

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO
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FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF THEOLOGY
(HONOURS)**

**A THEOLOGICAL INTERROGATION OF THE MOTTO:
*FAAVAE I LE ATUA SAMOA***

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BTH,**

OCTOBER 2014

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of a theological interrogation of the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God). This thesis proposes two viewpoints: the first argues the case that the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* can be understood as anti-traditional Samoan culture; while the second argues the case that there is room in the motto to accommodate both God and Atua.

The thesis will demonstrate this through a critical analysis of the motto by asking key questions such as: how did the concepts of Atua and God find their way into Samoan society; to which deity is the motto referring and why; who coined the phrase *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* and how did it become the nation's motto.

The thesis concludes by arguing that there is room in the motto to see God and Atua co-exist as Samoa's foundation. The significance of having Samoa founded on both God and Atua ensures that Samoa continues to keep its culture, especially for those living outside of Samoa. In other words, it serves as a reminder for those living in Samoa and in diaspora to not forget their identity as Samoans.

GLOSSARY

<i>Aana</i>	Name of a district
<i>Agan'uu</i>	Customs
<i>Aga</i>	Conduct, ways, behaviour
<i>Aiga</i>	Family
<i>Aitu fafine</i>	Goddess
<i>Aitu</i>	Devil, evil, lesser god
<i>Alofa</i>	Love
<i>Ao</i>	Head
<i>A'oa'o</i>	One who teaches
<i>Atua</i>	God/name of a district in Samoa
<i>Ato</i>	Bag, sack
<i>Aua ete fefe, o le Atua o le ta faavae</i>	Don't be afraid God is our foundation
<i>Ava</i>	Ceremonial drink
<i>Ave le tala</i>	Name of a lesser god or totem
<i>CCCS</i>	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
<i>E pola puipui e le aganuu le talalelei</i>	The gospel is protected by culture
<i>E iai le au faitau, e ia foi le au maitau</i>	There are people who observe, but there are also people who take notice
<i>E pola puipui e le aganu'u le Talalelei</i>	The gospel is protected by culture
<i>E o faatasi le aganu'u ma le talalelei</i>	Gospel and culture go together
<i>Faaaloalo</i>	Respect

<i>Faaaloaloga</i>	Token of appreciation
<i>Faamoemoe Lelei</i>	Virtue is our hope
<i>Faa-Samoa</i>	The Samoan-Way
<i>Faavae</i>	Foundation, base
<i>Faavae i le Atua Samoa</i>	Samoa is founded on God
<i>Fai</i>	Do
<i>Faifeau</i>	Pastor, church minister
<i>Falealupo</i>	Village in Sava'i
<i>Fale</i>	House
<i>Fasitoouta</i>	Name of a village
<i>Feagaiga</i>	Sacred covenant
<i>Feau</i>	Chores or task
<i>Fetalaa'iga''</i>	Negotiation
<i>Fiapoko</i>	Smart-alec
<i>Fonotele</i>	CCCS Annual General Assembly
<i>Folafola</i>	Public announcements
<i>Ia ola Samoa</i>	Let Samoa live
<i>Iesu</i>	Jesus
<i>Ietoga</i>	Fine mat
<i>Ie o le ola</i>	Mat of life
<i>Ifoga</i>	Samoan ritual
<i>Kaukalaikiki</i>	Cheeky
<i>Le'iataua</i>	A chief from the village of Manono
<i>Le fu'a o le saolotoga</i>	The Banner of Freedom
<i>Le-mafaufau</i>	Disrespectful

<i>Leulumoega</i>	Important village in Aana district
<i>Lufilufi</i>	Important village in Atua District
<i>Magamagaloloa</i>	It's a game to see who can stay in the water longest
<i>Malietoa Vainu'upo</i>	High Chief-Accepted Christianity
<i>Malietoa Fitiseanu</i>	High Chief-Father of Malietoa Vainu'upo
<i>Malo</i>	Government, winner, greeting
<i>Malosi o le nu'u</i>	Strength of the village refer to untitled and unmarried young men
<i>Manono</i>	Village between Upolu and Sava'i
<i>Mana</i>	Spirit
<i>Matai</i>	Chief
<i>Mavave, ua lalelei si teine e pei o le sala masina</i>	The little girl is as beautiful as yonder moon
<i>Nafanua</i>	Samoan Goddess, Prophetess,
<i>Nofotane</i>	Wife
<i>Nu'u</i>	Village or a village of people
<i>O ao o faalupega</i>	Head of genealogy or head of all titles
<i>Ola</i>	Life
<i>O le ala i le pule o le tautua</i>	The way to authority is by serving
<i>O Iesu na maliu mo Samoa</i>	Jesus dying for Samoa
<i>O lau ava lea le Atua</i>	This is your ava le Atua
<i>O le sui o le atua</i>	Gods manifestation
<i>Papa/Tafa'i</i>	Paramount title

<i>Pe'a</i>	Another name of Tamafaiga
<i>Pe'a or Tatau"</i>	Full body tattoo
<i>Pologa</i>	Slave
<i>Salamasina</i>	First tafa'ifa of Samoa
<i>Sala</i>	Punishment
<i>Saleimoa</i>	Village next to Malua Theological College
<i>Sama</i>	Celebrated
<i>Samoa mo Samoa</i>	Samoa for Samoa
<i>Savali o le Filemu</i>	The Messenger of Peace
<i>Siovili</i>	Founder of Siovili cult
<i>Sui</i>	Representative
<i>Suli</i>	Progeny
<i>Tagata</i>	Human Beings
<i>Tali le lagi se ao o lou malo</i>	Await your kingdom from Heaven
<i>Talosaga</i>	Plea also means prayer
<i>Tamafaiga</i>	Name of a warrior also known as Pe'a
<i>Tau</i>	To fight
<i>Tausi le va</i>	Care for or obey the sacred space
<i>Tautua</i>	Service or to serve
<i>Tautua lotu</i>	To serve the church
<i>Taulaga</i>	Offering, annual contribution
<i>Tuia'ana, Tuiatua, Gatoaitale and Tamasoali'i</i>	Paramount chief titles of Samoa also known as Tafa'ifa
<i>Tofiga i le sosaiete</i>	Position in society

<i>Tofuola</i>	Swimming hole at Malua Theological College
<i>Tofu</i>	Dip
<i>Tu</i>	Morals, also means stand
<i>Tua</i>	Back, behind
<i>Tuamasaga</i>	District in Samoa
<i>Tui Manu'a Tauveve</i>	King of Manu'a
<i>Tulafale</i>	Talking chief
<i>Tumua</i>	Lufilufi and Leulumoega (kingmakers)
<i>Ua ao Samoa</i>	Samoa is enlightened
<i>Ua ifo le aso o le Malietoa</i>	Malietoa's cannibalism ways have come to an end
<i>Ua le o gatasi le futia ma le umele</i>	What was hoped for did not turn out the way they thought it would
<i>Umu</i>	Earth oven for cooking food
<i>Usita'i</i>	Obedience
<i>Vatapuia</i>	Sacred space
<i>Vale</i>	Crazy or lunatic

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INTRODUCTION

If Samoa is founded on God, why are some *nofotane*¹ women treated like slaves? This was the burning question that gave rise to this study as a result of how my grandmother was seen and treated as a *nofotane*. However, the study does not dwell on the *nofotane* and their treatment, because it is extensively covered by the Samoan scholar Mitchiko Ete-Lima. Rather there are two reasons for undertaking this study: firstly to understand how the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* came to exist, and secondly a theological interrogation of the motto which will argue the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God) can be understood as against traditional Samoan culture or the *Faa-Samoa* (the Samoan way). This thesis will conclude by suggesting there is room in the motto to see both God and *Atua* as the country's foundation. This study will show how this is possible by exploring the history of *Atua* in Samoa, both traditional and Christian, including the oral traditions that link the two. In addition, the motto will also be considered from four angles: the motto against traditional Samoan culture, the motto affirming traditional Samoan culture, the motto critical of

¹ A *nofotane* woman is a Samoan woman who lives with her husband's family after they are married. She leaves the comfort of her own *aiga* (family) where she is the *feagaiga o le aiga* (sacred covenant) to serve her husband's family and kin. Some *nofotane* are oppressed, alienated and at times treated like a slave. However their treatment depends on how well off her family is, if she is well educated and has a career. *Nofotane* women who are not well educated are expected to do the *feau*'s (chores), that range from domestic duties around the house, to going and helping her husband in the family plantation. The *nofotane* is expected to be the first to rise in the morning to prepare food for the family. She is also the last to sleep at night after the family is served. Other *nofotane* women are often seen out at sea diving for fish and shells to feed her husband's family. Traditionally going to the plantation and diving for fish and shells are the work expected to be performed by men. If she had remained with her own family as the *feagaiga* she would not be expected to perform these heavy duties. See Michiko Kyoko Ete-Lima "Jesus Christ the *Feagaiga* and *Nofotane*: A Christological Perspective of the Samoan *Tama'ita'i*" (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2001) for a detailed account about this Samoan practice.

traditional Samoan culture, and the motto holding gospel and traditional Samoan culture together.

Chapter One introduces the study. This chapter will begin by clarifying traditional Samoan culture or the Faa-Samoa, before looking at the thesis problem, research questions, thesis argument, aims and objectives, literature review, and the methodological approach.

Chapter Two is titled “Birthing *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*”. This chapter will explore how *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God) developed over the course of Samoa’s history by tracing the origins of the concept of Atua, in traditional Samoan beliefs, society and prophecies. In addition, it will explore how the Christian God found its way into Samoan society.

Chapter Three is titled “The motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* comes into being” and discusses how the phrase *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* came into being.

Chapter Four provides a theological discussion on the motto, gospel and traditional Samoan culture, and provides a line of thinking towards holding God and Atua as foundations of Samoa and not as oppositions.

Chapter Five is the conclusion and will summarise the findings of this thesis and also detail the significance of having Samoa founded on both God and Atua, not only for those living in Samoa but also for Samoans in the diaspora.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 *Traditional Samoan Culture Faa-Samoa*

Culture is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society”². Leslie Newbigin defines culture as “the sum total of ways of living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another”³. In addition, Richard H. Niebuhr says:

Culture is the artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes and values, and culture is also human achievement.⁴

Clifford Geertz—a well-respected anthropologist whose proposals are widely discussed by scholars because they are not designed to defend a particular theology, but can be applied to the analysis of literature and non-written historical records⁵—defined culture as:

a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which man [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about the attitudes towards life.⁶

² <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture> (Accessed 12 August, 2013).

³ Leslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1948: Questions For the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1984), 5.

⁴ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: SCM Press, 1975), 32.

⁵ J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 1.

⁶ Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel*, 2.

Given the definitions of culture one may suggest culture is a human construction and the result of the work of human minds and hands. However, no Samoan word translates to the English word “culture”. The most commonly referred to Samoan word used to describe or explain “culture” is *aganu’u*, but *aganu’u* is translated as “customs” and not “culture”.⁷ The word *aganu’u* is broken up into two separate words, *aga* meaning conduct, ways, behaviour of the people and *nu’u* meaning “village” or “a village of people”.⁸ George Pratt defines *aganu’u* as “conduct according to the customs of one’s own country”.⁹ Ama’amalele Tofaeono on the other hand provides a more detailed definition of *aganu’u*, which he translates as culture:

The word contains two distinctive characteristics. The word “aga” refers to the moral and social or behavioural character of a “nuu” (village or a community). *Aga* bespeaks the spiritual ... character of the community, including the thinking process of the philosophy and psychology of a certain community. It includes their visions, dreams, anticipations, fears and hopes or the ways they conceive and face the ups and downs of life. This means that spiritual and social behaviours of the community are intimately interwoven to foster a specific ethos and a way of life of a society.¹⁰

⁷ G. B. Milner, *Samoa Dictionary*, 7; Serge Tcherkezoff, *The Changing South Pacific*, 255-256.

⁸ Milner, *Samoa Dictionary*, 7.

⁹ George Pratt, “Samoan and English Vocabulary” in *Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1911), 22.

¹⁰ Ama’amalele Tofaeono, “Eco-Theology: Aiga-The Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa” (Erlangen: World Mission Script, 2000), 27; Tcherkezoff, *The Changing South Pacific*, 255-256.

Tofaeono continues by suggesting that the “culture of Samoan society functions in communal terms, there exists individual ‘aga’ (‘behaviour’) but these can only be validated in and through participation in the community”.¹¹ This thesis will argue a more appropriate and acceptable term that embodies the definitions of culture is Faa-Samoa (The Samoan-Way). The term brings together Samoan customs, rituals, traditions, practices, beliefs and behaviours. When Samoan’s speak of the Faa-Samoa (the Samoan-Way), the idea does not refer to *aganu’u* but rather to *tu ma aga*, which means, “conduct, ways and behaviours of the people including morals”. Regarding this view Serge Tcherkezoff says:

When a Samoan talks about his society in English, he does not differentiate between ‘culture’ and ‘society’ ... but if he is asked to characterize his ‘culture’ in Samoan, it is clear the subject is the *faaSamoa* ... he will say the essence or the nature of Samoan culture is: what usually follows is a list of taboos and duties surrounding the matai system and religion, introduced by the phrase *o le aganuu faa Samoa*.¹²

These ways or the Faa-Samoa, this thesis argues, have always been a part of the Samoan way of life through the teachings of their ancestors, and not a product of Christianity alone. These *tu ma aga* include *faaaloalo* (respect), *alofa* (love), and *usita’i* (obedience), which combined with the Christian principles of peace, love, benevolence, truth, righteousness and justice¹³

¹¹ Tofaeono, “Eco-theology: Aiga-The Household of Life”, 7.

¹² Tcherkezoff, *The Changing South Pacific*, 255.

¹³ Peters, “Perspectives on the Church Mission”, 202.

gave birth to the beliefs of the Samoans: that “Gospel and Culture go together or walk side by side”. Stephanie Lawson in support writes:

Christianity became part of fa’a Samoa and was used, like the old religion, to legitimate its institutions ... The system which incorporated new practices, ideas and goods, was not perceived to have changed fundamentally ... the aiga, the nu’u, and the authority of the matai and the fono were still there.¹⁴

However Christianity also brought disunity and denominational division and a gradual loss of Samoan identity. An example of this loss of identity is highlighted in the people’s decision to worship a foreign God, i.e. the Christian God, over *Tagaloaalagi* their Atua. The same foreign God is the deity that Samoan’s believe is referred to in the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa.

1.2 Thesis Problem

The motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa is honoured by Samoans in Samoa and in the diaspora. But we are not entirely conscious about what the motto means and entails. Questions such as: how did the idea Faavae i le Atua Samoa come about; to which deity does the motto refer; who coined the phrase and how did the phrase become the nation’s motto are not readily available. Samoan and European historians,¹⁵ anthropologists,¹⁶

¹⁴ Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy*, 129; Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 161. Ernst denotes that Western Samoa to a very large extent has retained the traditional fa’a Samoa.

¹⁵ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 70. Proposals: “Christianity has now become an important part of Samoan culture, and the motto of Samoans is Samoa is founded on God”.

¹⁶ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapid Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands* (Suva: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1994), 167. Manfred Ernst makes

theologians,¹⁷ sociologists,¹⁸ and political writers mention the motto in their writings, but that is as far as they go. More prominent figures involved in Samoa's push for Independence, are also silent on the nation's motto even though they were involved in drafting the nation's constitution.¹⁹

This thesis suggests two reasons for the lack of information. The first pertains to an illusion that the phrase *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* is self-explanatory and Samoans are expected to understand what the motto means. The second suggests, that analysing the motto in such a way appears to be "out of line" breaking the "*vatapuia*" or the "Sacred-Space".²⁰ There is a common Samoan expression *tausi le va* (care for or obey the sacred space). The expression denotes that one must know the limitations between them and another person. It carries a meaning of caution and respect in the way people interact.²¹ This space is considered sacred by Samoans and should not be broken. If a person breaks it they are *fiapoko* (smart-alec), *kaukalaikiki* (cheeky) and *le-mafaufau* (disrespectful). This thesis does not set out to break the *vatapuia* because one is *fiapoko*, *kaukalaikiki* or e-

reference to the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* reflecting the country's long association with Christianity. He continues by suggesting there is no other place he has come across where the society and the mainline churches are so closely knitted together and where the church continues to have such an impact on every aspect of life as is in Western Samoa.

¹⁷ Talia Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa" (BD Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1991). Talia sees the motto as a covenant between Samoa and God, and that Samoa should reflect obedience to the commandments of God and so faithfulness to its motto.

¹⁸ Serge Tcherkezoff, "Culture, Nation, Society: Secondary Change and Fundamental Transformation in Western Samoa, Towards a Model for the Study of Cultural Dynamics," In the *Changing South Pacific: Identities and Transformation*, ed. Serge Tcherkezoff & Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon. (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005), 270.

¹⁹ J. W Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967); Lauofo Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2002). Unfortunately neither writer makes any reference to the motto given they are seen as important stakeholders in the development of the Constitution. It is important to note nowhere in the constitution makes any reference to the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*.

²⁰ The term is made up of two words: *vav* which means (gap or space) and *tapu* which means (protocols). The term carries a similar meaning to the word taboo.

²¹ Michiko Kyoko Ete-Lima, "Jesus Christ the Feagaiga and Nofotane: A Christological Perspective of the Samoan Tama'ita'i" (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2001), 25; Fanaafi Aiono, *O La Ta Gagana* (Apia: Lamepa Press, 1996), 11.

mafaufau, but only to understand what the nation's motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa (Samoa is founded on God) means and entails.

1.3 Research Questions

The overarching question of this study is whether it can be argued the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa can be understood as anti-traditional Samoan culture. In order to answer this focus question, several research questions also need to be considered. How did the concepts of "Atua" and "God" find their way into Samoan society? Why did Samoans choose to worship the God of the *Papalagi* and not continue to worship Tagaloaalagi the Atua of Samoa? Which deity is Samoa founded on, God or Atua? When did the idea Faavae i le Atua Samoa originate? Who coined the phrase and how did it become the nation's motto? Does the motto affirm culture or is it against culture? Finally, is there room in the nation's motto for both the God of the *Papalagi* and the Atua of Samoa Tagaloaalagi? In order to unravel the mystery behind the nation's motto, these questions will be investigated thoroughly in relevant chapters throughout the thesis. In doing so, the central question of this study will be answered.

1.4 Thesis Argument

From the outset this thesis will argue the motto of Samoa can be understood as anti-traditional Samoan culture for several reasons. Firstly, Tagaloaalagi was the supreme Atua of Samoa before Malietoa accepted

Christianity in 1830, which saw Samoans worship a foreign God²² over their Atua:²³ Tagaloaalagi. Secondly, the nation's national anthem makes reference to *O Iesu na maliu mo Samoa* (Jesus dying for Samoa) whereas no Samoan myth, ritual, atua or aitu is known by such a name, his name is primarily associated with the foreign God. Thirdly, the preamble of the nation's Constitution makes clear references to the "Almighty and Omnipotent"²⁴ God. These terms are synonymous with the Christian God. Fourthly, Malietoa's decision to transfer the power of authority from the matai to the pastor indicates the influence the Christian deity has had on Samoan thinking.²⁵

The theological departure point of this thesis shows that the motto appears to be in line with Richard Niebuhr's Christ against culture model, which uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over culture.²⁶ It encourages opposition, total separation and hostility towards culture. Within this model, Christ is opposed to the values and achievements of a particular culture. However this study will attempt to steer a line of thinking that holds Christ and culture together in tension and not in

²² The word "God" when used in this study refers to the Christian deity introduced to Samoa by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830.

²³ The word *Atua* when used in this study it refers to the Samoan Ancestral deity Tagaloaalagi.

²⁴ Gerald O'Collins and Edward Farrugia, *Concise Dictionary of Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 162. The "Omnipotent" is a Latin term, which means "being all-powerful". The term is assigned to God, who is all good and all wise. The term does not mean that God can do what is logically impossible; for example make a square circle, but refers to God's divine attribute of being infinitely powerful.

²⁵ Ete-Lima, "Jesus Christ the Feagaiga and Nofotane: A Christological Perspective of the Samoan Tama'ita'i" (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2001), 8. According to Ete, Malietoa gave consent and approved the use of the term feagaiga for the pastor. This was upon Malietoa's recognition that the feagaiga or sacred relationship between the brother and sister was so sacred, that should also exist between the pastor and the congregation. The brother is very protective of his feagaiga, she is also respected. Likewise the pastor is respected by the congregation and is also protected from any harm because he is seen by the people as a manifestation of God or the *sui vaaia o le Atua*.

²⁶ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951), 45.

opposition or separate. This means to have Samoa founded on both God and Atua, and not just the Christian God alone. It will do this by weaving various myths and legends, rituals, sayings and Samoan worldviews that suggest, in the minds and hearts of Samoans, that there is room for both Christ and culture as the nation's foundations.

Moreover, the nation's Constitution states "the leaders of Samoa have declared that Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition".²⁷ The statement affirms the belief of this thesis that there is room for both deities, because Samoan customs and traditions are influenced by religious beliefs, which stem from antiquity or old Samoa. In addition, the cultural practice of *ifoga*²⁸ has only recently been introduced into church services by the Catholic faith in Samoa, a clear indication that in this case, Samoan Catholic's can see the relevance of incorporating traditional Samoan culture into its services.

Finally, a number of Samoan and Pacific theologians continue to use Samoan customs, rituals, practices, proverbs, tales, myths, legends and sayings, in an attempt to develop Christologies and hermeneutics showing the relationships between gospel and culture.²⁹

²⁷ The Clerk, *The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 4.

