulotu* is believed to be an Elysium in the west end of the island of Samoa, where the ancestral spirits of the Samoan resides.<sup>22</sup> The word *Pulotu* itself is made up of two words. When literally translated it means *pu* or hole and *lotu* which means prayer or religion.<sup>23</sup> It is believed that *Pulotu* is the dwelling place of the spirits of the dead when they leave this earthly life. It is a place most honoured for praise and worship. Siupolu Moe referred to the earliest people of this place as the children of *Tuipulotu*. This was a group of very powerful people who took over control of the

<sup>18</sup> Liuaana, 3 – 5.

<sup>19</sup> George Turner, *Samoa, A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1984), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Liuaana, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Liuaana, 17 – 18.

<sup>22</sup> E Graighill Handy, *Polynesian Religion*, (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1971), 26. See also Featunai B. Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai, Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900 – 1962*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Tofaeono, 173 – 174.



place from the earlier gods of the Tagaloans; the gods of the Samoan myths, who settled in Samoa before the Pulotuans. The place was regarded to be the sacred place in honour of the deceased who lived a pure life on earth and would consequently live a life in a heavenly realm.<sup>24</sup>

John B Stairs, one of the earlier missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) to Samoa had his own version of the *Pulotu* world; referring to it as the Hades occupied by the blessed ones, *Sa-le-Fee*, the God Octopus; or also known as, *O le Lua-loto-o-Alii* (deep hole for the chiefs). This deep hole for the chiefs is a sacred entrance to the God Octopus' residence; the name of this place is called *Pulotu*. The place according to Stairs is the 'abode of the blest,' to the one tempered one, the Samoan Tartarus.<sup>25</sup>

The idea of *Pulotu* did not only relate to the Samoans but they also came to contact with other Pacific places like the Fijians and the Tongans who also had their concept of *Pulotu*. The Melanesian groups and their contact with the Samoan myths pave way in the strengthening of our own understanding of the *Pulotu* concept.<sup>26</sup> According to Faitala Talapusi, the Maori people of New Zealand claimed an Elysium place similar to our *Pulotu* myth, such a place is at the west end of New Zealand.<sup>27</sup> The Maoris referred to a singing and lament of moaning, the spirits is pipping farewell to the land of the living when entering their place of rest. Such views indicate one Pacific identity in relation to these Pacific Island mythology stories.

## 1.2. The Samoan Concept of Life After Death

Samoans believed in the existence of their people's spirit after death. When a person dies, that person's spirit or *Agaga* goes directly to *Pulotu* or the after world.<sup>28</sup> However, there is also a Samoan belief that there are some spirits of the dead that may for some reason have not entered the heavenly after-world of *Pulotu*. The causes of a wandering spirit or soul may be a result of a person who has died and their physical

<sup>24</sup> Siupolu Moe, "Interviewed with author," 10 March 2005.

<sup>25</sup> John B. Stairs, *Old Samoa, or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897), 217. See also Tofaeono, 173.

<sup>26</sup> Meleisea, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Siu Vaifale, "Eschatology In One Polynesia Context," Lecture notes Pacific Theology (TH403), Malua Theological College, Malua, 13 September 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Meleisea, 36.



remains may not have been recovered, leaving that spirit to wander aimlessly about the earth.<sup>29</sup> Unless their dissatisfaction is appeased, these souls can cause harm.

The Samoans in acknowledging this existence of life after death worshipped their ancestral spirits who dwelt in such spiritual places called by the name: *Fafa, Sa o le Fee or Pulotu*.<sup>30</sup> This afterlife understanding of the Samoans is similar to other Polynesian Island traditions.<sup>31</sup> This paper will now turn to elaborating further the Samoan belief in their ancestral spirits

## 1.2. The Samoan Concept of Ancestral Spirits

Samoan ancestral spirits can be divided into three main groups. This paper will briefly discuss each group or type, as this will help us latter to highlight each group's relationship to understanding traditional Samoan healing

### a. Aitu

There are Samoan ancestral spirits called *aitu*, it was believed that they returned among the livings for a particular purpose, for example, to enact something good or bad within their community or to protect its descendents.<sup>32</sup> These *aitu* or spirit contacted or visited their descendants in various forms; this belief was understood in their being in forms, of animals, birds and humans or in any other natural objects.<sup>33</sup> Consultation with these ancestral spirits or *aitu* could only be possible through the *taulaitu* or the anchor of the spirits, who spoke on behalf of the people to the spirits or on behalf of the spirits to the people.

There are several perspectives with regards to the word *aitu* in the Samoan context; one view echoes the meaning of violation of the norms and values preserved by the societies, by way of disrespect or the negative utilisation of authority. According to Dr. Kasiano Leaupepe, the word *aitu* is formed from two words '*ai*' meaning eat and '*tu*' meaning stand. In the Samoan custom, it is very disrespectful for someone to stand and eat in front of others, or even walks around the village eating food. The Samoans will label such actions as being disrespectful and evil; these evil

<sup>29</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoan," 19.

<sup>30</sup> Meleisea, 36.

<sup>31</sup> Meleisea, 36.

<sup>32</sup> Stair, 215. See also Tofaeono, 163.

<sup>33</sup> Kamu, 24 - 25.



actions break the norms and values of the society. In this sense the Samoan is labelling that person as acting in an *aitu* manner.<sup>34</sup>

One another perspective emphasises that *aitu* is not a ghost or the spirit of the dead. The *aitu* is part of the living person and continues to exist when the body dies. This view states that the *aitu* has a form said to look exactly like that person. This image was stressed by Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, as the same image of the person in the past, and later on in another place, the same or the exact image of that person exists in different times at different location. To such a case one would usually refer to the second image, as perhaps that person's *aitu* of the previous image.<sup>35</sup>

To a certain extent, the modern era continues to disregard the significance of the Samoan belief in *aitu*. However, it remains a significant aspect of Samoan traditions and belief system. It is influential in the sense that *aitu* are blamed to have caused certain illnesses amongst the people, to which it is a continued sign of their existence; even Universal Christianity today accept the existence of *aitu*, but are referred to as demons,<sup>36</sup> the devil or evil spirit<sup>37</sup> which the historical Jesus cast out during his healing ministry.

Today, traditional Samoan healers; *taulasea* or *taulaitu* continues to practice traditional spirit healing to heal *ma'i Samoa* or Samoan illnesses. The services of Samoan practitioners will continue to be rendered because their cause arises out of the existence of ancestral spirit, and only Samoan healers understand and can intervene to treat them successfully.

#### b. Agaga

Another grouping or type of Samoan ancestral spirits are referred to as *agaga*. According to George Pratt, the word *agaga* was originated from a Malayan word called *Anganangan*, which is translated, 'the disembodied spirit' or 'the free spirit from bodily existence.'<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Rev. Dr. Kasiano Leaupepe, 'Interview with author,' 8 June 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Fanaafi, Le Tagaloa, *Tapuai: Samoan Worship*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 42 – 43.

<sup>36</sup> Cluny & Laavasa McPherson, *Samoan Medical Belief & Practice*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1990), 239 – 240.

<sup>37</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoan", 52.

<sup>38</sup> George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, (Malua: London Missionary Society Press, 1911), 22.



The word *agaga*, simply means to go or to come, to go means '*aga atu*' and to come means '*aga mai*'. This definition refers to another Samoan function of the *agaga* or spirit, where the *agaga* leave the persons body when he/she is asleep and returns to that person's body when he/she awakens.<sup>39</sup>

According to John B. Stairs the *agaga* is another Samoan word used to designate the soul during death, it leaves the body and proceeds towards an underworld region, a place that is remote from human habitation.<sup>40</sup> This understanding of the *agaga* can identify the meaning of *agaga* to the word *aitu*, they are both related spirits of the dead or of the living human, they can also incarnate into certain forms. Also they are viewed as being able to cause *ma'i Samoa* or Samoan illnesses that upset the norms and values in that environment of the Samoan people.<sup>41</sup>

### c. Atua

This concept of Samoan ancestral spirit called *atua* is based on the traditional life of the Samoans; this can be of human origin or non-human origin, in the sense that their gods were those past ancestors whose deeds were so great and therefore worth worshipping.<sup>42</sup> Their gods were made to be reverence for they indirectly affected their lives in a positive manner.<sup>43</sup> The Samoans invoked and adored Tagaloa as their *atua* or god,<sup>44</sup> Tagaloa is viewed by Samoans as the Supreme Being, in whom they regarded as the creator of all things and the author of their mercies.<sup>45</sup> *Atua* or god is an inclusive non-gender term used to address the original gods,<sup>46</sup> immovable,<sup>47</sup> or the superior god whom they gave birth or created.<sup>48</sup>

This divine idea of the gods and spirits were immanent and dwelt in the places like the after world or *Pulotu*. Although they were viewed as transcendent beings but they were in the world on earth, not in some empty space above. They were believed

<sup>39</sup> Turner, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Tofaeono, 167. Stairs, 210 – 240.

<sup>41</sup> Tofaeono, 166.

<sup>42</sup> Meleisea, 35.

<sup>43</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoan." 24 – 25.

<sup>44</sup> Faalafi T.S. Fineaso, *Carrying the Faith (Samoan Methodism: 1828 – 1928)*, (Apia: Piula Theological College, 2005), 24.

<sup>45</sup> Meleisea, 2 – 10.

<sup>46</sup> Stairs, 211, Turner, 18 – 20.

