

MALUA THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

O le *Fa'afeagaiga* – The Sacred One of God

*[A Theological appreciation of the sacredness of the village
pastor of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa]*

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ABSTRACT

The following research calls for a Theological appreciation of sacredness. In particular, it focuses on the sacredness of the *feagaiga* or covenant that is inherent in the *Fa'afeagaiga* or the village pastor of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.¹

After considering the historical and cultural roots of the *feagaiga* concept and providing a critique of this concept against the sacredness of key covenants in the Bible, the research answers the question: - Is there still sacredness in the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS?

What I develop is an appreciation for the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* that is not only historically and culturally grounded, but one that is also relevant to the contemporary situation and contexts of the CCCS. This Theological appreciation is both necessary and vital if the *Fa'afeagaiga* seeks to honour and value the sacredness of God and the *feagaiga* that is at the heart of its reality.

I have undertaken this research with the upmost humility, respect, and dignity as a theological student currently preparing for the ministry in the CCCS.

¹ More detailed explanations will be presented later in the research concerning the definitions of *feagaiga* and *Fa'afeagaiga*. But for now the synonyms of covenant and village pastor respectively should suffice.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work in memory of my late mother

Lauesi Logovi'i Tuigamala

and

my wife Maria Logovi'i

and

our children

Fa'amanu, Fa'afetai, Agalelei and Fa'amaoni Logovi'i

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INTRODUCTION

Recent incidences between the village pastor of the CCCS, his wife, and the congregations they serve have brought the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* into question.² Amongst the complaints have been reports of their unruly behavior, with *Fa'afeagaiga* making national headlines as a result of extra-marital affairs.³ The fulfillment of the *Fa'afeagaiga* role has also come under severe criticism because of the alleged hardship and misfortunes they have caused for their local churches, including the ongoing internal disputes between the *Fa'afeagaiga* and members of the congregations, and especially the abuse of church finances and ecclesial power.⁴

² *Fa'afeagaiga*, is a combination of the causative prefix *fa'a* and the substantive *feagaiga*. According to R.W. Allardice *fa'a* means "to be like," see R.W. Allardice, "Fa'a," in *A Simplified Dictionary of Modern Samoa* (Newton: Pasifika Press, 2000), 21. *Feagaiga*, according to George Pratt, a London Missionary Society missionary who compiled the first Samoan dictionary, means "an established relationship between different parties, as between brothers and sisters and their children," see So combining these two definitions we can see that the *Fa'afeagaiga* thus becomes a noun, which calls for one to be like one who is in an established relationship, as between brothers and sisters and their children. This "established relationship" has been adopted between the village pastor or church minister and his congregation. For a thorough and thought-provoking analysis of the sacredness of the *fa'afeagaiga* because of traditional titles *feagaiga* and *Ao-o-faalupega* being bestowed unto him and seemed to have a divine power at the time, see Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Neuendettelsau: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Departments, 2000), 139.

³ A number of CCCS *Fa'afeagaiga* have been ostracized for sexual misconduct. Recently, a *Fa'afeagaiga* in Apia was asked to leave the parish after an indiscretion with a female parishioner. Villagers were asked to refrain from speaking to the media after the *Fa'afeagaiga* was charged with indecent assault. See Marieta Ilalio, "Villagers Gagged over Pastor Decision," *Sunday Samoan* (2010), www.samoaoobserver.ws.

⁴ "Corruption Via the Faifeau," One Samoana, <http://1samoana.com/screamingtree/2009/02/25/corruption-via-the-faifeau/>. This web page is a typical example of the many blogs that exist today current opinions and criticisms concerning towards the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS. For a detailed and critical complaint about the abuse of powers of *Fa'afeagaiga* concerning finances and church decisions, see "One Man Band at Our Church," *Samoa Observer*, 27 September 2011, 13. Such opinions represent the many repressed voices of the people that can not be freely expressed due to cultural constraints and protocol.

As a future *Fa'afeagaiga* I have chosen to critique the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga*, especially in relation to the inherent sacredness that underpins such a title, the *feagaiga*. It is my belief that such an undertaking or Theological appreciation of the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga*, will provide sound theological foundations in which positive responses can be made to the contemporary issues and concerns currently facing the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS. Ultimately, this research seeks to answer the question: - Is there still sacredness in the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS?

