

CCCS AND LAWSUITS BETWEEN CHURCH

MEMBERS:

A READER RESPONSE ANALYSIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 6: 1 – 8.

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the Malua Theological College
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Requirements for the Bachelor
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Vaasaumamao Lafaaua

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ABSTRACT

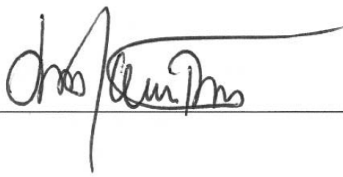
The aim of this research paper is to examine the role of CCCS, in settling disputes between church members. It also discusses the relationship between church (CCCS) and state (Government of Samoa) in terms of their roles and functions, pertaining to the welfare of its citizens/members. These two concepts will be incorporated into the analysis of 1 Corinthians 6: 1 – 8, where the apostle Paul discusses the issue of taking legal action against fellow Christians, within the Corinthian Church. This research paper will also offer some recommendations for CCCS, in dealing with such issue of lawsuits between its members.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Va'asaumamao Lafa'aua

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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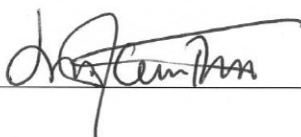
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work in memory of my beloved grandparents:

the late Si'a Vaefaga and Aiesi Si'a,

the late Falana'i Lo'i and Tina Falana'i,

and my father Lafa'aua Si'a Vaefaga

who have all passed away.

To my mother Tulua Falana'i,

To all my Relatives and Friends,

To Rev. Anoai and Sina Faletutulu, and my Beloved Church, the EFKS Vaovai,

Thank you all for your unconditional love and support which continue to inspire me
in my journey.

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May God continue to bless you all and your families for your prayers and support.

ABBREVIATION

Biblical References

Mt.	Gospel according to Matthew
Mk.	Gospel according to Mark
Cor.	The Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Publications

AMG	Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel
IVP	Inter Varsity Press
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
USP	University of the South Pacific
WM B.	William Bernard

Others

BC	Before Christ
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ACEO	Assistant Chief Executive Officer
cf.	compare with
ed(s).	editor(s)
etc.	and so forth or and other things
LMS	London Missionary Society
no.	number
Rev.	Reverend
Vol.	Volume
%	Percentage

INTRODUCTION

Samoa is constantly undergoing changes. That is, new ideas and overseas influences have dramatically change the way we think, the way we act and how we engage in societies.¹ Samoa has adopted many of these changes. It is fair to say that many of these changes are beneficial to Samoa and its development, especially improvements in lifestyles, better communication access locally and overseas, job opportunities, personal wealth and so forth. Unfortunately, other influences like drugs and negative social behaviours have also gravely affected our societies and our everyday living.

One such negative change I feel is a person's right to take court lawsuits. This legal right allows any person(s) to sue others in court to have legal justice served and/or legally justified their actions. But does the end result satisfy everyone involved? Personally, I do not think so, because the result may reflect the law's perspective as to what is legally right. But there are other factors like personal relationships, family ties, Christian principles, and cultural protocols that might help in sorting out differences, instead of taking these court actions.

¹For examples may include recent changes to the side of the road we drive, the way we vote in general election and how aspiring candidates are selected: higher costs of living because of fuels and other imported goods; most families now have cars for travel instead of walking and hiking long distances; these have contributed to diseases and other health problems; easy access to overseas family connections and information, but as well as illegal and prohibited materials; tourists and international companies; foreign cultures, religions and values; there is human rights, particularly the rights of the child, equality, and prohibition of child labour to name a few. This trend emerged early with the arrival of settlers where they introduced different clothes, imported food, new languages and adopting Christianity instead of our primo-religions. Recent changes may include technologies – mobile phones, internet and Facebook; other religions like Mormon, Islam and Bahai; international laws and conventions; and so forth.

CCCS has been stunned by a lawsuit² before the court of law. It has divided CCCS Elders, church members and a personal shock because this has shown our inability as Christians to solve our differences. I feel this also may have set a dangerous precedent for CCCS where members may be encouraged to take out lawsuits against each other.

This is the primary focus of this paper. I intend to examine the roles of the Church, with emphasis on CCCS, pertaining to settling differences between CCCS members. The secondary focus is to discuss the relationship between church (CCCS) and state (Government of Samoa) in terms of their specific roles and functions, in relation to its citizens /members. These aspects will be incorporated into the analysis of 1 Corinthians 6:1–8, where the apostle Paul exhorts the Christians in Corinth, not to take legal action against other fellow Christians. In this analysis, I will be using the Reader Response method of interpretation, to draw meaning from the text and to apply it to what is happening within CCCS. The purpose of this research is to suggest some recommendations for CCCS to deal with such issue of lawsuits between members.

This paper consists of three chapters. Chapter One will discuss in general terms the issue at hand, and the roles of the Church and State pertaining to such issue. It will also examine the relationship between these two institutions. I will also discuss in this chapter the methodology used. Chapter Two will focus on the exegetical analysis of the text, by rereading the text, reviewing some relevant scholarly perspectives and my own perspective as a reader of the selected passage. Chapter Three will provide an interpretation and apply this interpretation to the issue at hand and suggests some recommendations for CCCS, in dealing with such issues.

²With all due respect, I am referring to a court lawsuit where a former Elder has sued some members of the Elders' Committee for their decision to remove him from his former position as the Elder of the District.

CHAPTER ONE:

ROLES OF CHURCH (CCCS) IN SETTLING DISPUTES BETWEEN CHURCH MEMBERS, AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH STATE (GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA).

1.0 Introduction

This chapter briefly discusses the roles of the church, with emphasis on CCCS's role in settling disputes among church members. It also looks at the roles of the state, and the relationship between these institutions, pertaining to lawsuits. It consists of three sections. Section One discusses the issue at hand with some concerns as a CCCS member. Section Two examines the roles of the church and in particular how CCCS deals with such issue. It also looks at the role of state in brief as well as the relationship between these institutions. The final Section deals with the methodology adopted - Reader Response Criticism.

1.1 Current Issue: Lawsuit between some CCCS Elders.

This lawsuit stems from differences amongst CCCS Elders themselves. It arises from the former Elder's dissatisfaction with the Elders Committee's decision to relieve him of his role as an Elder, pertaining to matters arising from his district. Michiko Limā, CCCS's Legal Officer at the time states that CCCS does not have a legal system within the church constitution to deal with such matters.³ CCCS's constitution also does not say anything about taking these differences to court, which is outside the domain of the church.