²⁸ The ritual of *ifoga* is explained in more detail in Chapter 4. The ritual is a cultural form of formal apology, but also carries a sense of public humiliation.

²⁹ Falepo A. Tuisuga-le-Taua, "O le Tofa Liliu o Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context" (PhD diss., Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009); Peletisala Lima, "Performing a Remigrant Theology: Sons and Daughters Improvising on the Return Home" (PhD thesis, Charles Sturt University, 2010); Michiko Kyoko Ete-Lima "Jesus Christ the Feagaiga and Nofotane: A Christological Perspective of the Samoan Tama'ita'i" (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2001); Siu Vaifale "From Strategy to Spirituality: Re-addressing the Samoan Ritual of Ifoga in the Appropriate light of Reconciliation" (MTh Thesis, Geneva University, 2002).

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Study

There are two aims of this study. The first is to highlight how the motto of Samoa came into being. The second is to explore the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa from a theological perspective. A theological interrogation of the motto presents a vastly different perspective than what is currently in the public arena about Samoa. Much of the literature written on Samoa has focused on the origins,³⁰ myths and legends,³¹ political,³² and ecclesiastical³³ perspectives, but none has investigated how the motto came to exist from a theological perspective highlighting how and why the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa can be understood as anti-culture or against culture. In order to engage with the motto from a theological perspective researching the historical context from which the motto was created, who coined the phrase and the gradual development of the idea towards becoming Samoa's motto is crucial. This vital information has until now gone unrecorded, which makes this study about Samoa different from anything previously written.

1.6 Literature Review

Unfortunately there is very little information available on the motto of Samoa. Talia Tapaleao's BD thesis "Faavae i le Atua Samoa" is the only

³⁰ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987); Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the Modern History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987); John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), 277.

³¹ C. Steubel and Bro. Hermna, *Tala o le Vavau: The Myths, Legends and Customs of Old Samoa* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1987; Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History* (Western Samoa: Department of Education, 1958).

³² Laufo Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2002); Michael Field, *Mau: Samoa's Struggles for Freedom* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1984).

³³ Featuna'i Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004).

piece of research I have been able to find that discusses the motto. The overriding thought for Tapaleao is that the nation should reflect obedience to the commandments of God and therefore faithfulness to its motto.³⁴ The motivation behind Tapaleao's work is highlighted in his three research questions: How is the belief in the deity conceptualised? What are the reasons that gave rise to Samoans' affirmations about God? And what is life like under these affirmations?³⁵

For Tapaleao, the motto is Samoa's covenant with God and it should be obeyed. Tapaleao grounds this view in Christology. Jesus Christ is the new covenant: Tapaleao calls upon Samoa to be Christ-like. In doing so, Samoa remains faithful to her motto.³⁶ Therefore, Tapaleao claims the "God" Samoa is founded on is the Lord of love, justice, freedom and peace. In addition, he says "when a community places its trust in a deity, it has indeed established itself in a covenant relationship with the deity ... failure to maintain the terms of the covenant inevitably brings harm and suffering".³⁷ Suffering is caused by not adhering to the terms of the covenant in Tapaleao's view.

There are two distinct differences between Tapaleao's work and this study. Firstly, Tapaleao's work does not analyse how the motto of Samoa came to be what it is today. Tapaleao does not include information such as who coined the phrase nor details the process about how the phrase *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* became the motto of Samoa. This thesis complements Tapaleao's study by giving the names, dates, years, places and events that

³⁴ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", iii.

³⁵ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", 2.

³⁶ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", iii.

³⁷ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", 19.

led to the adoption of the nation's motto. Secondly, his work focuses on the motto as a covenant between God and Samoa.

Tapaleao is correct in suggesting the motto is a national confession, which is a sworn covenant between Western Samoans and God. However, covenants and agreements, though binding at times, are rarely kept. In some cases, they are broken. Samoa broke a covenant with their Atua for a new one with the Christian God.³⁸ In addition, covenants are made between two parties and the claim that *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* is the nation's covenant with God is questionable given God is an absent or distant God that is not seen.

Michiko Ete-Lima's thesis "Jesus Christ the Feagaiga and Nofotane: A Christological Perspective of the Samoan Tama'ita'i" provides a window of opportunity for this study to explore the implications of the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*. In her thesis Ete-Lima explores the dual role of a Samoan *tama'ita'i* who on the one hand, due to the *feagaiga* (sacred covenant), holds a prestigious status within her family and village, while on the other hand her status and role changes dramatically after becoming a *nofotane* (wife) living with her husband's kin. As *nofotane*, Samoan women in many cases are seen as a *pologa* (slave). Ete-Lima downplays the severity regarding how *nofotane* women are treated. Ete-Lima appropriates their treatment with the Samoan concept of *tautua* (service). The treatment of the *nofotane* is appropriated by Ete-Lima by making reference to her as a humble servant.³⁹

³⁸ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", 7. "Devotion to the new conception means leaving behind the old covenant relationship with traditional deities, in order to enter into a new one with the Christian God. Tapaleao continues: "The people that once looked to traditional gods now began a new journey founded in the Christian God, 10.

³⁹ Ete-Lima, "Jesus Christ the Feagaiga and Nofotane", 143-144.

In addition, the suffering endured by the nofotane is again downplayed by Ete-Lima by suggesting the suffering experienced in carrying out their culturally expected role, underpinned by a belief behind the suffering, means there are blessings. Ete-Lima makes a comparison between the sufferings that a nofotane endures in fulfilling her role and responsibilities, to the suffering endured by Jesus, the suffering servant. For Ete-Lima Jesus was both a Feagaiga and nofotane, in that Jesus came from an exalted position as the Son of God, to a suffering servant who died for the forgiveness of sin.

Although Ete-Lima makes a valid argument in her Christology from a social-status perspective, from a prestigious status to a slave-like status this thesis respectfully suggests, the suffering endured by Christ for humanity cannot be compared to that experienced by a nofotane, because not all nofotane women are treated the same. Some are treated favourably because of various factors; for example, if she is well educated, comes from a wealthy family and has a career, she would be treated differently to a nofotane woman who is uneducated and comes from a poor family. It is this treatment of nofotane women that prompts this thesis to question the nation's motto. If Samoa is founded on God, why are some nofotane women treated the way they are?

Questioning the nation's motto, especially when it reads *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* leads this discussion into an area that Samoans are passionate about—and sometimes very defensive about—because the motto is a symbol of what makes a person Samoan, fundamentally a conviction which was phrased and adopted by our ancestors, and should not be questioned. Nonetheless, this thesis takes much confidence from the work of *Risatisone*

Ete's *Christ the Vale*,⁴⁰ in his Christological view of Christ. To suggest one is a *vale* (crazy or lunatic), is offensive and arrogant. But when that vale refers to Christ, it is difficult for a Samoan person to comprehend, even those with theological training.

This is because a vale in a Samoan context is usually seen as someone begging for money and rambling on, who as Pearson denotes, stands outside the hierarchical system⁴¹ as a social outcast. In other words, a vale is understood to be abnormal and not aligned to societal norms and expectations. In relation to Jesus, Pearson makes this correlation in order to highlight the otherness of Jesus—one who would not align to the conventionalities of Judaism.⁴²

In relation to this thesis, the work of Ete as described by Pearson provides a window of opportunity for further analysis and critical reflections of things Samoan. To place Christ in the same light as a vale in the Samoan context is unheard of and difficult for most Samoans to accept. This is because in the minds and hearts of Samoans, Christ died for them and cannot be perceived in any way as a vale. But this type of critical thinking has become a regular fixture in academic studies worldwide. Academics have moved towards challenging the norm with new perspectives from liberation, feminist, womanist, black theology, Hispanic theologies, contextual theologies, and cross-cultural theologies.

Oceania theologians have also contributed to the wealth of knowledge that is now available from the Pacific perspective. There is a

⁴⁰ Clive Pearson, "Who is Jesus Christ for us Today", *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross-Cultural Theologies from Down Under* (Parramatta: UTC Publications, 2004), 80.

⁴¹ Pearson, "Who is Jesus Christ for us Today", 82.

⁴² Pearson, "Who is Jesus Christ for us Today", 82.

shift in thinking and theologising about God and Christ from the Pacific point of view. These changes have embodied a gradual development towards becoming more critical in how people interpret the Bible; see Christ and thus how this should be translated into the work of the church. These developments have been well documented by John Garrett in his work in three volumes.⁴³

Manfred Ernst's *Winds of Change* is another important work because it examines the shift in religious beliefs in Samoa culminating in a movement called new religious groups. Manfred's work is used to add weight to the argument this thesis proposes, that some aspects of traditional culture *Taulaga* (offering) and the missionaries initiative of "Annual Contribution" has increased the financial burden on church members and thus contributed to a mass exodus away from the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) and also from other mainline churches.⁴⁴ Featuna'i Liuaana in his book *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political face of Samoa's Independence, 1900–1962*, writes from the church's perspective on the arrival of Christianity to Samoa and the church's involvement in Samoa's push for independence. Liuaana's perspective is from a vastly different lens from the works of Michael Field, Malama Meleisea, Lowell Holmes, George Turner, and J.W. Davidson, who use a political lens.

⁴³ John Garrett, *Where the Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War Two* (Suva: University of the south Pacific, 1997); John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War 2*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992); John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).

⁴⁴ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 164-166.

Malama Meleisea's, *The Making of Modern Samoa* and *A Short History of Western Samoa* are crucial sources.⁴⁵ This is because Meleisea deals with Samoan origins, history and politics. Because this thesis seeks to research how the concepts of God and Atua found their way into Samoan society, Meleisea's works provide a good account that helps trace the development of the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa. In addition, Meleisea gives many examples of how God transformed Samoa. Meleisea also explains the reasons behind Malietoa Vainu'upo's decision to accept Christianity.

Lauofo Meti's⁴⁶ work on the making of the Samoan Constitution will show the extent to which the motto has been neglected, because the motto is not mentioned anywhere in the whole document. Another important work that will be used is the national Anthem of Samoa. The words "*aua ete fefe, o le Atua o le ta faavae*" translate to, "don't be afraid God is our foundation".⁴⁷ Could this be where the phrase originated, and thus Sauni Liga Kuresa the composer of the anthem the one who coined the phrase?

In addition, J.W. Davidson's work *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, will be used to confirm various events in Samoa's push for independence, including the establishment of the Legislative Assembly who made the final decision to have the phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa as the nation's motto. Unfortunately there is no mention of the motto anywhere in J.W. Davidson's account.⁴⁸ Lalomilo Kamu's thesis *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* will also be

⁴⁵ Meleisea, *A Short History of Western Samoa*; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*.

⁴⁶ Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*.

⁴⁷ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 303.

⁴⁸ J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*.

referred to because it is an important source in understanding the old Samoan religious beliefs and traditions. However, Kamu in his survey of the issue, concluded: Samoans were in fact talking about the Christian God.⁴⁹ This thesis will suggest Samoan myths, legends, and oratory explicitly affirm traditional Samoan religion was already in existence well before any European influence, including missionaries.

1.7 Research Methodology

I will take a historical/cultural/theological approach to this thesis. An interrogation of the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*, is impossible without knowledge of Samoan history, hence Chapter Two will look at how the concepts of Atua and God found their way into Samoan society. Chapter Three will explore Samoan cultural practices, customs, traditions, myths and legends, proverbs and sayings, the nation's national anthem, Constitution, and coat of arms, in order to establish the contribution of this thesis to knowledge.

The theological arm of this methodology is found in Chapter Four. The chapter will also highlight how the motto can be interpreted as being anti-culture. It will also show how the motto affirms culture on the one hand, and is critical of both Christ and culture on the other hand. The impact on local church practices and members are also dealt with in detail. Chapter Five provides the conclusion.

Books, journal articles, newspaper articles, lectures and speeches from prominent writers in a survey of work already in the public domain relevant

⁴⁹ Lalomilo Kamu, "The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1996), 59.

to this study and its argument will be extensively consulted. This thesis draws on collections from the United Theological Library, the Mitchell Library (Sydney), The National Library in Canberra, and the Australian National University Library (Canberra), which host extensive collections of materials on Samoa, in order to aid my research. This thesis also refers to several recent theses from the Pacific Theological College (PTC) library in Fiji and Malua Theological College in Samoa, which has theses written by Samoan theologians who use Samoan sayings, customs and traditions in developing various Christologies, which is crucial for this thesis' contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 2: BIRTHING FAABAE I LE ATUA SAMOA

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to trace the development of the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa. It will do this by firstly highlighting the significance of a prophecy on Samoa's decision to worship a foreign God over Tagaloaalagi the Atua of Samoa. Secondly, it will explore the origins of Samoa and the concept of Atua in traditional Samoan society. Thirdly, it will discuss early indications and the official arrival of the Christian God to Samoa, which was to Samoan's the fulfilment of the prophecy. The final section explores the impact of the Christian God on Samoan society showing how these developments in Samoa's history influenced the leaders at that time in the belief expressed in Samoa's motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa.

2.2 The Prophecy

Samoa, like many Polynesian Islands prior to the arrival of Christianity, believed in some form of deity. Samoa's primal deity was Tagaloaalagi who was considered the supreme god of the ancestors.⁵⁰ There were also lesser gods called *aitu*, the most prominent being the

⁵⁰ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 2-7. Meleisea details the Samoan myth of origin or the Samoan creation story in which Tagaloaalagi is the Atua of Samoa.

prophetess/goddess Nafanua,⁵¹ who prophesised the coming of a new and more powerful “God” to Samoa.⁵² The name Nafanua means “hidden inland”: “na” means “hid” or “hidden” and “fanua” means “in-land” or “land”. She was hidden in the land or in the earth not long after she was born by her mother, to hide people knowing she was an illegitimate child born from an incestuous relationship between an uncle and niece.⁵³

Nafanua was regarded as a war-goddess⁵⁴ renowned for her sound advice and wisdom. According to myths and legends, chiefs and warriors sought her advice before engaging in war, for she was believed to possess a powerful *mana* (spirit).⁵⁵ Through conquest Nafanua gathered the four highest paramount *matai* (chief) titles of Samoa.⁵⁶ They are known as papa

⁵¹ Jione. Havea, “Diaspora Contexted: Talanoa, Reading, and Theologizing, as Migrants,” *Black Theology* 11 (2013): 197. Nafanua is referred to as a prophetess. Many Samoan writers generally refer to Nafanua as the *aitu fafine* (goddess). Havea uses the term “prophetess” in comparing Nafanua’s prophecy with that of Kofoa’s, about a half-human and half-god (Tevalu). Kafoa prophesised she saw a bright light approaching from the east and could feel its powers penetrating from one ear to the other. A short time after the god died and the people expected she would return in a better form. On 8 June 1861 Deacon Elekana from Cook Island landed in Nukulaelae brought by strong winds. The people of Nukulaelae accepted him and his party as fulfilment of Kafoa’s prophecy and as a *gali* (appropriate) incarnation of Tevalu.

⁵² Meleisea, *Lalaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 52; Featuna’i Liuaana, *Samoa Tula’i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa’s Independence, 1900-1962* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004), 1; Latu Latai “E Au Le Ina’ilau A Tamaita’i: The History of Samoan Missionary Wives in the Evangelization of Papua New Guinea from 1883 to 1975” (MTh thesis., Pacific Theological College, 2005), 7.

⁵³ Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa, *The Social Status and the Economic Roles of the Female in Traditional and Modern Samoan History* (Apia: UNESCO, 1986), 2; Malutafa Leaupepe, “Nafanua: A Prophetess of God the Congregational Christian Church Samoa and Hermeneutics,” *Malua Journal* 1 (2013): 39-40.

⁵⁴ Nafanua is also regarded as a Priestess; Le Tagaloa, *The Social Status and the Economic Roles of the Female in Traditional and Modern Samoan History* (Apia: UNESCO, 1986), 1.

⁵⁵ Latu Latai, “E au le Ina’ilau a Tama’ita’i: The history of Samoan missionary wives in the evangelisation of Papua New Guinea from 1883 to 1975” 9.

⁵⁶ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 203. Meleisea records the year that this event took place as 1420. Nafanua won and established the government or *malo* at “*fili ma puletu’u*” which became the headquarters. People from all over Samoa came to this place to ask Nafanua for a share of authority. This also included Malietoa Fitiseanu who together with his orator or *tulafale* Su’a asked Nafanua for one of the *papa* or *oa*; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 13.

or *tafa'i*. They were Tuia'ana, Tuiatua, Gatoaitale and Tamasoali'i.⁵⁷ When held by one person they are called the *tafa'ifa*, because they have the four pairs of *tafa'i*.⁵⁸ Nafanua bestowed the first *tafa'ifa* (paramount title) upon Salamasina,⁵⁹ the daughter of Tuia'ana Tamalelagi and his wife Vaetoeifaga, the daughter of the Tuitoga.

Salamasina is a direct descendent of Malietoa Laauli. At the time that Salamasina was born the Tuiatua Mata'utia had been murdered and his wife Sooaemalelagi-Levalasi returned to her people in Leulumoega. After seeing the newly born Salamasina, Sooaemalelagi wanted to adopt the baby girl and bring her up to be the successor of her murdered husband. When she saw Vaetoeifaga the mother of Salamasina holding the baby, she picked the baby up and said, "*mavave, ua lalelei si teine e pei o le sala masina*" when translated means "the little girl is as beautiful as yonder moon". Tamalelagi named his daughter Salamasina and said "Salamasina shall be the name of my daughter forever".⁶⁰ The remaining *papa* was given to other high-ranking families of Samoa.⁶¹

⁵⁷Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 25. Davidson explains that the royal titles of *Tuia'ana* and *Tuia'atua* were indeed considered as of divine origins.

⁵⁸ *Tafa'i* is a more formal or chiefly name for "papa" ("paramount titles"). This was conferred on Salamasina in 1480; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 204; Featuna'i Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa Independence, 1900-1962* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004), xvii; Honorific for a chief who holds the four *papa* or titles of Tuia'ana, Tuiatua, Gatoaitale and Tamasoalii; Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition Versus Democracy in the South Pacific, Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127.

⁵⁹ Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific, Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 126. Salamasina is described by Lawson "*o le tupu o Samoa*" ("the paramount chief of all Samoa"); Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History* (Western Samoa: Department of Education, 1958), 13 describes Salamasina as the "mother of all Samoa".

⁶⁰ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 13.

⁶¹ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 13.

One of the high-ranking families who did not receive one of the four titles was the Sa-Malietoa family.⁶² Malietoa Fitiseanu,⁶³ through one of his talking chiefs or *tulafale* named Su'a,⁶⁴ sought out Nafanua for a papa or *ao*. Nafanua in response declared she had no more *ao* (head) to give, only tails but to await an *ao* from heaven,⁶⁵ saying to Malietoa “*tali le lagi se ao o lou malo*” which means “await your kingdom from Heaven” or “to wait for the head of your kingdom shall come from heaven”.

2.3 Meaning of Prophecy

According to Samoa's current Head of State, Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Aana read the prophecy as sanction for the full Salamasina inheritance, particularly concerning the *malo* (government) residing in Leulumoega or Lufilufi.⁶⁶ Leulumoega and Lufilufi are still to this day important villages in Samoa on opposite districts or *itumalo*. Leulumoega is located on the western side in the Aana district, and is one of the main villages.⁶⁷ Likewise, on the eastern side of Samoa in the Atua district, Lufilufi is very

⁶² Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 12. The name Malietoa derived from the Tuitoga's final words after the Samoans had driven him out of Samoa. The Tuitoga uttered the words “*malie toa, malie tau*” which means: “brave warriors, bravely have you fought”.

⁶³ Malietoa Fitiseanu was the father of Malietoa Vainu'upo who accepted Christianity when he welcomed John Williams and the London Missionary Society in 1830. It was upon Malietoa's consent that the missionaries were able to enter Samoa.

⁶⁴ Le Tagaloa, *The Social Status and the Economic Roles of the Female in Traditional and Modern Samoan History*, 2.

⁶⁵ Tuiatua Tamasese, “Tamafaiga-Sharman, King or Maniac: The Emergence of Manono,” *Journal of Pacific History* 30 (1995): 12; Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific, Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127.

⁶⁶ Tamasese, “Tamafaiga-Sharman, King or Maniac”, 12; Jione Havea, “Diaspora Contexted: Talanoa, Reading, and Theologizing, as Migrants”, *Black Theology: An International Journal*, (11) 2013: 196-7.

⁶⁷ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 25.

significant. Both villagers are referred to as *Tumua*,⁶⁸ translated as stand-first or be the first to stand.

The significance of the meaning of the word *Tumua* relates to when Samoans gather. At the end of any event a word of thanks is always said. Chiefs from Lufilufi and Leulumoega are usually the first to stand and be the representative of the people. Lufilufi is regarded as the *Tumua matua* or the oldest of the *Tumua* and is thus the first to stand. If there is no *matai* from Lufilufi present, a *matai* from Leulumoega is the next to stand as the representative. The reason why the people of A'ana thought the leader of the *malo* would come from one of these villages,⁶⁹ is because Salamasina, as mentioned, is a direct descendent of the Malietoa lineage in the district of A'ana where Leulumoega is its *Tumua* but she is also the adopted child of Tuiatua from the Atua district where Lufilufi is *Tumua*.

However this was not the case, Nafanua bestowed the first part of her *malo* on Manono and she fought for Western Sava'i. When she won, people from all over Samoa went to ask her for a share in governing Samoa, including representatives from Leulumoega in the district of A'ana. In response, Nafanua told them she would help them if they would move her house to *Falealupo*. When the house was complete, Nafanua invited them for a game of *Magamagaloloa* or “see who can stay in the water longest”. Nafanua won and when she surfaced, she congratulated the chiefs, and said: “Leulumoega, you will be the Head of the *Malo*”. Nafanua told

⁶⁸ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 15. Meleisea denotes according to oral traditions *Tumua* came into existence in the 16th century following a time of Tongan domination; Featuna'i Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, xviii. *Tumua* is a designation given to the centres in Upolu (Lufilufi and Leulumoega) whose orators were considered king-makers, political kingpins.