<sup>47</sup> Meleisea, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Meleisea, 35.



to not participated in the everyday life of the people or take the forms of the living things and human forms but only returned when their people called.<sup>49</sup>

#### 1.4. Traditional Samoan Communicators and Healers

##### a. The *Taulaitu* or Priest

The *taulaitu* or priest is a spirit medium that is generally a descendent of the ancestral spirit or the gods whose help is being sought. The *taulaitu* is the mediator between families and their ancestral descendents. The *taulaitu* is also normally one of the most powerful *matai* (chief or titled adult) of a village or family. Their power is supposed to have emanated from the family's ancestors who keep a close watch on the *taulaitu* mannerism ensuring honour and dignity is maintained. Otherwise disciplinary actions shall be forthcoming on the *taulaitu*.<sup>50</sup> The ancestral spirits are believed to return and dwelt among the living in their interest of looking after their descendants, they usually come into contact with or visit their descendants in some different forms, such as of animals, birds, other humans and other natural objects.<sup>51</sup> And this is the function of the *taulaitu* as the communicator, is to communicate and correlate the interest of the family ancestral spirits for the information of the living in one-way or the other. The *taulaitu* could be a man or a woman, could be a titled or an untitled person whose position was influenced and controlled by the *aitu*.<sup>52</sup>

##### b. The *Taulasea* or Shaman

The *taulasea* or the shaman had a slightly different role in the community from that of the *taulaitu* or the priest, although he also plays the mediating function between the supernatural forces and the people. The *taulasea* communicated with supernatural forces but also used natural medicines in his healing activities.

According to Pratt, the *taulasea* is a priest who is responsible for the protection of the *tapui*,<sup>53</sup> or the place of prohibition, and who can alone remove such a plague from any worse that may arise.<sup>54</sup> Even though the function of the *taulasea* is

<sup>49</sup> Meleisea, 36.

<sup>50</sup> Tofaeono, 168.

<sup>51</sup> Meleisea, 36.

<sup>52</sup> George Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians Their Life Histories Described and Compared*, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1910), 228.

<sup>53</sup> Pratt, 322.

<sup>54</sup> Pratt, 301



slightly different in nature from that of the *taulaitu*, but their communication with the spirits and the performance of spirit pleasing elevated them into high status within the community.<sup>55</sup> The people recognised them as having the *mana* or power from the spirits.

### c. The Samoan Woman

According to Samoan myths, the first *tafaifa* or holder of Samoa's four paramount chiefly titles was a woman named *Nafanua*, a great goddess warrior of ancient Samoa. She was the one that foretold the arrival of a new religion to replace the existing Samoan religion.<sup>56</sup> The myth about Samoa's great woman prophet and warrior foretold of the high status of women in the pre-Christian Samoan context. Women's role in the Samoan context is one of the givers of life as a mother and healer. She is addressed in many honorary titles as:

*She is a feagaiga o aiga*, a family covenant.  
*O le tama-sa*, sacred daughter. *O le sa'oao*, chieftainess.  
*O pae ma auli*, peacemaker. *O le togiola*, redeemer.  
*O le suli*, decendant. *O gafa*, pedigree. *O toala fanau*,  
 Creator. *O fofo*, healer. *O sootaga*, mediator.<sup>57</sup>

Malama Meleisea confirmed that behaviour and respect was another important factor of the Samoan social life, especially in honouring women.<sup>58</sup> The *matai* or his sister was also known as sharing in the offering of *kava* in prayer meetings, when addressing the participation of the individual or family gods. Also the *feagaiga* or covenant between brothers and sisters was enforced by the belief that if brothers behave badly towards the sisters, the family gods or ancestral spirits will come in the aid of the sisters, and bringing a curse over the brother and his children.

In the course of this misfortune, the only cure for such curses was for the brother and his family to ask for forgiveness from the sister for the release of a possession by the family gods or the ancestral spirits to bring about complete healing.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Tofaeono, 168.

<sup>56</sup> Fineaso T.S. Faalafi, "An Historical Survey of the Changing Role and Status of Samoan Women," (BD Thesis: Pacific Theological College, Suva, 1982), 3 – 4.

<sup>57</sup> Kuiniselani Tago, "Violence Against Women," Malua: Theological College, July, 2005, A paper presented in the SPATS Workshop, She is the Assistant Director, Ministry of Women Affairs Samoa.

<sup>58</sup> Meleisea, 36 – 37.

<sup>59</sup> Meleisea, 37.



### 1.5. The Healing Power of Samoa's Ancestral Spirits

Samoans do not question the invisible powers that surround its environment. A force that is usually only for the purposes of healing and for good conduct in the community. Stairs supported the traditional view of Samoans that the ancestral spirits had a role of curing the sick.<sup>60</sup> Every family has its own particular ancestral spirits that they depended upon in their time of need. Of these, the curing of the sickness requires communications between the family member and the *aitu*, for the restoration of strength for the sick person. Samoan ancestral spirit healing power can be divided into three groups. Firstly, they were able to enact physical healing. Secondly healing through comforting, and thirdly is healing through protection.

#### a. Physical Healing

The healing of a person's *laoa* (choked usually by a fishbone), was done through the following procedure: The patient is asked to face the sea while the *taulasea* fans the patients face while the incantation is performed.<sup>61</sup> This was the recorded treatment for the *laoa* performed by Saalu of Sasina village in Savaii:

O spirit, have pity on (the patient by name),  
who is choking on the fish bone.  
If it falls, let it fall on the outside, let it not fall in the house.  
Spirit, have pity.

After performing this, the patient is then asked to swallow a cup of water after which the bone becomes unstuck.

The following was another treatment for the *laoa* performed by Manufalealili Agaalii of Sapunaoa village at Falealili: Manufalealili Agaalii the *taulasea* and the sick person walked slowly along the beach, looking down at the Island of Nuusafee where the spirit is coming from. The *taulasea* quietly chants the words, begging to the spirit about the patient choking on the fish bone, mentioning the fish's name. Then the *taulasea* strikes the patients throat from behind, after which the bone is found to have gone.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> John B. Stairs, *Old Samoa, or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1896), 34.

<sup>61</sup> Richard M. Moyle, "Samoan Medicinal Incantations," (The Journal of the Polynesian Society, Vol. Nos. 6, Auckland: 1974), 174.

<sup>62</sup> Manufalealili Agaalii, "Interviewed with author", 17 December 2004.



The degree of successes to the spiritual and physical healing of the Samoan healers reflects the continuing development of the good relationship between the two. The ancestral spirit must surely be addressed in the highest possible term of respect: for instance, *lau Afioga* or your honour.<sup>63</sup> This may be that such spirits are conceived as having human form and dignity.

Another example of spiritual healing is when a person is suffering from a *silailagi* or carbuncle. Pepe of Salailua village, Savaii, explains how this form of skin diseases is healed. The patient is seated facing the wind and then the *taulasea* says:

*Silailagi se*, watch out; one.

*Silailagi se*, watch out; two.

*Silailagi se*, watch out; three.

*Silailagi se*, watch out four.<sup>64</sup>

Then the counting continues up to eight, and is performed twice a day until the infected patient is well and the *silailagi se* has disappeared. The healing powers of the ancestral spirits of Samoa as discussed above which as performed by way of proper addressing and also sacred songs of incantations reveals another true character of these traditional spirits of Samoa. This service of our ancestral spirits in their capacity as healers highlight how this service was widely accepted and practiced by Samoans.

#### b. Spirit heals as Comforter

One of the functions of the spirit was to ensure that an individual, family or the community are spiritually comforted and strengthened in times of need. For example, the traditional sports or in times of village warfare. The ancestral spirits are called to be present to give them warmth or *faamafanafana* and encouragement or *faamalosiau*, when there is a need for help.<sup>65</sup>

The legend of *Taulupo*'s family spirit is an example of this role of the spirit in the Samoan context. When *Taulupo*'s sister was faced with a serious domestic situation in her adopted family as wife of the Tongan King, The sister wanted to get away from Tonga for she feared for her safety. In Samoa, *Taulupo*'o felt something was wrong with his sister; he felt for his sister but could not do anything. The ancestral or family spirit of *Taulupo*'o came to his comfort. Because the spirits can change into any form, *Taulupo*'o ordered the spirits to enter into his bats for he had

<sup>63</sup> Rev. Faafili Tusani, Interviewed with author, 26 March 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Moyle, 177.

<sup>65</sup> Liuaana, *Aitu in Contemporary Samoa*, 99.



many bats. The spirits in animal forms went on a rescue mission to Tonga, this gave warmth to the upset *Taulupo'o*.<sup>66</sup> This and many other legendary stories reflect a useful characteristic of the ancestral spirits of Samoa. The calling of the spirit for help and to comfort the living people of the family, suggests the existence of this strong oral tradition of Samoa's ancestral spirit. It also suggests the strong influence towards calling family spirits to provide for the purpose of the living.

### c. Spirit heals as Protector

A general observation by its neighbouring islands stated that the ancient religious activities of Samoa were of less importance in their own local context, when compared to those of other Polynesian Islands, like Tahiti, Tonga, Rarotonga, and so on.<sup>67</sup> This claim is based on the apparent absence of any real form of religious icons such as the construction of sacred buildings, sacred chants and musical instruments that are normally associated with worship and sacrificial activities.<sup>68</sup> However Samoa is different for they have their domestic deities of lower supernatural order, which are well established and capable for the purpose of protection of the Islands, the villages, the families and even the individuals themselves. All of these units have their own lower supernatural gods in addition to their higher god *Tagaloa* or *Tagaloalagi* residing in the ninth heaven.<sup>69</sup>

It is believed that the Samoans called upon their own supernatural gods, the ancestral spirits when there is a related need of the family. The other interesting point here is that the ancestral spirits may also respond to the need of individuals such as a family chief, a special child, sister or brother. This spiritual response is in the form of a guardian or family spirit. This guardian spirit can be taken as very powerful and knowledgeable. It can change its appearance to several forms: from human form to any other object of nature like a tree, rock, animal, and so on.<sup>70</sup>

The myth about the *aitu fafine* or the goddess named Nafanua, illustrates the function of the spirit as protector. During one of her battles the spirit of Nafanua's father was sent to help her fight the enemies that were destroying her mothers people.

<sup>66</sup> Lafai Sauoaiga, *O le mavaega I le Tai*, (Apia: Malua Press, 1988), 27 – 29. See also Liuaana, Aitu in Contemporary Samoan, 22 – 23

<sup>67</sup> Meleisea, 35.

<sup>68</sup> Meleisea, 35.

<sup>69</sup> Liuaana, Aitu in Contemporary Samoan, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoan" 21-23.



