

**REVISITING A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP: A
DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVE IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE CCCS IN FAIRFIELD
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

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by

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ABSTRACT

This research paper attempts to investigate the traditional CCCS *tapuaiga* or Church worship content and to question whether it is still theologically relevant for young people in its diasporic churches. The author will be addressing this issue within his own context of Fairfield CCCS, by acknowledging the ‘subjective’ nature of his approach, and addresses issues from within his own cultural-religious experience.

As reflected in the title of this thesis, this research identifies one of the predicaments experienced by young people, such as the CCCS diasporic churches and their young people who are being caught between two socio-cultural worlds, namely, the Samoan culture and the Western world. This research poses to examine the influences of charismatic worship churches and their attractions.

Furthermore, this thesis seeks to explore the traditional CCCS form of worship from its interaction with the European missionaries in Samoa, and if there were any assimilation with or rejection of Pre-Christian form of worship that shaped and influenced the way CCCS worship today.

This thesis is an initial exploration of the question, ‘Is the traditional CCCS *tapuaiga* or Church worship content still theologically relevant for its diasporic churches?’ This connects with another question: ‘Will a revised theology of worship attract (draw) people back to our Church?’ The task of seeking possible solutions in suggesting to hopefully alleviate this issue and incorporate a more inclusive model for the CCCS Christian mission in diaspora, as she strives to make the gospel message a reality in an increasingly complex and multicultural society.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP OF THESIS

I, _____ (full name of student- printed)

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 student and staff with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

Signature: _____

Date: _____ (month and year)

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, *Rev. Elder. Toese Peleti Toailoa* and *Sene Peleti Toailoa* for their endless love and spiritual guidance at all times in my life. Thank you for your invaluable lessons in life that have influenced my life; notably, to trust in God, to be faithful in all aspects of life, and to stay humble.

To my siblings; brother *Papali'i* and sisters *Satui, Betty* and their children. My brother in-laws *Rev. Iosefa Iuvale* and *Rev. Mose Galuvao*, and their parish church. In addition, a heartfelt dedication to my daughters *Tamia* and *Anari Peleti Toailoa*.

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List of Abbreviations

- CCCS - Congregational Christian Church Samoa
- EFKS - Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
- LMS - London Missionary Society

Introduction

The way that a person conducts himself or herself during worship reveals that person's understanding of God and contributes to his or her spiritual formation. Our concept of God not only shapes our worship; it affects everything—how we think, act, and even feel. The current forms of worship and liturgy of the CCCS¹ has been well established. This paper will focus on the traditional worship within the CCCS in diaspora. It begs the question on whether this form of worship in Diasporic Churches is still theologically relevant for the generation of Australian born Samoans who are not only limited in the *fa'a-Samoa* (Samoan culture) but influenced by other western forms of worship.

Being a Samoan-Australian raised in Fairfield, Sydney² and also being a pastor's son, the author grew up within the confines of a Samoan church community. The reality is that a few of the generation (25 years to 35 years) still actively attend church. Although some families have left church and have either moved interstate or overseas, the majority do not attend church altogether. Some have joined other charismatic English language-based denominations such as Inspire, Hill Songs, or Assembly of God.

This thesis, is not in any way against the traditional worship of the CCCS, nor in any position attempt to endorse an overhaul of our traditional forms of worship or *tapuaiga*. However, the aim is to provide a revised theological insight as far as worship is concerned, to highlight a real and current issue – which is that of the gradual decline in the number of our CCCS youth. One potential factor that is a barrier for young people

¹ Congregational Christian Church Samoa.

² Fairfield, a western suburb of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia is where the CCCS church is located.

within CCCS diasporic worship in my opinion, is that of language – the Samoan language in this case.

A survey conducted between the year 2015-2016 from 1992 to 1993, and later on in 2016, within the Liverpool region, a close proximity to the Fairfield CCCS, highlighted the awkward situation faced by Samoan youth migrants living in Sydney. Not only was the Samoan language usage within Samoan families declining, but it has also become a barrier between Samoan parents and their children. The study indicated that from 1992-1993, Samoan was spoken in 72% of homes surveyed, but declined to 27% from 2015-2016. In addition, an increase from 27% using both Samoan and English in 1992-1993 to 64% in 2015-2016.³ Consequently, this continuous pattern could prove peril for youth, particularly within CCCS worship.

Thus, the focus of this project, as an attempt at theologizing, is born out of the author's personal experiences, with close friends who have left our CCCS environment for the charismatic Churches.⁴ A *palagi* friend named "John" queried as to why joy and laughter is embraced in our cultural performances at weddings and birthdays, and yet silence is mostly observed during our Sunday liturgies.

Consequently, these experiences have drawn some serious questions. Is the current form of CCCS worship a continuation of traditional Congregational theology of worship, inherited during the missionization of Samoa? Or whether the LMS⁵ European style of worship had any similarities in both theological understanding and approach to

³ Va'a,F.L, *Sa'ili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, (National University of Samoa: University of the South Pacific), 190-191.