⁶⁹ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 37; Tamafaiga was of the Le'iataua family and was said to be possessed by Nafanua, and the source of his powers.

Leulumoega to watch for the day she would arrive to establish the new government.

On her arrival Nafanua called out to a girl to bring her a drink of water, but the girl refused saying that the water belonged only to Tuia'ana. Nafanua was offended and set sail back to Sava'i. On her way back she passed Manono where she met a chief who was fishing, he took her and her travelling party in and showed them hospitality. To reward him Nafanua set the first part of her government on Manono. It was that occasion that gave rise to the name of the high chief of Manono, *Le'iataua* (the important fish). The title commemorates the fish that was caught by the chief and given to Nafanua for her meal.⁷⁰

Meleisea went on by saying, when Malietoa Fitisemanu arrived to ask for a share, Nafanua apologised and told him the head of the government had been given to Leulumoega and urged him to wait for the head of his government from the heavens. A few generations later when the *Savali o le Filemu* or The Messenger of Peace brought the good news to Samoa, Malietoa Vainu'upo, the son of Malietoa Fitisemanu, believed the prophecy of the *aitu fafine* Nafanua to be fulfilled when he welcomed and accepted Christianity in the form of the London Missionary Society (LMS).⁷¹ But how can Samoans be sure the prophecy referred to the Christian God as the head of Malietoa's malo, because it has also been reported it was the lesser *aitu* by the name of *Ave le tala* who predicted the arrival of a much more

⁷⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 57.

⁷¹ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands* (Suva: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1994), 167.

powerful foreign God to Samoa who would eat up all of the Samoan gods.⁷²

According to Stephanie Lawson:

Eight missionary teachers were left under Malietoa's protection, when John Williams returned two years later, Christianisation was well under way. Under Malietoa's lead, nearly all his people had renounced their heathen ways, demonstrating their commitment to the Christian God by eating their sacred *aitu*.⁷³

Masterman notes Nafanua's declaration does not mention the new God eating up any traditional gods, only that the new God will rule over Samoa:

That the dynasty of the old gods would be superseded by another one and that the new god would rule over all Samoa.⁷⁴

Could the arrival of Christianity be a matter of coincidence and good timing or was the prophecy genuinely fulfilled when John Williams and the London Missionary Society docked at Sapapali'i in 1830?⁷⁵ One thing is certain in the hearts and minds of Samoans, the prophecy was fulfilled in 1830 when Malietoa Vainuupo accepted Christianity and a foreign God replaced Tagaloaalagi the Atua of the ancestors. In relation to the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*, in order to clarify which deity was referred to in the motto, tracing the introduction and development of how both deities (Atua

⁷² Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 1; Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, 24.

⁷³ Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific, Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 130; Margaret Jolly, "Spectres of Inauthenticity", *The Contemporary Pacific*, (1) 1992, 49.

⁷⁴ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 14.

⁷⁵ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 27.

and God) found their way into Samoan society is paramount, so that a conclusion can be drawn on the overarching claim of this thesis, that the motto can be understood as anti-culture.

2.4 Origins of Samoa

The Samoans, like others from various Polynesian islands, claim to have originated in the Islands where Europeans claimed to have discovered or noticed them. Lauofo Meti suggests:

Although the Samoan people believe they have inhabited their islands since time began, retrospective narratives of genealogies of some of the known ancient lineages take Samoan traditional history back only to about the year 950 A.D. A recent pottery discovery takes this date to around the year 2000 B.C.⁷⁶

In contrast, Sylvia Masterman argues:

Polynesians did not use iron or any other metals, neither did they make pottery. Pottery has recently been found in Tonga and Samoa, but we do not yet know how old this is or if it was made in Samoa or Fiji.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Lauofo Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2002), 4; Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 117; John Cockcroft, *Polynesian: Isles of the South Pacific* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), 94.

⁷⁷ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 3; Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition Versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 117; John Cockcroft, *Polynesian: Isles of the South Pacific* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), 94 supports Masterman's argument that Samoans did not use pottery.

The archaeological evidence found at Vailele in 1957⁷⁸ helped establish when the Samoans (or whoever carried the items that have been found) arrived in Samoa, and whether the Samoans were indigenous to the land of Samoa. What archaeology cannot prove is the belief system of the people. In the view of Samoans Tagaloaalagi is their Atua the supreme deity who created the Islands. From him were descended the founders of the most ancient human lineages, villages and political institutions. This view was made resoundingly clear by a Samoan, as noted by Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck):

Their viewpoint is bound by their own horizon. This attitude of the mass of the people is expressed in the reply of a talking chief to myself after I had sketched the migrations of the Polynesians from the mainland of Asia to the remote isles of the Pacific. “We thank you for your address”. The rest of the Polynesians may have come from Asia, but Samoans – No. The Samoans originated in Samoa.⁷⁹

The Samoan patriot’s view was founded on the belief that the human person in Samoan society is regarded as divine. Samoans can trace their genealogy back to the High God, Tagaloaalagi, the creator of the heavens and earth, of the physical universe, of *tagata* (human beings) and their *tofiga i le sosaiete* (position in society). The highest *tofiga* is the paramount

⁷⁸ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 9.

⁷⁹ Te Rangi Hiroa, *Samoan Material Culture* (Honolulu: The Museum, 1930), 5; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 2, says Sir Peter Buck is considered by some as probably the best authority on Polynesian matters; Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 5; Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 16. Davidson says “according to Sir Peter Buck, an orator from Manu’a rejected his statement that the original Samoans were immigrants: We thank you for your interesting speech, the orator said, “the Polynesians may have come from Asia, but Samoans, no, we originated in Samoa”;

chief's whose ancestors were the first descendants of Tagaloaalagi.⁸⁰ In support of the same view, Lawson says:

Aspect of Samoan chiefly authority and legitimacy, especially in relation to ali'i, is that such attributes were related directly to the mana believed to have been passed down by divine ancestors and meant, ultimately, descent from a deity.⁸¹

2.5 Traditional Samoan Atua

According to Samoa's creation story, there was a primeval void, giving way to natural phenomena, which in several generations produced Tagaloaalagi or *Tagaloa*.⁸² Tagaloaalagi became known as Atua. The term was used to designate the various manifestations of Tagaloa, and was later applied to the Christian God.⁸³ Samoa's head of state Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese, in a speech delivered in 2009, gave further insight to the view that Samoans originated in Samoa:

In the Tagaloa religion, Tagaloa sent down his tuli (plover bird) to earth and on his instructions the tuli formed the image of man from bacteria *ilo*. It is said that man originates from *ilo* and eventually evolved from that into human form.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 37.

⁸¹ Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127.

⁸² R. P. Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900 The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 41; Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa*, 127.

⁸³ Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa*, 128.

⁸⁴ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "Samoan Fragrances in Samoan Thoughts" (paper presented at the Pacific Thought Symposium Mau forum, Waitakere, Auckland, March 7, 2009).

For the writer Unasa Va'a, every Samoan is a divine progeny of Tagaloaalagi. This is because Tagaloaalagi came down to earth in the form of his *suli* or progeny. Through his many marriages with the beautiful daughters of the earth people, every Samoan is able to trace his or her ancestry back to Tagaloaalagi.⁸⁵ The name Tagaloa or Tangaloa is made up of two words: *Tanga* or *Taga* means “bag” or “sack”, and *loa* means “long”.⁸⁶ *Taga* can also mean “allowed”, “permission” or “freedom” while *loa* can also mean “never-ending”, “unrestricted” or “free in limitless space”.⁸⁷ Myths and legends denote Tagaloa existing before anything came into being, and thus was responsible for the creation of all things, including humanity.⁸⁸ Meleisea confirms this belief:

The god Tagaloa dwelt in the expense; he made all things; he alone was (there); not any sky, not any country; he only went to and fro in the expense; there was also no sea, and no earth; but, at the place where he stood there grew up a rock. Tagaloa faatupu nu'u (Creator) was his name.⁸⁹

Although some writers argue Tagaloa was not revered, suggesting that idols and the high gods of Polynesia were not widely worshipped among Samoans,⁹⁰ other examples of early literature about Samoa express

⁸⁵ Unasa Va'a, “Samoan Custom and Human Rights: An Indigenous View,” *Victoria University Wellington Law Review* 40 (2009), 238.

⁸⁶ Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago*, 52.

⁸⁷ Va'a, “Samoan Customs and Human Rights”, 238.

⁸⁸ Lalomilo Kamu, “The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1996), 27.

⁸⁹ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 2.

⁹⁰ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins of Oceania* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1982), 121.

the view that prayers were offered and foods were dedicated to the deity.⁹¹ In addition, several writers have pointed to the actions and conduct of the missionaries who were keen to stamp out the worship of Tagaloa and the village gods.⁹² Holmes notes:

The Samoans believed in a Tagaloa family who lived on the ten mountains which they referred to as lagi (heavens). The most important of the Tagaloas was Tagaloa Lefuli (unchangeable) who was also known by the names Tagaloa Mana (Powerful) and Tagaloa Fa'atupu nu'u (Creator). Within the Tagaloa pantheon were such deities as Tagaloa Pule (authority), Tagaloa Tetea (albino), Tagaloa Tula'i (Standing), and Tagaloa Savalivali, the messenger of the gods.⁹³

These names describe the various attributes of Tagaloalagi who holds a significant place in Samoan and Polynesian mythology. However it is important to note at this point that not all of Polynesia holds Tagaloa in the same light as the Samoans. Elsewhere in Polynesia Tagaloa had a restricted sphere of influence, being seen primarily as the god of the sea and fishermen.⁹⁴ This designation is in stark contrast to that held by Samoans:

Belief in the supernatural or in the one Supreme Being was not foreign to the Samoan people. It was not even considered something

⁹¹ Howell Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa: The Mead/Freeman Controversy & Beyond* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987), 62.

⁹² Serge Tcherkezoff, "Culture, Nation, Society: Secondary Change and Fundamental Transformation in Western Samoa, Towards a Model for the Study of Cultural Dynamics," in *The Changing South Pacific: Identities and Transformation*, ed. Serge Tcherkezoff & Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005), 270.

⁹³ Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa*, 62; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 35.

⁹⁴ Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa*, 62.

new brought by the missionary movement. All the existing myths relating to god as creator agree on one point that Tagaloaalagi (Tagaloa of Heaven) was the Supreme Being who created things in the beginning.⁹⁵

While the origin of Samoans has been debated, their belief systems about their Atua Tagaloaalagi remained unchallenged until European contact throughout the 17th and 18th century.

2.6 God is introduced to Samoa

The first sight of European contact in Samoa is attributed to the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen who was in command of the Dutch Three Ship Expedition in 1722.⁹⁶ Records further indicate the next explorer to notice Samoa was the French circumnavigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville in 1768.⁹⁷ Bougainville impressed by the numbers and speed of the Samoan canoes and constructions, coined the term “Archipelago of the Navigators”, meaning “The Navigators Island” or “Isles of the Navigators”.⁹⁸ John Williams, the first LMS missionary to arrive in Samoa confirmed Bougainville’s sentiment in his journal:

⁹⁵ Kamu, “Samoan Culture and Christian Gospel”, 27.

⁹⁶ Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 65; Peggy Fairbain-Dunlop, *Tamaitai Samoa: Their Stories* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1998), 2.

⁹⁷ Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, 5; Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 66, give’s 1768 as the year in which Bougainville visited Samoa and not 1778. This thesis will use Gibson’s view, because many European and Samoan writers have referred to his work.

⁹⁸ Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 3.

La Perouse calls them Navigators from the constant use they make of the canoe in rowing from one bay to another and from one Island to Island.⁹⁹

The first visitors to go ashore were from the French expedition vessel La Perouse, led by Captain de Langle, who went to trade beads with the Samoans.¹⁰⁰ While visiting Tutuila or American Samoa as it is now known, an incident was reported to have occurred in which Captain de Langle went ashore to get water but was attacked by the natives. When the captain instructed his men to fire over the heads of the natives, a shower of stones apparently rained on their boats killing the captain and eleven others.¹⁰¹ As a result an article was circulated throughout Europe claiming that Samoans were “treacherous savages”, and a “godless people” whose shores should not be approached.¹⁰² The incident branded the Samoans for fifty years.¹⁰³ But according to George Turner if the Samoan’s version had been told it would have considerably altered the views circulated throughout Europe. Turner wrote on behalf of the Samoans:

A native who was out at the ship was roughly dealt with for some real or supposed case of pilfering. The poor fellow was shot at, and mortally wounded, and, when taken on shore bleeding and dying, his enraged companions roused all who were on the spot to seek instant revenge. Hence the deadly attack on the party in the boats at the

⁹⁹ Richard M. Moyle, ed., *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830-1832* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1984), 67.

¹⁰⁰ Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 66.

¹⁰¹ Rhys Richards, “The Decision to Lotu: New Perspectives from Whaling Records on the Sources and Spread of Christianity in Samoa.” in *Pacific Studies* 17 (1994), 31.

¹⁰² Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 4; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 12.

¹⁰³ Richards, “The Decision to Lotu” 31.

beach, in which the stones flew like bullets from a steam-gun, and which ended in the death of M. de Langle, his brother officer and ten of the crew. The natives wound up the bodies of the Frenchmen in native cloth, and decently buried them, as they do their own.¹⁰⁴

The words the “natives decently buried them as they do their own”, contradict the claim made by La Perouse that the Samoans were a race of “treacherous savages”. The Samoans did what came naturally when one of their own was mistreated. The perception that Samoans were a godless people gives a false view about Samoa. It suggests Samoans did not believe in a deity. It also suggests that Samoa at that time did not practise any form of religion.

The Samoan saying *ua le o gatasi le futia ma le umele*, which is still used today, means that what was hoped for or expected did not turn out the way they thought it would. This saying highlights the difference between the Samoan form of religion and the European understanding of religious practice. The definition of religion refers to a system of beliefs, the ceremonial and ritual activities that are associated with it and the worship of a supernatural being or beings.¹⁰⁵

This understanding of religion was an important contributing factor to the claim made by the first Europeans about Samoans. This is because the Europeans did not witness any familiar signs of a religion among them. This led the Europeans to assume that Samoans were a godless people. In addition, it was not just European explorers and missionaries who held this

¹⁰⁴ Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 35.

view of Samoa. Evidence indicates the Rarotongans' also saw Samoans as a godless people and they considered the introduction of Christianity to be the first experience the Samoans had with religion.¹⁰⁶

The Rarotongans' view about Samoans influenced the Europeans. This is because before arriving in Samoa the Europeans had already made contact with the neighbouring Rarotongans. In countering their claims two arguments were presented. On the one hand, these views were made because they did not observe any physical or visual manifestations of religious worship like large temples, statues of idols, special places of worship, and an institutionalised priesthood or religious specialists:¹⁰⁷

From what we could learn the Samoans have no idols, but pay some kind of worship to some invisible spirit ... the Samoans offered no human sacrifice. They were not guilty of crime of infanticide so prevalent in most of the Islands of the South Seas ... they have no maraes or houses for their worship, or idols of any description. They worship a great spirit they call Tagnaloa (Tagaloa), they in times go into the bush and pretend to hold conversations with Tagnaloa ... they have no priest ... they mutter their prayers to Tagnaloa who they say resides in the skies.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the signs were clearly absent because the explorers did not go ashore and therefore based their claim on observations from afar.¹⁰⁹ The Europeans' claim suggesting the Samoans' were a godless

¹⁰⁶ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Moyle, *Journal of John Williams*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 66.

people was drawn because the Europeans presupposed that all Polynesian Islanders worshipped the same way. However this was not the case for Samoa as Meleisea reveals:

In fact the Samoan form of worship was very different from other Polynesian Islands ... The Samoans did not have the usual outward expressions like they experienced in Tahiti, the Cook Islands as well as throughout some parts of Polynesia.¹¹⁰

The missionary George Brown also weighed into the argument reiterating the fact that Samoans were far from a godless people:

No statement could be more contrary to the actual fact than the assertion that the Samoans were a godless people, for as a matter of fact, they worshipped in some form or another a large number of gods, some of which were immediately connected with certain families.¹¹¹

Samoans did not believe in a monotheistic God like the Europeans who worshipped one God. Samoans instead were polytheistic.¹¹² In traditional society this meant the highest of these gods was Tagaloa the supreme deity. However this belief in Tagaloa was soon challenged by foreigners and natives introducing a foreign God to Samoa.

European sailors, whalers, merchants, beachcombers and a small number of Samoans are believed to be the first people to introduce a foreign

¹¹⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 35.

¹¹¹ Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa*, 56; Lowell D. Holmes, "Cults, Cargo and Christianity: Samoan Responses to Western Religion", in *Missiology: An International Review* 4 (1980): 473.

¹¹² Peter Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and cultural change in Samoa", *The Journal of Pacific History* 39 (2004): 244-245. In Samoa there are five classes of gods: god of individuals, family god, village god, district god, and war god. These gods are different to a major god "Tagaloaalagi" a figure in an elaborate cosmogony.

God to Samoa.¹¹³ The foreigners were refugees, escaped convicts, seamen and castaways from European ships who wanted to try their luck among a reportedly hostile people.¹¹⁴ The escaped convicts were primarily from Australia.¹¹⁵ These settlers had little to offer the Samoans other than basic trade skills in carpentry and metal work. As a result they were seen by the Samoans as experts who became known as the sailors' sect/cult.¹¹⁶

On the one hand, the "sect" played an important role in the Christianisation of Samoans, yet on the other hand they were described as heretical and blasphemous people, who presented a problem to the missionary movement.¹¹⁷ The sect was believed to have continued to be present in Samoa well after the arrival of Christianity.¹¹⁸ Samoans were also believed to have contributed to the work of the sects. A man by the name of Saiva'aia, reported to have been in Tonga for some years, returned to his village of Satupa'itea in Sava'i and began to teach members of his family about God using a Tongan (Methodist) version of Christianity.¹¹⁹ Another Samoan by the name of Tagipo from Lufilufi had his own version of Christianity, which was apparently similar to the teachings of a runaway sailor.¹²⁰

The most influential of these early Christian converts was a Samoan by the name of Siovili from Eva who had travelled the Pacific as a sailor on

¹¹³ Peggy Dunlop, *Tama'ita'i Samoa: Their Stories* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1998), 2;

¹¹⁴ Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 68; Lowell D. Holmes, "Cults, Cargo and Christianity: Samoan Responses to Western Religion", *Missiology: An International Review* 4 (1980): 477.

¹¹⁵ Kamu, "Samoa Culture and the Christian Gospel", 105.

¹¹⁶ Kamu, "Samoa Culture and the Christian Gospel", 64; Lowell D. Holmes, "Cults, Cargo and Christianity, 477.

¹¹⁷ Kamu, "Samoa Culture and the Christian Gospel", 105.

¹¹⁸ John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War 2*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992), 187.

¹¹⁹ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 5.

¹²⁰ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 5

trading vessels.¹²¹ In Tahiti he picked up a version of Christianity and when he arrived back to Samoa, he returned as a prophet of a Tahitian-influenced religion.¹²² Siovili started to teach this version of Christianity to members of his family and the people of Eva. Siovili's impact influenced many Samoans as far as Sava'i.¹²³ Williams reported that a Chief from Sava'i had confronted them while at sea:

That they had heard of the good news and that nearly all of Upolu and Sava'i were Christians. He also pointed out to Williams that there was a native who had been in Tahiti and was teaching the people the greatest nonsense. He had told them that he held intercourse with Jehova and that the lotu of the missionaries of sava'i was pepelo (deceit) ... the sixth day (Saturday) was the Sabbath ... as many as eight or nine villages had embraced his religion. He told them that if they embraced his religion they would not die. His name was Joe Vili (Siovili).¹²⁴

Yet Samoans convey a different affirmation, claiming it was John Williams and the London Missionary Society who introduced Christianity (foreign God) to Samoa.

¹²¹ Richards, "Decision to Lotu", 35.

¹²² Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 121.

¹²³ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 5.

¹²⁴ Moyle, *Journal of John Williams*, 109-111.

2.7 God is officially accepted and the fulfilment of the prophecy

The first official Christian missionary to arrive in Samoa was John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830. His aim was to spread the gospel to the heathens.¹²⁵ As the mission's administrator, John Williams was responsible for the building of a 60-foot ship called "The Messenger of Peace" while he was in Rarotonga.¹²⁶ This was the vessel that some Samoan forms of oratory, legends, tales and writings describe bursting through the skies bringing the gospel to a then heathen and godless society.¹²⁷

The arrival of Christianity was to Samoans the fulfilment of Nafanua's prophecy. The event continues to be inserted into Samoan oratory, mentioned in sermons and referred to as a blessing from the heavens. The Samoans at that time were in awe describing the white skinned Europeans, who appeared to have come from the horizons of the world of men as "Papalagi" ("they who burst the heavens").¹²⁸ Eight Tahitian teachers and their families, as well as a Samoan couple by the names of Fauea and Puaseisei whom they had picked up from Tonga, accompanied Charles Barff.¹²⁹

The Samoan Chief Fauea became an important figure in the acceptance of Christianity by Samoans. However the view that claims the LMS and John Williams were the first people to bring Christianity to Samoa

¹²⁵ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 9.

¹²⁶ Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 65.

¹²⁷ Holmes, *Quest for the Real Samoa*, 55.

¹²⁸ Gibson, *Samoa: 1830-1900*, 65.