She eventually became the sole protector of many of the Samoan people who obtained her assistance especially in fighting for survival from oppression by their enemies.<sup>71</sup>

The deeds of Nafanua made her a household name in the history of Samoa. She was a goddess that came forth in the good nature of a sacred spirit, sent from the underworld of *Pulotu*, where she stayed with her parents, to save her mothers' people from suffering. She overheard the cry of her people living in the island of Savaii and she prepared to fight a war for her people. She used clubs and a paddle to kill her people's enemies. Nafanua fights many wars for her people and she won it, this leads to her holding the four highest titles of Samoa, the *tafaifa*.<sup>72</sup>

Nafanua is known by a number of pseudos.<sup>73</sup> She is the *aitu fafine* or woman goddess of Samoa; the *aitu tau* or warrior goddess of Samoa and sometimes she is also known as the *perofeta fafine* or prophetess. She is the god-human of Samoa, a supernatural spirit who came into being to protect her suffering relatives and people.<sup>74</sup> Though she lived at the far end of the country, her goddess nature enabled her to exercise her protecting nature of the Samoan ancestral spirit. The significant point here is the fact that family spirits were called upon to provide protection for those living and for the destructions of enemies.

<sup>71</sup> Fuimaono Fereti Tupua, "Interviewed with author," 26 March 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Turner, 38 – 39.

<sup>73</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoan", 27 – 28.

<sup>74</sup> Faalafi, "An Historical Survey of the Changing Role and Status of Samoan Women," 3 – 4.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE GOSPEL IN SAMOA

#### Introduction

This chapter looks at the Christianisation of the Samoan islands and the impact it had on traditional Samoan healing beliefs and practices. This paper will begin by discussing the arrival of early religious movements to Samoa, followed by the arrival of the London Missionary Society. Then this paper will look at the establishment of a new religious role in Samoan society the *faifeau* or the pastor. A discussion of the power of the Gospel message will follow, and then the author will conclude this chapter by discussing the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

#### 2.1. The Christianisation of Samoa

By briefly commenting at the arrival and the evangelization of Christianity to other nations of the Pacific, and then comparing it to the time period Samoa was Christianised, this will indicate how fast Samoa embraced the Gospel message.

When the Wesleyan Church arrived in Fiji in the year 1835, they were only able to baptize king Cakobau, in 1857 a period of twenty-two years latter.<sup>75</sup> However this conversion of Cakobau did not lead to a quick and automatic acceptance of Christianity by the majority of the Fijian people. In the case of Vanuatu, the Eromangan people of Vanuatu killed John William on the shores of Dillon's Bay in 1839, while William was attempting to bring Christianity to the natives of the Island.<sup>76</sup> For the Tahitians, the London Missionaries Society's (LMS) first mission in 1795 failed. It was only in 1813 approximately 18 years later, that their attempts were finally successful.<sup>77</sup>

Unlike the other Pacific Island nations as highlighted above, it did not take long for the Samoan people to accept Christianity. One particular traditional belief to the reason why there was a remarkably smooth and easy passage of acceptance of Christianity by the Samoans was because this new age was seen as being prophesied

<sup>75</sup> John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, (Suva: Oceania Printers Ltd., 1982), 102 & 114.

<sup>76</sup> Garrett, 116.

<sup>77</sup> Meleisea, 53.



in the past. This prophecy enacted the promise of the war goddess Nafanua. It is believed that she predicted the arrival of a new kingdom for the Samoans under the leadership of king Malietoa.<sup>78</sup> The year 1830 saw this prophecy come to being, with the arrival of the missionary John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and his colleagues on the shores of Sapaalii, Savaii.<sup>79</sup>

## 2.2. Other Religious Movements in Samoa

Before the arrival of the LMS to Samoa, many other *papalagi* or white men were trying to teach their versions of Christianity to the Samoan people. Many sailors, who had little understanding of Christianity, tried to establish what was known at the time as the 'Sailors *Lotu*.'<sup>80</sup> Among them was a young man who had the title *Tagipo* or 'the night crier'.<sup>81</sup> He erected a rough pulpit from his own little Samoan house, and upon it he placed and kept some old books that he brought on shore with him. He stated that his books were very sacred, although he allowed them to be uncovered only on Sundays. He persuaded the people to assemble for worshipping their god on the Lords day (Sunday). The service involved the participants bowing before the sacred books. They also listened to some paragraphs read to them by the sailor out of these so-called sacred books, which the sailor did not even know how to explain to his audience. He regarded himself as the high priest of his *lotu* or religion, and as such he continued to have a reputation amongst his followers.<sup>82</sup>

In another case, a man name *Saivaia*<sup>83</sup> who had been visiting Tonga, returned to his village of Satupaitea, Savaii. He came with a Tongan version of Christianity and began to teach members of his family about the new god. Things did not work out well for him due to his limited understanding of the *lotu* or religion. There was another Samoan Christian cult, called the Siovili movement.<sup>84</sup> Siovili was a Samoan from Savaii, who journeyed the Pacific as a sailor on the trading ships that passed by

<sup>78</sup> Meleisea, 56 – 58, see also Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai*, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Garrett, 121 – 122, see also Meleisea, 45 – 46, Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai*, 8 – 9.

<sup>80</sup> 'Sailors lotu' refers to some runaway sailors who resume some religious practise in the Samoan islands, before the arrival of the missionaries in year 1830..

<sup>81</sup> The Rev. A. Buzacott, *Mission Life in the Island of the Pacific*, (London: John Snow and Co, 1866), 126.

<sup>82</sup> Buzacott, 126.

<sup>83</sup> Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Meleisea, 52.



the Samoa Island. Siovili in landing on the shores of Tahiti found his way to some Christian mission homes. On his return to Samoa he proclaimed himself as the teacher of a new *lotu* or religion. Some runaway sailors had given him the nickname Siovili, but his real name was Sio or Joe. Due to his acquaintance with the use of the gimlet on trade ships, sailors called him Siovili or Joe Gimlet. Joe Gimlet according to Rev. Buzacott<sup>85</sup> performed the most extraordinary corruption practice of the Christian faith. His followers met in their places of worship and went through some certain superstitious practices. Joe added the firing of the musket in the service and called some intelligible and absurd references to the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup> Eventually, Siovili or Joe Gimlet gained a lot of followers to his religion, not only in Savaii but also around Upolu.

All these smaller religions or *lotu* movements never survived or lasted long, but the importance of all this is the seemingly religious nature of the Samoans was highlighted. They believed in the supernatural power, which must be obeyed and worshipped as the creator and ruler of the universe.<sup>87</sup> The significant point here concerning the Christianisation of Samoa is that whoever could explain and their god/God better, not only by words but also through the provision of material wealth, would be believed. The people would participate and reflect their willingness to worship in good faith, in return for outward healing or forms of material goods to improve their position and status in the local community: (e.g. 'the argument by Fauea that the Christian God was superior because of the valuable possession of the English people, guns, steel knives, ships, etc').<sup>88</sup>

### 2.3. Samoa and the London Missionary Society (LMS)

The Samoan people were seeking religious explanation, especially when there was much to know about this new form of religion called Christianity. Christianity here meant, a religion, which was founded on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament of the Christian Bible.<sup>89</sup> It testifies to the good qualities of life, like the loving concern for others. This is the good news for the

<sup>85</sup> Buzacott, 127.

<sup>86</sup> Buzacott, 127.

<sup>87</sup> Buzacott, 127.

<sup>88</sup> Meleisea, 54.

<sup>89</sup> Collins, 132.



Tongans, the Rarotongans and also the Hawaiians, being converted to Christians,<sup>90</sup> gave the impression and the expectations amongst the Samoans that the new religion will soon reach their shores.

The Samoans called the white missionaries, *papalagi* or sky-breakers, since they appeared to have burst through the sky on the horizon.<sup>91</sup> The Samoans recognized them as being more powerful, possessing supernatural powers: their powers of navigation and weapons of war, and the wealth of material possessions, such gifts were giving out freely to the Samoan people.<sup>92</sup> It would be a valid assumption to suggest that Malietoa himself would have been anxious enough to meeting this new religion and to take advantage of the new forms of material wealth that were already being introduced to the Samoans by other Europeans arriving before the missionaries.<sup>93</sup> This was evident when he immediately left the war on the other island, Upolu, and traveled to meet the Christian missionaries at Sapapalii on the big island of Savaii.

John Williams and Charles Barff, six Tahitians and two Aitutakians together with the assistance of a Samoan couple Fauea and Puaseisei who they picked up from Tongan who were about to travel to Samoa, were the first missionaries that brought Christianity to the Samoa islands.<sup>94</sup> The missionaries under the advice of Fauea went to Sapapalii Savaii with the intention of meeting king Malietoa Vainuupo, whose *tafaifa* rank or kingly status in Samoa made him the right person by which the Gospel of Jesus Christ be introduced and accepted by the Samoan people. The crucial factor of note is the role that Fauea as a Samoan *matai* played. He was used as the liaison person between the missionary John Williams and king Malietoa. The significance of this welcoming occasion was the exchange between the two Samoan high chiefs Fauea and Malietoa Vainuupo, one of the paramount chiefs of Samoa. An important highlight of Samoan tradition here is the relationship that is bonded in much respect between one *matai* and another in the Samoan society. The effect of this is probably shown in Malietoa Vainuupo's seemingly immediate acceptance of the Gospel on behalf of the people of Samoa, without hesitation.

<sup>90</sup> Meleisea, 53.

<sup>91</sup> Meleisea, 42.

<sup>92</sup> Garrett, 121.

<sup>93</sup> These are the beachcombers and sailors who had already been to Samoa before the missionaries arrived in the year 1830.

<sup>94</sup> Meleisea, 56.