Chapter One will look at the historical and cultural perspectives of the *feagaiga* concept. It will also identify the transition from when the cultural concept became a church reality with the creation of the *Fa'afeagaiga*. The chapter will conclude with a survey on how the *Fa'afeagaiga* is currently been honoured and maintained in the CCCS.

Chapter Two will provide biblical perspectives on the sacredness of covenants. The covenants between God and Jeremiah and Jesus and the Church have been selected because both relationships can be interpreted in the same way as the *feagaiga* concept. Just as Jeremiah and Jesus were called before their births, so too are the *feagaiga* 'called' in a sense well before they are born. As already alluded to, the *feagaiga* is a position or relationship that spans across generations.⁵ Another important reason for the focus on these two biblical covenants is that Jesus in particular, and Jeremiah to a lesser degree embodies the Word of God. In this way, these two key figures of the Bible represent the expectations that the CCCS and its people have

⁵ Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-14.

of its ***Fa'afeagaiga***. Just as the prophet Jeremiah, is God's spokesman and Jesus' God's Word in the Flesh, so too does the ***Fa'afeagaiga*** and his words carry the weight of divine origin and authority. It is because of these critical reasons, that the covenants of Jeremiah and God, and Jesus and the Church were seen as pivotal for this study.

In Chapter Three a critical analysis of the ***Fa'afeagaiga*** of the CCCS is given in relation to the historical and cultural roots of the ***feagaiga***, and its relevance to the sacredness of the biblical notion of covenants, with the intentions of showing significant points where an answer can be made to the research question: - Is there still sacredness in the ***Fa'afeagaiga*** of the CCCS?

CHAPTER ONE: THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF THE

FA'AFEAGAIGA IN THE CCCS

1.0. Introduction

In this chapter I posit some of the historical and cultural roots of the *Fa'afeagaiga*. The constraints of the research do not allow an exhaustive study of all the roots, but I will identify one perspective of *feagaiga* as a central concept in which an understanding of the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* can be critically analysed. It will also trace the transition of the *feagaiga* concept as a cultural norm to its ecclesial usage in the CCCS. This chapter will conclude by showing how the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* is currently honoured and maintained in the CCCS.

1.1 Historical and cultural perspectives of the feagaiga concept

The *Fa'afeagaiga* as a cultural concept has its roots within the Samoan family organization where a unique and sacred relationship, gap or space known as the *va-tapuia*, is upheld between a brother and his sister.⁶ The sacredness that is formed within this relationship allows for the establishment of the sister as the *feagaiga* in which she is revered as one who has divine

⁶ *Va* – means “space between.” See George Pratt, “Va,” in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 356. However, *tapuia* is formed from the word *tapu* which means “to make sacred,” or “to place under restrictions,” see ———, “Tapu,” in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 322.

authority.⁷ All the respect and dignity of her brother and his children is a privilege rendered unto her for life and her descendants for generations.⁸ A belief in supernatural power, which is awarded to her through the power of cultural memory and reinforcement acts as a key social mediator for relations between her and her brother and his family. It is clear here why blessings and curses can be interpreted against such a framework of belief, if one does not value the *feagaiga* relationship. The sister as the *feagaiga* possesses a sacredness that is encompassing and extreme. It is no wonder why Michiko Ete-Lima notes that, “this relationship is considered very special and eternal.”⁹

Others view the *feagaiga* concept origin differently. Afa Afato points its origins to a unique Samoan tradition where the maidens, *teinemuli*, or *taupou*, or the actual virginity of the *feagaiga* as being a primary reason for the valuing of her by her brothers and descendants.¹⁰ If this is so, we can see that the sacredness involved with the *feagaiga* has a moral and ethical element that would have been a crucial factor in ensuring the harmony of the families of the village. The idealised standards of purity, holiness, and sanctification no doubt would have permeated in a

⁷ For a detailed and enlightened discussion and description of the *va-tapuia* in its many cultural nuances, see Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi, "Bio-Ethics and the Samoan Indigeneous Reference," in *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance and the Samoan Indigeneous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau M. Sualii-Sauni, et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2008), 179. To show that the concept is not only restricted to the CCCS, see a Methodist student's attempt to understand the *va-tapuia* in, Fa'atauva'a Tapuai, "The Fundamental Idea of the Feagaiga" (BD, Pacific Theological College, 1991), 7.