¹²⁹ Havea, "Diaspora Contexted: Talanoa, Reading, and Theologizing, as Margins," *Black Theology* 11 (2013): 197.

was vigorously disputed by various people, who argued that Christianity had already been practised by Samoans prior to the arrival of John Williams. Garrett reports:

When the LMS arrived in Samoa in 1830 the people had already heard about the new God, Jesus Christ ... Tahitians on passing ships brought news of the lotu Tahiti before John Williams came.¹³⁰

But to Samoans the 24th of August 1830 continues to be remembered as an important day in Samoa's history. This is because the day signifies the breaking of a new morning, a new age, and the turning point in the country's history. The enormity of this event is reflected in one of Samoa's most commonly used oratory proverbs: "*E ui a i isi taeao, ae o le taeao sili lava o le taeao o le talalelei*" ("Of all the mornings, the most important morning is the morning of the gospel").¹³¹ The morning of the gospel is attributed to the overhauling of old Samoa that was riddled with tribal factions and wars, heathen practices and customs. These old practices and customs were slowly changed or abolished resulting in a more peaceful and transformative Samoa. These transformations are the result of missionary influence who thought to Christianise Samoans transforming them into a more civilised society, as a worthy cause.¹³²

¹³⁰ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 21.

¹³¹ Latu Latai, "E Au le Ina'ilau a Tama'ita'i: The History of Samoan Missionary Wives in the Evangelization of Papua New Guinea from 1883 to 1975." (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2005), 5. This was the morning in which Samoans recalled the heavens bursting, and out of which came The Messenger of Peace carrying John Williams and the London Missionary Society bringing the gospel and the good news about Jesus Christ to Samoa. This period in Samoa's history has been described as a period of great transformation.

¹³² Steven Gertz, "People Worth Knowing: Bringing Peace to Paradise" in *The Christian History and Biography* 87, 44; Charles W. Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis books, 1982), 3.

2.8 *God transforms Samoa*

There is no doubt the introduction of the Christian God to Samoa influenced the leaders when they decided on a motto for Samoa. This is because in the minds of many, Samoa was enlightened due to the impact of Christianity. Samoan culture *agan'uu*¹³³ has been informed and thus transformed for the better by the Christian message, which is evident in a more peaceful Samoa, free of the tribal wars of the past.¹³⁴

Laden with the trophies of victory, the gods of the heathen taken in this bloodless war, and won by the prince of peace ... Williams also promoted a measure of peace throughout the Islands. Chief Malietoa in Samoa was a feared warrior, when Williams met him; after embracing Christ, Malietoa was a force for peace.¹³⁵

Samoa at that time was in turmoil with the two rival districts of A'ana and Tuamasaga engulfed in a civil war which lasted for thirty years until the coming of John Williams brought peace to Samoa by way of the gospel.¹³⁶ In the Tuamasaga district, Malietoa was the supreme chief. In A'ana a new leader had risen to power by the name of Pe'a who later, because of his cruelty, was given the name Tamafaiga.¹³⁷ Tradition has it before Tamafaiga's mother gave birth to him, she shouted "*o le aitu, o le*

¹³³ The word *aganu'u* is translated in the Samoan Dictionary as "customs" and not "culture". There is no Samoan word that translates into "culture" see G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1951), 7; George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1960), 22.

¹³⁴ Samoans were constantly at war with each other before the arrival of Christianity as mentioned in previous chapters. The gospel principles of love and peace were attributed to ending the wars.

¹³⁵ Gertz, "People Worth Knowing", 44-45.

¹³⁶ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 14.

¹³⁷ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 14.

*aitu*¹³⁸ meaning “it’s a ghost, it’s a ghost” thus giving rise to the name Tamafaiga, “the man with a difficult birth”.¹³⁹ Tamafaiga was a feared warrior, some describing him as a maniac, the devil, and as his name suggests: an evil ghost. He would go from village to village burning and destroying plantations, killing and burning and ordering many wicked things to be done.¹⁴⁰

Tamafaiga was considered the earthly representative of a war god with supernatural powers. He was also believed to have prophesised that after his death the people would hear of a new religion and a new god. The people of Fasitoouta planned his assassination, but Tamafaiga was warned and his anger was terrible. He planned the invasion of A’ana (the district which Fasitoouta is within) from Manono¹⁴¹. The people from Fasitoouta had heard of his coming and hid in the mountains. Tamafaiga and his followers burnt the village and plantations to the ground. In retaliation the people of Fasitoouta attacked him at night and Tamafaiga was killed.¹⁴² Holmes records Tamafaiga was killed while in the act of adultery with the wife of a powerful chief, who despite knowing about Tamafaiga’s powerful *mana* (spirit), decided to end his arrogant ways.¹⁴³ As a result Manono set

¹³⁸ The word *aitu* in general means evil. In this case the word *aitu* is also referred to as ‘ghost’. This is because ghost is in the same category as evil in Samoa.

¹³⁹ Tamasese, “Tamafaiga-Sharman, King or Maniac”, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Albert Wendt, *Guardians and Wards: A Study of the Origins, Causes, and the First Two Years of the Mau in Western Samoa*, (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 1965), 11. Tamafaiga’s reign was short lived but brutally tyrannical, his harsh treatment of the Aana people eventually turned the Aana leaders against him, hatching a plot to kill him; this they did at Fasito’o in 1829. The way was now opened for Malietoa to gain the Tafa’ifa, after thirty years. The murder turned Manono against Aana; something which Malietoa had hoped for. Tamafaiga’s death also turned most of the powerful families, who through marital ties and historical circumstances were related to Tamafaiga, against Aana; Lowell D. Holmes, “Cults, Cargo and Christianity: Samoan Responses to Western Religion”, in *Missiology: An International Review*, 4 (1980): 472-473.

¹⁴¹ Tamafaiga is from ‘Manono’.

¹⁴² Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 15.

¹⁴³ Holmes, “Cults, Cargo and Christianity: Samoan Responses to Western Religion”, 472-473.

out to avenge Tamafaiga's death. At the same time Malietoa Vainuupo led his forces over to Aana and joined in the war.¹⁴⁴

Tamafaiga's death opened the door for Malietoa to claim the tafa'ifa. The war ended with all the warriors being killed and all survivors ruthlessly hunted from their hiding places and burned in a huge fire that was kept alight for days while more victims were hunted down and thrown in. The smoke from the huge fire was the smoke that John Williams had noticed afar when he first arrived in Sava'i.¹⁴⁵ In old Samoa the consequences of losing a war meant the surviving people are driven from their land, as was the case for Aana. After the arrival of a contingent of LMS missionary families in 1836, Meleisea reported that Malietoa proposed that the people of Aana should be permitted to return to their lands; the proposal was put to the various parties of the malo at a *fetalaa'iga* (negotiation). As a result 3000 people returned to the area and commenced rebuilding their villages:¹⁴⁶

It consisted of three long speeches. The first was by the public orator of Malietoa's village, which was merely introductory and complimentary. The next was by Malietoa, who proposed that the general fono should be held in Sava'i to consider whether the A'ana people should be restored. His chief argument was that now Ieova (Jehovah) was their God, and His was the Malo that there was now necessary to keep the people from their lands ... heralds were sent

¹⁴⁴ Wendt, *Guardians and Wards*, 11. Malietoa's armies ravaged the whole district and burnt villages to the ground. Those who were captured, warriors, old men, women and children were thrown into a pit known as *Tito* and burnt alive. The fire raged for days. The missionary John Williams arrived in Sapapali'i (Malietoa's main village in Sava'i) in August 1830 and saw the smoke billowing from Aana. It was here the missionaries waited until they received the word that Tamafaiga was killed. It was this battle that facilitated the task of planting the Christian Jehovah's in Samoa. Samoa, after this battle was united under Malietoa.

¹⁴⁵ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 27-28.

out round all the islands to summon the chiefs to the great fono which assembled at Sava'i ... the decision was that people should be restored.¹⁴⁷

Christianity, through the missionaries, taught that all men should live in peace together and as a result wars gradually ceased in Samoa, with the gospel attributed to the transformation.¹⁴⁸ Samoan cannibalism also ceased.¹⁴⁹ This event is summed up by the Samoan saying: *ua ifo le aso o le Malietoa* which carries the same meaning as the English expression, the sun has set, meaning that something has come to an end or ceased to exist anymore. A well-known legend detailed how cannibalism came to an end in Samoa.

This legend details how Samoans used to take turns in offering a family member as Malietoa Faiga's meal. On this particular day Malietoa's son was playing in a nearby village called Saleimoa. He heard a couple coming from Sava'i wailing, and so he called out to them and asked them why they were crying. The couple explained that they were going to offer their child as Malietoa's meal of the day. Malietoa's son instructed them to wrap him in coconut leaves and place him before Malietoa as his meal.¹⁵⁰ The couple, not knowing who the boy was, did as he had directed them to do. The boy was brought before Malietoa for his meal, as he started to unwrap the coconut leaves and take a bite, before him was his son who said

¹⁴⁷ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 25-26.

¹⁴⁹ Cockcroft, *Polynesian: Isles of the South Pacific* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968), 95. Cockcroft mentions that an Englishman who was to figure prominently in Samoan development, was contemplating bringing Christianity to the "heathens and cannibals" of the beautiful Pacific.

¹⁵⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 68-69.

to his father, “*ia ola Samoa*” which means “let Samoa live”. In response Malietoa cried in agony and declared “*ua ao Samoa*” (“Samoa is enlightened”) and as of that day ceased his cannibal ways.¹⁵¹ The swimming waterhole where Malietoa’s son was swimming is still there today, opposite the principal of Malua Theological College’s residence.

The waterhole is called *Tofuola*, *tofu* means dip and *ola* means life. The waterhole was called this because this is where the couple on their return from Malietoa took a dip. It is said the words they uttered after they dipped were “*ua o’u tofu, ua o’u ola*” translated as “I have dipped, I am alive”. The action of Malietoa was attributed to the influence of the foreign God. His words *ua ao Samoa* was his testimony and promise to Samoa.¹⁵² Christianity, in addition, outlawed many unacceptable practices as Garrett explains:

Christian moral standards were rapidly introduced to regulate Samoan life. Restraints were eventually placed on war, following protracted missionary preaching and meditation. Tattooing, long hair, sexually charged night dances, bare breasts and introduced intoxicants were gradually proscribed. The new laws were based on the Ten Commandments, with Sabbath observance as king pin of the system.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 12; C. Steubel and Bro. Herman, *Tala o le vavau: Myths, Legends and Customs of Old Samoa* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1987), 132. A version of this story is also told by many writers including Meleisea, *Lagaga: A short history of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 68-69. But this version was told by the head of state Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese. It was told to him by the late Oka Fauolo who was a former principal of Malua Theological College; Tui Atua Tamasese Efi, “Managing cultural and religious diversity in the Pacific” (paper presented at managing cultural and religious diversity Symposium, New Zealand), 6.

¹⁵² Samoans came to understand the idea of Jesus as the saviour from this same legend. The boy offered his life as a sacrifice, and as a result he became a saviour for other Samoans after Malietoa denounced cannibalism.

¹⁵³ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 124-125.

Polygamy was also abolished. In former times Samoans indulged in plurality of wives,¹⁵⁴ known as *taunonofo*. Samoan *matai* (chiefs) had many wives, as many as seven, ten or even more.¹⁵⁵ This practice was later understood to ensure their lineage did not cease. This was also a way to form alliances with other highly ranked kingly and royal families in Samoa. This practice was outlawed and replaced with the sacramental covenant of marriage.¹⁵⁶ The gospel teaches that men and women should have only one marriage partner, chiefs wishing to become Christians were asked to choose one wife for the rest of their lives. It was another eight years after John William's arrival in 1830 before Samoans accepted the new teachings on marriage.¹⁵⁷

Some aspects of Samoan tattooing practice were also abolished. The *pe'a* or *tatau* (full body tattoo) is very important in Samoa. The *pe'a* details aspects of Samoa's history. The *pe'a* begins from the upper rib cage and finishes just below the knees. The *pe'a* was traditionally worn by chiefs; however today anyone is tattooed. It is a painful process and death is always possible. Those who have a *pe'a* wear it with pride and prestige; it is a visual symbol of one's tenacity, strength and resilience. They are looked upon as warriors. In old Samoa when the *pe'a* is completed, the *pe'a* has to be *sama* (celebrated).¹⁵⁸ The celebration involves one having intercourse with anyone he chooses or wanted. When the missionaries

¹⁵⁴ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 13.

¹⁵⁵ Steubel and Herman, *Tala o le Vavau: The Myths, Legends and Customs of Old Samoa*, 175.

¹⁵⁶ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 13; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 68.

¹⁵⁷ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 68.

¹⁵⁸ The word celebrated is the closet English word that describes the meaning behind "*sama*".

arrived, this practice was outlawed. Today, celebrating the pe'a involves the family gathering to give thanks to God. This is led by the *faifeau* (pastor).¹⁵⁹

The missionaries also made many contributions to Samoan society. Those who went to Samoa were motivated in helping the people and acted as interpreters when foreign boats visited the island. They taught the Samoans the usefulness of European goods, cloths for clothes to wear on Sundays, hats, umbrellas, nails, irons and axes they had not known before.¹⁶⁰ The Samoans were taught how to press oil and make copra that was sold to buy what they needed and wanted. In addition, it was the missionaries who taught Samoans how to read and write. The missionaries wrote books, including dictionaries and grammar books, but most importantly translated the bible. This enabled Samoans access to knowledge about the newly adopted God of Samoa.¹⁶¹

2.9 Conclusion

The prophecy by Nafanua was a significant event in Samoa's history. The prophecy influenced the people's decision to worship the Christian God over Tagaloaalagi their Atua. God was introduced to Samoa by traders, beachcombers, runaway convicts, and natives. But Samoans hold firm to the belief that the official arrival of the foreign God was the 24th of August 1830 when Malietoa Vainu'upo accepted Christianity in the form of the London Missionary Society. In relation to this thesis argument, the people's decision to worship a foreign God over their Atua Tagaloaalagi, supports

¹⁵⁹ An informal conversation with Tiafau Vaega, a Samoan youth who had just arrived back to Australia after being tattooed.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Hempenstall, "On missionaries and cultural change in Samoa", *The Journal of Pacific History* 39 (2004): 244.

¹⁶¹ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 55.

the claim that the motto can be understood as anti-culture. But how did the Samoans' belief in the Christian God translate into the nation's motto? Who coined the motto? How did Faavae i le Atua Samoa become Samoa's motto? The answers to these questions will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THE MOTTO FAABAE I LE ATUA SAMOA COMES INTO BEING

3.1 Introduction



Figure 3.1: Photo taken by writer: Site of independence ceremony 1st June 1962

This chapter will look at the question: How did the phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa come into being as the nation's motto? Section one will show where the idea of Faavae i le Atua Samoa originated. Section two will identify which deity the motto refers to. The final section will give a detailed account about who coined the phrase and the process that resulted in the leaders of Samoa at that time deciding on the phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa as the nation's motto.

3.2 *The idea of Faavae i le Atua Samoa is introduced*

A covenant made between Malietoa Vainu'upo and the Tui Manu'a Tauveve in the early part of 1830, not long after the arrival of the good news, was the setting from which Faavae i le Atua Samoa, according to Tapaleao, originated.¹⁶² But did the Samoans of the early 1830s formulate the motto as it is now? Tapaleao argues that this was not the case. The closest formulation that we can find is in the covenant made between Malietoa Vainu'upo and Tuimanu'a Tauveve.¹⁶³ The content of the covenant is as follows:

Tau o le tasi le lotu i Samoa mai manu'a e o'o i Sava'i. Tau o le lotu na aumai e Viliamu ma papu ia o'o lava i le faavavau. Ia tau o i la'ua tupu tagata, ae a i'u o la soifua, ia aua lava ne'i toe faia se tupu tagata a ia tupu. Tasi lava i le Atua soifua i le lagi e ona le malosi uma lava, ma ia o uma lava e ta'u o aiga tupu o Samoa e folau i nu'u fa'apaupau ma tala'i atu iai le talalelei i le maliu tiga o Iesu Keriso le alo e toatasi o le Atua silisili ese.

In translation:

There shall be only one Lotu in Samoa from Manu'a to Sava'I ...

Only that which was brought by John Williams and Barff forever.

Their deaths shall mark the end of human kings for Samoa, but the

¹⁶² Talia Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa" (BD thesis, Pacific Theological College Suva, 1991), 10-11. Tapaleao in his thesis emphasises the fact that Faavae i le Atua Samoa ("Samoa founded in God") is a covenant between Samoa and the Christian God. Note also the differences in expressions "Samoa Founded in God" compared to "Faavae i le Atua Samoa" ("Samoa is founded on God") as the current motto states.

¹⁶³ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", 10.

living and most powerful king in Heaven shall be over all, and all royal families must be missionaries to the heathens, bearing the good news of the death of Jesus Christ, the only son of the almighty God.¹⁶⁴

Reflecting on the King's covenant making speech, Falenaoti Iiga Pisa, in an unpublished document *Tala Tuu Faasolopito*, summed up the substance of the speech with the words "Faavae i le Atua Samoa".¹⁶⁵ According to Tapaleao whether these words were used by the two kings is not important. This is because for Samoans the above formulation is the only logical conclusion and summary of the devotion of Malietoa and the people of Samoa to the Christian God.¹⁶⁶ This view was reiterated by Meleisea:

On his death in 1941 Malietoa Vainu'upo gave further testimony to his belief that the malo (nation) belonged now to Ieova (Jehovah).¹⁶⁷

Tapaleao's view concerning when Faavae i le Atua Samoa originated is valid. Meleisea did not comment on the genesis of the motto, but only confirmed Malietoa's acceptance of the Christian God. This thesis will argue that Faavae i le Atua Samoa was born when Malietoa Vainu'upo accepted Christianity on the 24th of August 1830. In accepting Christianity, Malietoa not only accepted the material wealth introduced by the missionaries, but also accepted the foreign God as Samoa's foundation:

¹⁶⁴ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", 10.

¹⁶⁵ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa," 12. Tapaleao refers to a piece of writing by Falenaoti Tofa Iiga Pisa, called "Tala Tuu Faasolopito" which is an unpublished work (unpublished Mss., 1963).

¹⁶⁶ Tapaleao, "Faavae i le Atua Samoa", 10.

¹⁶⁷ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 28.

His heart was manao tasi lava i le lotu a Jehova, that is single in its desire to know the word of Jehova ... Let all Sava'i, all Upolu embrace this great religion ... for his whole soul should be given to the word of Jehova and he would use his utmost endeavours that the word of Jehova might encircle the land.¹⁶⁸

But to which deity does the motto Faavae i le Atua refer? This thesis will argue it is the Christian God and not Tagaloaalagi the Atua of Samoa.¹⁶⁹

3.3 Deity in the motto is identified

This thesis will argue that it is the Christian God that is referred to in the nation's motto. To support this claim evidence such as Figure 3.2 below, the establishment of Malua Theological College, the translation of the bible from English to Samoan, the nation's national anthem, Samoa's constitution, and the nation's coat of arms continue to lend support to this study's claim concerning the deity Samoa is founded on. The picture shows the motto with the flags of Samoa and also the flag of Israel. The picture suggests in the heart and mind of the artist that it is the Christian God or the God of Israel to which the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa refers.

¹⁶⁸ Moyle, *Samoan Journals of John Williams*, 118-119.

¹⁶⁹ Tcherkezoff, "Culture, Nation, Society: Secondary Change and Fundamental Transformation in Western Samoa," 254; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 70; Ernest, *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Island*, 167.



Figure 3.2: Photo taken by writer July 2013 in Samoa

The establishment of Malua Theological College in February 1844 was for the purpose of training lay preachers for missionary work abroad and in the villages. On the 25th of September 1844 the Samoan Mission Seminary as it was then known, began teaching its first 25 students ranging from 12–24 years of age.¹⁷⁰ These graduates went as far as Tokelau, Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Papua, Niue, the New Hebrides, and the Solomon Islands.¹⁷¹ Their task was to minister the word of God to the people. By the time the World Missionary Conference met in Edinburgh in 1910 Christianity had largely indigenised in the South Pacific which prompted John Garrett to suggest:

What emerged was Polynesian (Christianity) with British overtones rather than British Christianity in Polynesian garb.¹⁷²

For John Garrett the tradition of the Malua Institution was the “Christianizing but not Anglicizing” of Samoan society through the training

¹⁷⁰ Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity* (Canberra: Australian National University, 2005), 84; Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, *Tamaitai Samoa: Their Stories* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1998), 2, discusses the purpose of training local pastors to spread the gospel.

¹⁷¹ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 24; Lange, *Island Ministers*, 96.

¹⁷² Steven Gertz, “People Worth Knowing: Bringing Peace to Paradise” *Christian History and Biography*, 87 (2005): 44.

of the ministry. Garrett went on to suggest the policy of “Christianizing but not anglicizing” was a product of Samoan insistence rather than an invention by the mission.¹⁷³ Manfred Earnest on the other hand believed the establishment of the Malua College was for the purpose of training Samoan teachers for the work of evangelisation.¹⁷⁴

Another indication was the translation of the bible from English to the Samoan language. This process was completed in 1870. However it was not until 1886 that there were sufficient copies for distribution. The translation of the bible involved the missionaries working together with Samoan chiefs with the aim that the Samoans might be able to read and study it for themselves.¹⁷⁵ This was significant because it was not only a way for Samoans to learn how to read and write, but it was also a way for them to learn more about the foreign God introduced by the Papalagi.