Once the Gospel was established it spread out not only in Savaii, but also to the rest of the Samoa islands of Upolu, Manono, Apolima, Tutuila, and Manua. Fauea and his wife Puaseisei thus became the first Samoan Christians.<sup>95</sup> Their advantage as Samoans became a useful tool in communicating the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ in their own language, and helped in the process of Evangelization of the Samoan Islands. As evidence of their conversion, the new converts to Christianity had to kill and eat their old gods, (eg: animals and birds), in demonstration of their rejection of the old religious beliefs.<sup>96</sup> As Christianity became more popular, the power of the new Christian God of the missionaries began to emerge through the teachings and stories of the missionaries, convincing the Samoans of their new worship. The healing powers formerly ascribed to Samoan priests or shamans were now being replaced by Christian worship in the forms of prayers and blessings. Traditional healing practices were replaced with the introduction of the *faiifeau* or pastor the mediator between man and God.<sup>97</sup>

#### 2.4. The Christian '*faiifeau*' or Pastor

As Christianity began to establish itself in village life, many people who decided to take up the new religion, in place of their old religion and gods, began to follow the new moral teachings of Christianity and its new moral code for their lives. This fast growth and evitable changes were noted by Thomas Heath<sup>98</sup> when he said, "I do not know of a village in Samoa in which we have not seen a Chapel and a school, or '*aoga faiifeau*'"<sup>99</sup>

The impact of Christianity saw Samoan belief in supernatural spirits of their ancestors and their gods decline. This process was accelerated with the LMS missionaries introducing a key figure and role model into the existing Samoan structure. That is the role of the *faiifeau* or pastor who was seen as God's visible representative to the Christian community. In a way the *faiifeau* was also considered to

<sup>95</sup> Kenape T. Faletese, *Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa (L.M.S)*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1961), 10-11.

<sup>96</sup> Meleisea, 54.

<sup>97</sup> Garrett, 124 – 125.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Heath was a London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary who serves in Manono, Samoa in the year 1841

<sup>99</sup> Garrett, 125.



be the incarnation of God, his status was also honoured as the Holy Father that conduct Christian worship for the people.<sup>100</sup>

The manifestation of this respect by the people was shown by their giving the *faiifeau* the best house in the village, gifts of all sorts like food, clothes, money and fine mats. The *faiifeau* speaks and prays with authority as he reveals the message of God for the world including the Samoans. The rising status of the *faiifeau* seemed to have overshadowed even that of the position of the high chief in the Samoan village council. Gods Chapel built by the villager's for worshipping God dominated the surrounding community and environment. He was charged by the white missionaries to proclaim and live the Word of God, to reflect the Gospel message and the Biblical teachings in his life. The *faiifeau* also had the responsibility to leading Sunday worship and to make sure there was an evening family prayer in every household.<sup>101</sup> These instructions by the early missionaries<sup>102</sup> still exist today, and it is well established in the structure of Samoan society because of the *feagaiga* or covenant between the village congregation and their pastor. Without the *feagaiga* or covenant, the *faiifeau* or pastor would not have that support to hold such a respectful position.

As stated in Chapter one, in the traditional Samoan context, the role of the *matai* or a high chief of a Samoan family was to act as the family mediator with their family god.<sup>103</sup> But in the case of a village or a district there is specially a *taulaitu* or priest, a *taulasea* or shaman whose role was to act as a mouthpiece for their gods in relaying messages to the village or the district people.<sup>104</sup> There is also a provision of food and other valuable properties, an offering asked through the priest or the shaman to the gods, either for blessings or for the forgiveness of wrongdoing by the victim of the related families, villages or the districts.<sup>105</sup>

However all these traditional roles and responsibilities, were re-interpreted and taken over by the new man of God, the *faiifeau* or pastor since the arrival of Christianity. The roles of the *taulaitu* or priest, the *taulasea* or shaman were no longer required and were seen as evil and meddling with the devil. The faith of observation and experience of the forefathers in dealing with their own supernatural beings was

<sup>100</sup> Meleisea, 54. See also Garrett, 122 – 123.

<sup>101</sup> Meleisea, 54 – 55.

<sup>102</sup> Meleisea, 54.

<sup>103</sup> Fuimaono, interviewed

<sup>104</sup> Fuimaono, interviewed

<sup>105</sup> Fuimaono, interviewed



abolished, and the missionaries in the '*faifeau*' established a new role and faith of 'hearing' the Gospel message to heal the sins of humankind<sup>106</sup>

## 2.5. The Power of the Gospel Message

The power of the Gospel continued to be revealed through the daily lives of the Samoan people physically and spiritually.<sup>107</sup> The offerings in terms of material goods and wealth by the people for the purposes of the Church highlighted their new spiritual commitment. Worshipping their new God of Christianity through faith and prayer were trademarks of Samoan Christianity. The people anticipated a new life that they believed never existed before. The Gospel of Jesus Christ had taken over as the most powerful and most convincing God that the Samoans have given honor to, over its traditional religious practices and beliefs.<sup>108</sup>

The power of the Christian Gospel had made telling changes in the lives of the Samoan people. For example the organization and unity of the people had improved, the people not only contributed to the welfare of the *faifeau* or the pastor, but they also helped the missionaries take the Gospel to other Pacific Islands. They also contributed coconut oil for sale to England to get money to help out with the outstation work of the missionaries in the Pacific.<sup>109</sup>

The message of the gospel as expressed through the deeds and teachings of Christ have helped to re-shape the worldview and focus of Samoan society. Its priority and concern for peace and stability in terms of spirituality and religious practice was now concentrated in the power emanating from the one Omnipotent God of all things in the universe that Jesus Christ represents. The priest or the *matai* and his extended family at nightfall gathered together under one roof to sing hymns and offer prayers of thanksgiving and hope to the 'God from Above.' The Samoan people ceased having village warfare, but now they shared in the forms of gift exchanges to the Church, and their extended family *matais*.<sup>110</sup>

Although Samoa seemed to have made an immediate response of accepting Christianity, its people did not necessarily all join the same denomination.

<sup>106</sup> Garrett, 124 – 125.

<sup>107</sup> Meleisea, 69 – 70.

<sup>108</sup> Peletisala Lima, "Silent Worship" (BD Thesis: Malua Theological College, 1999), Unpublished, 17. see also John Garrett, *Footsteps In The Sea*, (Suva: Oceania Printers LTD, 1992), 186.

<sup>109</sup> Meleisea, 54 – 55.

<sup>110</sup> Garrett, *Footsteps In The Sea*, 17.



Christianity came to Samoa in many versions. These were the mainline denominations of the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Roman Catholics (RC), and the Methodists (WMMS).<sup>111</sup>

With the LMS missionaries and its established Churches and members, a new understanding of physical healing emerged. What was traditionally attributed to the works of the ancestral gods was replaced by a Christian message that stated that illness and disease were signs of a persons' sinful nature. The message of Christianity is of God that comes with power of hope and new life not only in the present but also in the future and eternity and this message of new life required the sinful person to repent from their sins. This Christian view of relating sin to illness and repentance leading to restoration is a predominate thinking in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ places value in his healing ministry.

## 2.6. The Healing Power of Jesus Christ

Diseases and infirmities were very common in Jesus Christ time. Despite the healing of the sick playing a minor role in Jesus ministry, it did have an important bearing on his followers emphasizing the view that God was His peoples physician. The healing ministry of Jesus Christ highlights the spiritual aspect of the power of God. This is the power that heals those who have faith in that name, from all wounds and diseases that may affect their lives. The Gospels recorded about twenty-six cases of healing,<sup>112</sup> in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The healing ministry of Jesus as is mentioned in the Gospels included all sorts of sicknesses. For examples:

- the comforting of the sick and the oppressed (Mat 9: 20-22), Mk 5:25-34), (Luke 8:43-48), (John 5:2-18)
- the feeding of the hungry and thirsty (Mat 14:13-21), Luke 9:11-17)
- and the rebuking of the evil spirits. (Mat 8:28-34), Mk 5:1-20), (Luke 8:26-35),

In the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 8:1 – 4, Jesus showed compassion in the cleansing of the leper. "I do choose. Be made clean."

In the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 5:25 – 34, the faith of the woman with hemorrhage draws the compassion of Jesus Christ the healer. "Daughter, your

<sup>111</sup> Meleisea, 55.

<sup>112</sup> Bernard Martin, *The Healing Ministry in the Church*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960), 19.



faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your disease." Here faith usurps all physical barriers, as the woman believed in the power of Jesus Christ that could emanate even from the mere touch of His garment.<sup>113</sup>

Luke the physician of Paul,<sup>114</sup> whom had a career of healing the physical body, stated the power of Jesus Christ traced to His anointing by the Holy Spirit of God, as per Luke in chapter 3:22. Luke in chapter 5:17 notes that the power of the Lord, Jesus Christ was present to heal the sick people.

In chapter 6:18 – 19, people from Judea, Jerusalem and as far as Tyre and Sidon all who were possessed with the evil spirit came earnestly seeking his healing. And the whole crowd was seeking to touch Him, because power was coming out from Him and healing all them.

Two points that are worth noting from Luke's Gospel:

Firstly is the role of the twelve disciples as witnesses and participants in the healing and preaching ministry of Jesus. Luke refers particularly to their call, commissioning and sending them out, as the three separate references to their healing activities.<sup>115</sup>

Secondly the often response of the crowd as noted, included all those who were healed as well as those who witnessed the healing. This is a true indication of the spread of the faith in Jesus, through his work with his disciples, as being emphasized with in the following parts of the Gospel of Luke:

Luke, 5:25 – 26: "Immediately he stood up before them, took what he hath been lying on and went to his home, glorifying God. Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awed, saying, we have seen strange things today"

7:16 – 17: "Fear seized all of them, and they glorified God, saying A great prophet has risen among us! And God has looked favorably on his people! This word about Him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country"

9: 43: "And all were astounded and amazed at the greatness God"

13: 17: "And the entire world was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing"

<sup>113</sup> Martin, 24 – 25.

<sup>114</sup> The Holy Bible, (Col. 4:14).

<sup>115</sup> John Christopher Thomas, "International Review Mission," Vol. 93 Nos. 370/371 July/October Geneva: 2004, 'An Overview of the Biblical Canon' 431 – 434.