⁸ Unasa Vaa, "Samoan Custom and Human Rights: An Indigeneous View," *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* 40, no. 1 (2009): 242-43.

⁹ A Theology of the Feagaiga: A Samoan Theology of God (2003) Lima Michiko Ete in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania* (Suva: University of the South Pacific), 25.

¹⁰ For detailed information concerning the *teinemuli* or the *taupou* see, Afa F. Afato, "Manono the Island of the Covenant" (BD, Malua Theological College, 2000), 2.

community so that importance of virginity would have no doubt added to the appreciation and justification of the *feagaiga*.

It is clear that once we take seriously the cultural roots of the *Fa'afeagaiga* which is deeply embedded in the *feagaiga* between a brother and his sister, then we can begin to understand critically the power and extent of the sacredness which lies at the core of this cultural concept. A sacredness which no doubt demands moral and ethical adherence, but also a commitment to embrace and live according to ideals of purity, holiness and sanctification in order to preserve the harmony of family and community and ultimately with God.¹¹

1.2. *Feagaiga to Fa'afeagaiga.*

The arrival of Christianity through the London Missionary Society saw the eventual transition of the usage of the *feagaiga* from a cultural concept to an ecclesial reality.¹² Initially missionaries assigned *faiifeau* to each village,¹³ but eventually villages ended up formally 'calling' their

¹¹ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, *Pacific Indigenous Dialogue on Faith, Peace, Reconciliation and Good Governance* (Alafua Campus, University of the South Pacific), 231.

¹² Fred Henry, *Samoa: An Early History* (Pago Pago: The Department of Education, 1980), 150.

¹³ According to Pratt, *Faiifeau* means literally "to go on a message," but as a noun, the word means "a missionary or pastor." See George Pratt, "Faifeau," in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 127. Allardice also points towards the church when he defines *Faiifeau* as simply "a minister of religion." See R.W. Allardice, "Faifeau," in *A Simplified Dictionary of Modern Samoa* (Newton: Pasifika Press, 2000), 19. Compare with Pratt's definition of *Feagaiga*, George Pratt, "Feagaiga," in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 139. Ainslie So'o a specialist in the Samoan language currently working in the Department of Education in Samoa, classifies *Faiifeau*, as someone who has been ordained to look after a congregation. See Ainslie So'o, in *Utugagana* (Malifa: Department of Education, 2000), 46. An interview also with the Vice-Chairman of the Samoan Council of Churches, Rev. Deacon Kasiano Leaupepe revealed a belief that the title *Faiifeau* in its usage in the church is clearly based on the role of the untitled men in the village in which they serve their chiefs - Personal Interview with Rev. Deacon Kasiano A. Leaupepe of the Catholic Church on the 5th of May, 2011.

own.¹⁴ Therefore, in the 1880s it was clear that *faifeau* were called by the church members in conjunction with the *matai* of the village.¹⁵ What this meant was that the calling of the *faifeau* would take a cultural significance and identity. Almost covertly, the *osiga-feagaiga*, was born in the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.¹⁶

The *osiga-feagaiga* consists of a ceremony between the *faifeau* and the chiefs of the village. There are speeches that express thanksgiving to God for the occasion and express their good wishes and blessings for one another.¹⁷ Both parties state clearly that the *osiga-feagaiga*, between the village and the pastor is to last for the life of the minister. These speeches are usually then followed by a kava ceremony in which the pastor is the very first person to drink. This indicates that the *faifeau* is the most important participant of the ceremony

During the ceremony, the pouring of part of the kava drink is associated with words which invoke God's blessing upon both parties. The pastor receives his share of the of the kava drink, and pours a little on the floor as an offering to God before he drinks the rest himself. Here, according to cultural protocol at least, the position of the *feagaiga* has been bestowed on him by

¹⁴ Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigeneous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005), 97.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Osiga* – derived from the word *osi*, which means to make, as a speech, a covenant, a sacrifice. See George Pratt, "Osi," in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 60.

¹⁷ For confirmation of the usage of kava by missionaries see, Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga - the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 124.

the *matai* of the village.¹⁸ However, a more polite and respectful way of addressing the *faiifeau* would be to add the prefix *fa'a* was added to form the new word *Fa'afeagaiga*.