In addition, the national anthem of Western Samoa called “*Le fu’a o le saolotoga*” (“The Banner of Freedom”) included the words, “*aua ete fefe o le Atua le ta faavae*” (“don’t be afraid God is our foundation”) and the word “*Iesu*” (Jesus). In traditional Samoan religion there is no evidence of there being any references to a deity or aitu by the name of Iesu. The name Iesu is particular to Western European religion as revealed in scripture:

Samoa tula’i, ma sisi ia lau fu’a, o lou pale lea

Samoa tula’i, ma sisi ia lau fu’a, o lou pale lea

Va’ai i na fetu, o lo’o agiagia ai

O le faailoga lea o Iesu na maliu fai mo Samoa

¹⁷³ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 277; John Garrett, *Where the Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War Two* (Suva: University of the south Pacific, 1997), 98. Garrett informs the importance of Malua Theological Training Institution in preparing literate lay preachers and pastors.

¹⁷⁴ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 167.

¹⁷⁵ Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, 25.

Oi Samoa e, u'umau lau pule ia fa'avavau
Aua ete fefe o le Atua le ta faavae
O lo ta sa'olotoga,
Samoa tula'i ma sisi ia lau fu'a o lou pale lea
Samoa tula'i, ma sisi ia lau fu'a, o lou pale lea
Samoa tula'i, ma sisi ia lau fu'a, o lou pale lea
Va'ai i na fetu, o lo'o agiagia ai
O le faailoga lea o Iesu¹⁷⁶ na maliu fai mo Samoa
Oi Samoa e, u'umau lau pule ia fa'avavau
Aua ete fefe o le Atua le ta faavae
O lo ta sa'olotoga
Samoa tula'i ma sisi ia lau fu'a o lou pale lea

The anthem is translated:

Samoa Arise! And raise your flag, this is your crown
 Samoa Arise, and raise your flag this is your crown
 Look at the stars fluttering in the wind
 It is the symbol of Jesus who died, adopt it for Samoa
 Hold firmly your authority be forever
 Don't be afraid, God is our foundation
 He is our freedom,
 Samoa stand and raise your flag this is your crown
 Samoa Arise! And raise your flag, this is your crown
 Samoa Arise, and raise your flag this is your crown

¹⁷⁶ Clive Pearson, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today," *Faith in a Hyphen: Cross Cultural Theologies Down Under*, ed. Clive Pearson and Jione Havea, (Parramatta: UTC Publications, 2004), 80.

Look at the stars fluttering in the wind
It is the symbol of Jesus who died, adopt it for Samoa
Hold firmly your authority be forever
Don't be afraid, God is our foundation
He is our freedom
Samoa stand and raise your flag this is your crown¹⁷⁷

For Clive Pearson:

Samoaan Christology has recently been more focused on Christ's work of atonement, and he believes the cross of Jesus is imbued into the core of Samoaan society.¹⁷⁸

Pearson refers to the national anthem as an example of how embedded the cross of Jesus has become in Samoaan society. Just as significant, the nation's coat of arms highlights the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*.¹⁷⁹ The arm bearing the motto continues to be used today. In addition, in 1962 Samoa's Constitution was officially adopted. The Constitution's preamble gives a further indication as to which deity the motto refers:

I LE SUAFA PAIA O LE ATUA, LE E ONA LE MALOSI UMA
LAVA, LE E ALOFA E FAAVAVAU.

¹⁷⁷ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 303.

¹⁷⁸ Pearson, *Faith in a Hyphen*, 80.

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.hubert-herald.nl/SamoaWest.htm>. (Accessed 5 May 2013). This website gives an image of the coat of arms and an explanation which says that, this logo was used until 1951 when the present arms were adopted, with the exception of the cross. After Independence the sun was replaced by the cross. The 1962 coat of arms has the cross symbolising Christian principles replacing the rising sun.

*ONA o le pule aoao i le Lalolagi e i ai lea i le Atua na o Ia, e afio i mea uma lava ma o le pulega e faaaogaina e tagata o samoa i totonu o tuaoi na faasinoina ma i Ana Tulafono o se tofi paia tuufaasolo; ONA ua faaalia e Taitai o Samoa le tatau ona avea Samoa ma Malo Tutotasi e faavaeina i luga o talitonuga faa-Kerisiano ma tu ma aganuu o Samoa.*¹⁸⁰

In translation these words mean:

IN THE HOLY NAME OF GOD, THE ALMIGHTY,
THE EVER LOVING

Whereas sovereignty over the universe belongs to the Omnipresent God alone and the authority to be exercised by the people of Western Samoa within the limits prescribed by His commandments is a sacred heritage; Whereas the Leaders of Western Samoa have declared that Western Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition.¹⁸¹

The words Omnipotent God and Christian principles further draws attention to the deity the leaders of Western Samoa declare as the nation's *faavae*. The purpose of a preamble is explained by Lauofo Meti:

A constitution usually has a Preamble. In it the general purpose of the constitution is given. The Preamble was the last part of the constitution to be drafted and discussed. The agreed text contained

¹⁸⁰ *The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 5.

¹⁸¹ Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, 63.

those values which are close to the heart of every Samoan: God, Custom and Tradition ... During the discussion the committee felt it is important to emphasize the sanctity of God. That was done by the insertion of the word “HOLY” before the word “GOD” ... it was decided to replace the word “HIM” by the words “His Commandments” to make clear that the authority to be exercised by the people of Samoa was to be done within the bounds of His Commandments.¹⁸²

The picture below continues to reaffirm the deity that Samoa is founded on, and further supports the explanation given by Lauofo Meti.



Figure 3.3: Photo taken by writer July 2013

Yet what was interesting about the Constitution is that there was no mention of the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa. This suggests people would be more inclined to research and find out about a nations motto, over what the Constitution says. This is because the motto is a public conviction and is a summary of what that country or nation stands for. For Samoa,

¹⁸² Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, 64.

broadcasters and commentators will always refer to Samoa as a very religious nation that is founded on God.¹⁸³ No commentator or advertisement about Samoa ever refers to the nation's Constitution. The current head of state Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi on opening the 15th Parliament of Samoa in 2011 reaffirmed Christian principles as indicated by the Constitution:

The values of our faasamoa share a common heritage with the values of our Christian faiths ... We share a common search for what is good, right and just ... There is no beginning and no end to that search, but there is always something to learn ... Selling a vision must thus contain more than just espousing words; it must also show how those words will be realised in this context, in the here and now, today and this morning. As Revelations 1:8 says God is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. It is only He who was, is and is to come. As God's children we search for His wisdom, His timelessness, His enduring love and justice.¹⁸⁴

In addition Elizabeth Moore contemplated the outcome of the London Missionary Society's work in Samoa by saying:

We thank God that the Samoans have been grounded in the faith ... if a testing time is coming it may serve to strengthen and establish them. One thing we rejoice over, that it is a Christian and a

¹⁸³ Any Samoan rugby game that is televised, you will always hear the commentators make reference to how religious the Samoans are, and how the motto says "Samoa is founded on God".

¹⁸⁴ Tuiatua, "Address to Parliament."

Protestant nation, which is to have control over our beloved Samoans; but oh how we wish it had been England.¹⁸⁵

The evidence supports the claim of this thesis that it is the foreign God to which the motto refers and not the traditional Atua of Samoa Tagaloaalagi. In relation to the overall argument of this study, the evidence presented would indicate the motto could be seen as anti-culture as a result. One of the main questions this section seeks to unravel is, how did Faavae i le Atua Samoa become embedded as Samoa's motto.

3.4 Samoa's mottos from 1889–1962

The motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa did not become Samoa's motto until it was adopted on the 1st of June 1962. Before the Samoan islands Tutuila, Sava'i and Upolu were divided on the 16th of February 1900, the nation's motto read *Le Faamoemoe Lelei* (Virtue is our hope).¹⁸⁶ This motto appeared on Samoa's coat of arms and remained until Samoa was taken over by Germany in 1889 after an agreement was reached between Britain, Germany and the United States in Berlin.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 46.

¹⁸⁶ "Samoa i Sisifo," <http://www.hubert-herald.nl/SamoaWest.htm>. (Accessed 22 January 2013). The word *faamoemoe* means rely on, and can also refer to an upcoming event. The word *lelei* means good. The motto *Le Faamoemoe Lelei* was established while Western Samoa as it was known was under the rule of Great Britain from 1873 to 1900.

¹⁸⁷ Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, 5; The treaty came about as a result of conflicting interests between these countries over who was to control the Samoan Islands. In the treaty it was agreed that the Eastern Samoan Islands of Tutuila, Aunu'u and Manu'a were to become the territory of the United States. Germany was to control Sava'i and Upolu. In return Germany would give up its interest in Tonga and the Solomon Islands, which would become colonies of Great Britain after it relinquished its claims in Samoa. As a result Tutuila was named American Samoa and Upolu and Sava'i were named German Samoa.



Figure 3.4: Samoa's Coat of Arms under Great Britain 1873-1900

On the 1st of March 1900 Germany hoisted the German Flag in Mulinu'u to mark the official taking over of Western Samoa. A new coat of arms was developed, but no motto was inscribed on it. In 1914 an article appeared in the *Thames Star* newspaper indicating the motto of Germany at that time was "Fear of None, Favour to None, Justice to All".¹⁸⁸ This became Western Samoa's motto also. When war broke out in 1914 the United Kingdom asked New Zealand troops to land in Samoa and withdraw the German flag.¹⁸⁹ On the 25th of January Samoa was placed under a mandate by the League of Nations.¹⁹⁰ At that time no motto was recorded

¹⁸⁸ "Germany in the Pacific", *The Thames Star*, Tuesday 1 September 1914. (Wellington: Alexander Turnbull Library, New Zealand). <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/15888740>. (Accessed March 25, 2013).

¹⁸⁹ In the early 20th century the former German territory was administered by New Zealand. A local flag for these islands was developed that reflected the New Zealand flag in its red, white and blue colours, Southern Cross constellation, and field-and-canton design. Introduced on 26 May 1948, the new Samoan flag was red with four white stars on a blue canton; on 24 February 1949, a fifth star was added. The Southern Cross has been a popular flag emblem in other countries in the Southern Hemisphere. In the Samoan flag, white is said to stand for purity, blue for freedom, and red for courage. No change was made in the national flag when the country became independent on 1 January 1962.

¹⁹⁰ Fairbairn-Dunlop, *Tamaitai Samoa: Their Story*, 3; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 126-127. When Samoa became a German colony in 1900, New Zealand was unhappy about it. It did not want a major power, such as Germany to have a colony so close to her shores. The wish to include Samoa among New Zealand's territories was still strong in 1914, which is why the New Zealand government lost no time in sending an expeditionary force to capture Samoa from Germany.

for Samoa, only the words “Samoa” on an expeditionary badge. On the 15th of October 1917, an article in the Ashburton Guardian newspaper said otherwise:

The Rev. F. Copeland, of the Woolston Circuit, was the preacher for the day. In the morning he spoke to the children on the motto of the Samoans: Be courageous.¹⁹¹



**Figure 3.5: Coat of Arms German
Samoa 1900-1914**



**Figure 3.6: Expeditionary Badge
under New Zealand**

In 1922 a resistance movement called the Mau began to surface.¹⁹² The movement was a peaceful group against foreign rule and their policies. For the leaders of the Mau their intention was very clear, summed up in the words “*Samoa Mo Samoa*” (“Samoa for Samoa”).¹⁹³ The objective of the movement was a push for Samoa to regain independence, to have control

¹⁹¹ “Methodism”, Ashburton Guardian Newspaper, 15 October 1917. (Wellington: Alexander Turnbull Library, New Zealand). <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/15888740>. (Accessed 29 May 2013).

¹⁹² The word is translated “to stand-firm”. See Charles W. Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: The Emergence in the Twentieth Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 25.

¹⁹³ Liuaana, *Samoa Tula’i*, xvi.

over its own affairs and to make decisions on all facets of Samoan life for the benefit of Samoa. Davidson explains:

In Samoa, the attainment of self-government had been the accepted objectives of the political activity since the early years of the Mau. The argument in favour of it, and the techniques of presenting and organizing support for them, had been learnt by the country's political leaders in the course of their work for that movement. In 1930 Nelson had cited the example of Tonga as proof that local political control was not incompatible with continuing dependence on the service of overseas experts.¹⁹⁴



Figure 3.7: Photo taken by writer, office of the Mau-Vaimoso

Samoa traditions, customs and culture were being tampered with by the foreign powers;¹⁹⁵ for example, chiefly titles were being abolished and

¹⁹⁴ Davidson, *Samoa Mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, 167.

¹⁹⁵ Susan Pedersen, "Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples Before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40 (2012): 232. Similarly, after visiting Samoa in 1929, Margery Perham, a historian in British colonial rule wrote: "Successful rule in Samoa is chiefly a matter of touch". Perham was referring to Western Samoa's then current situation under foreign rule. To Perham Samoa was in "ferment, while in comparison American Samoa seemed contented and at peace". After analysing Western Samoa's situation Perham concluded:

the rarely used custom of banishment was used as a tool to punish those who did not conform to their political regime. The Governor Wilhelm Solf stopped Samoans from exercising their customs; the power was to be exercised by the Governor alone.¹⁹⁶ The administrator did not listen to the people's grievances. Huffer writes:

Customs is generally seen as a monolithic whole that is passed on from a divine and ancestral source and from generation to generation.¹⁹⁷

This view is in line with Samoans' belief that their culture is of divine origin. This divine origin was from Tagaloa, who gave Samoans direction for organising and living life.¹⁹⁸ The divine connection gives coherence and meaning to culture, which is seen as a positive force.¹⁹⁹ Samoans have held their culture to be basically good, and culture was for the good of its people and for the whole of society.²⁰⁰ The slogan *Samoa Mo Samoa* encapsulates this belief of the Samoans. Samoa's struggle for independence was mentioned by the current Head of State Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese when he opened the 15th Parliament of Samoa in 2011:

We remember the struggles of all those who believed in and fought for this fine institution. In looking forward, the work of the 15th Parliament will be informed by the work of the last Parliament and the work of Parliament before that ... for the next five years is an

"America was doing the wrong thing the right way, whereas New Zealand although doing the right thing, was doing it the wrong way, hence finding herself in a difficult situation."

¹⁹⁶ Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, 7.

¹⁹⁷ Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o, "Beyond Governance in Samoa: Understanding Samoan Political Thought," *The Contemporary Pacific* 17 (2005), 314.

¹⁹⁸ Kamu, "Samoan Culture and the Gospel", 40.

¹⁹⁹ Huffer and So'o, "Beyond Governance in Samoa", 314.

²⁰⁰ Huffer and So'o, "Beyond Governance in Samoa", 311.

opportunity to write good history ... to write it in such a way that it would not only be a debt to the past but also a gift for the future ... We as Parliament have a sacred responsibility to recognise that good leadership must draw lessons from the past when shaping the present in order to have something worthy of gifting to the future ... The beginning we celebrate today and the possibilities of tomorrow are only imaginable because of the triumphs and tribulations of yesterday.²⁰¹

The Head of State also reminded his colleagues about their expected duty and responsibilities to the people of Samoa saying:

As elected members of our country's 15th Parliament and as Samoan matai we have a sacred duty to serve our people and Samoa with honesty, fidelity and prudence ... we must serve Samoa in a way that demonstrates by words and deeds the essences of alofa (love), tofa saili (search for wisdom) and tofa fetalai (wisdom). As leaders and as an Assembly of Leaders we have been gifted the sacred responsibility to write or rewrite over the next five years the kind of laws to which we, our forefathers and the children of our children should be proud to be associated with. Fulfilling this responsibility requires us to take seriously what we write, why we write it and who we are writing for.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Tui Atua, Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, Tiafau "A gift and a Debt: A beginning and an end" (Paper was an address in Opening of the Samoan Parliament on 31st May 2011).

²⁰² Tiafau, "Address to Parliament."

Despite this the slogan was not chosen to be the official motto of Samoa. A decision on the official motto of Samoa did not eventuate until 1951.

3.5 The phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa is coined

The motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa is fitting for Samoa. It summarises the people's conviction as a result of years of struggle towards Independence. The motto is the third for Samoa, but the first after gaining independence in 1962. The phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa first appeared in public on the 1st of June 1948. On that day Samoa's freedom from New Zealand was confirmed and was commemorated with a newly composed national anthem "*Le fu'a o le Saolotoga*" ("The Banner of Freedom") composed by Sauni Iiga Kuresa. The anthem contains the words "*aua ete fefe o le Atua le ta faavae*" ("don't be afraid God is our foundation"). This thesis will argue it is Sauni Iiga Kuresa who first coined the phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa. On the same day, Samoa's new flag was hoisted and a national day of celebration was adopted.²⁰³ The flag only had four stars in 1948 and a fifth star was added on 24 February 1949. The red color represents courage, the blue signifies freedom and white symbolises purity. The five stars resemble the constellation of the Southern Cross. The Southern Cross signifies Samoa's geographical position on the world map

²⁰³ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 149;. In a timeline Meleisea indicates in 1948 the Samoan flag was raised in Mulinu'u flying side by side with the New Zealand flag. In addition, it also shows that the first Legislative Assembly met. The 2nd Legislative Assembly met three years later in 1951 and made the decision to have the phrase Faavae I le Atua Samoa as the nation's motto. Also see <http://www.fonoti.info/> (Accessed 12 May 2013). Meleisea notes "Samoa's freedom from New Zealand was approved and confirmed". On the 1st of June 1948 the newly authorised flag of Samoa, the Samoan flag, which had just been adopted and the New Zealand flag, flown conjointly were raised ceremonially for the first time. An official anthem, 'The Banner of Freedom' had been composed for the occasion. In addition Samoa gained a national day.

and its association with New Zealand, which also has the Southern Cross on its national flag.²⁰⁴ To celebrate freedom from New Zealand administration Samoa celebrates Independence Day on the 1st of June every year, corresponding with the exact day in 1948 and not in January when Samoa officially gained independence in 1962.

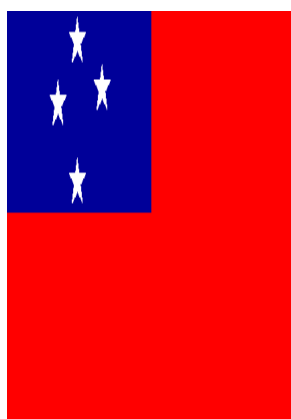


Figure 3.8: Flag of Samoa 1948



Figure 3.9: Flag since 1949 adopted
1st January 1962

3.6 *The phrase Faavae i le Atua Samoa is adopted*

The decision to have this phrase as the nation's motto was decided by the 2nd Legislative Assembly on the 3rd of April 1951.²⁰⁵ One week later on the 12th of April a newly developed coat of arms for Samoa was adopted which appeared in public for the first time displaying the words

²⁰⁴ <http://www.mapsofworld.com/flags/samoa-flag.html>. (Accessed 15 November 2013).

²⁰⁵ www.paliament.gov.ws. (Accessed 15 April 2013). The elections of members were held in April 1948 and in the same month every three years. The 1st Legislative Assembly elected members gathered on the 3rd of April 1948. It was made up of 12 Samoan members who were all *matai* title holders elected by voters. Three years later in 1951 the phrase was adopted and displayed; Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 210.

“*Faavae i le Atua Samoa*”.²⁰⁶ The Legislative Assembly was the only body that was able to make such a decision. This is because the *Fono of Faipule*, which consists of Samoans, could only provide recommendations to the government authority or the Administrator. The Fono only gave advice, unfortunately while being ruled by laws made by foreigners.²⁰⁷ The newly developed coat of arms (Figure 3.11) was officially recognised on the 1st of June 1962 at the Independence ceremony at Mulinu’u. The coat of arms was modified to highlight Christian influence.



**Figure 3.10: Coat of Arms adopted on
12th April 1951**



**Figure 3.11: Coat of Arms adopted on 1st
June 1962**

A noticeable omission from the 1951 arms was the rising sun, which was situated at the very top of the emblem. The rising sun was replaced with a cross to highlight the nation’s Christian belief in God as the motto

²⁰⁶ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 210. Meleisea records several important events that occurred in Western Samoa in 1951, the official crest of Western Samoa was adopted for all government documents, “Faavae i le Atua Samoa” and the 2nd Assembly elected. In addition, it also shows that the 1st Legislative Assembly met. The 2nd Legislative Assembly met three years later in 1951 and made the decision to have the phrase “Faavae i le Atua Samoa” as the nation’s motto.

²⁰⁷ Meti, *Samoa: The Making of the Constitution*, 12.

Faavae i le Atua Samoa suggests. This ratification of the coat of arms is a clear sign that Samoa was well and truly a Christianised nation. In relation to the central argument of this thesis the ratification of the old coat of arms is yet another part of Samoa being replaced by a symbol representing the foreign God, thus contributing to the claim that the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa can be understood as anti-culture.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established five key developments. Firstly, the deity the motto refers to is identified as the Christian God. Secondly, the birth of Faavae i le Atua Samoa came about when Malietoa Vainu'upo accepted Christianity on the 24th of August 1830. Thirdly, various mottos given to Samoa under foreign rule were also identified, with the most significant being Faavae i le Atua Samoa. Fourthly, Faavae i le Atua Samoa was coined by Sauni Iiga Kuresa in 1948 and the decision to have the phrase as the motto of Samoa was made by the 2nd Legislative Assembly on the 3rd of April 1951. Finally, on the 12th of April 1951 Faavae i le Atua Samoa was displayed on Samoa's newly developed coat of arms. In the next chapter, an argument will be developed that the motto can be understood as anti-culture because most people assume that the motto is referring only to the Christian God and not to Tagaloaalagi the Atua of Samoa as well.