18: 43: "Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God"

In the Gospel message of John, healing was another part of the fourth gospel in the use of signs: In John chapter 5:1 – 9, Jesus speaks with authority to the man by the Beth-zatha's pool in this case, "Do you want to be made well?" He was asking this man who has suffered for thirty-eight years and was incapable of getting himself into the pool: the paralytic man was not convinced of Jesus' way of treatment. However Jesus commanded him to do, what to the man was an impossible task: "Stand up, take your mat and walk". At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

This is the power of healing of the Gospel, the healing power of the Spirit of God; the power that gives new hope and life to all believers. Those who came to God and those who are too far away from God are healed by Jesus. God that can act from whatever situation no matter what the cause may be, as the Gospel according to John briefly states.<sup>116</sup>

These are but a few of the many examples of the importance and relevance of the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. A ministry of Jesus that was motivated for His concern and genuine love for those suffering from diseases and infirmities. Through Jesus healing ministry people were liberated from the bondage of sickness and disease. They believed in faith and in most cases observed Jesus enact his healing before them.

<sup>116</sup> Weatherhead D. Leslie, *Psychology Religion and Healing*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1922), 47 – 50.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL OVER TRADITIONAL SAMOAN HEALING

#### Introduction

This chapter directs our attention to the important influence of the Gospel upon the traditional practices of Samoan healing as discussed in chapter one. In particular, the use of Samoan medicine and spirit healing. This paper will be discussing here the changes that occurred to the traditional Samoan healing practices due to the impact of the Gospel. Furthermore, this paper will discuss the interaction between the gospel and Culture. Then the author will look at the effect of such impacts that resulted in the establishment of a new Samoan healer.

#### 3.1. The Changes to Traditional Samoan Healing due to Impacts of the Gospel

Samoan healing practices in particular their traditional spiritual beliefs came under great scrutiny during this particular period of missionisation. The days of the simple hand massage and a portion of traditional herbal mixture that saw many serious ailments cured and normalized, was challenged by western science and new theories. For example the wonder of drugs and medicines that the missionaries brought with them quickly cured simple illnesses that could terminate ones life, like the common flu. Traditional Samoan spiritual worship of its own gods to repel sickness and hostile spirits, were questioned and eliminated by the missionaries. Traditional ancestral deities were deemed and judged as being far inferior and powerless to the one and only God of all creation. The God that Lords over all and conquers in miraculous wonders all sickness and evil in life, through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.<sup>117</sup>

However, it is now viewed that the first Christian missionaries infact showed indiscriminate cruelty and disrespect for the traditional and ancestral beliefs and practices of Samoa. They played down the important role that the Samoan spirit healing and ancestral spirits had as part of the spiritual world and religiosity of the

<sup>117</sup> Tofaeono, 127.



Samoan people.<sup>118</sup> This includes the invasion and overthrow of all beliefs in the presence of spirits that settled in parts of the creation. For example in the lands, sea and the sky, the Samoans believed their deities inhabited these areas of creation.<sup>119</sup> The use or practice of the Samoan traditional spirit healing as being genuine was also criticized as worthless by the missionaries. They also denied the indigenous spirit belief in their conquest of their belief in the one and only Holy Spirit of the Christian faith.<sup>120</sup> The missionaries in fact were convinced that traditional healings of the Samoans were sub-standard and heathenish and involved the worship and recognition of demons and idol gods, ancestral spirits, which to them were destructive spirits.<sup>121</sup> However such denunciation by the Samoans of their objects of veneration is a mere evidence of their respect and loyalty to their visitors the missionaries, which leads to all their sacred deities being destroyed and thrown away.

The Samoan people began to respect and adopt the newly introduced concept of a single God. This meant a shift from the personal contact of the Samoan and their many gods, to a new spiritual relationship with the one single God of all things in Creation. The God of Christianity as being the most powerful and most high that dwells in the heavens.<sup>122</sup>

The attitudes of the missionaries towards healing was clear they preferred their own modern English medical practices as being far superior to that of the native Samoans; hence their negative attitude towards the practice of spirit healing and traditional medicine of the Samoans. The missionaries have always favored the Occident<sup>123</sup> understanding of science as more competent in medicine for health matters. This was evident by the obvious preference of the medical doctors that accompanied the missionaries instead of the traditional practices of the natives in curing the sick people.<sup>124</sup> The abandonment of the old paradigm and the adoption of this new scientific methodology of diagnosing diseases and its association with the

<sup>118</sup> Kamu, 104 – 105.

<sup>119</sup> Tofaeono, 103

<sup>120</sup> Tofaeono, 127.

<sup>121</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in contemporary Samoan", 33

<sup>122</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoan", 59-60.

<sup>123</sup> Anne H. Soukhanov, The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, third edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), 1250. The 'Occident's' are the countries of the Western Hemisphere and Europe, from old English, (French and Latin). The Westerners are from time of Hippocrates the 'Father of Medicine' in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries, BC. He is a Greek physician who laid the foundations of scientific medicine by freeing medical studies from the constraints of the philosophical and superstition speculation.

<sup>124</sup> McPherson, 59 – 60.



elitist attitude of the European missionaries began to take its toll on the Samoan mindset.<sup>125</sup> In the abandonment of the traditional models of healings, the Samoan belief would therefore have to accommodate the other beliefs about medicine and healing of illnesses the missionaries had to offer. However, the Samoan worldview could not be totally discarded which included their traditional practices and beliefs in healing. This aspect of the Samoan culture ensured that the traditional ways of healing remained alive although having a much lesser role but still significance with the Samoan community.<sup>126</sup>

The introduction of the new medical theories and practices by the missionaries represent their attitudes towards physical health for the body. They were chosen more for their evangelical devotion rather than for their knowledge and mastery of Western medical belief and practice. According to Gunson,<sup>127</sup> the recruits of the missionaries were drawn largely from that of England and Scotland, the 30 European missionaries sent to Samoa between 1830 and 1860, only three of them had any formal medical training. They were Turner, Bullen and Macdonald; George Pratt was the only one to have been apprenticed briefly to a druggist.

Much of the Samoan mission was given to the conduct and control of the Pacific Islanders from Tahiti and Cook Islands who were chosen specially on the basis of their religious commitment and training in the scriptures, before posting to their various fields.<sup>128</sup> In the process of the missionary changes the Samoan perceptions of supernatural being still existed, with the power to produce and remove illnesses in humans. However, the belief in these traditional powers has since been challenged and replaced by the introduction of the Christian God; the omnipotence and high God as witnessed in its Holy Scriptures. Gunson refers to the root of such an attitude as follows:

The attitude taken to disease was a typical projection of Calvinist thought. Disease was an agency of the providence of God, a judgment on the sins of the people and the necessary consequences of their immoral state.... The way to heal this disease was to apply physical remedies but first to heal the spiritual state of the people, to effect salvation.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>125</sup> McPherson, 59 – 60.

<sup>126</sup> McPherson, 61.

<sup>127</sup> Neil Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, 'Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797 – 1860'. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 344 – 364. see also, McPherson, 60.

<sup>128</sup> McPherson, 60.

<sup>129</sup> Gunson, 248. See also McPherson, 61.



Therefore, traditional practices and belief in healing needs to be completely destroyed for not only were they the causes of mental and physical illness, but also separated the person from the divine Christian God.

### 3.2. Christ Against Culture

The missionaries understanding of heaven was defined in scripture as a place that opposed anything evil and ungodly. It is in the interpretation of the missionaries that view heaven as a divine place well beyond reached and invisible; it is also referred to, as a peaceful heaven, well secured and it should not be in contact with the world of culture.<sup>130</sup> Such a notion of a heavenly God beyond the skies and mountains was easily accepted and adopted by the Samoans, because they to have a similar notion of a divine exist in the first tier.<sup>131</sup> However, because God cursed the earth in the beginning as it states in the bible,<sup>132</sup> so to in the mind-set of the missionaries, the world was fallen and therefore corrupt and evil. It needed to be set free and redeemed from the bondage of sin through the message of the gospel.

This is why the LMS missionaries saw the need to Christianize Samoa, because its people were living in the darkness and so were their beliefs and practices. To the missionaries, the purpose of Christianity was the continuation of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on earth, as was carried out before by the Apostle Paul to the gentiles when he and Barnabas were set apart by the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel to the gentiles.<sup>133</sup> This redemptive work of Jesus Christ cleansed the mess of an evil world. To transform the Samoan islands from the darkness of their sins to the purpose for which God had created them, this is the work of restoring life, both spiritually and physically of the Gospel.

This redemptive work not only includes the healing of the body and soul, but also the healing of the whole creation. It includes the whole social reconstruction of the world, like cultural traditions and humankind. Jesus Christ is the Word of God that brings life to his creation that brings life to the Samoan culture and traditions.

<sup>130</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoa," 58.

<sup>131</sup> Liuaana, "Aitu in Contemporary Samoa," 58 – 59.

<sup>132</sup> The Holy Bible, (Genesis 3:17).

<sup>133</sup> The Holy Bible, (Acts, 13:1-52).



In illustrating this view of the superiority of Jesus Christ and represented by the Gospel Message we turn to the 'Christ Against Culture model of Richard Niebuhr. The Christ against Culture model does not mean that the Lordship of Christ rules over Culture but rather, it is the sole authority of Christ over the Christian. This means that life is a choice for the Christian believer that is if he followed Christ he must therefore reject any loyalty to culture. The Apostle John's statement supports this view:

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."<sup>134</sup>

The issues of conflict in the world as offspring's of the demands of Christ and culture are many, complicated and diverse. Christians for instance from the martyrs of Rome to the Confessing Church of Nazi Germany have been summarily persecuted throughout history for defying the demands of secularism through State supremacy rule and conduct. Richard Niebuhr's model of Christ against Culture can help describe the situation of Christianisation in Samoa, the destruction of the traditional healing practices of the Samoans and labeling the ancestral spirit belief of the people as uncivilized. The problem is when Christianity tries to divorce itself from a particular culture it is evangelizing, identifying that culture in particular its practices as evil, thinking of Christ as Lord over everything. Niebuhr here suggests that the world here means culture and the worldview of the Samoans is the culture that Niebuhr implies needs to be ruled over by Christ.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.3. A New Samoan Healer

The rejection of the Samoan healers role, traditionally performed by the *taulaitu* or priest, the *taulasea* or shaman as discussed in chapter one, were reinterpreted and expressed in the power of prayer of the Samoan *faiifeau* or pastor. This transfer of power to the *faiifeau* also meant that the spirits of the old gods of Samoa who administered healing were to be replaced by the Holy Spirit of the God of Christianity.<sup>136</sup> According to Featunai Liuaana, despite the transformation of understanding in healing now being associated with the Christian God's power, some Samoan Christian pastors still practiced traditional healing methods. However, once

<sup>134</sup> The Holy Bible, (1 John 2:15).