The creation of the *Fa'afeagaiga* honorific title satisfied both the cultural and ecclesial preferences of the people. The *Fa'afeagaiga* was expected to uphold the covenant till death, and the congregation would take the position of the brother as in the sacred *feagaiga* concept.¹⁹ The whole idea of the covenant according to the Samoan tradition is understood only within the context of duties and responsibilities. The congregation is expected to give the *Fa'afeagaiga* all the respect, protection, and services needed, and the *Fa'afeagaiga* is expected to uphold the sacredness of the relationship.²⁰

However, the privileged status of the *Fa'afeagaiga* not only applied to his congregation but because of its cultural roots was and is embraced by the entire village. Everyone is compelled to show due respect and observe correct conduct before him.²¹ Against the backdrop of a holy 'calling' the *Fa'afeagaiga* is also seen to possess holiness with divine proportions. Such expectations call for a humility and honesty from the *Fa'afeagaiga* and a critical awareness of the congregation that he is only human as well.

¹⁸ *matai*- the head of a [Samoan] family. See George Pratt, "Matai," in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977). What Pratt does not state is that even to this day, most *matai* are men.

¹⁹ Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigeneous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* 97.

²⁰ Lalomilo Kamu, *Samoan Culture & Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 139.

²¹ Personal Interview with Rev. Deacon Kasiano A. Leaupepe of the Catholic Church on the 5th of May, 2011.

1.3. *Honouring and maintaining the Fa'afeagaiga in the CCCS.*

The *Fa'afeagaiga* acts, works and lives in 'tension' between God and his congregation. He represents God to the people in his work and service to the congregation, and all his words and actions are expected to carry the weight of divine authority and responsibility. In addition, the *Fa'afeagaiga* also represents the congregation before God through his conducting of communal worship services, burials, weddings, birthdays and all ecclesial activities awarded to him through his ordination. This can be appreciated through the fact that the *Fa'afeagaiga* is also seen as the *Fa'afeagaiga-taulagi* and the Sui *va'aia o le Atua*²².

The perspective that the *Fa'afeagaiga* is the possessor of privileged knowledge continues to validate this status. Despite the *Fa'afeagaiga* having no traditional ranking, he inherited the respect that was initially awarded to the missionaries. As John Garrets puts it so accurately,

The LMS introduced a key figure into the picture - the faife'au, pastor...The pastors took the place of the priests and prophets of ancient Samoan religion as mediators with the unseen world. They were honoured as men of God...Their prayers and prescence were considered indispensable on ceremonial occasions. They renounced matai status, but exercised special power of their own because of their spiritual authority and social position.²³

We can see from Garret's insights, that the *Fa'afeagaiga* enjoys a privileged position courtesy of both culture and church. It is no wonder why they can be seen as the gate-keepers to blessings

²² *Fa'afeagaiga-taulagi* – literally, the covenant holder originating from the heavens. *Sui-va'aia o le Atua* – literally, the visible representation of God.

²³ John Garrett, *To Live among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, 2nd ed. (Suva: Oceania Printers, 1985), 124.

from God; they enjoy a spiritual monopoly that can be used to encourage their congregations to offer their wealth to him as the “new mediator of the unseen world.” Paulo Koria, a *Fa’afeagaiga* himself, reinforces this belief, as he states that the *Fa’afeagaiga* is “the personification of the covenant between God and the people...[and] [b]y virtue of that fact, the respect and royalty that is due to God is directed to the *Fa’afeagaiga* on God’s behalf.”²⁴ The sacredness which once only had significance in interpersonal relationships has now fully entered into the realm of the divine. If the *Fa’afeagaiga* is to be regarded as a “holy man, a representative of God... *auauna a le Atua* and *Tama fa’ale-Agaga*,” then such holiness and sacredness must be critically appreciated against the notion of sacredness and covenant in the Bible.²⁵ .

1.4. Summary

In this chapter I clearly established the contemporary context of the *Fa’afeagaiga* of the CCCS from its cultural and historical roots. Now we turn to appreciate the significance of sacredness in the covenants of God and Jeremiah and Jesus and the Church.

²⁴ Paulo Koria, "Moving toward a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts," *The Pacific Journal of Theology* 11, no. 22 (1999): 10.