³Michiko Lima, interview with author, 22nd April, 2016.

As a Samoan citizen, the former Elder has a right to appeal any decision to a higher court authority, pertaining to any court decisions.⁴ But as a CCCS minister and an Elder, did he have any other option for appeal, provided for under the CCCS constitution? Does the Elders Committee have the final say in such matters? Why did this Elder not adhere to and accept the decision? Therefore, what kind of disputes amongst CCCS members requires a state judicial intervention?

1.1.1 Concern about possible implications for the future.

The current lawsuit has raised a number of concerns. Why has it come to this stage? Has the Elders' Committee failed in its roles and responsibilities? What about the relationship roles and functions of church ministers, let alone the Elders? Has this case set a precedent for the future? What will become of the individual members involved and the parishes affected? How is this decision by the court interpreted and implemented?⁵

We are guided by our Christian principles and cultural values of respect, humility and forgiveness, harmony and unity, and especially love. Unfortunately, this case has created division, mistrust and suspicion. What message is CCCS Elders sending to church members when they could not settle differences amongst themselves? Is this in line with our Christian teachings to forgive, as Jesus had already forgiven and freed us from our sins? To help shed light on this issue, we need to briefly examine the roles of church and state and their relationship, in order to make sense of this lawsuit.

⁴Part II, Article 4, Section 1, *Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa* 1960.

⁵On Monday, 16th May, 2016, the court delivered its decision by dismissing the former Elder's case against some members of the CCCS Elders' Committee. The court's decision reaffirms the separation of church and state roles, but maintains a relationship of mutual co-operation.

1.2 Roles and Relationship of Church and State

1.2.1 Definition and Roles of the Church

The English word “church” comes from two Greek words; “*kuriake*” meaning “belonging to the Lord”⁶ and “*ekklesia*” meaning an “assembly” or “to call out.”⁷ The church therefore is an assembly of people being called out for, or belonging to the Lord.⁸ CCCS’s constitution reaffirms that the Church is the company of those who are gathered together with Jesus, who believes in Jesus and who celebrates the sacraments ordained by Jesus for His Church.⁹ With these definitions, Millard Erickson clearly states four core roles for the Church:

1.2.1.1 Evangelism.

This role is mandated from Jesus himself. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus’ followers are to continue spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and His kingdom to all four corners of the earth. The church has remained true to this commandment with missionary work to the world throughout history, to proclaim our salvation through Jesus’ death and resurrection.¹⁰

⁶Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 541.

⁷J. B. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edition, (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1962), 205.

⁸Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 1037, without Jesus’ presence, a gathering of group of people is not a church. The church is the Household of God, where Christ is the Head, and the church is His Household. The church must continue His work through the assistance of the Holy Spirit; Louis Bekhof, *Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1941), 584-587. The church is also the instrument for God’s salvation through the proclamation activities of its members.

⁹CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa: Faamaonia Fonotele i Malua*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2011), 4–5, in relation to the Great Commission in Mt. 28:16-20.

¹⁰Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1052.

1.2.1.2 Edification

Edification focuses on each member's experience and talent, which contribute towards the growth of the church.¹¹ God has equipped church members with various useful gifts according to their ability, for work in His ministry. These talents are meant to benefit and to please all members, and in doing so, believers are also pleasing God.

There is a strong emphasis on the relationship of all members of the one body. There should be unity in diversity¹² and equality within the church. Every member needs to be a functioning member, by performing his/her role no matter how insignificant that may appear. It is imperative that members unite and share their different talents, instead of division and arguments.

1.2.1.3 Worship

Worship is another important role of the church where believers' primary focus is upon God.¹³ This activity prioritises and enhances the believer's relationship with God. The believers must come together to worship God on a regular schedule.¹⁴

¹¹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1054.

¹²This term refers to different parts or members of the same church, with different functions and responsibilities, but with the same purpose of achieving a common goal for all members and to adhere to Jesus' commandments.

¹³Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1056. As Christians, we believe in one Triune God– God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We also believe that God the Son, Jesus Christ is both truly divine and truly human in His nature and character.

¹⁴However, Christianity has become so diverse not only in theological interpretations of the Bible but also with different aspects of worshipping God. For example, Pentecostal denominations tend to involve musical instruments and loud music in their worship. As CCCS Christians we worship God in awe and respect, without much fanfare, noises and other musical instruments that are prominent forms of expressions in other Christian worships. This reverence and respect reflect our *faaSamoa*, when it comes to worshipping God. This form of worship illustrates our insignificant and humility, when we come before God in worship. It also portrays the essence of being one with God, where we praise and listen in silence, as He blesses us with His Spirit and be empowered with His spoken Word.

1.2.1.4 Social Concern

The church is also to show concern and take relevant actions when and where the need arises, or where wrong has been done.¹⁵ Part of Christians' responsibility is to exercise our compassion and love for others in tangible ways: feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrow, praying for the sick, and doing charity works. Jesus cared about the needy and the suffering during his ministry and we should do likewise. CCCS also adheres to these roles with emphasis on "the betterment of life and the service of all who are in it."¹⁶

1.2.2 Specific CCCS Roles in Solving Members' Differences

CCCS does not include in its constitution, any specific provisions that cater specifically for solving differences between its members. However, the ordained ministers are especially trained for various services within the church, as well as to "assist people and to prepare them to serve others."¹⁷ Other positions like lay preachers and deacons and their wise counsel are also recognised and valued when difficult issues arise in the village and within the church.¹⁸ Even individual members also play a role when it comes to the welfare of others, by encouraging them and working together.¹⁹ These various roles are defined in CCCS's constitution to deal with member relationships, and other avenues are also available at ministerial or village level to help members.

¹⁵Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1056-1057.

¹⁶CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 9.

¹⁷CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 8-10. Vavatau Taufao, Interview with author, 15 July, 2016. Rev. Taufao is the General Secretary for CCCS and he reaffirms this role of ordained minister within the CCCS system.

¹⁸CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 10.

¹⁹CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 6, 7.