<sup>135</sup> Peletisala Lima, "Richard Niebuhr's: Christ against Culture" Lecture #21 to Gospel and Culture TH409, Malua Theological College, Malua, 11 April, 2005, 1 – 2.

<sup>136</sup> Peter Hempenstall, "The Journal of Pacific History," Vol 39. No.2. 2004, On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa, Derek Freeman. (Suva: Carthage Publishing, 2004), 248.



these rebels were identified they were soon forbidden and threatened with dismissal from the mission by the London Missionary Society (LMS) authorities.<sup>137</sup>

A further point of note is the manner by which the social practices of old Samoa has been translated to affect the attributes of the new Christian religion. The village curfews in traditional times were sacred hours of prayer in respect of the spirits of the dead. No one was allowed to move outside during this hour of prayers.<sup>138</sup>

Today, these same sacred hours are still observed in village curfews around seven and eleven o'clock every evening, for worship and final prayers for the night. But the worship is given to the God of the Christian religion. This in effect is a translation from their god Tagaloa-lagi. Though the God of Christianity has taken over the podium from the gods of pre-Christian Samoa, the Samoans have continued to believe in the existence of their old gods.<sup>139</sup>

Another aspect of the decline in the role of traditional Samoan healer reflects the position of women in the traditional Samoan. The role of the women that was previously mentioned in chapter one discusses the sacredness of women in the old Samoan context. However that was not the same with the arrival of Christianity, women status was of lesser value in the structure of Christianity. During missionaries training, women were only trained to become suitable wives for the new Samoan healer (the pastor)<sup>140</sup> The education given by Christianity to women emphasized the England in 19<sup>th</sup> Century, women's domestic duties in the house such as cooking, sewing, gardening and housekeeping.<sup>141</sup>

According to Rev. Prof. Otele Perelini, one major factor that contributed to the obstruction of women sacredness was the arrival of Christianity. Perelini states that the traditional and literal interpretations of the bible, which promotes the status of man and their dominance in the early services of Christianity. It has contributed to the slavery and suppression of women and their rights. Therefore women had minimal leadership role during the early structure of Christianity.<sup>142</sup>

The *feagaiga* or covenant relationship that accorded a sister sacred status, is now extended to the *feagaiga* or covenant between a *faiifeau* or pastor as the sacred

<sup>137</sup> Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai*, 264 – 265.

<sup>138</sup> Hon. Le Tagaloa Leota Pita, "Interviewed with author," 8 June 2005.

<sup>139</sup> Meleisea, 36 – 37, see also Tagaloa Leota Pita, "interviewed".

<sup>140</sup> Meleisea, 60.

<sup>141</sup> Meleisea, 60.

<sup>142</sup> Otele Perelini, "Pacific Journal of Theology," series II No.22. "The Emancipation of Church Women," Suva: 1999, 15 – 16.



man of God, a representative of the Christian God in the society and congregations. Even though, the Gospel diminished this role of sacredness, the Samoan woman is still a dominant figure in the practices of ancestral spirits and medicine healing in Samoa today.

The soft touch and care of their feminine hands and dedication to their work shows them as the natural source of hope and life for the healing of their people. The presumed sacredness of the Samoan woman in its cultural setting reflects the special treatment of the female gender in the ancient traditions of Samoan society.

The author also provides a synthesis approach to traditional Samoan healing with a challenge to Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), to re-evaluate and re-interpret its theology in this important area.

#### 4.1. God and the Created World

In the book of Genesis in the Old Testament it states that God created the world and afterward God declared everything good. God saw God's creation as perfect and God created humankind in God's image and allowed humanity to become stewards over the whole of God's creation.<sup>20</sup> God has always had a relationship of love with the created world, right from the beginning of time. In the New Testament, the Gospel according to John states that "For God so loved the world..."<sup>21</sup> is a testimony of God's love for the created world. A love so great God incarnated in Jesus Christ as the historical event and a witness of God's love and concern for all of creation.

On these premises, creation is not viewed as being corrupt or evil for all has been created by the goodness and love of God. Culture and those important elements that incorporate it, for example language, values, rituals and ceremonies are all forms of expression by the cultural people in interpreting and understanding their own experiences with the one divine God. God as Creator continues to respond to God's creation. This is the creation that was made perfect by God for the whole universe and not for any particular people.

<sup>20</sup> The Holy Bible, (Genesis 1:1 - 2:2).



## CHAPTER 4

### A SAMOAN THEOLOGY OF HEALING

#### Introduction

This final Chapter begins with a discussion of the goodness of God's creation and its cultures. This is followed by looking at Jesus' ministry of healing as the restoration of the whole person. A discussion of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (CE), normally coined as the modern period, will show how physical and mental healing became more of a responsibility for medical science rather than the ministry of the Church. The author also provides a synthesis approach to traditional Samoan healing with a challenge to Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), to re-evaluate and re-interpret its theology in this important area.

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<sup>143</sup> The Holy Bible, (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3).



For the God of Creation continues to participate and establish a good relationship with the world today. God Almighty that cannot be contained in any one single tradition for God's context is universal. Faitala Talapusi's theology raises an important related thought that no one's tradition of human response can contain the living God.<sup>145</sup>

Our culture and position will be insufficient to claim any universal way of doing theology, in the sense that theology must have the ability to speak beyond its own context, its openness to hear any voices from beyond its own boundary. But this does not discount the fact that a particular cultural context cannot have our specific relationship and particular response to God, who is always the same yesterday, today and forever.<sup>146</sup> The God of love who rules the creation with good and loving care His creation reveals to us God's nature. In having humankind free from sin, this signifies His delights in health and wants all creation to enjoy and live happily healthy lives.

So to speak about the theology of creation in this paper, one perceives creation as being good. That God is pleased with what He has created and is immanently present in the created world through various fabrics of culture. The doctrine of the Trinity is fundamental to characterize all that God does in the processes of this good relationship with creation.<sup>147</sup>

When God cursed creation,<sup>148</sup> God did not let go of the world to survive by itself, for the Trinity maintained that relationship in healing the creation to its fullness of life.<sup>149</sup> Although in the Genesis story Adam and Eve's sin led to the termination of everlasting life, God provided a Saviour who would eliminate the pain of death, illness and disease in the world. A Saviour who would restore life for the believer and created world in order to continued in fellowship with God.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>144</sup> The Holy Bible, (John 3:16).

<sup>145</sup> Siu Vaifale, "Pacific Theology", Lecturer Notes TH 403, Malua Theological College, Malua, 19 July 2005.

<sup>146</sup> Lewis Maclachlan, *How to Pray for Healing*, (London: James Clarke & Co, 1955), 16 – 17.

<sup>147</sup> Wilson, 8.

<sup>148</sup> The Holy Bible, (Genesis 3: 1 – 24).

<sup>149</sup> Wilson, 8.

<sup>150</sup> Enns, 42.



#### 4.2. Jesus Ministry of Healing

God through Jesus Christ brings life to the world. Much of Jesus' ministerial work included healing the sick, the leper, the broken hearted, raising the dead, and all those who were in need of help as discussed in chapter two. Therefore, Jesus' healing ministry reveals to the Church today the true nature why Christ came to being, which was to redeem the world, to restore life to its fullness for the human race. The only way to bring humankind into the continuity of that good relationship with God was through the incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>151</sup>

In the New Testament we see God's clear indication through the ministry of Jesus Christ, that God is a God that desires to heal the sick and lame, to care for and love God's creation. God in Jesus Christ by restoring human life, humankind was once again able to reach their true destiny, wholesomely, collectively and individually at the same time.<sup>152</sup> It is clear that Jesus' ministry of healing covered all types of sickness, from the physically ill, the mentally ill and the spiritually ill.<sup>153</sup>

Jesus' healing ministry sought to heal the person's illness there by healing the whole person. For the illness was viewed as obstructing the person from a complete life. Whether physically ill, means hungry for food, or mentally ill, means out of self-control or spiritually ill means possessed with demon spirits, Jesus sees the whole person. That is the totality of the human person is the true nature of this healing ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the healing of a persons' body, one seek the assistance of God's holy will in claiming our heritage as citizens of God's kingdom. In the kingdom of God it is asserted that such a place is absolutely pure, joyous, and peaceful. If this is the case then one may affirm that such a place of healing will free us from disorder and the evil diseases of this world.<sup>154</sup>

#### 4.3. The Modern Period and Its View on Healing

The emergence of the Enlightenment movement in the Eighteenth century saw classical Christian theology come under immense pressure from the rise of natural

<sup>151</sup> Wilson, 10.

<sup>152</sup> Bernard Martin, *Healing For You*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 147.

<sup>153</sup> Martin, *Healing For You*, 28

<sup>154</sup> Maclachlan, 87 – 88, see also Wilson, 27 – 28.



science and rationalism. If events could not be scientifically tested and proven to have occurred, then the rational mind would not verify such events as being factual or truthful. It became obvious that the birth, ministry and death of Jesus Christ would seriously come under the microscope of critique during this period. Much if not all of Jesus miracle and healing events were severely doubted by the enlightenment movement as narratives created by the authors and the first century Christian Church. Science could provide the answer and the remedy for people's health, not faith in some mythical ancient story.

In the nineteenth Century, the Church was trying to defend itself from a culture dominated by science. Although antagonists of the Church have successfully played science off for trying to discredit the Church, the Church continued to loose its working class.<sup>155</sup> The advance of modern science ensured the triumph of doctors in the area of dealing with the sickness, which contributed to an uneasiness of the Church towards its healing ministry. Another reason for the neglecting of this healing ministry in the Church was due to the Occidental understanding of science in the competence use of medicine for health matters. The old countries of England in the Western Hemisphere known as Occident<sup>156</sup> have had such an influence over the separation of medicine from religion.