CHAPTER 4: A THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION: THE MOTTO, GOSPEL AND TRADITIONAL SAMOAN CULTURE

4.1 Introduction

Like many Polynesian Island nations, Samoans were not at first aware of the foreign God. The introduction of Christianity challenged their perceived heathen beliefs and practices. The main questions this section seeks to ascertain concerns how the motto relates to traditional Samoan culture: Is the motto anti-traditional Samoan culture? Does the motto affirm traditional Samoan culture? And, is there room in the motto for both God and Atua to co-exist as the country's foundation?

4.2 What is Theology?

In Samoa, theology is translated as *mataupusilisili*. It is made up of two words, *mataupu* (subject) and *silisili* (highest). Theology is the highest subject, and the highest subject in *mataupusilisili* is Atua. This is because, for Samoans, Atua is the supreme deity who created heaven and earth, including humans (Samoans). Atua is the translated God as revealed in Christ. It also refers to the God of the heathen (*Tagaloaalagi*). As an

adjective, Atua refers to a divine being.²⁰⁸ This Divine Being is the Atua in Samoa's motto, Faavae i le Atua Samoa.

The word theology derives from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *logos* (word).²⁰⁹ Theology is the discourse about God in much the same way as biology is a discourse about life (Greek-*bios*).²¹⁰ Theology was also understood to mean 'the doctrine of God'. Under the influence of Peter Abelard and Gilbert Poitiers, the Latin word *theologia* and Greek *theos-logos* came to mean "the discipline of sacred learning" embracing the totality of Christian doctrines and not merely the doctrine of God.²¹¹ Anselm of Canterbury defined theology as "*fides quaerens intellectum*" ("faith seeking understanding").²¹² Paul Tillich on the other hand says theology is God-talk:

Theology as God-talk takes its origin from two permanent features of human experience. First, from time to time in all sorts of ways, man [sic] finds himself [sic] wondering whether there is any meaning to his [sic] existence or just fine moments of feeling ... Second the impatience and restlessness about human experience and purpose, to wonder whether in and behind material existence there is another order of reality.²¹³

²⁰⁸ G. B. Milner, *Samoa Dictionary* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1955), 29.

²⁰⁹ Paul Tillich, *Modern Theology* (London: Epworth Press, 1973), 14.

²¹⁰ Alistair E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 102.

²¹¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 102; Philip Gibbs, "Narrative and Context in Practical Theology for Papua New Guinea," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 9 (2007): 1-13.

²¹² Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 2.

²¹³ Tillich, *Modern Theology*, 13.

Daniel Migliore believes if Christian faith is trust in and obedience to the freely gracious God made known in Jesus Christ, theology then is faith asking questions and struggling to find at least provisional answers to these questions.²¹⁴ For Migliore, theology is the need to “inquire” and “daring” to ask questions about God, while Millard Erickson says: “theology is a discourse about God”.²¹⁵ The discourse seeks to understand God’s creation, particularly humans and the human condition, and God’s redemptive work in relation to humankind. Migliore offers a more detailed definition as:

That discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily upon Scriptures, placed in the context of the culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life.²¹⁶

Migliore continues by saying:

Theology then is biblical ... theology is systematic ... theology also relates to the issues of general culture and learning ... theology must also be contemporary and finally theology is to be practiced.²¹⁷

George Peter believes theology “gives content to one’s faith, direction to one’s life and motivation in one’s work, it colors all of life”.²¹⁸

While according to Stephen Bevans:

²¹⁴ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 2.

²¹⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 21.

²¹⁶ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 21.

²¹⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 21-22.

²¹⁸ George W. Peters, “Perspectives on the Churches Mission Part 3: Missions in Cultural Perspective,” *Bibliotheca Sacra July-September* 136 (1978): 198.

There is no such thing as theology; there is only contextual theology: feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, Filipino theology, Asian-American theology, African theology and so forth.²¹⁹

Bevan's opinion echoes the thought of Clement Sedmak who asked; where is theology being done? In the view of Sedmak, theology is done in the village:

It is done from somewhere, from a particular perspective out of a particular context. In addition theology can be done under the shade of a tree, at a street corner talking to a homeless person, in a bus talking to the person in the next seat.²²⁰

Simply by asking the question why is Samoa founded on the Christian God and not on the god of our ancestors, we are doing theology. By suggesting the motto *Faavae i le Atua* Samoa can be understood as anti-culture, we are doing theology. The questions invite us back to the debate about the relation between gospel and culture or Christ and culture.

4.3 The gospel and culture debate

Gospel or (*Euangellion*) means "good news". The word designates the reward given for good tidings. It also indicates a message or an announcement of victory. It was later applied to other messages bringing joy. The gospel is the good news that God in Jesus Christ has fulfilled his

²¹⁹ Stephen Beavans, *Contextual Theology as a Theological Imperative*, in *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 3.

²²⁰ Clement Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 15.

promise to Israel, and that a way of salvation has been opened to all.²²¹ In other words, the good news brings salvation to everyone who believes and further sums up Paul's message and call for personal sacrifice. In the second century the word gospel became the title for the four New Testament books dealing with the teachings, activity, death and resurrection of Jesus.²²² This was the message the missionaries went to Samoa to deliver and to preach Christian principles of love, humility, peace and obedience. These principles are attributed to ending centuries of wars amongst Samoans and outlawing heathenism.

For centuries theologians have debated the relationship between Christianity and culture, or gospel and culture. This thesis will argue from the outset the motto concerning Faavae i le Atua Samoa can be seen as against traditional Samoan culture. This agreement depends on an argument that the motto affirms only the Christian God, but not Tagaloaalagi the Atua of our ancestors. Richard Niebuhr's theological framework "Christ and culture" is a useful tool for reflection on the issue. Niebuhr's theological framework consists of five approaches, which are his answers to the problem of Christ and culture. They include: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture, and Christ the transformer of culture.

"Christ against culture" uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over culture.²²³ It encourages opposition, total separation and hostility towards culture. In this opposition, Christ is opposed to the values

²²¹ Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 436.

²²² Gerald O'collins and Edward Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1991), 85.

²²³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 45.

and achievements of a particular culture. Tertullian is an advocate of this model.²²⁴ On the contrary “Christ of culture” is an attempt to bring Christianity and culture together regardless of their differences. Here Jesus’ life and teachings are seen as the greatest human achievement. Niebuhr confirms what is best in the past, and guides the process of human cultural development to its proper goal.²²⁵

In addition “Christ above culture” is an attempt to correlate (marry or complement) fundamental questions of culture with Christian revelation. This approach is not a compromise, but an attempt to bring together two ideas to form a new theological position. This approach essentially is a synthesis of “Christ and culture” affirming both “Christ and culture” as one who confesses a Lord who is both of this world and of the other.²²⁶ Moreover, Niebuhr suggests Christ fulfils cultural aspirations and values, yet also transcends them. The gospel according to Mathew can be seen representing this view due to his presentation of the relationship between Jesus and the Torah.²²⁷ To summarise this approach: Christ and the world cannot be simply opposed to each other.²²⁸

Niebuhr’s approach “Christ and culture in paradox” contains a question about God and humanity. This approach seeks to address the issue of grace and human sin. This tension is between the dualistic realms, the spiritual and the temporal, and we must live to fulfil the responsibilities to both. As Christians we experience the tension of living in one kingdom

²²⁴ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 118.

²²⁵ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 84; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 118.

²²⁶ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 120.

²²⁷ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 118.

²²⁸ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 117.

(temporal), yet trying to obey the authority of another (spiritual).²²⁹ This approach in summary, seeks to do justice to the need for holding together as well as for distinguishing between loyalty to Christ and responsibilities to culture.²³⁰

The last model is “Christ the transformer of culture”. Christ is the conversationalist who attempts to convert the values and goals of secular culture into the service of the kingdom of God.²³¹ Though culture is sinful, it is still under the sovereign rule of God.²³² The fall of humanity was a result of choice, and thus man became corrupted, its good nature became corrupted as a result of being twisted and misdirected in the world.²³³ The love of God reconciled in Christ converts and transforms fallen culture and society.

The scholar Erivwo²³⁴ suggests Richard Niebuhr’s model of “Christ and culture” would be impossible to find any culture invaded by Christ (Christianity) in his army of followers, which remains unchanged.²³⁵ In other words, Erivwo is saying the consequence of Niebuhr’s models will result in either abolishing traditional culture or the transformation of it. Either way culture will be altered. Erivwo went on to suggest “as long as Christians are challenged to forsake the whole world for the sake of Christ, and yet are equally called to permeate and transform that world, the dilemma between Christianity and traditional culture is bound to persist”.²³⁶

²²⁹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 118-119.

²³⁰ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 149.

²³¹ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 11.

²³² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 191.

²³³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 194.

²³⁴ Dr Sam U. Erivwo is an Anglican priest lecturing at the University of Ibadan.

²³⁵ Erivwo, “Traditional Culture and Christianity” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)* 21 (1979): 216-222.

²³⁶ Erivwo, “Traditional Culture and Christianity”, 217.

Along the same line of thought George Peter suggests, “the gospel can never be completely indigenized ... the gospel is the judge of every culture and leaves no culture undisturbed when it is applied in full scope and measure”.²³⁷ As a result of this tension Richard Neuhaus offered a sixth approach to Niebuhr’s five and called it “Christ without culture”.²³⁸ What Neuhaus means by this is that the church can at times adopt a way of being in the world that is deliberately different to the culture of which it is part. In the “Christ without culture” model the indifference derives as a result of the church adopting and reinforcing patterns of culture that are incompatible with her gospel.²³⁹ These cultural patterns were denounced by some of the church Fathers.²⁴⁰

Irenaeus vigorously defended Christian orthodoxy during a period of immense challenge from Gnosticism. His most important work was *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies). He made a major defence of the Christian understanding of salvation, and especially the role of tradition in remaining faithful to the apostolic witness in the face of non-Christian interpretations. In appealing to traditions to discredit or argue against Gnosticism, Irenaeus was appealing to “that which has been handed down or over”. Irenaeus was appealing to scripture and the rule of faith that was faithfully preserved by the apostolic church, and had found expression in Scripture.²⁴¹

²³⁷ Peter’s, “Missions in Cultural Perspective”, 197-8.

²³⁸ Richard Neuhaus, “The Public Square: A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture and Public Life”, *Journal of Religion and Public Life* 68 (2012): 55.

²³⁹ Neuhaus, “The Public Square”, 56.

²⁴⁰ Tertullian pays Irenaeus much credit for his material against Gnostics; Greenslade, *Library of Christian Classics: Early Latin Theology* (London: SCM Press), 23.

²⁴¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 13.

In addition Origen, another noticeable defender of Christianity, made contributions to Christian theology in the field of biblical interpretation and Christology. Origen developed the notion of allegorical interpretation. He argued the “surface meaning” of scripture was to be distinguished from the deeper “spiritual meaning”.²⁴² His push for surface meaning over a deeper spiritual meaning indicates that he is not too concerned about how the final text came to be. In other words he is not concerned with context, situations, settings, or background of the text, only the final product. In relation to the argument between Christ and culture, Origen’s starting point is scripture and not from context and experience which derives from a particular culture.

Tertullian’s opposition to philosophy led him to say, “what has Athens to do with Jerusalem” (*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis*). Athens at that time was the home of pagan Greek philosophy, opposite to Jerusalem, the centre of Christian faith and revelation.²⁴³ As a third-century Roman lawyer, Tertullian wanted to understand what relevance the Platonic Academy had for the church? Tertullian said: “Christianity must maintain its distinctive identity by avoiding such secular influences”.²⁴⁴

Tertullian rejected every aspect of pagan culture and refused to allow Christianity to be contaminated in any way by the mental or moral environment in which it took root. He went on to say, the conflict of the believer is not with nature but with culture, for it is in culture that sin chiefly resides.²⁴⁵ Tertullian was strongly opposed to making Christian theology

²⁴² McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 11.

²⁴³ Susan Abraham, “What Does Mumbai Have To Do With Rome: Postcolonial Perspective on Globalization and Theology,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 376-393.

²⁴⁴ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 115.

²⁴⁵ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 52.

dependent upon extra-scriptural sources, which included philosophy.²⁴⁶ In his work *De praescriptione haereticorum* (The prescriptions against the Heretics) Tertullian wrote a section “what has Athens to do with Jerusalem” which is an attack on the Gnostics and a statement of a need to dispose of all heresy in principle.²⁴⁷

Gnostics and Gnosticism come from the Greek word *gnosis* meaning knowledge. This knowledge was applied exclusively to a body of heretical teachings denounced by the church Fathers in the early Christian centuries.²⁴⁸ It was denounced because the Gnostics claimed because of their possession of special knowledge (gnosis) they were released from the normal rules of society, claiming to be living an elevated, spiritual existence even in their present material state.²⁴⁹ The Gnostics believed in a cosmological dualistic world. There was the spiritual world, and the created world, which was regarded as “evil”. This spiritual world could only be obtained by those who had “gnosis” (special knowledge). According to Gnostics in this world the supreme God has no dealings with the created world or the world of matter. This is because to the Gnostics matter was the creation of an inferior being, the Demiurge who barred the path of individual souls trying to ascend to the spiritual world. This is why Gnostics claimed to be elevated above the material state they are in, because they had the special knowledge. In short, the main argument for Tertullian is related

²⁴⁶ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 10.

²⁴⁷ S. L. Greenslade *Library of Christian Classics: Early Latin Theology*, (London: SCM Press, 1956), 21.

²⁴⁸ Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 424.

²⁴⁹ Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 424-426.

to the sufficiency of Scripture as God's revelation, as opposed to those who appealed to secular philosophy (reason) for a true knowledge of God.²⁵⁰

In addition, the attitudes of the nineteenth century Protestant missionaries can also be understood on some occasions as anti-culture, as a result of their pietistic and evangelical background.²⁵¹ For the missionaries, to become a Christian entailed a complete break with the past. This was applied to every situation and it meant the relationship between Christianity and traditional culture could not be interpreted as one of partnership, but was seen as one of rivalry and opposition.²⁵² The reason for this was because the West was unaware of its ethnocentrism, which is related to the attitude that one's own culture is superior and uncivilised.²⁵³ This attitude was further expressed through colonialism: economically, politically, socially, and too often religiously. It was further felt that non-western people needed to be civilised in order to be Christianised.²⁵⁴ In the case of Samoa, the motivation behind the missionaries visit was realised when the Samoans accepted Christianity.

4.4 The motto against traditional Samoan culture: The Faa-Samoa

In relation to the overall argument of this thesis, the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* can be understood as anti-traditional Samoan culture for several reasons. The word *Atua* was used to designate the various

²⁵⁰ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 10.

²⁵¹ Erivwo, "Traditional Culture and Christianity", 216.

²⁵² Erivwo, "Traditional Culture and Christianity", 220.

²⁵³ Ross Langmead, "Mission and Contextualization", *Journal of Tribal Studies* 1 (1998): 46-47.

²⁵⁴ Langmead, "Mission and Contextualization", 47.

manifestations of Tagaloa the creator, but it was applied to the Christian God after 1830.²⁵⁵ Samoans began to worship the authoritative and more supreme foreign God, who is referred to in the motto as Samoa's foundation, over the Atua of the ancestors, Tagaloaalagi. This was because the Samoans thought that as the Papalagi had many nice things, their God must be more powerful than Tagaloaalagi; their God was good while Tagaloaalagi was bad.²⁵⁶ Material benefits were believed to be the driving force behind the people's decision to accept Christianity and worship the Christian God. The Samoan Chief Fauea explained to the first Samoans at sea about the benefits of becoming a Christian:

Fauea the Samoan Chief spoke to the people who recognised him immediately and addressed him ... Those who came on board saluted him ... we were much delighted with the manner in which he (Fauea) was introducing the object of our voyage by telling them that ours was a Pahi-lotu (Religion Ship or Va'a lotu) ... he told them also of the number of Islands which has become lotu Tongataboo, the Haapae, Rarotogna Tahiti ... they are all much better since they embraced Christianity ... Wars have ceased among them ... ships visiting brought them an abundance of property ... their God was more superior to ours ... they are clothed from their head down to their feet and we are naked ... they have got large ships and we have only got these little canoes.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Lawson, *Traditional versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 128; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 9.

²⁵⁶ Moyle, *Journal of John Williams*, 109.

²⁵⁷ Moyle, *Journal of John Williams*, 68.

Fauea also laid out for Malietoa the purpose and the message the Papalagi came to bring, which was the message of peace and love. He advised Malietoa about the array of material goods that the missionaries had to offer:

Can the religion of these papalagi be anything but good? ... let us look at them, and then look at ourselves, their heads are covered, while ours are exposed to the sun, their bodies are clothed all over with beautiful cloth, while we have nothing but a bandage of leaves around our waist ... look at their axes, scissors, and their other property, how rich they are.²⁵⁸

As a result Malietoa quickly accepted Christianity and ordered his people and Samoa to accept the God of the Papalagi.²⁵⁹ Although Malietoa was swift in accepting Christianity some Samoans were not as quick. According to Meleisea, Samoans deliberated for some time before deciding. Samoans gave much thought to the transfer of loyalty from their old gods to Jehovah, however it appears the material gains that accompanied the Christian God proved difficult to pass up:

Before a village became Christians the subject was debated by a fono (village council). Some of the arguments ... was that the Christian God was superior because of valuable possessions of the English cloth, steel knives, guns, ships and beads. Another argument cautioned Samoans against a hasty acceptance until more was known about Christianity. The chief who presented this view

²⁵⁸ Latai, "Missionary Wives", 6.

²⁵⁹ Latai, "Missionary Wives", 6.

asked what would happen if Samoans went to England and asked the English to accept their religion. Would the English agree quickly without wanting to learn more about it? Another chief said that writing was obviously a valuable tool, since the English could keep track of all the goods on their ships.²⁶⁰

Also, Malietoa's rapid acceptance of Christianity was for political supremacy. Having missionaries at his disposal would ensure popularity, power and wealth, which would aid his push to become the tafa'ifa. But it is also fair to suggest, the authoritarian figure, which the foreign God represented appealed to Malietoa.²⁶¹ In addition, once a village decided to become Christian preparations were made to house a teacher and a *faifeau* (pastor). A church was built and the people began to support the pastor with food and services.²⁶²

The *faifeau* (pastor) was introduced to Samoa by the London Missionary Society. In the early days, the word *a'oa'o* which means "one who teachers" referred to village workers. Over time the word that emerged as the more usual name for the London Missionary Society mission teachers was *faifeau*, which means: "to go on a message".²⁶³ This meaning carries the sense of "being sent" as in the New Testament word "apostle". The literal translation of the word *faifeau* in Samoa is, *fai* which means do and *feau* which means "chores" or "task". It carries a sense of service. *Faifeaus* were expected to proclaim the word of God, expound the Samoan Bible,

²⁶⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 54.

²⁶¹ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 122; Featuna'i Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 8.

²⁶² Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 54-55; Peter Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", *Journal of Pacific History*, 39 (2004): 250; Tcherkezoff, "The Changing South Pacific", 271-273.

²⁶³ Lange, *Island Ministers*, 91.

oversee weekly worship and ensure that daily family prayers were offered in each household.²⁶⁴ The faifeau took the place of the priests in traditional Samoan religion, as mediators of the unseen world. They were worship leaders, preachers, pastoral visitors, spiritual guides and guardians of morals.²⁶⁵ To this day Samoans continue to hold pastors in very high regard as God's manifestation in the world, they are to Samoans "*o le sui o le atua*" ("Gods manifestation").²⁶⁶

The Samoan saying *O ao o faalupega* (head of genealogy or head of all titles)²⁶⁷ was yet another traditional belief that was ratified as a result of Christianity. The phrase was traditionally reserved for high chiefs including Malietoa. It refers to a prestigious position for one who is at the highest in the ladder of hierarchy in Samoan society.²⁶⁸ After accepting Christianity Malietoa initiated the reforms, transferring the authority and title of *O ao o faalupega* from the paramount chiefs to the faifeau. The sacred power of the old chiefs was transferred to the pastor who was given the chiefly form of address *susuga* (the honourable).

²⁶⁴ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 67.

²⁶⁵ Lange, *Island Ministers*, 92.

²⁶⁶ Peter Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", *Journey of Pacific History*, 39 (2004): 250; Lawson, *Traditional versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 128; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 9.

²⁶⁷ Hiroa, *Samoan Material Culture*, 5. Explain *faalupega* to be an (order of rank prestige). To be the *ao* (head") of rank and prestige means you are afforded the highest customary honours. These customary honours were with the high chiefs, because they were believed to be of divine origins; Peter Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", *Journey of Pacific history* 39 (2004): 247. According to Hempenstall, "when the great Jehovah, of the European sailing-gods was accepted in preference to Tagaloalagi, it took the place at the head of the hierarchy of the gods of old Samoa". At the same time the customary honour that was invested in the high chiefs was now to be transferred to Jehovah also, in the form of the village *Faifeau* (pastor).

²⁶⁸ Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 121.