⁴ A friend who has left our CCCS Fairfield, for the charismatic Inspire Church tells of how inclusive, and spiritually uplifting form of worship, that this Church presents, all conducted in English. The CCCS form of worship in his opinion is too impersonal and found the Samoan language rather difficult to understand. Furthermore, the CCCS choir sang all of the four hymns, mostly of old-fashioned tunes, whilst the rest sat back and listened, to a "one dimensional" service.

worshipping God with the pre-existed *tapuaiga* or *lotu* in Samoa. Is there any scope for changes in the way CCCS in diaspora conduct their worship service? How can the CCCS approach a revised form of worship, to cater for the needs of the current generation that give rise to a balance between traditional and contemporary? Providing theological answers to these issues is the focus of this project, in the hope that a much clearer and resonance theological appreciation of how we worship God in diaspora shall be discovered.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One discusses a Christian theology of Worship in particular the Congregational Tradition and how the Congregational form of worship helped in developing the Samoan LMS and eventually the CCCS. Chapter Two looks at the Pre-Christian Worship in Samoa, and its interactions with the arrival of the Congregational Christian Worship. The focus will be on the Samoan *Tapuaiga* or Worship, its meaning/content and performance in Samoan rituals and ceremonies. A discussion of the interaction between the new LMS *lotu* (church) and the traditional Samoan *tapuaiga* and how all this shaped the CCCS worship and liturgical formats to date will also be dealt with.

Chapter Three will focus on CCCS worship in diaspora, focussing on the CCCS Fairfield, Sydney, from its early beginnings up till today. The thesis will conclude proposes a revised theological understanding of worship from a Diasporic perspective in the context of the CCCS in Sydney.

⁵ London Missionary Society: The London Missionary Society was a predominantly Congregationalist missionary society formed in England in 1795 at the instigation of Welsh Congregationalist minister Dr Edward Williams working with evangelical Anglicans and various nonconformists.

Chapter 1

A Theology of Worship in the Congregational Tradition

Introduction

This chapter explores the current understanding of a theology of worship within the Congregational tradition. A brief discussion of the arrival and endeavours of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Samoa, highlighting its significance in terms of the development of Christian worship within the *Lotu Samoa* (Samoan Church) as it was known then.

1.1 Christian Theology: Definition and Significance in Worship Life of the Church

Christian theology is the study of Christian beliefs and practices, based on the Old and the New Testaments, and Christian traditions. The term “theology,” (from Greek, θεός meaning God, and λόγος, meaning word, matter, issue, speech) is initially understood to be “the doctrine of God”.⁶ The term, “worship” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word, *weorthscipe*, “worth” and “ship,” meaning “one worthy of reverence and honour.”⁷ Paul Basden defined the purpose of ‘worship’ as:

....the offering of praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is and what he has done (adoration)...to reaffirm our love for and commitment to Him (commitment)...to lead God's people in the way of life (pastoral care), to clarify God's standards and perspective on

⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 102.

⁷ “Worship Today/Bible.org,” Marty Kendall, <https://bible.org/article/worship-today>; (June 4, 2004).

life (ethics), to build up and unite the body of Christ (fellowship), and to proclaim God's love and mercy to unbelievers (evangelism).⁸

For Basden, worship is a mystery that resists simple analysis and resists a logical explanation. However, its primary purpose of praises and thanksgiving must be revered.⁹

Hence, the theology of worship, in itself, is an adoration on what He has done in the expression of a certain history; that is, the history of humanity's redemption. Worship not only arises out of history, but it also has a history. Christian worship change over time, and it was not the same in the past as it is today. This helps us to put the present into perspective and to avoid the pitfall of making the sort of worship we are most familiar with into an idol, saying, "In this form of Christian worship and in no other can one find God." Therefore, there are two separate kinds of history that undergird our Christian worship. Firstly, the history of what God has done for us all in Christ. Secondly, the history of what God has done in our lives and in the life of our community.

We need to study Christian worship in the past in order to help us explain the present. Past traditions are still evident in today's worship, and when we worship, we declare God's worth. In the Holy Scripture it infers to a twofold pattern that repeats itself over and over again: God graciously saves his people; they gratefully respond in worship and praise.¹⁰ This is also reflected in how the African Independent Churches understand a theology of worship as one of 'joy' and 'joyfulness', a key feature of their worship, in appreciation and love of God and worth of the supreme Being, and blessings

⁸ Paul Basden, "The Theology and Practice of Worship" in *The Theological Educator* (ATLA, 1998), 84.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

deriving therein.¹¹ For these worshippers, there exists the feeling of gladness, cheerfulness and satisfaction in worship, for they regard worship as an activity that demands the totality of one's attention, and in turn, provides the feelings of joy, and satisfaction.¹²

Today, this joyfulness and satisfaction have led our generations to reconsider their choice of which Church to attend. However, we should not misinterpret nor deviate from scripture in how we should worship God. This view is reaffirmed by Rory Noland, who stated that our worship should be conducted in spirit and truth which derive from Scriptures alone, and not some distorted concept of God that we formulated through our own personal upbringing.¹³ Thus, our perspective of God is important in shaping our concept of worship. The 'truth' should be our ultimate objective in seeking God, and this can only be achieved by seeking His Holy word. Moreover, if our idea of God is vague and remote, then our worship will be uncertain and ill-shaped.