Another reason for the neglect of the healing ministry was based on Christianity itself, being influenced by Greek philosophy, an attitude developed that was negative towards the body and the physical life. Christians stressed the importance of saving the soul for eternal life more than having good living conditions on earth. As a result of this development, a division emerged between medicine and religion, where physicians were responsible for the body, and the theologians were responsible for the soul.<sup>157</sup>

The LMS missionaries brought such influences and ideologies to the Pacific, where they encouraged the use of medical doctors for the cure of the sick people. Their approach was based on their belief in medical or scientific treatment of the

<sup>155</sup> George R. Humsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 72-73.

<sup>156</sup> The 'Occident's' are the countries of the Western Hemisphere and Europe, from old English, (French and Latin). The Westerners are from time of Hippocrates the 'Father of Medicine' in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries, BC. He is a Greek physician who laid the foundations of scientific medicine by freeing medical studies from the constraints of the philosophical and superstition speculation.

<sup>157</sup> Beate Jakop, "International Review of Mission," Vol.93 Nos. 370/371 July/Oct Geneva: 2004, *The Relation Between Faith and Healing*, 463.



human diseases.<sup>158</sup> They discouraged any other sort of treatment for the sick people including the Samoan traditional practice of healing and especially the healing power of Samoan spirits.

The uniqueness of the gospel message has taken root in the Christianisation of Samoa today, even though ancient traditional methods and medical beliefs continue to be a practical part of the healing process of the Samoan community. Such a process has now included modern methods of healing and medical treatment. All such methods constitute the theology of healing concerned with the totality of life: to heal the whole person, which consist of the spirit, the soul and the body, to purify the person and give that person new life. This is the recalling of man to the fullness of life, restoring creation to its wholeness both materially and spiritually, which is the redemptive work of God.

#### 4.4. The Synthesis Approach to Healing

Richard Niebuhr,<sup>159</sup> in his synthetic model, implies that the world and the Church must cooperate and join forces in the work of the world. In Christ interacting with culture, Niebuhr sees culture as not totally bad. Instead it views culture as a gift from God, being founded on nature that was originally created perfect by God. Culture is important, because through culture God deals and communicates with the human person.<sup>160</sup> What is important in bringing Christ and Culture together as this model suggests, is the exaltation of Christ as king presiding over the present life as well as eternity, and helping make Christian life in the world more effective. That is the final analysis the Christian message of God's grace shall prevail to carry the temporal through. A more contemporary expression of this interaction between Christianity and Culture is best discussed in the synthetic models of Steven Bevans<sup>161</sup>. This theological model explains such interactions, in related situations in the everyday conduct of people's lives.

<sup>158</sup> Jakop, 463.

<sup>159</sup> Peletisala Lima, "Richard Niebuhrs' Christ against Culture," Lecture to Gospel and Culture TH403, Nos. 19, Malua Theological College, Malua, 4 April 2005.

<sup>160</sup> Peletisala Lima, "Richard Niebuhrs' Christ against Culture," Lecture to Gospel and Culture TH403, Nos. 19, Malua Theological College, Malua, 4 April 2005.

<sup>161</sup> Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (New York: Orbis Books, 191992), 81 – 84.



The synthetic model of Steven Bevens is a model that tries to balance the insight between the emphasis of cultural changes and the Gospel message.<sup>162</sup> This way of doing theology, tries to preserve the Gospel message, while at the same time acknowledging the importance of Culture.<sup>163</sup> Those who operate along such frameworks would declare that every culture or contexts have elements that are not only very unique but also in common with each other.<sup>164</sup> Contextual theology is defined by Macquarrie,<sup>165</sup> as, "the study, which through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available." This implies the need for openness in the search for ways and means of delivering such a message of faith and to ensure that such a faith is well understood and appreciated by its recipients. Healing as culture is one such vehicle by which this message of faith may be transmitted.

These particular ideas do not affirm or reject culture for Christ, but instead it perceives a synthesis of partnership of Christ and Culture. Healing is a gift of God revealed to us in the goodness and riches of culture and nature as part of Gods wonderful creation. Christ and Culture and all the creatures of the world created by God in His goodness draw us all towards our heavenly Father. Traditional Samoan healing methods with mediating ancestral spirits should be realized and given recognition again within our Church system. Ignorance and modern thinking that negates the use of healing ministry in today's Church activities has destroyed one valuable aspect of Jesus mission as seen in His Gospel work. The world of Gospel and Culture must cooperate in the work of Christianity in the world today.

A re-interpretation of traditional Samoan healing methods and practices is required. Most of the *fofo* or traditional healers that the author has interviewed are converted Christians. They firmly believe that the source of their gifts of healing stems from the Supreme God. Although their ancestors are remembered by name by the traditional healers in their process of healing but this is because their memories are captured in the methods that have been passed down through the family. It is the Spirit of God that brings about the healing, whether physical, mental or spiritual upon the person in need.

<sup>162</sup> Bevens, 81.

<sup>163</sup> Bevens, 82.

<sup>164</sup> Bevens, 83.

<sup>165</sup> John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology, (London: SCM Press Ltd., edition 1966), 1.



This paper is of the opinion that the practice of traditional Samoan healing needs to be brought under the umbrella of the Christian Church.

#### 4.5. Theology of Healing for the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) Today

While the implied nature of idol worshipping and paganism cannot be condoned, this paper is of the opinion that the traditional methods of Samoan healing process still used today ought to be embraced by the CCCS in terms of the spirit behind the process. That is to say that despite the seemingly vane activity of spinning the bible the spirit behind the act is more important.

In the Old Testament story of the bronze serpent,<sup>166</sup> the thinking behind it is that the serpent is a native animal of the Palestinian environment and therefore a more familiar sign for the Israelites. The use of the serpent represents God's creation of the Israelites and their environment and culture. The serpent is on that basis symbolic of who actually has the power to heal and cure those bitten by the live snakes. That is God Almighty.

Modern day Samoan healers believe that the use of the bible itself is a symbol of the presence of the Lord in the healing process.<sup>167</sup> The patient's faith in the treatment can only be strengthened by the presence of the Holy Bible. Likewise the healer by the faith in the presence of the Lord through prayer and through the use of the actual Word of God is spiritually empowered to believe that the patient shall be cured of whatever their ailment is.

Scientifically the effectiveness of Samoan medicinal treatment and therapeutic massaging have been proven and accepted by modern medical practitioners worldwide. In that respect the gift of healing of the Samoan people has indeed continued to survive and given real recognition internationally by people like the ethno botanist Dr Paul Alan Cox<sup>168</sup> and the South Pacific College of Natural Therapeutics (NZ) Inc, and many others who have shared the importance of our

<sup>166</sup> The Holy Bible, (Numbers 21: 4 – 9).

<sup>167</sup> Fevii'a'i Tauveve Sa, "Interviewed with author", 22 August 2005.

<sup>168</sup> Dr Paul Cox is the Dean of General Education and Honours and Professor of Botany at BYU in Utah, King Carl XVI Gustaf Professor of Environmental Science, author of the Scientific American Library book *Plants, People, and Culture*. A recipient of a 1997 Goldman Environment Prize – the equivalent of a Noble Prize



traditional healing practices.<sup>169</sup> They believe in bringing together the Samoan and other Pacific Island traditional healers with other world healers, to give a wider knowledge for the enrolling students future career. But at the same time such an integration of Pacific gifts may help not only to develop a Pacifica course on healing but also to sustain these values and strength of the Pacific people.<sup>170</sup>

Most of the Samoan traditional healers that were interviewed<sup>171</sup> during the research for this paper as stated previously that their works nowadays rely totally on their faith in the power of God of Christianity. This is the same power by which Jesus Christ conducted and accomplished his own biblical healing ministry. The Samoan healers however still trace the existence of the power of their ancestral spirits that enrich and strengthen the materials they use. But they believe that power has been reinterpreted as the reflection of the all-powerful Spirit of the new God of Christianity that reaches out to heal His creation. And this is evidence of the success in the performing of their practical methods, in the offering of pre-requisitions. Though they lack scientific methods of analysis they depend much on their experiences and their interaction with Gods nature in their superstitious practices.<sup>172</sup>

Although the significance of the supernatural forces in Samoan life appears to have declined dramatically since the arrival of the new God, it did not displace all other pre-existing traditional supernatural beliefs. These beliefs still remain a significant influence on Samoan life, which has recognised the co-existence of the Gospel with traditional Samoan healing methods. This was further confirmed by Samoan traditional healer Araisa Sinclair, who stated that the success of their work is due totally to the gift of healing from God.<sup>173</sup>

Savea Sano Malifa<sup>174</sup> reported that the Samoans continue to play a leading role in the Pacific and the entire world today through her gift of traditional healing. The use of traditional medicinal products and the soft massaging with bare hands and feet has helped restore strength and life to the human body. These skills in the use of medicinal plants for healing sicknesses are accepted as gifts from the *taulaseas*' Ancestors, long before the arrival of the Europeans,

<sup>169</sup> Malifa, S. Sano. "The Samoa Observer" The Institute Wants Samoan Healers, issued of July 22, Apia: 2005, 5

<sup>170</sup> Sano, "The Samoa Observer" July 22, 2005, 5.

<sup>171</sup> Soo Omeri, "Interviewed with author," 6 June 2005.

<sup>172</sup> Toelupe Faasoo, "Interviewed with author," 17 December 2004.

<sup>173</sup> Araisa Sinclair, "Interviewed with author," 6 June 2005.

<sup>174</sup> Sano, "The Samoa Observer" July 22, 2005, 5.



In the Solomon Islands, they also practice traditional healing, which is an integral part of their cultural heritage. They use traditional medicine and also include the practices of witch doctors. They also believe in the intervention of their traditional gods in the strengthening and enriching the materials used in their work.<sup>175</sup>

The healing power of Samoan ancestral spirits means so much for Samoan people today, its significance leads Samoan Christians to many questions that need to be settled within the Christian Church. Questions such as how one should understand the activities of the Traditional Samoan spirit healing. That was the faith of those faithful servants who performed their duties to the best of their ability, in order to save the lives of those who seek help.

<sup>175</sup> Maenuu, P. Leonard, "Pacific Perspective" Volume 8, No.2, Making Modern use of Traditional Medicine, (Suva: Times and Herald Ltd, 1978), 20.