In addition the faifeau was given the term *o le feagaiga* (covenant)²⁶⁹ because of his covenant with the village, and in recognition of the covenant between God and man.²⁷⁰ Villagers bestowed on pastors the respect formerly given to priests and matai in their religious capacity, together with their entitlement to receive service and material tribute. He was the *ao o faalupega* (head of all titles) and on him (as if on God) were conferred the highest honours of the village, so the pastor embodied in himself all its dignity and status, as a new kind of sacred chief.²⁷¹ The faifeau moved into an important place in Samoan life. His role as a teacher and pastor was comparable to that performed by the priest in traditional Samoan religion. To the missionaries the faifeau was no priest, but to the people he was the main point of contact between individuals and God, and the one who mediated between the village community and the divine giver of all life's blessings. Some of these perceptions are implicit in one of the titles still given to the pastor today: the *sui* (representative) of God.²⁷²

4.5 The motto affirming traditional Samoan culture: The Faa-Samoa

But the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* can also be understood as affirming traditional Samoan culture. The incorporation of Christianity into the Faa-Samoa highlights the fact that the motto can also be understood as

²⁶⁹ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 168. The term *feagaiga* describes the sacred relationship between a brother and his sister. The sister is the *feagaiga*. She is the pupil in the eye of her brother. She is to be protected at all cost. The brother serves her. The Samoan saying "*E mu mata o le tuagane*" ("the brother's eyes burn") denotes the brother's eyes burning from the smoke in preparing her food. This relationship was also applied to the expected relationship between the *faifeau* (pastor) and the *aulotu* (congregation) as a result the *faifeau* is referred to as *faafeagaiga*. Tcherkezoff, *The Changing South Pacific*, 271.

²⁷⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 69.

²⁷¹ Lange, *Island Ministers*, 98; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 18.

²⁷² Lange, *Island Ministers*, 97.

affirming Samoan traditions, unlike the previous section where theologians argued that the gospel should not be contaminated by culture. As mentioned earlier, there is no Samoan word for the term culture, the commonly used Samoan word is *aganu'u* which is translated as custom. The term culture is best understood by the Samoan concept of the Faa-Samoa. Faa-Samoa entails all aspects of Samoan living. It incorporates the social, political and religious life of Samoans.²⁷³ One will claim that Faa-Samoa was responsible for the acceptance and rapid spread of Christianity in Samoa. John Williams understood by going to the high chief Malietoa, the chance of a mass conversion was highly probable, because once Malietoa was converted his family, village and ultimately all of Samoa would do likewise.²⁷⁴ This is because in the Faa-Samoa, the *faa-matai* (chief system) was and continues to be a crucial element in Samoan society. John Williams was made well aware of this by Fauea, who understood the role and responsibility of a matai, because he too was a matai. It was the duty of a matai to ensure the smooth running of family, village, district and national affairs. This also includes ensuring his family members adhere to village protocols or face punishment, in some cases families are banished. J. W. Davidson explains:

A matai would decide to become a convert and instruct the members of his household to do likewise; the members of a village fono would reach a similar decision and punish, by force or banishment, any who declined to accept it; an important matai in a major lineage would use the bonds of kinship to influence members of his aiga in other parts of the country. To the people as a whole, the church's

²⁷³ Tuisuga-Le-Taua, "Tofa Liliu o Samoa", 91-92.

²⁷⁴ Cockcroft, *Polynesian: Isles of the South Pacific*, 55.

opposition to war, private violence and brutal forms of punishment brought a promise of personal security greater than they had previously known. Within ten or fifteen years of William's first visit, the great majority of Samoans had become nominal Christians.²⁷⁵

The strategy used by John Williams helped the missionaries endeavour to take the gospel to the Pacific. The missionaries "endeavours" were what the Taiwanese scholar Shoki Coe has argued is a theological necessity for the gospel to take a fresh shape in each culture, because the Good News is incarnational. By this he means that it takes flesh, it is particular, it is rooted in the human situation, it applies not only in tribal or traditional situations, but also in secular and urban situations. This process Shoki Coe called "contextualizing".²⁷⁶ Leslie Newbigin on the other hand explored the mission of the church in a continually evolving society, because he was also motivated by an authentic expression of the meaning of the gospel and the mission of the church in the midst of a changing world. The changing world is what Newbigin calls a plurality of cultures and religions.²⁷⁷ These cultures and religions Newbigin argues are things to be celebrated, approved and cherished.²⁷⁸ Newbigin was advocating a world that accepts religions and cultures alike:

The Christian mission or mission of the church involves specific activities which are undertaken by human decision to bring the

²⁷⁵ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 34.

²⁷⁶ Langmead, "Mission and Contextualization", 49.

²⁷⁷ Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 121.

²⁷⁸ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 1.

gospel to places and situations where it is not heard; to create a Christian presence in a place or situation where there is no such presence.²⁷⁹

This means churches are called to unity in mission, to plant the seed of the good news about the kingdom everywhere. To achieve this it requires Christians to express their faith in the symbols and images of their respective cultures. This can be realised by contextualising the gospel in order to make the message relevant and meaningful to the people. In support of this view the Second Vatican Council in 1962, convened by Pope John XXIII,²⁸⁰ brought far-reaching changes for Catholics around the world suggesting the gospel needs to be rooted in the local cultures:

The seed which is the word of God sprouts from the good ground watered by divine dew. From this ground the seed draws nourishing elements which it transforms and assimilates into itself. From the seed which is the word of God, individual churches can be adequately established and flourish the world over demonstrating their own vitality and maturity. Thus the congregation of the faithful endowed with the riches of its own nation's culture, should be deeply rooted in the people.²⁸¹

As a result of Vatican II many changes were evident in the Pacific as Earnest explained:

²⁷⁹ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 121.

²⁸⁰ K. P. Aleaz, "The Theology of Inculturation Re-examined", *Asia Journal of Theology* 25 (2011): 231.

²⁸¹ Aleaz, "The Theology of Inculturation Re-examined", in *Asia Journal of Theology* 25 (2011): 228-249

... missions, the religious life, the liturgy, the use of scripture, ecumenism, the role of the bishops in the church, the place of the laity and the official understanding of religious liberty were altered with astonishing speed. The new and simplified Roman Mass was translated into Pacific vernaculars and celebrated with locally devised ceremony and music.²⁸²

An example of this can be seen in the Samoan concept of *ifoga* (formal apology)²⁸³ where gospel and culture are integrated. The *ifoga* is a formal ritual or practice of apology. The missionary, John Stair described the *ifoga*:

In cases of murder or adultery, the common mode of making compensation to the injured party of their relatives was by *ifonga* or bowing down accompanied with a *totongi* or payment of fine. In case the offending party thought it prudent to tender this satisfaction, he collected some valuable mats, in number quality according to the nature of the offence and with his friends prepared to make his submission.²⁸⁴

It is one of the most significant forms of showing remorse, after a crime is committed. It is a practice that is rarely performed, and it is only performed in serious cases, like a murder or any crime affecting the village

²⁸² Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 169-170.

²⁸³ Siu Vaifale, "From Strategy to Spirituality" (MTh Thesis, University of Geneva, 2002), 15.

²⁸⁴ Cluny Macpherson, "The Ifoga: The Exchange Value of Social Honour in Samoa", *Journal of Polynesian Society* 114 (2005), 109.

pastor. It is a public act of self-humiliation²⁸⁵ but also a show of remorse. The ifoga involves the entire family, and in some cases villages and congregations. When a person commits a serious crime, especially murder, the family gather to prepare the ifoga.

The ifoga is when the person who has done wrong and another member of the family—usually a chief or in some cases a family elder—kneel outside the grieving family’s house covered over with an *ietoga* (fine mat). The ifoga is usually performed in the early hours of the morning before sunrise, in time for when the family wake and also in the coolness of the morning. The ifoga can last for many hours and in some cases days. In order for the ifoga to end, the grieving family must accept the family’s show of remorse, by coming and taking off the *ietoga*. The *ietoga* is described as the *ie o le ola* (mat of life).

The Catholic Church in Samoa has incorporated the ifoga in the church service, as a form of a formal apology to God for transgressions.²⁸⁶ The theological significance of ifoga derives from the work of atonement performed by Christ for humanity. To Samoans, Jesus Christ is the *ie o le ola*, that covered the sins of the world. The resurrection gave the world a second chance like the grieving family gives the person who committed a crime a second chance, by taking the *ietoga* off, hence ending the ifoga.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Macpherson, “The Ifoga: The Exchange Value of Social Honour in Samoa”, 109.

²⁸⁶ Leapepe, “Nafanua: A Prophetess of God”, 47 the practical application is quite visible in the Catholic Church in Samoa with the applying of Samoan traditions and concepts within their worship.

²⁸⁷ Vaifale, “From Strategy to Spirituality”, 20-21. In addition, the ifoga according to Vaifale is also a surrendering of life. In other words the fate of the person who did the wrong is in the hands of the grieving family. The family performing the ifoga take with them all the things needed to prepare a Samoan *umu* (earth oven). They include firewood, stones and covering leaves. According to Vaifale the ceremony is an invitation to the grieving family to proceed in lighting the fire and placing them in it;

Another noticeable cultural practice that has been woven into Catholic services in Samoa and abroad, is when the bible is brought into the service; a matai dressed in full ceremonial dress leads the parade. Kafoa Solomone reiterated this view in the belief:

The gospel must renew the mentality of the people within a culture. It must develop new attitudes for them to accept and appropriate cultural changes that will help them express their faith, allowing them to celebrate liturgy in cultural expressions relevant and meaningful to them.²⁸⁸

Stephen Bevan defines contextual theology in more depth by stating:

Contextual theology is a way of doing theology that takes into account the experience of the past recorded in Scripture and preserved and defended in the church's traditions, and the experience of the present or a particular context, which consists of personal or communal experience, secular or religious culture, social location and social change.²⁸⁹

He continued to articulate this definition by reaffirming the emphasis of contextual theology, which is the centrality of experience. In other words, it is human experience that makes theology contextual. What this then means is that for contextual theologians, anything can be a source of theology, suggesting contextual theology is a theology of rich and

²⁸⁸ Kafoa, Solomone, "One Gospel: Contextually Inclusive and or Exclusive" *The Pacific Journal of Theology* 17 (1997): 8. Kafoa was the academic dean at the Pacific Theological College in Suva, he is of Catholic faith.

²⁸⁹ Bevans, *Contextual Theology as a Theological Imperative: in Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 3.

challenging dialogues that tries to articulate my context, my experience with the experiences of Christians down through the ages that is found in scripture and Christian tradition.²⁹⁰ These Christian traditions were introduced to the Islands by missionaries, and they were met with some criticism.

The late Sione Amanaki Havea was critical of missionary endeavours. For Havea the missionary endeavour packed more than the gospel or biblical text in their suitcases; to Havea, Christ was introduced as a foreign figure in Pacific soil.²⁹¹ This dilemma needed to be addressed. In an attempt to make the gospel relevant to the Pacific context, local theologians began the process of trying to earth Jesus in Pacific soil or in the Pacific context.²⁹² In particular, Havea tried to articulate the view given at Vatican II, by developing an Oceania or Pacific theology.

Havea coined the term “coconut theology”. The coconut symbolises Christ. Like the coconut it gives life to human beings, in the way of nourishment and when the coconut is broken, new life springs forth. The Pacific use of time is called coconut time, as the coconut comes to fruition at its own pace, without hurry or concern for punctuality. Havea claimed the gospel affected the whole world simultaneously at the time of Christ.

Coconut theology was an attempt to simplify the gospel message in order for Pacific people to truly understand the message conveyed about

²⁹⁰ Bevans, *Contextual Theology as a Theological Imperative: in Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 3.

²⁹¹ Seforosa Carroll, “Weaving New Spaces: Christological Perspectives from Oceania (Pacific) and the Oceanic Diaspora”, *Studies in World Christianity* 10 (2004): 72; Charles W. Forman, “Finding Our Own Voice: The Reinterpreting of Christianity by Oceania Theologians”, *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (29) 2005: 1115-122.

²⁹² Seforosa Carroll’s article “Weaving New Spaces” gives a very good account of the various theologies from Pacific theologians in an attempt to ground Jesus in Pacific soil or Pacific context.

Christ, so that the gospel message can have some relevance to the people.²⁹³

In the Pacific the coconut tree is most important. This is because every part of the tree is used by the Islanders in some form or another. The husk is used to make fire. The hard coconut shell is used not only for starting fire, but also in ceremonial rituals like the *ava*. The hard coconut shell is smoothed out using a sharp object to scrape the shell smooth.²⁹⁴ Once the shell is smoothed out, it becomes the cup used to drink the *ava*.²⁹⁵ The kernel is shredded to make coconut juice that is used for cooking, and also for feeding pigs and chickens. It is also used for quick relief from severe burns. The juice from the coconut is a refreshing drink that is often relied upon when working in the plantation and fields. The actual coconut tree is chopped up into logs and used for the *umu* (earth oven).²⁹⁶ The branches and leaves of the coconut tree are used to make *ato* (bag), used to carry various loads, including food.

In short, the coconut symbolises life. It gives life to the people in that all parts of the coconut tree are used for the purpose of sustaining life. Pacific people came to understand Christ in the same light as a result. This was why the need to earth the gospel was crucial to spread the gospel; because there was the growing awareness that Christianity was somewhat

²⁹³ Carroll, "Weaving New Spaces", 72.

²⁹⁴ Hiroa, *Samoan Material Culture*, 151. Te Rangi Hiroa is also known by the name Peter H. Buck.

²⁹⁵ When the coconut is cracked in half, one half is used as a cup that is traditionally used to drink the *ava* juice. In the *ava* ritual no other cup is used apart from the cup made from the coconut.

²⁹⁶ The logs are placed around the earth oven, to stop the hot rocks from sliding off the oven area. The logs are removed allowing for the rocks to be evenly spread out. The food is then placed on the hot rocks and covered. The food usually takes approximately 45 minutes to cook.

foreign and alien, which served only as a lingering reminder of Christian missions and colonialism.²⁹⁷ Neil Gunson writes in support of this view:

That missionary was the chief promoter of civilization, and colonization was regarded as the most efficient means of effecting Christian civilisation. The idea that the role of the missionary was to introduce civilization together with the doctrine of the cross was developed into a principle missionary enterprise.²⁹⁸

Leslie Boseto did not share Neil Gunson's view and describes the missionaries activities in this way:

... transplanting Western faith in a theological pod, and instead of taking out the plant and placing it in the local soil, they kept it in the pod and nurturing it with Western environment and climate, for why it is seen by Pacific peoples as a foreign religion.²⁹⁹

Perhaps the point Boseto is trying to make is that the form of Christianity that was introduced to the Islands was difficult for some to understand because of the many foreign concepts and doctrines which came with it; for example words like "omnipotence", "omnipresence" and "omniscience", were foreign to many Island people. This was one reason why it was met with criticism. Jione Havea makes an important point:

It does not matter that the Bible is in the hands of Africans, and of Asians and Islanders, and so forth, if they are to interpret it according to the teachings of white men ... the South have the Bible

²⁹⁷ Carroll, "Weaving New Spaces", 73.

²⁹⁸ Carroll, "Weaving New Spaces", 73.

²⁹⁹ Carroll, "Weaving New Spaces", 72-73.

and the numbers but the North determines how we read the Bible and how we contextualize. Our minds are still conned, and colonized.³⁰⁰

In a similar way to Jione Havea, Nasili Vaka'uta went on to say:

Biblical interpretation has been, and still is, dictated to a great extent by Western norms of scholarships and criteria; it is a form of colonization. In both cases, the Bible (from an Oceanic standpoint) remains a foreign text that requires to be read with foreign lenses and tools.³⁰¹

Charles Robson argues:

... that in the post-colonial and secular world of many writers and critics, the motives and impact of the missionaries are often dismissed with something like contempt, but to understand this phase of history we must understand not only the missionaries who were diverse in background, education, commitment, and effectiveness, but also the people of the Islands who with a few violent exceptions, allowed the missionaries to stay and eventually decided to embrace the new religion.³⁰²

On the other hand, Lamin Sanneh does not share Robson's view:

³⁰⁰ Havea, "The Cons of Contextuality...Kontextuality," 41.

³⁰¹ Nasili Vaka'uta, "Talanga: A Tongan mode of interpretation" in *Talanoa Ripples: Across Borders, Cultures, Disciplines*, Jione Havea (ed), (Massey: Office of the directorate Pasifika@ Massey, 2010), 150.

³⁰² Andrew E. Robson, "Telling Pacific Lives: On Writing a Biography of William Prichard", in *Biography of William Prichard*. 196 (195-203).

I have decided to give priority to indigenous response and local appropriation over against missionary transmission and directions, and accordingly have reversed the argument by speaking of the indigenous discovery of Christianity rather than the Christian discovery of indigenous societies.³⁰³

Sanneh's critical direction was along the same line of thought expounded by Sione Amanaki Havea some years before, who argued the missionaries came only to make known the Good News that was already present.³⁰⁴ Havea was referring to the sharing and caring that were already common among Pacific peoples. This thesis will claim sharing and caring are not ideals attributed to Christianity and the gospel, but rather attributed to the spirit of our ancestors that we believe continue to live within us. This thesis argues that it was the spirit of the ancestors which guided the decisions by leaders of Samoa to first accept Christianity, second to worship a foreign God, and third to have Samoa founded on God and not Tagaloaalagi.

4.6 The motto critical of gospel and traditional Samoan culture: the Faa-Samoa

Kosuke Koyama's Water Buffalo theology is a form of contextual theology, though with a difference. It aims not only to articulate Jesus Christ in culturally appropriate words, but more importantly for this thesis, also to criticise, reform, dethrone or oppose culture if it acts against the

³⁰³ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 10.

³⁰⁴ Charles W. Forman, "Finding Our Own Voice: The Reinterpreting of Christianity by Oceania Theologians", *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (29) 2005: 116.

interest of what the name of Jesus Christ stands for. Koyama's theology is an expression of an Asian theology. This theology is rooted in the Thai Buddhist culture that has developed out of Koyama's missionary experience in Thailand. In the development of this theology, Koyama's focus was to ensure that theology must be able to culturally express Christianity in terms that carry both the form and meaning of the gospel message. While this theology is firmly rooted within culture, it must also allow the gospel to prophetically interpret, challenge, and change that culture and be understood by the believers. Koyama writes:

Our dilemma is this: if we say salvation through the blood of Jesus, our Thai audience is completely lost. If we say salvation through dharma, they would see no difference between the Christian faith and Buddhism.³⁰⁵

An example of this he calls kitchen theology, which shows how one might sit and drink tea with the missionaries in the living room expressing proper theology, but their real life is in the dirt floor in the kitchen.³⁰⁶ The moral of this example is that, in an attempt to ground the gospel, Koyama reminds the readers that we do not interact with Buddhism, but with the people themselves. In other words grounding the gospel is not a theoretical exercise; rather it takes place within actual relationships and within dialogue with real people. This is because for Koyama, third world theologies begin by raising issues and not by digesting Augustine, Barth and Rahner.³⁰⁷ The significant issue being addressed here is about making the gospel relevant to and for the context in which the gospel has been introduced.

³⁰⁵ Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 59.

³⁰⁶ Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 60.

³⁰⁷ Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 15.

Jione Havea has raised a critical question about “context”: what does it really mean to be contextual? To Havea it is about being “kontextual”.³⁰⁸ In a play of words Havea inserts a new word by coining the term “kontextual”. Havea believes “kontextual-thinkers” need to foster the courage to question the status quo and its cultural look, especially those of your own culture. In support of this view Havea gives an example that departs from the heart of any person and their own culture. Havea takes on the most public of statements and critically analyses it from the perspective of Tongan women:

Since I am Tongan, I start by interrogating the text written at the bottom of Tonga’s Coat of Arms, which Tongans proudly take as the motto of our Island nation: *Ko e ‘Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi’a*, popularly translated as God and Tonga are my inheritance.³⁰⁹

Havea offers this critique:

It is under Christian guidance that Tongans grow up thinking that our inheritance is both God and Tonga. But it is ridiculous to speak of inheritance in Tonga, and in all patriarchal cultures, where women do not have the same right to inheritance as men. The motto of our nation is exclusivist and this is the mindset that fuels our imagination when struck by the fever of nationalism. Shouldn’t we change our imagination?³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Havea, *Kontextuality*, 42. Havea dropped the C in contextual and replaced it with K to read kontextual. The reason for this is because in Tonga and also other Pacific Islands, we do not have the letter c in our alphabet. For Havea it would be more appropriate for me to use kontextuality instead of contextuality; Te Rangi Hiroa, *Samoan Material Culture* (Honolulu: The Museum, 1930), 4.

³⁰⁹ Havea, *Kontextuality*, 48.

³¹⁰ Havea, *Kontextuality*, 48.

It is clear in this critique of the Tongan motto, Havea, on the one hand affirms that Tonga and God are his inheritance. However Havea is also critical of the Tongan culture in that the rights to inheritance are predominantly in favour of men. In order to redeem this imbalance Havea suggests a change in imagination is required. This is not the only occasion in which Havea has opted to side with those on the margins. In *Out of Place*, Havea gives a critical reflection on the biblical narrative in 1 Samuel 28:3-25. In his reading of the narrative he makes no apology for being critical of both the biblical narrative and the culture within it. He states:

My telling is unapologetically biased on behalf of the proscribed Medium of End-or, while at the same time mindful of the riddle that the story of Saul may have answered for Israel.

Havea continues:

I respect the biblical narrator's view, but this chapter is accountable to Mikel Bal call's for counter-coherence, which is about critically examining texts from their coherence of kingship, nation-building and empire ... instead of focusing on the story of Israel and its kingship, I favour out-of-place characters.³¹¹

Havea's decision to shift in the direction to side with the medium and of Saul ahead of Samuel was not easy because for Havea Samuel represents the ancestors and he has been conditioned to respect the

³¹¹ Jione Havea and Clive Pearson ed., *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Cross-Cultural Brink*, (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2011), 255-256

ancestors.³¹² In comparison, Nasili Vaka'uta is critical of both the bible and his Tongan heritage when he reflects on the notions of “native” and “*tu'a*”:

Both notions “native” and “*tu'a*” (“commoner”) have their origins in the past. But they continue to shape practice and relations in the present ... both notions have been justified to an extent by certain readings of the Bible, and some mythological validation of culture. They both project a false reality, a delusional world, I am invited to leap into, and accept my place and role, as givens of existence! How ironic that I, as a native, read and value the Bible; a text so instrumental in my identification; a text that legitimized colonial practices and perceptions on the one hand, and validated the suppression of Oceanic cultures on the other.