Christian theology also deals with different ideas as to how Christians relate to each other, such as prayer, and worship. It is not just a set of ideas; it is about making possible a new way of seeing ourselves, others, and the world, with implications for the way in which we behave. This aspect is best summed up by theologian C.S. Lewis, who asserted that, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen – not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else."¹⁴

Thus, our study of God, particularly in how we worship, should not be a set of religious ritual routine labelled upon Christians to perform daily. However, it should be

¹¹ Christopher O. Oshun, "Joyfulness: A Feature of Worship among African Independent Churches (AICs) in *Mission Studies*, Vol. IX-2, 18, (Hamburg: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies, 1992), 189.

¹² Oshun, 188.

¹³ Rory Noland, "From Neutrino Worship to Real Transformation", in *Common Ground Journal*, (ATLA, 2009): 65.

an involuntary response motivated by love and gratitude in honouring God. It should be a life transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit that ought to compel us to worship and honour God. This motivation is enhanced with God's love and support, and one's encounter with Christ in worship enhances our faith.¹⁵

Furthermore, worship is not limited to the way we revere God, such as our singing, bowing, sincerity, silence, pious feelings, or musical feeling, but is determined by God himself. The prophet Isaiah made it known that God sees right through our hearts (Isaiah 29:13);¹⁶ therefore, one cannot lie nor pretend to worship. True worship is about God found in His word. We respect, honour, and adore Him, not because of what He does, or has done for us, but simply for who He is.

1.2 Church as a Worshipping Community

The Church, as a community of believers, is not an established institution meant to seek one's individual needs. The role of the Church must not be stagnant in its function, such as catering for the members alone. However, it ought to be a messenger of the Gospel by means of a positive lens, guided by the Holy Spirit, particularly for the less fortunate. The Church is a worshipping community that mirrors the overarching kingdom of God in an earthly expression. Worship is thus both individual as well as communal.

For Migliore, this earthly expression as the Church called to mission, represents one of its key roles as the Church. It does not exist for itself alone any more than God

¹⁴ McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 189.

¹⁵ Jared Yogerst, "The Re-Wilding of Worship: A Post-Contemporary Reception," in *Word World* Vol.39 (ATLA, 2019), 366.

¹⁶ Isaiah, 29:13: "*The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote;*" in *The Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version.*

has chosen to exist for God alone. Its mission is to bear witness to and take part in the reconciling love of the triune God who reaches out to a fallen world through Christ. Its mission enhances the mission of Christ.¹⁷ This mission to serve others outside the Church, is what ‘congregationalism’ is about; a gathering of believers in unity, coming together for a common purpose to fellowship, worship and follow Christ’s teachings. Christ’s role as a gracious host offering hospitality is also ours as a Church; to be able to speak, and listen, and that we are not only strangers or guest in order to learn from others, but host as well, in offering hospitality to others.¹⁸

The unity amongst believers within a community is important because the Church is the context in which worship is enjoined. The Church represents the people of God, who are to show allegiance and fidelity to God and His plan for us, which, initially was to draw people unto himself for his purposes and for his glory. D.T. Niles suggests that, the issue is that people expect Christ to solve their worldly problems; whereas the solution has already been provided through the Holy Spirit, and the Church’s mission, in order to annihilate the evils of this world.¹⁹

This is the issue with churches nowadays, especially in the western society where people have been consumed by their own belief of God. They seek individually deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives individually, hungry for genuine spirituality in the secular society, and to experience the Holy Spirit within their churches.²⁰ Personally and spiritually, seeking Christ as the answer to their problems is the focus, whereas solutions have already been provided through the Church, the ‘community of believers.’

¹⁷ Daniel, L Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding’ An Introduction to Christian Theology*; 3rd ed (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2014), 358.

¹⁸ Daniel L. Migliore, “Christology in Context: The Doctrinal and Contextual Tasks of Christology Today,” in *Christology in Context* (University of Saskatchewan Library, 2015), 252.

¹⁹ D.T. Niles, *The Message and its Messengers*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1966), 50.

Thus, the Church should be perceived as the holy instrument for God's purposes, and the covenant community called and endowed with God's own authority to continue His work on earth.

1.3 Congregationalism: Silent Worship and Liturgy

Congregationalism is a Protestant movement that practices congregational polity. It is a system of ecclesiastical polity in which every local church congregation is independent or autonomous. Founded in the 16th century by the English Protestants known as the Puritans, this movement sought to separate its policy and governance away from the Roman Catholic Church – the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church and complete the English Reformation during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547).²¹ With the rejection of the Church of England to become self-governed and convinced that the Church was a false Church, Robert Browne, (1550-1633) founder of Congregationalism, moved to Norwich together with Robert Harrison, forming an illegal Separatist congregation. In 1581, Browne and his followers moved to Holland to worship freely and flee persecution. Later, in the early 16th century John Robinson a congregation pastor and William Brewster an elder also known as the 'pilgrim fathers' and their followers sailed on the Mayflower' ship to North America from Holland in 1620, establishing the Plymouth Colony²² that introduced Congregational tradition to America which later expanded to other parts of the globe, including the Pacific.