## CONCLUSION

The view that the world needed to be redeemed from its fallen nature was the central Gospel message of the LMS missionaries. The person of Jesus Christ and His message of salvation to be freed from sin for all humankind was fervently preached and proclaimed by these diligent servants of God. Yet in doing so perhaps they were over zealous in their identifying what they viewed in the Samoan Culture as being unchristian and therefore unacceptable thus requiring to be abolished.

This paper is of the view that aspects of traditional Samoan healing both of the physical nature and spiritual arena could have been better translated and synthesized by the local people themselves with the aide of the missionaries as resource people. This would have prevented the situation we have today, a form of dualism between the Christian understanding and approach to such matters of indigenous healing and the Traditional Samoan methods of healing that are still alive and used by many Church people today.

Although the name Jesus Christ is the theological identity of the Christian faith, it is clear that the powerful force that coincided with the ministry of Jesus, especially in the areas of exorcism and healing is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was the driving force that brought liberation to various sections of the oppressed and the downhearted people.

The Samoans traditional healers that have conversed with the author revealed the source of their gift of healing, as the Spirit of God. Although they believe and have faith in supernatural beings that help in the process of healing the sick as was in the past. But it is not the belief and faith in the traditional method used that brings about the healing, but rather an obedience and faith in the Spirit of God. The author views this as being a positive impact of a re-interpretation of the Gospel message by the Samoan healers themselves in redirecting the emphasis and focus of the healer and the person being healed. What was attributed solely to an indigenous religious understanding prior to the arrival of Christianity to Samoa is now re-interpreted by the communicators and enacts of traditional healing to the Sovereign and ever-present God of all of creation.

The central thrust of this paper has been to theologically reinterpret traditional Samoan healing as been a wider expression of the Gospel message. This is a Christian



message that seeks to restore an unhealthy person to complete fullness with the family, community and also with God.

In the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa's (CCCS) book of *Iugafono Tumau*, (Standing Resolutions) Part 10, section six and seven<sup>176</sup> The *faiifeau* or pastor and his congregation are instructed to refrain from participating in the false trickery of the Tusi Paia Vili (Spinning Bible), and to refrain from assisting the taulasea (Samoan healer) through prayers for his witchcraft. Although the wording is rather vague and ambiguous the implied intention is that any healing method that resembles witchcraft or trickery and involving the pastor or the Church congregation is not permitted by the (CCCS).

This paper is of the opinion that the CCCS needs to review their *Iugafono Tumau* (Standing Resolution), in respect to traditional Samoan healing practices. For as highlighted in the commencing pages of this paper, traditional Samoan healing practices are very much alive, practiced and accepted in the Samoan community and by many of the CCCS church members, including many *faiifeaus* (pastors). For it is an obvious contradiction and inconsistency to have Church rules to guide the spiritual lives of its members on the one hand and the existence and practice by its members that go directly against that rule on the other, whilst the Church remains silent.

This paper challenges the CCCS to theologically reconsider traditional Samoan healing as a worthy cause to bring under the Church's umbrella. To become a positive extension of the healing ministry and theology of the CCCS as highlighted by the healing ministry of Jesus Christ to the world. The author prays that this work can in some small way commence and contribute to this vital process for the glory of God.

<sup>176</sup> Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa, *O le Iloiloga O Iugafono Tumau*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 24.



## GLOSSARY

<i>agaga</i>	another word for spirit
<i>aitu</i>	a spirit or ghost
<i>alii</i>	a high chief
<i>aoga</i>	school
<i>atua</i>	a high god
<i>aso pogisa</i>	days of darkness
<i>ilamutu</i>	guardian spirit
<i>fafa</i>	the entrance to the Hades or the after world
<i>fafine</i>	woman
<i>faamafanafana</i>	to warmth
<i>faamalosiau</i>	to encourage
<i>faavavau</i>	forever
<i>faifeau</i>	a pastor or a church minister
<i>Fauea</i>	the name of a Samoan high chief brought from Tonga by John William and Charles Barf
<i>feagaiga</i>	a covenant as between a brother and a sister, or between a congregation and a pastor
<i>fofo</i>	to heal
<i>Lagi</i>	heaven
<i>laoa</i>	choke with a fishbone
<i>lalo</i>	below
<i>Lau Afioga</i>	the highest form to address a high chief
<i>Lau Susuga</i>	the highest form to address Malietoa, Samoa's Head of State, it is also to address a pastor or a priest.
<i>luga</i>	above



<i>lotu</i>	a religion
<i>lua-loto-o-alii</i>	deep holes for the chief
<i>ma'i Samoa</i>	Samoa illness
<i>malau</i>	a name of a fish
<i>Malietao</i>	this is the chiefly name that accepted Christianity in 1830. This is the title name of Samoa's current Head of State.
<i>matai</i>	a chiefly title name
<i>osofa punimoa</i>	a name of Samoan ailment liken to a stomach disorder
<i>osofa tulita</i>	name of Samoan ailment liken to a running stomach
<i>Papalagi</i>	the white people, literally a sky breaker
<i>Perofeta</i>	prophet
<i>pu</i>	a hole
<i>Puaseisei</i>	She is the wife of Fauea the Samoan couple that brought with John Williams and Charles Barff.
<i>Pulotu</i>	an Elysium in the west end of Samoa island of Savaii, like a Hades
<i>Sa le fee</i>	god octopus
<i>Sapapalii</i>	this is the village in Savaii where Malietao accepted the LMS religion
<i>Satupaitea</i>	a village in the Island of Savaii in Samoa
<i>Savaii</i>	the largest island of Samoa in the west side
<i>silailagi se</i>	name of a Samoan ailment (carbuncle)
<i>tafaifa</i>	the kingly status, a term given to a chief holding all four paramount titles.
<i>Tagaloa</i>	Tagaloa is namely the Supreme Being whom the Samoan myths regarded as the creator of all things and the author of their mercies.
<i>tala anamua</i>	words of legends
<i>tala tu'u</i>	oral tradition



<i>tala o le vavau</i>	words of distant past or timeliness
<i>taulasea</i>	a Samoan healer or the spirit medium
<i>taulaitu</i>	a Samoan healer known as the mediator
<i>Tuipulotu</i>	it is a chiefly name with the suffix tui, which means the rock
<i>Tusi Paia</i>	the holy bible
<i>Upolu</i>	the second largest Island of Samoa where the capital of Apia is situated
<i>vili</i>	spin

*Samoa, Rev. Dr. Le Tagaloa Aiono (High chief)*

Personal interview with author John Williams Building, Office of La  
Université o Savavai, Apia, 8 June 2005

*Samoa, Rev. Williams (High chief)*

Personal interview with author Ana American Samoa, 26 May 2005

*Manualealii Agasili (traditional healer)*

Personal interview with author Saponosa Falealii, 17 December 2004

*Samoa, Rev. Lualua (High chief)*

Personal interview with author Salehua Falealii, 2 February 2005

*Samoa, Sog (traditional healer)*

Personal interview with author Sog Apia, 4 June 2005

*Sam, Hon. Le Tagaloa (High chief)*

Personal interview with author John Williams Building, Office of La  
Université o Savavai, Apia, 8 June 2005

*Sa. Taveve Ferial (traditional healer)*

Personal interview with author Falealupo Savali, 22 August 2005

*Samoa, Anisa (traditional healer)*

Personal interview with author Varavara Apia, 6 June 2005

*Sapota, Moe (Lecturer)*

Personal interview with author Palalua College Siuna 3 March 2005

*Samoa, Elder Rev. Peleli Toese (High chief)*

Personal interview with author Fairfield, Australia, 11 January 2005



## APPENDIX 1

### List of Interviews

- Faapale, Kaisa. (traditional healer)  
Personal Interviewed with author Poutasi Falealili, 25 January 2005.
- Faasoo, Toelupe. (traditional healer)  
Personal interview with author Poutasi Falealili, 17 December 2004.
- Fanaafi, Dr. Le Tagaloa Aiono. (High chief)  
Personal interview with author John Williams Building, Office of Le Univesite o Savavau, Apia, 8 June 2005.
- Kasiano, Rev, Dr. Leaupepe. (faifeau)  
Personal interview with author John Williams Building, Office of Le Univesite o Savavau, Apia, 8 June 2005.
- Leilua, Rev. Viliamu. (faifeau)  
Personal interview with author Aua American Samoa, 26 May 2005
- Manufalealili Agaalii. (traditional healer)  
Personal interview with author Sapunaoa Falealili, 17 December 2004.
- Meni, Rev Lualua. (faifeau)  
Personal interview with author Saleilua Falealili, 2 February 2005.
- Omeri, Soo. (traditional healer)  
Personal Interviewed with author Sogi Apia, 6 June 2005
- Pita, Hon. Le Tagaloa. (High chief)  
Personal interview with author John Williams Building, Office of Le Univesite o Savavau, Apia, 8 June 2005.
- Sa, Tauveve Fevii. (traditional healer)  
Personal Interview with author Falealupo Savaii, 22 August 2005
- Sinclair, Araisa. (traditional healer)  
Personal Interview with author Vaivasetai Apia, 6 June 2005.
- Siupolu, Moe. (Lecturer)  
Personal interview with author Palalaua College Siumu 3 March 2005.
- Toailoa, Elder Rev Peleti Toese. (faifeau)  
Personal interview with author Fairfield, Australia, 11 January 2005.



Tone, Rev. Peteru. (traditional faifeau)

Personal interview with author Vaivase-tai Apia, 20 February 2005.

Tupua, Fereti Fuimaono. (priest or high chief)

Personal interview with author Poutasi Falealili, 3 February 2005.

Tusani, Elder Rev. Faafili. (faifeau)

Personal interview with author Malua Theological College, 26 March 2005

Uili, Rev. Letone. (faifeau)

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Taga, S. S. "Violence Against Women," Government paper, Malua Theological College, Malua, July, 2005.

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## APPENDIX 2

### Class Lectures, Papers, Journals and Others

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Hempenstall, Peter. "The Journal of Pacific History" Vol.39, Nos. 2, 2004. 'On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa,' Derek Freeman. Suva: Carthage Publishing, 2004.

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