Part III, Section 5 of CCCS's constitution relates specifically to the Elder Ministers' roles within the Church Order. They are leaders of their congregations.²⁰ Their roles are to oversee the churches in "their conduct through watchfulness and prudence, uprightness, patience and love, and they must also be able to instruct others."²¹ Their "first duty is to be the Spiritual Father to Lay Preachers and Ministers who are resident in that part of the District."²²

Within the structure of CCCS's constitution, one of its main committees is the Elders Committee. It receives reports of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on matters concerning the minister's calling, and matters concerning the church and to make decisions thereon.²³ The Ministerial Sub-Committee deals specifically with matters pertaining to conduct and discipline of ordained ministers, Malua graduates, lay preachers as well as Malua lecturers, students and wives.²⁴

Other services provided by the church for its members, include a counselling service, which is administered by CCCS's main office. However, they cater mainly to troubled youths, specifically those serving times in the government rehabilitation facility in Oloamanu.²⁵

²⁰Benjamin L. Merkel, *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 44-51. Merkel also mentions other roles: shepherd, teacher and equipper.

²¹CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 9.

²²CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 9.

²³CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 43.

²⁴CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 45.

²⁵PoasaToiaivao, Interview with author, 15 July, 2016. Toiaivao is a graduand of Malua Theological College. This service provides counselling, bible study and other educational programs to help the youths. He also mentions that no one from the church has used this service, recognising the work done at the village level by the ordained ministers. Other organisations like Samoan Victim Support have also contributed enormously with people who have been victimised within their families, churches and villages.

1.2.3 Definition and Roles of the State

The state is defined as a supreme public power within a sovereign political entity.²⁶ In Samoa, the government has three main pillars – the parliament, the executive officer and the judiciary.²⁷ Parliament creates relevant laws to govern its people and societies.²⁸ The executive officer must adhere to these laws, and the judiciary interprets and applies these laws,²⁹ pertaining to lawsuits brought before it.

1.2.4 Roles of Government in relation to its citizens

The government focuses on the provision of goods and services for the welfare of its citizens.³⁰ It also provides laws for the legal protection of its people.³¹

²⁶*Universal Dictionary: Reader's Digest*, (London: The Reader's Digest Association Limited, 1988), 1482. The state consists of all its citizens, its own territory, its government and it is a sovereign state. The government is an agent of the state and its members are elected by its citizens. Modern governments have continuously focused on the development of their nations by using their limited resources for the welfare of its citizens. A healthy nation is measured by its economic developments and economic growth via a prudent use of its available resources; Part I, Article 1, *Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*; Agafili Shem Leo, (CEO Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) Interview, 1st April, 2016, states that in Samoa, only those residents who live in Samoa during election time are eligible to vote. Samoans residing overseas cannot vote in general election.

²⁷For the government, Cabinet is the main decision maker. Cabinet makes policies and makes decisions. Cabinet is accountable to Parliament. The Cabinet also is responsible for the day to day operations of the State; Ministry of Finance, *Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2012 – 2016*, (Apia: Government Printing), 2, states that the government of Samoa has a vision to motivate the Cabinets, all public ministries and corporations to perform their duties and responsibilities diligently, effectively and with great efficiency.

²⁸Part V, Article 43, *The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*.

²⁹Part VI, Articles 65 and 66, *The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa*. The judiciary sector has a legal system in which disagreements can be resolved in courts. This legal system also accommodates appeals if a concerned party is not satisfied with a given verdict. This legal system within Samoa has the Court of Appeal as its highest court. However, since Samoa is a member of the Commonwealth, grievances can be theoretically appealed to the Commonwealth's Privy Council, in London, when required.

³⁰Ministry of Finance, *Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2012 – 2016*, (Apia: Government Printing), 2.

³¹Laurofo Meti, *SAMOA: The making of the Constitution*, (Lepapaigalagala: National University of Samoa, 2002), 63. It states "WHEREIN should be secured to all the people their fundamental rights".

The public service is made up of all government ministries and corporations, which provides various services to the public.³² However, each ministry is required under the law to provide annual accounting of the money they have been allocated,³³ which plays an important role in terms of transparency and accountability.

1.2.5 Relationship of CCCS and Samoan Government

In Matthew 22:21 (cf. Mk. 12:17), Jesus answers the Pharisees' question about paying taxes. Jesus' answer to render to the emperor the things which are of the emperor's (state), and to God the things which are God's (church), clearly implies a separation of roles. However, a church cannot exist in a vacuum. It exists within a state. In Samoa, with around 77% Christian population,³⁴ there exists a relationship between church and state that caters for the welfare of the people.

The Preamble to the Samoa's constitution states that Samoa is an independent state based on Christian principles. CCCS's Constitution, Section VIII also states:

The Church should have its place in the activities of the State...yet without needless interference in the political activities of the State...it should advice the State on those matters which concern the Christian life...wherever the Church is, it could be seen to be working for the good of all people...it is the special duty of the Church in relation to Governments to enhance the Christian life of all the people...³⁵

³²Soteria Noaese, (ACEO Ministry of Finance) Interview with author, 15th July 2016, explains that all Ministries and Corporations are accountable to Cabinet and they have different roles depending on their mandates. Their mandates determine the services they deliver. The public relies very much on these services. Each Ministry gets a share of the finance that the government has approved to finance their operations and personnel for the financial year. For Ministries, the government runs an annual budget called *Performance Budget* from July 1 to June 30 which includes all financial allocations and the deadline for each project.

³³*Public Finance Management Act 2001*, Part XIV states that all Ministries must provide a report on how the money is allocated for a project given.

³⁴There are a few religious movements in Samoa – Baha'i, Islam, Mormon and Christianity with Christianity as the majority (77%). Within Christianity itself there are numerous denominations, which include CCCS, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal Churches, etc., but exclude Mormon and Jehovah's Witness, which are considered non-Christian denominations. – see Samoa Bureau of Statistics, *Population and Housing Census 2011 Analytical Report*, (Apia: Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011), VII.

³⁵CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 17.

Both constitutions clearly identify co-operations, but with different roles and purposes. The government is to provide a quality life for all its citizens through developments and growth.³⁶ The church is to enhance the spiritual side of every Christian. The church also has a role not only in speaking out but also fighting against social injustices that the government appears to ignore.

This relationship has somehow become blurred over time.³⁷ That is, Government has constantly used biblical quotations and Christian teachings to legitimise their actions. Church has become so involved in political manoeuvrings to carry out its roles, resulting in dissatisfied members and differences among leaders, just like this lawsuit. The end result is differences that cannot be solved within the church environment, like CCCS. The re-examination of a similar case within the Corinthian Church might shed lights on this issue and to help CCCS, in its roles and responsibilities. To re-examine the Corinthian issue, I have chosen Reader Response Criticism for this purpose.