²⁵ *Auauna a le Atua* – Servant of God; *Tama Fa’aleagaga* – Spiritual Father [Authors translations]. For more on these titles see Fa'atutituli Setu, "The Theological Appreciation of The "Faifeau" In the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa: Is He Christian?" (BD, Pacific Theological College, 1986), 8.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF SACREDNESS

2.0. Introduction

In this second chapter I will be discussing the significance of the sacredness that can be appreciated in God's covenant with Jeremiah, and with Jesus' covenants with the Church.²⁶

Before discussing the sacredness of God's covenants in the Bible, it is important that we establish working definitions for 'covenant' from both the Hebrew and Greek languages of the Bible.

The Hebrew word for covenant is *berit*.²⁷ It has no real synonyms but its associative includes the following:-- sworn oath, oath, steadfast love, and instruction.²⁸ These different associative words of *berit* is used in a wide variety of arrangements, some on a strictly human level and others involving God.²⁹ However, the Greek word for covenant is *diatheke* and it refers to an obligation. It was commonly used in ancient Greek literature for a last will or testament, rather

²⁶ I use the word God as a synonym for "the LORD" that is preferred in the biblical text of Jeremiah. Covenant – "in a legal setting it refers to a formal agreement drawn up between two or more parties. In a socio-political setting it refers to the solemn undertaking agreed to by members of a particular party or group. In an ecclesiastical setting, it may describe the commitments made by members of a congregation, the marriage relationship established by the taking of mutual vows between two parties." See Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2007), 34.

²⁷ Ibid., 36.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

than some kind of formal agreement or treaty.³⁰ With these definitions, let us look at the sacredness of covenants in the Bible.

2.1. *Sacredness in Jeremiah's calling.*

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet before he was born.³¹ According to Warren Wiersbe this means that Jeremiah was set apart by the Lord for God's sacred use.³² In the process Jeremiah was in a sense declared holy and sanctified. Therefore, if the 'calling' of Jeremiah the prophet was sacred and holy, then the God who called Jeremiah must be sacred and holy also. Whatever sacredness Jeremiah possesses it is not due to anything he has done, but is a direct result of God's sacredness in his 'calling.'

It is not hard to understand then through Jeremiah's example, that a prophet was a sacred person "who receives a message from God and proclaims it to a specific audience."³³ God had a specific purpose in calling Jeremiah to be His prophet. Such purposes can be further understood through Bruce Barton's references to a prophet being, "an interpreter of the times and of people's hearts," and "one who issues an oracle or the works of the Lord."³⁴ Warren continues to say that a prophet was a, "a chosen person and authorised spokesman for God who declared God's word

³⁰ Ibid., 37.

³¹ Jeremiah 1:5

³² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary of the Old Testament: The Prophets* (Colorado: Cook Communications, 2002), 77.

³³ Marshall Shelly, *Quest Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 1747.

³⁴ Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Study Bible* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 2498.

to the people.”³⁵ It is clear from these definitions that Jeremiah as God’s prophet was called by God alone for God alone.

2.1.1. Sacredness in Jeremiah’s ministry

Jeremiah’s ministry begins with doubt and an honest declaration of disbelief.³⁶ As Victor Matthews and James Moyer discuss, Jeremiah’s plea is simple and straightforward, he is far too young.³⁷ Jeremiah still does not acknowledge that any success of his ministry will not be of his doing, it is God who equips him with the necessary words.³⁸ In other words, Jeremiah is gifted the sacredness or holiness of God to perform his ministry. God’s sacredness is Jeremiah’s only in order for him to perform God’s ministry according to His will.

A quick survey of the Book of Jeremiah reveals that the main aims of his ministry was to proclaim judgment and salvation to God’s people. He was set with the task to remind God’s people to abandon their sin and turn back to God.³⁹ However, despite his efforts the people continue to be disobedient. This is why Jeremiah and the other prophets needed to live sacred lives. Proclamation was not just about preaching but about being an example as well for the

³⁵ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary of the Old Testament: The Prophets*, 77.

³⁶ Jeremiah 1:6

³⁷ Victor H. Matthews and James C. Moyer, eds., *The Old Testament: Text and Context* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 166.

³⁸ Jeremiah 1:9; For a detailed analysis, see Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary of the Old Testament: The Prophets*, 77.