²⁰ Johnathan E. Alvarado, "Worship in the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspective on Liturgical Theology and Praxis" in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, (ATLA Religion Database, 11/2/20), 136.

²¹ John Von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620-1957*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 9-10.

²² John, William, T. Youngs, *The Congregationalist*, Student ed. (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 30.

Currently, the CCCS is amongst a group of Protestant Churches in the Pacific region embracing congregationalism. Most, if not all of CCCS parishes endorse a silent form of worship, reflecting one pre-Christian traditional worship, known as the *umuti*. a dangerous fishing expedition, where the *matai* or title men carry out the *tapuaiga* in silence until the fishers of sharks would return.²³ According to Rachel Muers, silent worship has its uses, a celebration of finding God at the heart of the world. Keeping silence disciplines and redirects the attention without compelling it, creating awareness of the significance of the time taken with the things that matter.²⁴ For Manfred Waldemar Kohl,

... generations have forgotten that holiness - from God and towards God - requires time, practice, and allowance for quietness and stillness. Action oriented worshippers need to learn that God also speaks and blesses in silence [Ps. 46.10]. Remember Elijah, who had a worship experience with God through silence (I Kings 19.12). Loudness, noise, or actions are not always required, nor are they necessarily the best form of worship. Proper, God-honouring celebration requires balance.²⁵

Worshipping in silence can also be due to cultural reasons such as *fa'aaloalo* or respect. Clive Pearson experienced this nature of “silence” whilst in a small intimate class with three New Zealand-born Samoans in his class. The usual dynamic of silence was at work, with one of them explaining that their silence was cultural, not lack of interest.²⁶

²³ This kind of *tapuaiga* (worship) is when a dangerous expedition or *umuti* such as shark hunting takes place. The *matai* or High Chief and fishermen would gather at a village house or *fale tele*, where only two blinds would be kept up. The kava ceremony or *alofisa* takes place with most of the blinds down then a meal would follow. The fishermen then depart for their venture while the *matai* carry out the *tapuaiga* in silence until the fishers of sharks would return. Faanafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa, *Tapua'i. Samoan Worship*. (Apia: Malua Printing Press.2003),73.

²⁴ Rachel Muers, “Why Silence isn’t doing nothing’, and why it might be all right to do nothing: Spiritual Challenges from Silent Worship to Contemporary culture,” in *Modern Believing* (ATLA, 2015),341

²⁵ Manfred Waldemar Kohl, “Theological and Philosophical Understanding of Church Liturgy/Worship” in *International Congregational Journal*, (ATLA, 2010),75.

²⁶ Clive Pearson, “Telling Tales: Following the Hyphenated Jesus-Christ” in *Studies in World Christianity* (ATLA Religion Database, Accessed, 05/05/2020), 6. As Lecturer in his final year at the ecumenical

Thus, silent worship practiced by the CCCS is significant for it allows the worshipper to focus on one's spiritual worship without the distraction of any background noise (music). In addition, silent worship prevents the worshipper in a sense from falling into more of an emotional type worship based on feelings, rather than faith. Silence with the incarnation at its centre is not unworldly; and giving 'full homage' to the incarnate one is not about forgetting everything that belongs to the world and to time, but rather finding a transformed relation to the world and to time.²⁷ In hindsight silence in worship enriches our focus on God, and disciplines one's attention on God from any external distraction and redirects our focus, only on God.

1.3.1 External Worship Influences

For American music professor, Monique Ingalls, there are five distinct types of 'congregations' that worship together in song, namely the local congregations, concerts, conferences, praise marches, and worship on screen. The local church congregation is often seen as the most significant for worship and spiritual formation. However, conference worship, social media posts from worship leaders and popular worship bands are more influential than ministers or local congregations.²⁸ These external influences common in charismatic worship, deemed inspiring and spiritually awakening to the individual, is perhaps a major factor behind some CCCS youths moving away.

Faculty of Theology in the University of Otago, he encountered this silence amongst three New Zealand-born Samoans in his class.

²⁷ Ibid., 338.

²⁸ Monique Ingalls, "One Heart and One Voice", 'Across the globe, contemporary worship music provides the glue that holds believing communities together'. Interview by Constance Cherry; American Theological Library Association (ATLA, 2016), 74. Ingalls, an assistant professor of music at Baylor University, studied this phenomenon of contemporary worship music as a distinct genre, highlighting this phenomenon as an ethnomusicologist, looking at the intersection of different social and musical.

Moreover, the constant attention to social media outlets such as Facebook and Instagram have given celebrity worship leaders more of a platform to influence young people's spiritual formation. According to Rory Noland, worship is formational because we become what we worship, what we focus on tends to shape us.²⁹ Thus, media outlets platforms may be another alternative that are attracting our young people away to the more charismatic form of worship.