1.3 Methodology: Reader Response Criticism

Reader Response's approach to interpretation leans heavily towards the readers/interpreters' life experiences to guide their reading of a text.³⁸ The reader, therefore, plays a crucial role in the creation of meaning of any text. However, the reader's knowledge of the history of the text also helps in finding meanings and

³⁶*The Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2012 – 2016*, highlights a long term vision of *Improved Quality of Life for All*, by effective implementation of national development strategies. The bottom line of all these developments and strategies is to improve the life of all Samoans, not just a few.

³⁷Recent practices on television highlights government's ignorant towards church roles and contributions, such as not having a prayer to open the recent independence celebration; the disregard of church ministers to conduct a leading prayer for the opening of State occasions; the media's involvement in their news reports where the Prime Minister's speech takes up most of the report, without mentioning the preacher/minister's opening prayer and words of encouragements.

³⁸David A. Holgate and Rachel Starr, *SCM Studyguide to Biblical Hermeneutics*, (London: SCM Press, 2006), 89.

interpretation. Thus, meaning and interpretation is the result of the combination of the text and the reader's context.

Reader Response criticism focuses the attention on the reader as the creator of meaning in the texts. This approach argues that the interpreter/reader should focus on the text rather than on the historical author.³⁹ Since readers are situated in different time, place, and social contexts from those of the author(s), these factors have roles to play in interpretation.⁴⁰ In other words, the historical author's understanding may differ in meaning from those who read and interpret his/her story.

Marjorie Roemer has briefly summarised early proponents of Reader Response thoughts, like David Bleich, Wolfgang Iser, Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, and others, who have placed emphasis on what occurs in the transaction between the reader and text.⁴¹ Bleich pays more attention on the way a reader projects his own desires on a text. Iser and Rosenblatt are more interested in the interaction between text and the reader, what the text activates in the reader, and what the reader activates in the text. Fish on the other hand focuses on the communal assumptions that control the sorts of attention we pay to the texts and thereby shape our readings of them.⁴²

Thus, Reader Response covers many aspects of our identity, which have been recognised as affecting our interpretation of the Bible. These includes gender and sexuality; ethnicity, age, ability and wellbeing; socio-economic status and political affiliation; denominational, spiritual and theological traditions.⁴³ This reading is influenced by the lived situation of the reader/interpreter.

³⁹John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd edition, (London: Westminster John Know Press, 2007), 168.

⁴⁰Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 168.

⁴¹Marjorie Godlin Roemer, "Which Reader's Response in *College English*", vol 49, no. 8 (1987), 911.

⁴²Roemer, "College English", 911.

⁴³Holgate and Starr, *SCM Studyguide to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 93.

For this research, the passage will be read from my Samoan perspective. The focus will be on the political and cultural elements of my context. In particular, the emphasis is on the relationship of CCCS and the state within the context of the Independent State of Samoa. I believe this reading strategy will help inform us about this issue of lawsuit and its implication on the different roles and relationship of the church and state.

1.3.1 The political and Cultural Context of Church and State in Samoa

There is an inherent relationship between the church and state. This is evident in the fact that in the preamble of the Samoa Constitution, it is clearly stated that Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition.⁴⁴ While critics may argue that the preamble is not considered part of the constitution, nevertheless, it does indicate meaning and purpose for the constitution. It is reasonable to think that the framers of the Samoa constitution recognized the important relationship between the church and the state. This important cultural and political feature of the Samoan context continues to this day.

This important relationship also cements a longstanding tradition, perceived to be fulfilled with the arrival of Christianity. It is believed that the paramount chief Malietoa Fitiseanu went to seek the blessings of the goddess Nafanua, where she prophetically stated that Malietoa's kingship would be from heaven.⁴⁵ In 1830, it was Malietoa Vainuupo that greeted LMS missionary John Williams and as now believed, fulfilled Nafanua's prophecy.

⁴⁴*The Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa 1960.*

⁴⁵Malama Meleisea, *LAGAGA: A Short History of Western Samoa*. (Suva: Institutes of the South Pacific/USP, 1987), 56-58.

The three pillars of any Samoan society includes: the Samoan culture, Western democracy, and Christian principles. These three govern all aspects of living in Samoa. To this day, it is expected that any government function opens with a prayer or some Christian reflection. This relationship reinforces the different roles and functions of both church and state. Moreover, in the case of the church, many of those holding ministerial and key positions in government also hold similar positions in the church. The point is, within the Samoan context, there is an intimate relationship between the church and state.

Very briefly, this is my context and the lens through which the passage will be read. As a Samoan male, born and live in Samoa for most of my life, I anticipate an intricate political relationship between the church and the state in the selected passage. Projecting my Samoan context unto the passage may give us a better understanding of the text and of the meaning in the text.

1.4 Summary

This research is limited because of the scope required and the limited amount of resources available in order to fully understand the passage. It is also limited in the sense that a deeper understanding of Reader Response Criticism would have benefited this research. Nevertheless, I believe that this effort is enough to fulfil the requirements as needed.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF 1 CORINTHIAN 6:1-8

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the exegetical analysis of the selected passage. It contains three sections. Section One is a brief account of the historical background surrounding the text. This is to explicate the political setting in Corinth especially highlighting any influence as a result of Corinth being a colony of the Roman Empire. Section Two looks at the Christian church in Corinth, focusing on the influence of the political environment. This is to understand some of the political agents at work in Corinth. Having described the political aspects of the passage, the third section contains an exegetical study of the text. Finally, a brief summary is provided at the end of the Chapter.

2.1 The Political Setting in the City of Corinth

Corinth was a Greek city state which was later controlled by Philip II of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great.⁴⁶ In 146 BCE, the city was destroyed by the Romans, but it was re-established in 46 BCE by Julius Caesar and recognised it as a Roman colony.⁴⁷ It became the seat of the Roman proconsul, who was chosen by Rome to govern the whole province of Achaia.⁴⁸ Due to Roman colonization, the city was developed on a new local government pattern of a Roman city. Every citizen must follow and abide by the laws made by them.

⁴⁶W. Harold Mare, *New Testament Background Commentary: A new dictionary of words, phrases and situations in Bible order*, (Ross-shire: Mentor Imprint, 2004), 258.

⁴⁷David A. Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry formation*, (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2004), 555.

⁴⁸Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 555.