³⁹ Jeremiah 1:10ff; Jeremiah 26:1-16ff.

people to follow. Jeremiah needed to model God's faithfulness to His people. Wiersbe reminds us that Jeremiah tried to reach and change the people's hearts.⁴⁰ Once again, this point reiterates the fact that Jeremiah's total focus was on the salvation, welfare and betterment of the people, according to God's will and love.

2.1.2. Sacredness in Jeremiah's covenant with God

It is believed that Jeremiah was in his early twenties when he was appointed by God to be a prophet to the nation of Judah.⁴¹ From the outset it is God's ever-present and probing Word that sets, establishes, and seals His covenant with Jeremiah.⁴² God's covenant with Jeremiah points to reminding the God's people of their covenant that was established at Sinai.⁴³ In Jeremiah we can appreciate God's efforts to engender obedience from His people through making Jeremiah an example. As Brueggemann shares, such a covenant like that which Jeremiah had established with God, is one that only rewarded disobedience with a curse.⁴⁴

2.1.3. Jeremiah's sacred message

Jeremiah along with the other prophets never owned their messages or prophecies. It was always God's message. Even though different prophets sent messages to different people at different places and times, the messages appear to have the same themes. That is, that punishment and

⁴⁰ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary of the Old Testament: The Prophets*, 75.

⁴¹ Ibid., 74.

⁴² Jeremiah 1:4

⁴³ Barton, *Life Application Study Bible*, 1290.

⁴⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 110.

deliverance were the two choices offered to the people. So, proclaiming the realities of Gods salvation and judgment was always part of the sacred message that Jeremiah was charged with.

Furthermore, the credibility of the prophet was measured against his prophecies coming true.⁴⁵ Repentance was a lot easier of course, if the prophet could back up his words. Such credibility was highlighted when the integrity of two opposing prophets was tested.⁴⁶ Therefore it is clear, that God's prophets needed to value the honesty and integrity of their prophecies. The truth needed to be plain to see. In a similar vein, we can also appreciate the sacredness of Jesus' covenant with the Church.

2.2. *Sacredness in Christ's calling*

Jesus was called to be our Redeemer and Saviour before he was born.⁴⁷ In this respect, Christians uphold the belief that He is none other than the promised Christ of the Old Testament scriptures, the Son of God.⁴⁸ Matthew, Luke, and John's accounts all show sacredness in Christ's calling. Matthew depicts Jesus as the Emmanuel, the visible and physical sign of God's presence with the world.⁴⁹ Luke's account records the angel of God expressing God's instructions through His angel⁵⁰ and John clearly situates Jesus as the Eternal Word of God.

⁴⁵ Matthews and Moyer, eds., *The Old Testament: Text and Context*, 115.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 116.

⁴⁷ Matthew 1: 18-25; Luke 1: 26-38; John 1:1-14;

⁴⁸ Mark 1:1.

⁴⁹ Matthew 1:23.

⁵⁰ Luke 1: 31-33.

Such theological constructions declare that Jesus' calling was indeed reflective of the sacredness of God that dwelled within Him.

2.2.1. Sacredness in Jesus' ministry

Biblical theologians like Millard Erickson have chosen to interpret Christ's ministry through a trinomial relationship, "We have chosen to speak of the three functions of Christ – revealing, ruling and reconciling." Such functions can be seen in the carrying out of his ministry as the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one of God.⁵¹ For example, Jesus reveals a foreknowledge of events and people which gives away his identity.⁵² Erickson writes, "Jesus proclaims doom and judgment,""⁵³ Jesus here steps into the mode of the Old Testament prophets, and reiterates the consistency of his ministry with that of God's chosen prophets.

But Jesus also revealed the love of God the Father and heavenly truth.⁵⁴ In this sense, he challenged all potential followers to embrace the same ideals, morals, and ethics as he stood for. During his ministry we can appreciate two forms of revelation. Firstly, Jesus "spoke of the divine word of truth. However, he was the truth and he was God." The second which is declared by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews is that "Jesus is the highest of all revelations of God"

⁵¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House Books, 2002), 781.

⁵² John 1:43-51

⁵³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 783.