1.3.2 Spiritual Worship of the Individual

Terry Pouono³⁰ shares his personal experience of how a New Zealand-born Samoan coped in a cross-cultural society. A former CCCS parishioner, but has left the CCCS in NZ for the Salvation Army Church in NZ. Terry Pouono, university life gave him the freedom to experience first-hand, how evangelical Churches offered a different kind of Christian message, now focussed on being 'born-again' of the Spirit. These evangelical churches present a major challenge to mainland migrant Churches, including the CCCS, whose focus on church traditions and cultural practices remained undeterred. Thus, for Pouono, the young people were more or less searching for a deeper spiritual awakening that was missing at their CCCS congregations. Consequently, one option was to attend both the CCCS and a nearby evangelical Church, at designated times on Sundays. Others attempted to introduce what they have acquired from their newly-discovered faith commitment to the CCCS environment, so as to avoid family arguments, and to stay connected with the *faa- Samoa*.³¹

²⁹ Rory Noland, "From Neutrino Worship to Real Transformation", in *Common Ground Journal* Vol 7, No1 (Illinois: Zondervan, 2009), 61.

³⁰ Terry Pouono, "Coconut Water in a Coca Cola Bottle": In search of an Identity: A New Zealand-born Samoan Christian in a Globalized World", PhD, dissertation, (Auckland: The University of Auckland 2016), 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8

Personally, one can ascertain from Pouono's experience, the difference between attending an evangelical Church, and that of the CCCS. Martina Prosēn conferred that the heart of Pentecostalism worship is its spirituality, and this spirituality finds worship as one of its major expression.³² This is the reality for the youth of CCCS in diaspora. However, there is a risk involved, for it becomes more of a 'worship experience' based on emotions, rather than a profound reverence out of joy, love and faith. Ingalls referred to this "worship experience" as commodity, packaged and sold ready for consumption.³³

Utilizing contemporary music during worship is so common today, and aided by social media platforms. Now, in the diasporic environment of the CCCS, this worship transformation can be a problem for the younger generations, for these evangelical organizations may not accommodate neither their traditional worship nor cultural practices altogether. Once the focus of worship relies solely on the essence of sound-driven emotions, then the true nature of worship becomes secondary. Individualism takes precedence over the communal nature of worship. Migliore pointed to this self-centred approach, noting that one remains a member at a Church for as long as they meet one's needs and serve one's purpose; this translates into a self-centred piety.³⁴

Contemporary hymnal lyrics, according to Christine Longhurst can also be a concern, for they portray an individualistic mindset, emphasizing private religious experience over the thoughts and aspirations of the community. From 509 hymns surveyed, 34% were composed from an individual standpoint (I, me, my), while 44%

³² Martina Prosēn, "Worship: A Window into Pentecostal Theology," in *Swedish Missiological Themes* (ATLA, 2014), 87.

³³ Monique Ingalls, "One Heart and One Voice", 'Across the globe, contemporary worship music provides the glue that holds believing communities together'. Interview by Constance Cherry; American Theological Library Association (ATLA, 2016), 75.

³⁴ Daniel L Migliore *Faith Seeking Understanding' An Introduction to Christian Theology*, third edition, (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2014), 339.

corporate, and the 19% were a combination of both.³⁵ In essence, the truth about God, the object of our worship is literally ignored, as “sugar-coated” lyrics take precedence in order to please the listeners. Rory Noland identified this as another form of idolatry when we focus more devotion to our self-image than devotion to God alone.³⁶

Our youth may indeed lack proper theological understandings so as to appreciate the difference. If granted, perhaps they may appreciate the value of Martin Luther’s utterance, quoted by Migliore, “that to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is . . . really your God.”³⁷ Thus, our devotion needs to be focussed on God, and God alone, without undue influences, that may hinder our spiritual growth.

1.4 Congregational Theology of Worship and Praise

Congregational Churches are deemed governed by members of the congregation. In matters of ecclesiology, emphasises is on the completeness of the local church under the headship of Christ. The local Church is where one discovers the classical ‘marks’ of the church: the word rightly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and church discipline rightly applied.³⁸ Congregational Churches follow the Protestant traditions and beliefs of an empty cross. The central place of the sermon reflects its belief in scripture as prime authority over the Christian life, and above, beyond any authoritative role of the Church and its leadership.³⁹ Congregational theology of worship is instilled in a corporate and communal response of joy, praising God in unison as one body, as

³⁵ Christine Longhurst, “The words we sing: An exploration of Textual content in Contemporary Worship Music”, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 160.

³⁶ Rory Noland, “From Neutrino Worship to Real Transformation”, (Common Ground Journal, 2009), 62

³⁷ Daniel L Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2014).

³⁸ Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The Encyclopaedia of Protestantism*, Vol.1 (London: Routledge, 2004),508.