The city was known as the centre for trade with two seaports including Cenchase to the east and Lechaëum to the north.⁴⁹ It was situated on the narrow isthmus which joins northern and southern Greece, so traders from one part of Greece to the other part had to pass through Corinth. On the other hand, most of those who carried cargo by sea between Italy on the west of Corinth, and Asia Minor on the east, passed through Corinth rather than sailing round the coast of southern Greece.⁵⁰

The increasing prosperity and obvious wealth attracted many people to Corinth and they settled in for different reasons such as trading, business, religious, visit, holiday and others. It was a large city, offering Rome great profits through trade as well as the military protection of its ports. But the city's prosperity made it ripe for all sorts of corruption. The city was being undermined and also filled with idolatry and immorality.

2.2 Political Influence on the Church in Corinth

The church in Corinth had been established on Paul's second missionary journey⁵¹ and was largely made up of different kinds of people from different cultural and religious origins.⁵² Because many people moved and migrated around, they brought with them their cultures and traditions as well as their religious beliefs. This contributed to the Christians in Corinth's struggle with their environment, which was surrounded by corruption and they felt the pressure to adapt.⁵³

⁴⁹Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 556.

⁵⁰John Hargreaves, *A guide to 1 Corinthians*, (London: SPCK, 1978), 20.

⁵¹C. J. Den Heyer, *Paul: A man of two worlds*, (London: SCM Press, 2000), 127.

⁵²Hans Fror, *You wretched Corinthians: The Correspondence between the Church in Corinth and Paul*, (London: SCM Press, 1995), 9.

⁵³Lander E. Keck, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. X, (Nashville: Abington Press, 2002), 778.

Paul was concerned with the Christian church in Corinth because religion there was not only greatly influenced by political and economic life but it was also primarily a matter of individual faith.⁵⁴ These factors influenced the minds of Christians from focusing on God's word. With the Roman Imperial order as the context, most of the Christians' rights were oppressed and influenced by Roman ideologies. Part of this oppression may have been related to the Roman belief that the emperor was considered a deity, and as such should be worshipped.⁵⁵ Thus, Paul's gospel and mission about salvation in Christ and the church's role of worshipping God opposed this and the Corinthian church was also affected by it.

2.3 Exegesis of 1Corinthians 6: 1-8

A quick overview of First Corinthians indicates Paul's emphasis on Christians' unity as part of God's family. However, Corinthian believers appear to have favoured different preachers, which have created divisions within the church.

2.3.1 Divisions within the Corinthian Church

A report from Chloe's people has indicated to Paul of some quarrels among the Corinthian Christians. Some have followed Paul, Apollo or Peter (1 Cor. 1:10-17). Although the apostles are united in their message, their personalities have attracted different followers. Paul has made it clear that all preachers and teachers have one common emphasis – Jesus Christ. Paul emphasises this by mentioning Jesus Christ 10 times in the first 10 verses (1 Cor. 1-10). To Paul, God's message via Jesus Christ is much more important than any human messenger.

⁵⁴Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, (London: Trinity Press International, 2004), 1.

⁵⁵Richard A. Horsley, *Corinthians: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 27; Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 6-11.

Arising from this issue, the Corinthian Christians are facing divisions within the church. There are individuals or groups claiming superiority over others in the church. These people are still living to the norms and expectations of their social status. In many respects these divisions reflect individualism rather than looking out for the interests of fellow believers. The effects of this mindset are far-reaching, such as creating rivalry between Christians on the basis of the teacher to whom they favour the most.⁵⁶

As a result, Paul writes this passage in response to the problem of the Corinthian church's arrogance and divisions. He is especially concerned over their disagreements with their fellow Christians, resulting in their use of the civil courts for settlement. For Paul, the Corinthian Christians are seeking unrighteous non-Christians in the Roman court system to settle their disputes.

2.3.2 Roman Court System

A civil court case in the Roman court system is often a fight to the death in which irreparable harm (economic, psychological, and spiritual) is done to parties.⁵⁷ So the person who sues another person is bent on obtaining, under cover of law, that party's financial resources.⁵⁸ He is intent on winning the case regardless of the damaging effect the trial may have on the defendant.

Paul has noticed that the Corinthian secular world is encroaching upon the Christian community. Sadly, the Christian community there appears to continue conforming to these worldly immoral practices, as if they were acceptable part of the church and Christian teachings. A case in emphasis, the Christian brothers who take

⁵⁶Desilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 566.

⁵⁷Simon J.Kistemaker, *New Commentary 1 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 178; Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 117, states that political divisions and uprisings also result in lawsuits.

⁵⁸Kistemaker, *New Commentary 1 Corinthians*, 178.

their cases to non-Christians are causing the church to be a laughing stock in the Gentile world,⁵⁹ especially to those who do not believe in Christ.

These actions have placed the Christian faith in a precarious position within the context of Corinth. They have also demonstrated their lack of ability, knowledge and understanding among its members to solve their dilemmas. They have given the world's unrighteous the opportunity to make decisions regarding Church matters.

In the selected passage, Paul declares that Christians should not have to go to a court to resolve their differences (verses 1-6), because the Roman courts are corrupt.⁶⁰ Judges and even juries expect to receive something for a favourable verdict.⁶¹ This might come in terms of a straight financial gift with strings; a promised payment; or a debt to be paid by using economic or social influence or by providing new business opportunities.⁶²

The system remains heavily weighted in favour of privileged people.⁶³ Certain people such as fathers, patrons, magistrates, and men of standing are basically protected from persecution. This is contrary to others including children, freedmen, private citizens, and men of low rank.⁶⁴ Therefore, those with financial resources, business or social influence, wealthy or influential patrons, are in a position to offer incentives to judges or juries to decide in their favour. These kinds of people would be benefited in court cases rather than the poor and low status in the community.

⁵⁹Kistemaker, *New Commentary 1 Corinthians*, 178.

⁶⁰Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans, 1987), 232.

⁶¹Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A shorter Exegetical & Pastoral Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 89.

⁶²Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 89.

⁶³Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 163.

⁶⁴Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 163.