⁵⁴ 1 John 4:7-21

(Heb.1:1-3).⁵⁵ It appears that the overlapping nature of Jesus word's and His identity as the Word of God confirms the sacredness of His ministry. As Erickson puts it, "...the natural universe obeys him, all things came into being through him (John1:3), through whom all things continue (Col.1:7), he is in control of the universe, and most of all he has the glory of God."⁵⁶

2.2.2. *Sacredness in Jesus' covenant with the Church.*

There are many images of the church which make known the sacredness of Jesus' covenant with the church. However, I choose the Body of Christ to show the sacred covenant between Christ and the Church. This image as well had various interpretations. But, it is simpler to interpret as what Erickson wrote, "Christ is the head of this body (Col. 1: 18), and the believers are parts of the body."⁵⁷ That is, the believers have given fullness in Christ, the head over every power and authority (Col 2:10). Thus, the church is only sacred because Christ is holy who is in control of the Church.

The notion of worship in the church allows for us to appreciate the sacredness of Christ's covenant with His Church. Worship is an activity of the church where believers give "the service of praise, thanksgiving, and petition expressly directed to God in sacred signs and inward attitude."⁵⁸ It also gives a clear understanding of the covenant. that Christ is their Lord and the

⁵⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 784.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 786.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1047.

⁵⁸ Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, eds., *Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981), 540.

believers are his followers. Again, it is obvious that the church is only sacred because of its relationship with Jesus Christ, the Sacred One of God.

2.3. *Summary*

In this Chapter I identified key aspects of Jeremiah's covenants with God and Jesus' covenant with His Church, so that we could appreciate some biblical perspectives on the sacredness of covenants. Now we move to critique the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS, in light of the theological foundations which have been identified in this Chapter as critical to this research.

CHAPTER THREE: A CRITIQUE OF THE FA'AFEAGAIGA OF THE

CCCS

3.0. *Introduction*

Using the significant points on sacredness developed from the previous chapter I will now provide a critical analysis of the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS in its contemporary context, in order to answer the research question: - Is there still sacredness in the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS?

3.1. *Calling*

The notion of 'calling' carries great responsibility to the one who has called us. This reality was made clear when we looked at Jeremiah and Jesus respectively. However, the notion of 'calling' is also very strong in the *feagaiga* covenant which is the cultural concept that is at the core of the *Fa'afeagaiga*. There is a 'calling' to be valued in the *feagaiga* because as we saw its historical and cultural roots showed that such a commitment was for life. In other words, Samoan children are born into pre-arranged or pre-established *feagaiga* relationships. Their entrance into the family can be seen as a 'calling' to become part of the culturally accepted process. In this way, we can understand the loyalty and commitment demanded of by the families, because they in this context are the ones who have 'called' the *feagaiga* into being.

The significance of this insight for the *Fa'afeagaiga* is that he must remember that it was the congregation that 'called' him. Secondly, the *Fa'afeagaiga* must take seriously the belief, that

his ‘calling’ to serve God, Jesus and His Church is one that must be totally centered around fulfilling God’s purposes, not his own. There is no room for personal agendas and desires of self-gratification. So whatever is received by the ***Fa’afeagaiga*** in any shape or form must always be interpreted to be for the benefit of his congregation and the ministry of Jesus’ Church. To deviate from these theological pillars, is to deny any consistency between the Prophets and Jesus Christ and the ***Fa’afeagaiga*** and his current life and ministry. The ***Fa’afeagaiga*** and his ministry must be reflective of the One who has called him into the work itself.

3.2. *Covenant with God*

Despite the ***osiga-feagaiga*** ceremony occupying a somewhat secular setting, it must always be remembered that such an occasion is only important because the relationship that is being formed between the ***Fa’afeagaiga*** and the people is a sacred one, with God the ultimate witness. The ***Fa’afeagaiga*** has his covenant with God first and foremost. This should be the motivating and driving factor for him to uphold and sustain harmonious relationships within all spheres of his life and work. God’s judgement must always be feared and expected, for even Jeremiah and Jesus had to walk in the wisdom of their ways.