³⁹ Ibid, 508-509.

the focus of liturgies, with Christ as the Head of the Church. This ‘Oneness’ of the Church, stipulated at Nicea, 381⁴⁰, cannot be said of today’s Church, leading Hans Kung to say that it is evidently more helpful to see the unity of the Church in conjunction with its diversity.⁴¹

1.4.1 The Congregational Hymns

An important feature and an integral part of congregational worship are the Church hymns. They promote a sense of harmony and unity amongst the worshipping community. For a CCCS *Faifeau* (Church Minister) and likewise, in other denominations, there is a Samoan expression that says, “*E lauga le Pese,*” meaning, a hymn can also preach, as in a sermon. This is true for Swee Hong Lim, who asserted that any theologian can express in the form of musical composition his thinking which cannot be expressed appropriately in words.⁴²

Hymns can also play the role of a prayer, or as a healing tool, but most importantly, to cater for one’s spiritual meditation. The structuring of verses within hymns also highlight this essence of a community of faith in unison, as stated by CCCS Reverend and musician, Ioane Petaia. Referring to the CCCS Hymn 92, Petaia stressed the trinitarian significance of the hymn’s three verses, with each verse a solemn praise to the three persons of the Godhead.⁴³ Migliore mirrors Petaia’s theological stance,

⁴⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1949), 572. The Council of Constantinople (381) developed a Creed that contains the phrase “I believe...one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.”

⁴¹ Corneliu C. Simut, *The Ontology of the Church in Hans Kung*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 231.

⁴² Swee Hong Lim, “Methodologies of Musicking in Practical Theology: Portal into the World of Contemporary Worship Song,” (Emmanuel College of Victoria University In the University of Toronto, Canada, 2014), 306.

⁴³ Ioane Toafitu Petaia, “Roles and Functions of Christian Hymns,” BTh Thesis (Apia, Samoa: Malua Theological College, Apia Samoa, 2001), 26-27.

noting that the Church is a divine representation of a new community with God and with others through Christ in the Spirit.⁴⁴

The role of the choir, in enhancing the spirit of communal worship is also vital. When people worship, in joy and admiration of our Lord, John Calvin believed that this power of congregational singing and corporate prayer helps the Church express and experience the unity of the body of Christ.⁴⁵ In all CCCS parishes, the choir leads the congregation in hymns and praises on Sundays, and any other gathering of believers. Singing is not an option, but essential to the ministry of the Church.⁴⁶

Christians believe that in their common worship they are making their relationship with God and with the community a visible and tangible reality. Worship therefore, is a way of forming and sustaining essential relationships (both divine and human), and for this reason the word “communion” (from Greek, *κοινωνία koinonia*, meaning “fellowship,” “sharing,” or “participating”) is often used to describe what happens during earliest Christian worship.⁴⁷

Luther believed that the most effective way of transforming worship was to include ordinary people in the performance of the liturgy. Thus, he introduced the *Chorale*, or congregational hymn, in place of liturgical chants in certain liturgy. Luther believed in the ethical power of music, as a tool of evangelization, for music enhances active participation in Church liturgies. Vocal participation facilitated understanding

⁴⁴ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* 3rd ed (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2014), 355.

⁴⁵ Ford Lewis Battles, *John Calvin: The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol.3., (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans publishing company, 1975), 31.

⁴⁶ Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology*, (Missouri: Chalice Press, 2008), 93.

⁴⁷ Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version.

and meaning in worship as cited by Bethke,⁴⁸ something that is somehow lacking in some CCCS parishes, where the choir takes over most of the singing. This contradicts the principle of congregational worship as being a corporate unity of believers.

For one former Anglican Bishop, the goal of congregational worship is the ‘word of God,’ spoken and received, and ought to be done in an inclusive manner, regardless of how hymns are performed.⁴⁹ This denotes flexibility in liturgical style, where Churches may then introduce their own preferences, in terms of creating a worship experience for their communities, rather than true worship of God. In this sense, Edwin Chr. Van Driel reminds us that, worship is centred upon God, not the individual, embedded in a ministry of singing that belongs to the faithful. Worship is all about getting to know God truly, a believer’s response through faith to give honour and praise.⁵⁰

Therefore, worshipping in communion with others reflects our responsive self-offering to God, as recipients of divine gifts, in a visible manner. Worshipping is then not only dialectical, with God, but also a horizontal movement amongst the faithful.

⁴⁸ Andrew-John Bethke, “The Theology Behind Music and its Performance in Anglican Worship:” An Historical Exploration of Anglican Theological Attitudes to Music, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 153 starting with the 1549 Book of Common Prayer and Finishing with An Anglican Prayer Book 1989, (ATLA Religion Database, November, 2015),47-48.

⁴⁹ Maxwell E. Johnson, What is Normative in Contemporary Lutheran Worship? Word and Sacrament as Non-negotiable in *Currents in Theology and Mission* (University of Notre Dame, August 2011), 245.

⁵⁰ Edwin Chr Van Driel, “A Theology of Seminary Worship” Vol.9 (ATLA Religion, May 2017), 262.