Vaka'uta continues to be intense in his description of the Bible and the Tongan culture suggesting that the Tongan culture in a sense has disowned him:

How can such a text be sacred? The Bible, like any other text, is not guiltless! And neither are its readers; How ironic that I, as a *tu'a*, employ aspects of Tongan culture for interpretation. Tongan culture has in a sense disowned me. Tongan culture, like any other, is neither pure nor innocent! As such, there is a need to critique one's culture prior to critical reading of texts.³¹³

³¹² Havea and Pearson, *Out of Place*, 256.

³¹³ Vaka'uta, *A Tongan Mode of Interpretation*, 152.

Like Jione Havea, Vaka'uta also makes an important point in the need to be critical of one's culture first. This thesis is critical of the writer's culture also. Three Samoan practices will be critically analysed to show how certain Samoan practices and Christian concepts have added to an already vast array of responsibilities to the church that has become a burden to families. The added responsibilities are a contributing factor in the mass exodus of people away from the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) and other mainline churches.³¹⁴ These people now attend the array of new religious groups in Samoa and abroad.³¹⁵ Manfred Ernst explains the reason for this vast exodus:

The income, lifestyle and position of CCCS ministers are questioned by a growing number of people, and the contributions to the church are considered a growing burden ... It is a common view even among the leaders of the church that the expected contributions to the church are an important factor in the massive numerical decline of the CCCS.³¹⁶

For many the church has moved away from its original purpose, of bringing people closer to God through spiritual nourishment, but instead has become more concerned with building its assets:

There are thousands and tens of thousands of pounds spent each year on buildings ... we must not emphasis building and neglect the real reason we are here to build up the spirituality for the benefit of the

³¹⁴ Mainline churches are usually referred to Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS or EFKS), The Methodist Church of Samoa and the Catholic Church.

³¹⁵ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 22, 172-177; Aukilani Tuiai, "The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa 1962-2002", 2-3.

³¹⁶ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 169.

people. Are things we don't see less important than things we see? Remember the meaning of the parable of the person who gathered worldly riches but was not rich in the eyes of God.³¹⁷

Also some ministers are becoming more and more selective about which village to go to, rather than taking the first parish offered. The ministers are not selected by the church headquarters, but by the village people. The ministers are selected from the pool of graduates of Malua Theological College. The selected minister has to agree and accept the village's formal request. Manfred Ernst revealed that in 1993 approximately 20 parishes did not have a minister; however there were more than 20 ministers who did not have a parish.

For Ernst "it seems that ministers are waiting for the best offer". This situation indicates a serious problem in the central structure of the CCCS.³¹⁸ To the people, the church and Faifeau's are abusing their position as God's watchful eye in the world, and this is not the foundation in which Samoa is founded. This view is taken up by Forman who argues:

... the older churches have become perhaps too comfortable in their solid relationship with the local culture and the steady support they have received from the power structures of traditional society. They have thought they could count on the leaders of society to keep the

³¹⁷ Aukilani Tuiai, "The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, 1962-2002: A Study of the Issues and Policies that have Shaped the Independent Church" (PhD thesis, Charles Sturt University, 2012), 108.

³¹⁸ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 168; However in saying that 20 years later (2013) there are hundreds of ministers waiting for a parish.

people active in the church and to keep the young people supportive of the institutions of the elders.³¹⁹

Consequently, for many years now, an exodus has occurred with people seeking spiritual nourishment elsewhere. The financial burden associated with attending church, Ernst believes is a result of the *fonotele* (General Assembly's)³²⁰ decision to keep the traditions of the church. These traditions are sometimes closely linked with pre-Christian cultural patterns deriving from pre-Christian times.³²¹

This thesis will argue some of these pre-Christian cultural patterns and practices include the practice of *tautua* (service), *taulaga* (offering/contribution) and the practice of *folafola* (public announcements). These cultural patterns and practices, combined with Christian beliefs and added missionary interventions (Annual contribution and public announcements),³²² have forced many away from mainline churches due to dissatisfaction with how both gospel and culture have brought financial burden to many families.

Tautua (service) is a Samoan concept that is synonymous with the provision of service to the chief and to the *aiga* (family) in some form. The word derives from *tau* (to fight) and *tua* (back). The word carries a sense of a person fighting from the back in performing his or her dedication and

³¹⁹ Charles W. Forman, "Recent development in Pacific Island Christianity", *Mission studies*, 17 (1992), 29.

³²⁰ In May each year the CCCS hold its Annual General Assembly in Malua. Many issues are spoken about and recommendations are put to the delegates for their input. It is at this assembly as Ernest noted a majority of delegates voted to keep the traditions of the church that are closely linked with pre-Christian cultural patterns that derived from pre-Christian times.

³²¹ Ernst, *Winds of Change*, 169.

³²² Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", 250; Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 54-55.

commitment to his or her designated role and responsibility. The Samoan proverb *o le ala i le pule o le tautua* (the way to authority is by serving) highlights the essence of tautua. The proverb echoes Jesus' various sayings and replies to his disciples:

Then they came to Capernaum and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way". But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all".³²³

Jesus continued to teach his disciples about the need to serve others by saying "for the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many".³²⁴ In order for a Samoan person to become a matai, it is usually after the matai recognises his service to the family. This service entails years of working the family plantation, preparing food and ensuring the matai and the aiga are well provided and cared for. The practice is not easy and it is physically demanding. Samoans believe their tautua will be rewarded by being chosen to become a matai. It is also important to note, not everyone who performs the practice becomes a matai. The call to be a matai is dependent on how well you perform the task. J. W. Davidson explains:

The right of electing a matai was, in most cases vested in the family as a whole. This group included both members by descent and persons connected with the family by marriage or adoption who

³²³ New Revised Standard Version, Gospel According to Mark 9:33-36; Mathew 20: 26-27.

³²⁴ New Revised Standard Version, Gospel According to Mathew 20:28.

were living as members of it. In reaching their decision the members of the family would bear certain customary considerations in mind ... special attention was paid to a candidates past record. If he had shown loyalty to the family and faithfully served the previous matai, his suitability on other grounds, such as age and ability, merited consideration. If he failed in these respects—perhaps through prolonged absence from the village—no other qualifications could ordinarily compensate for the deficiency.³²⁵

The introduction of Christianity has made this practice even more demanding. This is because in old Samoa tautua was only directed towards the matai (chief) and the aiga (family). The arrival of Christianity and the introduction of the Christian God and the village pastor had seen an increase in financial responsibilities and burden to families. This is because not only the people had to tautua their matai and aiga, but also the church through weekly fundraising and providing for the village pastor. The practice of tautua to the church (tautua lotu), became a burden for many because families competed for who could give the most amount of money each Sunday. The competitive spirit of the people was the result of an initiative of the missionaries who introduced the practice of annual contribution. In the past Samoans made taulaga (offerings) to their Atua Tagaloaalagi and to their lesser aitu's where their best were given as offerings. The practice continues today, but not to Tagaloaalagi or any of the lesser aitu's, but to God, as Peter Hempenstall reveal:

³²⁵ J. W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 22-23.

It is interesting too, to observe the manner in which the institution of presenting food and property to the ancient gods was now transferred to the god Jehovah, and how it gradually evolved in terms of his material culture ... before in a service honour of Jehovah on the Island of Sava'i, each chief brought his own basket of food.³²⁶

The missionaries took this practice a step further, by introducing annual contributions, as previously mentioned. On the 24th November 2013 CCCS churches in Australia gathered to offer their taulaga. One parish offered \$20,000 AUD. Out of six parishes a combined amount of \$38,570 was offered. One individual offered \$1500. In addition, a combined annual salary for the faifeau's came to \$285,000 AUD. One minister's alofa³²⁷ was \$78,000. This amount is exclusive of other monies he received for funerals, birthdays, weddings and special events.³²⁸ This thesis will argue annual contributions have contributed to a host of people departing from the church. This is because it has become more of a competition as to which family offers the most, not only at taulaga time, but every week, rather than giving from the heart like the widow's offering recorded by the gospel of Mark 13: 41-44:

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are

³²⁶ Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", 250.

³²⁷ Every two weeks parishiners make voluntary offerings, for the minister. This is called "*alofa a le faifeau*" ("love for the minister"). The amount offered is up to the individual. On average, the minister on \$78,000 received around \$2,900 a fortnight in alofa.

³²⁸ Annual Contribution service held 24th November 2013.

worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

Hempenstall continues by revealing:

In 1836 the missionaries introduced the institution of annual contribution to the church in May (the month which the LMS was founded in 1795). Each family made its contribution, then each village, and finally each district, all of these contributions were offered to Jehovah.³²⁹

Meleisea confirmed the view of Hempenstall and went on to say:

This practice introduced the custom of making public the donations of the money to the church; before people had money to give, the family heads would call out the amount of oil their family had made for the church. Families, villages and districts competed for the honour of giving the most to the church.³³⁰

The practice of folafola (public announcement) as mentioned by Meleisea is another contributing factor to the mass exodus of people out of the mainline churches, especially the CCCS. This practice has been a tool,

³²⁹ Hempenstall, "On Missionaries and Cultural Change in Samoa", 250.

³³⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 55; Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa the Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1983), 153-154.

used to encourage people to give. The problem is the practice also has an element of shame attached to it. By making public the amounts people offer it becomes a burden on the families to ensure not only that they give, but that it is more than what someone else has given. People give because they do not want to be the only family that did not make an offering. And on the odd occasion where a family do not give, it is to some people a shame.

Some people are not fazed about what others give, but there are many people who pay close attention to who gives how much and who fails to give. Hence the Samoan saying: *E iai le au faitau, e ia foi le au maitau* (there are people who observe, but there are also people who take notice). Sometimes well off families would compete to see who gave the most. Sadly, in many cases this type of giving is fuelled by pride and not a result of faith.

At the 2013 Annual General Assembly held in Malua, a proposal was tabled and discussed asking the fonotele to make a directive to stop families and congregations going to extravagant lengths in giving food and fine mats *faaaloaloga*³³¹ (togan of appreciation) to pastors during the fonotele. The reason behind this is to lighten the burden on families who feel obliged to do faaaloaloga because a member from their parish has received their faifeau Samoa status (F.S.). Much discussion took place at the General Assembly and while some agreed with the proposal, a majority argued against it as this is part of the Faa-Samoa, and it is considered to be shameful if a family does not do faaaloaloga as usual. The elders' committee opted to look into it before making a decision on the matter.

³³¹ A recent conversation with a Faifeau Samoa (F.S.) he revealed his family spent \$15,000 tala (Samoan Dollars) in faaaloaloga.

While the Christian God has brought peace and other positive outcomes for Samoa it has also brought denominational division and financial burden. Division is a result of different theologies and church practices with each denomination having their own interpretation and beliefs about God. Whereas if Samoa continued to worship and remain loyal to their Atua Tagaloaalagi, there would not be any denominational division as all Samoans would have the same ideas and perceptions about their Atua.

4.7 The Motto holding Atua and God together as foundations of Samoa

The connection with our past, according to Jione Havea, is important because it enables the barriers between the sacred and the secular to fall.³³² In relation to the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa the motto must also incorporate Samoa's past, because it is no secret Samoans believe their culture and the Christian message to have a unique place in Samoan society. Several examples, including the ava ceremony, two Samoan sayings and the preamble of Samoa's constitution help clarify this point, further lending support to the argument of that there is room for both God and Atua in the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa. Both culture and the Christian message can be informed by one another and they form a partnership in the minds of Samoans, because in the view of Samoans "gospel and culture" are inseparable.³³³

³³² Havea, "The Cons of Contextuality...Kontextuality", 50.

³³³ Samantha Lichtenberg, "Experiencing Samoa Through Myths and Legends of a People and Place" (Independent Study Project), 2011, 8; J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion and Culture in Ancient Israel*, 3.

The ava ceremony was an important ritual in Samoa long before Christianity arrived, and it continues to be practised today. Other islands have their own stories about the origin and the use of ava as a social drink in their traditions. But for Samoa the ava is related to Samoan hospitality and fellowship. The importance of the ava is expressed in one Samoan song:

Le ava e sili lona taua

Pe a alu o se usu, o le matai ma lana e u'u

Ae a te'a le inati, le aumaga ia faanatinati

A'o le taupou i le tanoa aua ne'i sasi

Le palu ava ia poto ai uma o tama'ita'i

Le folafola ava ia e manatua

Le inati o le tanoa, ia te'a muamua

O 'oe o le latasi, fa'apea ma le lupesina

O ava o ipu e puipui e lau fetalaiga.

The song is translated:

The ava is so precious to culture

When matai gather to welcome visitors each one brings an
ava

When ava are distributed, servants shall be swift

And the maiden at the ava bowl shall be agile

All maidens must be competent in mixing the ava

The ava distributor must remember

The allotment for the bowl be first

You the one-branch as well as the white pigeon

Ava for the high chiefs be protected by you the oratory members.³³⁴

The song tells the process of distributing the ava. The theological aspect of the ceremony is not mentioned in the song. But it relates to when a person receives the cup, before s/he drinks from the cup, s/he pours a small portion on the ground (on the right hand side) and utters the words, “*O lau ava lea le Atua*”, (“this is your ava le Atua”). In addition, it is customary that a small portion of ava juice is hoisted over the right shoulder. This portion is said to be for the ancestors. This thesis will argue before the arrival of Christianity the Atua that is acknowledged is Tagaloaalagi.³³⁵ This is because the ava ceremony was performed by Samoans well before the introduction of Christianity.

After the arrival of Christianity, two significant acts were changed to accommodate the new God. The Christian God took the place of Atua and was acknowledged instead of Tagaloaalagi. Also the portion of the ava that used to be poured on the right-hand side was now poured in front. The action was a symbol that indicated a change in Samoan thinking and mentality, from old Samoa to the new, from darkness to enlightenment. One significant act remained: the portion of ava juice that was hoisted over the right shoulder for the ancestors still continues to be hoisted to this day.

³³⁴ Tuisuga-Le-Taua, “Tofa Liliu o Samoa”, 96.

³³⁵ Charles W. Forman, *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 114. Kava or ava drinking is found in parts of the Pacific where betel is not used. The drink is made by grinding the root of the kava plant and mixing it with water. The drink produces a mild sense of relaxation. Most churches, particularly in Samoa, have incorporated the ceremonial drinking of kava into their Christian ceremonies. Forman went on to say it was the practice in welcoming guests to pour a little kava on the earth as had been done in offering to the ancient gods and then to say a prayer of Christian thanksgiving before drinking together. Samoans pour kava or ava as an offering to their god.

This is a significant sign to indicate that Tagaloaalagi continues to have a place in the hearts and minds of Samoans. This is why in the heart and the mind of the writer, there is room in the motto to see both deities as Samoa's foundation.

Samoan philosophy believes "*E pola puipui e le aganuu le talalelei*" ("the gospel is protected by culture").³³⁶ In the minds of Samoans gospel and culture are inseparable. This belief is clearly highlighted in the village council's emphasis about attending church and the lengths to which they will go in order to ensure the village people adhere to it. Fundamental to Samoan society is the gospel. This is because the gospel contributes to the wellbeing of families and villages, resulting in a more harmonious Samoa. Families are often punished by the village council for various reasons that break village protocols. Failure to attend church or to align with a church means breaking village protocols.³³⁷ This is one way in which the gospel is understood to be protected by culture, to ensure the gospel message continues to be an integral part of Samoan life.

At a village council fono, general interest and concerns are discussed. Also regulations regarding conduct of village affairs and decisions are reached as to the punishment of offenders. On various occasions the village council would order the *malosi o le nu'u* (strength of the village) the unmarried men, to carry out the *sala* (punishment) agreed

³³⁶ This saying is often uttered in oratory speeches, to signify and to remind people about the importance of the Gospel and the need to be guarded by Samoan culture. Manfred Earnest referred to this relationship as where the society and the mainline churches as closely knit together; Manfred Earnest, *Winds of Change* (Suva: PCC, 1994), 167.

³³⁷ Some villages in Samoa have more than one church. Other villages only have one church, in many cases it is either the (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, Methodist or Catholic). If a family does not belong to any of these denominations, they have the choice of either travelling to a nearby village to attend their affiliated denomination or attend whichever church is in their village. Either way they must attend church.

upon by the council. In some instances a family's home is to be burnt for failing to adhere to village protocols.³³⁸ J. W. Davidson explains:

If a matai refused to carry out the full terms of a decision of the fono that affected him, he and his family would be banished from the village. This act, intended to avoid continuing dissidence in the village, would be accompanied by some destruction of house and crops; but it imposed greater humiliation than physical hardship upon those exposed to it.³³⁹

In relation to the saying “*E o faatasi le aganu'u ma le talalelei*” (“gospel and culture go together or walking side by side”), the role that the pastor plays highlights this idea. On some occasions the pastor has become involved in village affairs by way of *talosaga* (plea) with the village council regarding a decision they had made about the degree of punishment for a crime committed. Pastors have been known to enter the village council *fale* and plea immunity on behalf of the family. Once this happens, the council usually refrains from carrying out the full punishment, but may seek a lesser punishment. The village council's decision to refrain is attributed to the common understanding that gospel and culture in the hearts and minds of Samoans go together or walk side by side. It is a partnership, based on mutual understanding and respect of each other's role and position in Samoan society. This mutual understanding stems from a decision made by the leaders of Samoa to have Samoa founded on Christian principles and

³³⁸ In more recent years, a family home was burnt in the village of Matautu Falelatai. The burning of the house is not because the family did not attend church but rather for other reasons.

³³⁹ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 20.

Samoa customs and traditions. When the leaders of Samoa collaborated regarding the constitution, they were very clear about the principles on which Samoa was to be based. This desire was inscribed into the nation's constitution:

Whereas the Leaders of Samoa have declared that Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan customs and traditions. And whereas the constitutional convention, representing the people of Samoa, has resolved to frame a constitution for the independent state of Western Samoa ... Now therefore, we the people of Samoa in our constitutional convention, this the twenty-eighth day of October 1960, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this constitution.³⁴⁰

In the hearts and minds of the leaders Christian principles, Samoan customs and traditions co-exist in partnership. This is evident in many of the examples given throughout this study where Christianity is made to sing in harmony with indigenous traditions. In addition, the customs of the ancestors are in some instances supportive of Christianity even to the point where they have merged. These are the reasons why the writer believes there is room in the motto *Faave i le Atua Samoa* to see gospel and culture in tension, working together and not in opposition. This has been the focus of this study, to show that gospel and culture can co-exist in order to transform the lives of Samoans, from the old Samoa to a new as a result of the gospel.

³⁴⁰ *The Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa* (Apia: The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, 2007), 4.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the motto can be understood as anti-culture, by pointing to the fact that Samoans chose to worship the foreign God over their Atua. It has also argued that the motto can be understood as affirming culture. This was highlighted by various cultural concepts and practices that were integrated into church services, like the ifoga. It also argued the motto can also be understood as being critical of both gospel and culture, by using three cultural practices of tautua (service), taulaga (offering) and folafola (public announcement) as evidence. The chapter further highlighted the fact that the motto can hold gospel and culture together; evidence used to support this was the ava ceremony and Samoan philosophy.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

After considering the information and the evidence regarding the development of the nation's motto from an idea to its full realisation as highlighted in the motto *Faavae i le Atua Samoa*, this thesis concludes that Samoans myths, legends, proverbs, rituals, and practices clearly show that Atua continues to have a place in Samoan thinking alongside the Christian God. As a result this thesis suggests there is room in the motto to also include Samoa's ancestral Atua as Samoa's foundation.

The Christian God was officially introduced to Samoa in 1830 by John Williams and The London Missionary Society. As a result Samoans no longer worshipped Tagaloaalagi their Atua but chose to worship the missionary introduced God. The idea to *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* was born when Malietoa Vainu'upo accepted Christianity. The term was coined by Sauni Iiga Kuresa in 1948. The phrase appeared in Samoa's anthem, which was written and composed by Kuresa. The 2nd Legislative Assembly on the 3rd of April 1951 made the decision to have *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* as the nation's motto. In addition, the motto can be understood as against traditional Samoan culture. Evidence used to support this argument includes Samoa's decision to worship the Christian God introduced by missionaries over their Atua.

The introduction of the faifeau (pastor) took the place of the matai (chief) as the ao o faalupega (head of genealogy). The motto can also be understood as affirming traditional Samoan culture. Evidence that supports this claim is the ritual of ifoga, which was introduced into catholic mass in Samoa in recent years. Furthermore, it was argued the motto could also be

understood as critical of both gospel and Samoan culture. Three Samoan practices were given to support this argument: the practice of tautua (service), and the practices of taulaga (annual contribution) and folafola (public announcements). These practices were introduced by missionaries and contributed to a mass exodus of people out of mainline churches. The final part of the thesis contribution argues that there is room in the motto to see both God and Atua, or gospel and culture co-exist transforming Samoa from the old to a new and enlightened Samoa, ceasing many practices like cannibalism.

The ava ceremony, the sayings “*E pola puipui e le aganuu le tala lelei*” (gospel is protected by Samoan culture) and “*E o faatasi le talalelei ma le aganuu*” (gospel and culture go together or walk side by side), and the preamble of Samoa’s constitution give weight to this thesis contribution to the understanding that in the hearts and minds of Samoans there is room in the motto Faavae i le Atua Samoa (Samoa is founded on God) for God and their traditional Atua to co-exist as the country’s foundation.

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