2.3.3 *Some Modern Scholarly Views*

There are many different reasons that motivate people to go to court. For John Calvin, he experienced that the parties involved in lawsuits are motivated by greed, impatience, revenge, hostility, and obstinacy. He writes;

Indeed wherever lawsuits occur, it is perfectly obvious that their minds are inflamed far too much by wrongful, greedy desires, and that they are not prepared for calmness of mind and endurance of wrongs, according to the commandment of Christ.⁶⁵

Calvin's experience reflects the reality of Paul's day. Paul knows that secular courts are ruled over by those who have no connection with the church and so are called unrighteous (verse 1). According to Kenneth Bailey, the unrighteous are simply not part of the company of saints and thereby, are not qualified to judge cases that relate to the faith commitments of Christians.⁶⁶

However, John Hargreaves has a different perspective. He sees Paul's reference to unrighteous as not wicked men, but magistrates in the public courts who do not acknowledge the rule of God.⁶⁷ Gordon A. Fee agrees when he defines *ἀδίκων* (ungodly) as referring to those who break God's law.⁶⁸ These men are not able and do not care to find God's solution to the dispute. Hargreaves has experienced that a non-Christian judge could be righteous, because God's wisdom is not only given to Christians.

Calvin and Bailey's views are more relevant when it comes to the context of Corinth. However, in my Samoan context, I am more inclined to side with Hargreaves and Fee because those who administer our court systems in Samoa are Christians as

⁶⁵John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 122.

⁶⁶Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011), 173.

⁶⁷Hargreaves, *A guide to 1 Corinthians*, 66, calls them the least esteemed by the church.

⁶⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 232

well. Thus, the challenges for these Christian judges are to be fair without prejudices and to impart right decisions based upon sound legal principles and ethical Christian teachings. They should also not engage in cases where conflicts of interests occur. These aspects dictate that they should be unbiased in their decision making, because they should fear God.

This personal preference and my Samoan perspective will help guide the exegesis that follows.

2.3.4 Exegesis

As a reader/interpreter of this passage, there are gaps within the text that must be filled, in order to fully understand Paul's message. These gaps could be explored by examining the literary devices reflected in the text, by knowing the history of the text, by understanding some scholarly views of the text, as well as my own context as a Samoan reader. This moulding together of the text and my experiences and ideas, might make sense of the text in my own context.⁶⁹

2.3.4.1 Grievances

In verses 1 and 4-7, Paul indicates that there are grievances amongst church members. However, instead of forcing upon them a set course of action to be taken, Paul offers alternatives. The use of the Greek word *Τολμα* meaning "dare, be brave or bold enough," rather than saying "you must not," suggests the possibility that in some circumstances, it might be appropriate for Christians to take some cases to a secular

⁶⁹Edgar V. McKnight, "Reader-Response Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application*, Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds., revised and expanded, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 236-240.

court.⁷⁰ This suggestion may contrast with Paul's belief to ignore secular courts due to its political and economic influence on the life of Christians.⁷¹

However, as a reader, this suggestion parallels my context, because the church (CCCS) and the government of Samoa have a shared responsibility for the welfare of the people. Many cases between Samoan Christians have come before the court for settlements. It is Christian judging Christian. This is also in line with what Paul says towards the end of verse 1; "...instead of taking it to the saints." Paul exhorts the Christians in Corinth to refrain from seeking solution from the unrighteous. At the same time, he encourages them to settle their differences within their community of saints.

2.3.4.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Saints (Christians)

Verses 2-4 denote the roles and responsibilities of the saints. "The saints will judge the world" (6:2a). The Christians "are to judge angels" (6:3a). Even though these two phrases imply an eschatological presupposition, in reality, it speaks about the roles of the saints or Christians. The Corinthian Christians are not doing their duties of settling their own differences, but they prefer the unrighteous to make decisions for them. They are doing the exact opposite of what Christians ought to do – to judge the world and the angels. As Paul rightly points out, how could they, if they could not even settle trivial cases and ordinary matters amongst themselves (verses 2-3).

Paul's purpose with these questions is to remind them of their responsibilities as Christians. Paul does so by shaming them into seeing the reality of decay in their moral condition and to deflate their unwarranted pride. Paul's words are meant to shame them into proper action, required of Christians, to settle their own differences.

⁷⁰Mare, *New Testament Background Commentary*, 262; H. A. Ironside, *An Ironside Expository Commentary: 1 and 2 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 103, states that it is impossible sometimes to avoid lawsuits.

⁷¹Refer to Section 2.3.2 above.

2.3.4.3 What kind of Grievances to be taken before the Court

The passage does not clearly identify what kind of cases Paul is referring to. The word *πράγμα* (grievance) in verse 1, may be variously translated as “a deed, matter, thing, dispute, case, grievance, or even business.”⁷² This is also supported by Kistemaker where he argues that the phrase is purposely general, for Paul does not isolate any specific case.⁷³

However, its usage in this passage may refer to contentious matters involving dispute and lawsuit.⁷⁴ Without being specific, Paul leaves us to fill the gap. At the end of verse 2, Paul also mentions *κριτηρίων ἐλαχίστων* (trivial matters) and *βιωτικά* (ordinary matters) at the end of verse 3. Combining these aspects, one gets an expression that the Christians in Corinth are fighting over matters that are less important.⁷⁵ As Kistemaker suggests, they are more influenced by financial gain, pride and personal status, rather than their roles and relationship as Christians.⁷⁶

Others have linked these grievances to dowry or inheritance, which were frequent in the Roman Empire, since the words *βιωτικά* and *αποστερεῖν* (be defrauded) are more applicable to disputes over property.⁷⁷

Paul, may not have been thinking of serious crimes and fraudulent activities but small matters, which persons of a litigious characters, were always ready to make into causes of disagreement and legal action. It does not matter to Paul what kind of

⁷²Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, third edition, based on Walter Bauer, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 858-859.

⁷³Kistemaker, *New Commentary 1 Corinthians*, 178.

⁷⁴Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 859.

⁷⁵Margret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, 117.

⁷⁶Kistemaker, *New Commentary 1 Corinthians*, 178.

⁷⁷David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 199.

grievances would be taken to court, but his concern focuses on the effect of these on Christians, especially what Christians can do to other Christians.

2.3.4.4 Right to Choose and Why it may be Wrong

Paul questions the Corinthian Christians about their rights to choose (verse 4) as indicated by the active verb *καθιξέντε* (to put in charge, to authorize or to appoint⁷⁸). Paul acknowledges this right to choose, but highlights their wrong decisions by shaming their actions (verses 5-6). Their right to choose an unbeliever to settle their differences is a shame. Thus, their wrong decision reinforces the idea that they are only interested in personal gains, without any consideration for a fellow Christian.