1.5 LMS and the Development of Christian worship within the CCCS (Lotu Samoa) Sunday Worship

On July 22, 1830, the London Missionary Society [LMS] ship, Messenger of Peace, arrived at Sapapalii on the island of Savaii. Samoan High Chief Malietoa officially accepted Christianity on behalf of the Samoan people.⁵¹ The new religion was duly embraced by the locals, and with the influence of Malietoa, the LMS succeeded in ensuring the new mission, guided by the element of respect or *faaaloalo* in the Samoan culture, where everyone listens to the chief.⁵² Soon, the missionaries were in a position of influence, and called by locals as *papalagi* (sky breakers or heaven busters) because they were held to be descending from the heavens.⁵³

Aiming to spread the gospel, the LMS was formed in 1795 as an inter-denominational group of evangelical churches, comprising Calvinistic Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Scottish Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Independents and Anglicans. However, subsequent formation of other mission societies left the LMS predominantly Congregational.⁵⁴ Thus, Congregational-type liturgies and forms of worship impacted greatly upon the LMS, though interestingly enough, these forms of worship were not intended to be utilized in evangelization of locals. LMS prioritized the

⁵¹ Olive Samuelu, "Salvation in Church Offering? Towards a Theology of giving in the context of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa" (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College of Suva, 2010),93.

⁵² Ioane Lafoa'i, "Fa'amatai in Australia: Is It Fair Dinkum? E Maota Tau'ave Samoa," in *Changes in the Matai System: O Suiga I Le Fa'amati*, ed. Asofou So'o (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2007), 14.

⁵³ Moyle (Ed), *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832*, (Canberra, 1984), 265. According to Amaamalele Tofaeono, European missionaries and their God were seen as a positive occurrence by the native Samoan. They associated the white men and their God as 'power' through their material goods and sailing islands they brought. See Amaamalele Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga, The Household of Life. A perspective From Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa.* (World Mission Script Friend Druckerei, Neuendettelsau, 2000), 67.

⁵⁴ Norman E, Thomas, *Missions and Unity: Lessons from History, 1792-2010*, (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010),15.

spreading of the Gospel, based on Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission⁵⁵, and for locals to have autonomy over their religious affairs. Andrew F Walls reaffirmed this mission perspective, saying,

...design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government.... but the Gospelit shall be left to the minds of the Persons whom God may call into fellowship of His Son... to assume for themselves such form of Church Government, as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God.⁵⁶

Perhaps, this allowed the Samoans to maintain their own Christian identity by incorporating an interaction between cultural traditions and the new *lotu* or religion, whilst allowing missionaries more of a supervisory position.⁵⁷ An institutionalized Church structure thus emerged, in place of Samoa traditional beliefs, noted by John Williams in his 1832 journal that Samoa,

Not having either idols, temples, Maraes or sacred Places of any description of course they have not the religious rites, ceremonies, sacrifices and feasts that existed at Tahiti, Rarotonga [sic] and other islands.⁵⁸

Samoa's polytheistic beliefs gave way to Christianity, which to some observers, was influenced to some extent by the material possession, and the desire to learn more about the world of the missionaries. Samoans saw European education as essential, and soon, the Bible was translated into Samoan. With the establishment of a printing press in 1839 at Falelatai, the work of the LMS expanded rapidly. More formal education was

⁵⁵ The Great Commission according to Matthew: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version.

⁵⁶ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 248.

⁵⁷ Lange, *The Origins*, 19: 22-25. The idea of greater autonomy and self-sufficiency of the local church was encouraged by the LMS missionaries.

⁵⁸ Moyle (Ed), *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832*, 264.

later offered by the LMS at Malua College and Leulumoega School both established in 1844.⁵⁹

In the beginning of the Samoan ministry, the Samoan teachers helped spread the new religious knowledge and the accompanying literacy. The Samoans were enthusiastic about their new-found faith, and upon Williams' return in 1832, the new *lotu* had taken a stronghold, as chapels were erected, and people anxiously waiting for instruction.⁶⁰ Williams attributed this progress to the gracious interposition of divine providence, which for him, was something more than an accident: *this is the finger of God!*⁶¹ Additional LMS missionaries arrived in 1836, and they too extended and systematized the participation of Samoans in evangelism, teaching, and the leadership of worship.⁶²

Conforming to European-types of worship, including white Sunday attires for both men and women, was required of the locals, so as to prevent reverting back to old religious beliefs.⁶³ Perhaps the focus of these LMS missionaries and their local counterparts was to really drive home a European mind-set base, that of a civilized Christian, who is keen on worshipping the true God of all. The wearing of white attire on Sundays somehow gave the locals a more dignified sense of aristocratic identity in belonging to the new religion like the missionaries.⁶⁴ There is also a sense of reverence accompanying such changes in attire, from near-nakedness to full white attires for

⁵⁹ L.F. Palenapa, "A Study of the Place of Samoan Culture (Fa'aSamoa) in two New Zealand Churches" (MTh thesis, University of Canterbury, 1993).

⁶⁰ John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, (London: John Snow, 1840), 149.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶² Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity*, (University of Canterbury, New Zealand: Pandanus Books, 2005), 81-82.