3.3. *Authority from God*

All the privileges that the ***Fa’afeagaiga*** has, also has its responsibilities. Esekielu Tapu believes that, “such honour allows room for abuse, as the [***Fa’afeagaiga***] assumes the authority comparable to that of a ***matai***. Conflict and tensions often result, especially when the

Fa'afeagaiga asserts that he has the final authority over the affairs of the congregation. The possibility for irrational decision-making and the power to make autocratic decisions increases. Such an attitude is quite contrary to one who advocates being a servant of God as exemplified by Christ.”⁵⁹

3.4. *Abuses of power*

Tapuai on the other hand, also blames the congregation for giving the *Fa'afeagaiga* too much authority right from the outset when they receive him as their village pastor. They revere him as a king, which in turn the people suffer on behalf of the *Fa'afeagaiga*.⁶⁰ Such perspectives of supreme authority which are both shared by Tapu and Tapuai, shows that the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* is not being maintained and honoured in a way that is life-affirming for all.

It is clear also that such a privileged position in the Church threatens the harmony and social participation that is at the heart of the *Fa'afeagaiga*. As Tapuai again reiterates,

In the congregation's meeting he [*the Fa'afeagaiga*] is the Chairman, in ordering the people he is the general, making a speech he is the orator, staying in the house he is the chief, and feeding the flock he is a traditionalist.⁶¹

It is obvious in Tapuai's opinion that the *Fa'afeagaiga* is by no means sustaining or honouring a mutual relationship of care and respect between himself and his congregation. The status of

⁵⁹ Esekielu Tapu, "A Theological Approach to the Gap: Towards Establishing a Congregational Christian Church of American Samoan Theology of the Laity" (MTh, Pacific Theological College, 1999), 57-58.

⁶⁰ Tapuai, "The Fundamental Idea of the Feagaiga", 32.

⁶¹ Ibid.

leadership in the Church and the desire by *Fa'afeagaiga* to maintain full control of all church affairs always has the potential to corrupt the *feagiaga* concept.

3.5. *Worship of God.*

A brief mention of worship here encapsulates the relevance of our critique to the eventual praxis of the CCCS and reconfirms the need for sound theological foundations for the *Fa'afeagaiga*. The act of worship is one of the most sacred functions of the church. This is because the congregation as a whole owns the worship, not any particular individual. Again, despite the *Fa'afeagaiga* occupying a position of leadership in worship, it is no reason for him to forget that worship should be centered on God and all service should be directed towards him. In saying that, the *Fa'afeagaiga* is in the prime position, in which to solidify the congregation's commitment to worship that is not only relevant but applicable to people's situations.

3.6. *Summary*

Our critique by no means claims to be exhaustive and comprehensive. What has been attempted here has been an effort to identity some of the overlapping and interweaving realities of the sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS and the sacredness of Jeremiah, Jesus and the Church. A conclusion will now follow that will answer the research question: - Is there still sacredness in the *Fa'afeagaiga* of the CCCS?

CONCLUSION

After considering the *feagaiga* concept and the sacredness of covenants from the Bible, we are challenged to question the existence of any inherent sacredness of the *Fa'afeagaiga* in the CCCS today. The valuing of the *va-tapuia* and the inherent sacredness of the *feagaiga* at its heart, that was honoured and revered as a necessity for ensuring harmony in the family, village and wider community is a thing of the past. In this contemporary context, such a reality for the *Fa'afeagaiga* is non-existent. The uncomfortable transmission of the *feagaiga* concept from a cultural norm to an ecclesial reality has only produced fragmented relationships and ruptured any observance of sacredness due to the incidences of abuse and subsequent dissolutions of the covenants between the *Fa'afeagaiga* and their congregations.

In other words, the *Fa'afeagaiga* is a flawed reality for it can never live up to any of its cultural roots and expectations because of its individualistic tendencies. Sadly, the CCCS can never fully honour the *feagaiga* concept because it tries to embody and implant its values on one person instead of embracing the potential it has to bring harmony to the congregation, village, and wider community.

Therefore, it is my contention that there is only one *Fa'afeagaiga*, the Sacred One of God, who truly reflects the research undertaken in this study - Jesus Christ. Only Christ can do justice to the *feagaiga* concept as He continues to reconcile the Created Order unto God through His

unconditional love. Only Christ points us towards God the Father without desiring to take any credit. Only Christ can ensure that whatever sacredness we may have inherited as part of our cultural heritage, it is effectively used for the welfare, betterment and ultimate salvation of others. This is where the sacredness of the ***Fa'afeagaiga*** of the CCCS truly exists.

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