Paul follows this theme of shameful action to the end of the passage. Verse 7 provides further support with the passive verb *ἀδικήσθε* (be wronged), which covers the whole range of activity that injures and does injustice to another person.⁷⁹ This is also supported by another passive verb *ἀποστερήσθε*, which denotes stealing, robbing, defrauding or causing another to suffer loss.⁸⁰ These passive verbs are again mentioned as present indicative active in verse 8. This transition indicates that by taking these trivial matters to court, the Christians in Corinth are not only causing injuries or defrauding one another (verse 7), but, they themselves as Christians, are also affected (verse 8), when they wrong and defraud each other.

⁷⁸Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 492.

⁷⁹Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 241.

⁸⁰Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 20, 121, Both *ἀδικήσθε* and *ἀποστερήσθε*, are indicative present passive verbs, 2nd person plural; Max Anders and Richard L. Pratt, *Holman New Testament Commentary: I & II Corinthians*. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 92, indicate in 1 Corinthians 6:7-8, that the use of these terms in conjunction probably indicates injustice, but emphasizes cheating in property or monetary matters.

2.3.4.5 Paul's Conclusion: Defeat

Paul concludes in this passage that the practice of suing one another is unacceptable for all believers, and that a lawsuit amongst Christians is a defeat in itself (verse 7). Lawsuit is a defeat because it indicates the Christians' inability to settle their differences as Christians ought to be. It is also a defeat because of their wrong decision to choose non-Christians to settle their disputes. To further emphasize their failure and defeat as Christians, Paul adds that those who behave in this manner will not inherit God's kingdom (verses 9-10).

This exegesis shows that Paul's purpose is not really to address one specific type of conflict or dispute between Christians. The purpose in general is to discourage disputes between Christians altogether. But if this is unavoidable, Paul's call is for Christians to judge Christians and to call Christians to seek resolution of their disputes from fellow Christians.

2.4 Summary

This chapter provides evidence confirming the mutual relationship between the church (CCCS) and state (Government of Samoa) pertaining to the welfare of the people.

From the exegesis, Paul is against those Christians who are taking other Christians to law for wealth and personal status. Paul understands that going to law is very political, due to the biased influence of the Roman Empire on peoples' lives. Paul emphasizes that this is un-Christian. In doing so, Christians are oppressing other Christians as well as defeating the very essence of being a Christian – to help one another and to be united as one, in proclaiming the Good news of Jesus Christ.

Paul also reminds the Corinthians Christians regarding their roles and responsibilities within the church. Knowing their roles and responsibilities will help

them to end their divisions. He also exhorts them to act in accord with their Christian confession and new nature: to love one another, to forgive others who wrong them, to fellowship with other believers; to have their disputes judge with righteous judgment for the glory of Christ and the good of His church. Being a Christian means forgiving those who have wronged you. So if Christians have lawsuits between themselves, it shows that they have been defeated, when they have failed to forgive.

This exegesis might also shed some light in understanding this lawsuit between CCCS Elders and to highlight some recommendations for CCCS, in settling disputes amongst its members.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION FOR CCCS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an interpretation of the selected text and to apply that interpretation to the current lawsuit. This chapter also suggests some recommendations for CCCS. It consists of three sections. Sections One and Two provide an interpretation of the text in relation to CCCS's lawsuit case. Section Three identifies some recommendations for CCCS.

3.1 Interpretation of Text

As readers interact with the text, the differences in contexts may influence the interpretation and its application. Thus, interpretation involves appreciating the culture and history of people involved as well as the issues impacting their lives.⁸¹ The context of the selected text states that Paul is concerned with the divisions that have enveloped the Corinthian church. This division has intensified as the Christians have taken lawsuits against each other, to settle their personal differences. From the exegesis, Paul realises people's right to choose a set course of action when it comes to settling differences. The exegesis also suggests that some cases may require civil courts' intervention. However, for Paul, the Christians in Corinth have failed to carry out their roles and duties as Christians.

The exegesis has provided a number of reasons. First, there is the culture of pride and greed, by seeking financial gains at every opportunity. Second, there is the failure to

⁸¹Mihno Song, Contextualization and Discipleship: Closing the Gap between Theory and Practice in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol. 30, Issue 3, (London: Evangelical World Fellowship, 2006), 249.

understand roles and responsibilities of Christians towards each other. Thirdly, they are unaware of their ultimate blessings as Christians, a place in the kingdom of God.

3.1.1 Culture of Pride and Greed

The exegesis highlights a problem where wealth and status are prioritised. Corinth epitomises this where “unprincipled profit taker”⁸² would stop at nothing to move ahead of their rivals. Shockingly, Christians there have followed suit by undertaking lawsuits for financial gains over their relationships as Christians.⁸³ Their decisions have resulted in Paul shaming them, because of their inability to deal with their differences as Christians. They have opted for lawsuits because they could have a say in the outcome, through bribery or other corrupt means.

3.1.2 Failure to Understand their Roles and Responsibilities

Because of their decision to take out lawsuits against each other, Paul has highlighted their failure to know their roles and duties as Christians. They are to judge the world, even angels. The Christians have opted instead to be judged by non-Christians and for Paul that is a shame and a wrong decision. Pauls’ conclusion also indicates their immature nature, without wisdom and knowledge to guide their decision making. As the exegesis has suggested, their greed for personal gains has blinded their ability to decide wisely. For Paul, this is a failure and also a defeat for them as Christians.

⁸²Horsley, *Corinthians*, 31.

⁸³Kistemaker, *New Commentary 1 Corinthians*, 178; also, Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 199.

3.1.3 *Failure to know their Place in the Kingdom of God*

The Corinthian Christians' failure and defeat as Christians, is a warning of their ultimate failure to inherit the kingdom of God (verses 9-10), if they continue with their current behaviour. Their actions of gaining personal wealth and status have created division within the church, but will also deny them entrance into the kingdom of God. This kingdom is reserved only for those who do the will of God,⁸⁴ instead of those pursuing personal agendas and material wealth.

Paul's argument also suggests his eagerness to be reconciled with the Christians in Corinth who have questioned his authority, by following other preachers. Paul's purpose is to unite all Christians as a household of God, with Jesus Christ as the Head.

3.2 Application to CCCS

From the exegesis and the above interpretation, the lawsuit between CCCS Elders is a reflection of the events in the text. With all due respect, those Elders involved with this lawsuit have served and lead CCCS for many years. CCCS members and I have looked up to these Elders with pride, for their leadership. They have steered our journey with guidance from the Holy Spirit, in spiritual formation and recent developments within the church.⁸⁵

Unfortunately this lawsuit has tainted that image with numerous questions asked. There is confusion and division and people have been forced to choose side, depending on personal relationships and affiliations. Where is their wise counsel? What has

⁸⁴R.T France, "Kingdom of God," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 766.

⁸⁵Some examples of these developments include the Conference Building, the Museum, the building of the new Jubilee Church, helping those who had being affected by natural disasters – tsunami and hurricanes, etc.

happened to their roles as mentioned in the CCCS constitution? Why has this lawsuit come about?

The answers to these questions are the same as those suggested in the interpretation; personal pride and status; failure to perform their roles and functions; lack of respect; and loss of focus on the overall purpose of being a Christian.

3.2.1 Personal Pride and Status

The current lawsuit is a result of personal pride and status that have overwhelmed the Elders' roles and duties of care to themselves and CCCS as a whole. The Elders have failed to settle their differences amongst themselves, simply because of their pride and status at the expense of CCCS, its constitution, especially their roles and relationships as leaders.

3.2.2 Failure to Perform Roles

The Elders Committee and its Ministerial Sub-Committee's roles are to deal with matters pertaining to conduct and discipline.⁸⁶ If they were to judge others according to CCCS's constitution, why have they failed to apply the same rules to themselves? They have failed to perform their roles. This lawsuit is a defeat for them, but confusion and division for CCCS.⁸⁷

⁸⁶CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 9, 43, 45.

⁸⁷Although a decision has been delivered and there is a sense of calmness, the reality is that, CCCS and members have been affected. I can only pray for a smooth transition to implement this decision, with wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit, as well as our need to be humbled before God. The constitution states the election of an Elder Minister shall be by way of ballot by Ordained Ministers who have covenanted with the Congregations of that Sub-District. – see, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 41.

3.2.3 *Lack of Respect*

With all due respect, the existence of this lawsuit only shows a lack of respect amongst the Elders themselves, lack of respect for the constitution of CCCS, lack of respect for church members, but most of all, lack of respect for the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. This is because we have prioritised our pride and status, and turning away from his guidance.

3.2.4 *Loss of Focus on Purpose of being a Christian*

As Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that they are in danger of not inheriting the kingdom of God, this lawsuit is also a timely reminder for CCCS and the church in general. The church and CCCS is a congregation of those who are called out to belong to the Lord.⁸⁸ As Christians we are to proclaim the Good news of Jesus Christ to the world, instead of division and lawsuits.

3.3 Some Recommendations for CCCS

This lawsuit may be a blessing in disguise. That is, we can learn from it so that improvements and recommendations may be discussed and implemented to find ways of moving forward. This paper therefore recommends the following for CCCS's consideration and perusal.

3.3.1 *CCCS to maintain and reaffirm mutual relationship with state*

This lawsuit and the court's decision have reaffirmed the mutual relationship between CCCS and the Government of Samoa. These have also highlighted their different roles and functions, pertaining to the welfare of people. CCCS however must recognise the rights of individual members to pursue legal avenues to seek justice. But

⁸⁸Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1037; CCCS, *The Constitution of the CCCS*, 4-5.

when it gets to this stage, the lawsuit should be between individual members concerned, without CCCS being dragged through the mud.

3.3.2 CCCS to reaffirm and adhere to its Constitution

CCCS must adhere to its constitution with relevant parts and sections to guide its decision making process. Decisions reached should be made solely within the requirements of the constitution without any personal influences. These decisions are final and binding and must be respected by every member.

3.3.3 Decision making must be consistent and adhered to

With due respect, this lawsuit can be attributed to the inconsistency of decisions reached due to personal affiliations, relationships or for personal gains. This human tendency is inconsistent with our roles as Christians and as a church.

3.3.4 Incorporate current practises within CCCS Constitution

The role of the counselling service provided by the main office should be extended to include various members' needs, instead of just focussing on the troubled youth. Members may be reluctant to approach their local ministers due to the nature of their problems. This service can be that avenue for members to seek help. CCCS should support this undertaking further with proper resources and facilities. It could also act as a last resort of mediation before opting to have lawsuits.

3.3.5 Accountability and Transparency

One of the main problems facing members as said before is the inconsistency of decisions made. This combines with the lack of accountability and transparency have fuelled members' frustrations and disillusion. Recent informal discussions surrounding incomplete projects like the main office and the new Jubilee Church have contributed to

this with numerous rumours abound. Members must be well informed about developments' progress and full disclosure of financial records would go a long way to ease members' dissatisfaction and encourage them to be united and work together, instead of divisions and lawsuits.

3.4 Summary

Although my initial reaction to this lawsuit has been that of shock with some apprehensions, the exegesis of 1 Cor. 6:1-8, has calmed these personal feelings with assurance that this lawsuit has some values for myself and CCCS, as stated above. My only prayer is for CCCS leadership, Elders and members alike to heed these warnings and work together, so that our mission as Christians and as a church to proclaim Jesus to the world, starts with us.

CONCLUSION

This research has reaffirmed that the Church and State are two separate institutions. However, in Samoa, there is an intimate relationship between these two for the betterment of the people. Even though they are separated in roles and responsibilities, the common factor that seals their relationship is the wellbeing of its people. Thus, these two institutions must work together to promote unity within the community and to live interdependence of each other, to meet their obligations to the people, and for the people to live in harmony and respect each other.

Unfortunately, the reality of our ever changing environment is that there will always be differences that cannot be solved between parties concerned. This lawsuit within our CCCS, is a prime example of our inability to solve our differences, because of our pride and status, our affiliations and personal relations that sometimes, have overwhelmed our roles as Christians. These human tendencies have blinded us from performing our roles as Christians ought to be, by helping each other, and to be a community of believers, proclaiming the Good news of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This failure according to Paul is a defeat and a shame for us as Christians.

From this perspective, I am grateful for this lawsuit, because it has reminded us of our roles as Christians. It is also a timely reminder for CCCS, especially our Elders of their calling as leaders to shepherd Christ's flock, instead of fighting over trivial matters that could only result in divisions and shame. It is also a reminder of our role as a church to maintain and improve the spiritual welfare of people, instead of material wealth and possessions.

I can only pray that this lawsuit acts as a pivotal guide for CCCS, Elders, ordained ministers as well as members, of our roles and relationships to unite us, instead of

division and confusion. I also pray that we take notice of the Corinthian Church's situation, to help us in our context, with the help of our God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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