⁶³ Tunupopo Patu, "Fa'amalama Theology", (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, Apia Samoa, 2001), 3.

women. This signifies divine respect, and that of goodness, innocence, purity and perfection, as opposed to what LMS missionaries may have perceived as paganism within traditional Samoan religions.

For Tofaeono, eradicating primitive religious practices such as initiation rituals, nakedness, communal ceremonial activities that were considered impure and banned by the Church was vital to the success of the island mission.⁶⁵ The tenacious task by the early missionaries led to numerous Samoans embracing the new change, where on Sundays, the whole congregation would attend Church properly clothed and decently covered.⁶⁶ In all, Christianity and civilization went hand in hand, as the locals came to experience the changes in how they were to conduct themselves in worship.

As stated earlier, the setting up of a printing press in 1839 helped with the distribution of written literature, which were being used in worship, in place of the traditional orally-based vernacular/language. New worship practices for the locals had emerged, as more Churches were established in villages. A Christian prayer prelude and conclude every Sunday service. Sunday was considered a sacred day, and duly called, *Aso Sā* (or sacred day). Enhancing Christian doctrines and ethical teachings was a priority for the LMS Samoan mission, and more importantly, introducing a more European type of worship. The missionaries also introduced disciplining measures such as evening curfews and prioritizing the Bible to be taught in every local Church. These

⁶⁴ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: The University of the South Pacific, 1987), 67-68.

⁶⁵ Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga, The Household of Life. A perspective From Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*,”106.

⁶⁶ Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832*, p.231. See also Thomas on the significant value that Samoans had in the adoption of European cloth. Nicholas Thomas, “The case of the misplaced poncho: Speculations concerning the history of cloth in Polynesian,” in *Clothing the Pacific*, ed. Chloë Colchester, Berg, Oxford, 2003, pp. 79–96, pp. 91–94. See also Serge Tcherkézoff on cloth, gifts and nudity’ regarding some European misunderstandings during early encounters in Polynesia,” in *Clothing the Pacific*, ed. Colchester,51–75.

Christian principles were embraced not only by the locals, but also for those who were fortunate then to travel abroad.

In summary, the arrival of the LMS missionaries and its European-dominant structures helped revitalize the religious practices of pre-Christian Samoa. The fusion of the indigenized gospel and structure of the *lotu* then gave birth to a new identity of Samoa as a Christian nation, as of today, socially, physically, and spiritually.

Chapter 2

Pre-Christian Worship in Samoa and Interaction with Christian Worship

Introduction

This chapter explores the interaction between the elements and fundamentals of traditional Samoan religions, or *tapuaiga*, and that of Christianity. Emphasis will be on the significance and content of *tapuaiga* as seen in its rituals and ceremonies. The transition from what was termed as paganism into the new *lotu* shall also be included in the discussions. The belief in one supreme god, ruler and creator of the universe, *Tagaloa-Lagi* without denying the existence of other deities¹, is also discussed in this chapter, particularly in its resonance with God, and how it affects the spirit and essence of worship.

2.1 Samoan *Tapuaiga* (worship): Significance and Content

When Christianity was introduced to Samoa in August 1830, Samoa had long worshipped their own god called *Tagaloa*,² whom they believed was similar to the European missionaries. *Tagaloa* was considered the supreme ruler, the creator of the universe, the chief of all gods and the progenitor of other gods and humans.³ There was no national religion, though people had embraced the existence of myths and

¹ Philip Culbertson, Margaret Agee, and Cabrini Makasiale, *Penina Uliuli: Contemporary Challenges in Mental Health for Pacific Peoples*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 67.

² Ibid, 67. *Tagaloa* was also known as *Tagaloa-lagi* or *Tagaloa* of the Heavens or Skies.

³ Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 16.

superstitious beliefs. Samoan oral mythology was preserved in memories, and according to Aaron Buzacott, each chief, and almost every man, had a god. LMS pioneer, George Turner, noted that Samoa consisted of close to a hundred and twenty personal gods and goddesses. Furthermore, everyone revered at least four other gods: the family god, a village god, a district god and a war god.⁴

The three types of gods or deities that the locals revered were, *Atua*, *Aitu* and *Tupua*. *Tagaloa*, the *Atua* and the supreme creator god, resided in the *Lagi* (the heavens), or in *Pulotu* (the underworld). The *Atua* which were of non-human origin, were not worshipped in any particular form.⁵ The *Aitu* on the other hand were of human origin and usually took the form of animals, birds, humans or other natural objects. They were considered to be the gods of war, family, and protection or guardian gods of various trades and employment. If the object, fish, animal or human whom they venerated was dead, the Samoans believed that the spirit or soul would incarnate in another form. They firmly believed in the immortality of the soul.⁶

The *Tupua* were the deified spirits of dead chiefs or deceased persons of high rank. The worship involved an offering in the form of a cup of ‘ava’⁷ (ceremonial drink), and prayers to the gods. In the *Ava* ceremony, which is the most solemn ceremony of the Samoans, the first cup of *Ava* is offered to the gods. The *matai* (chief) of the family who acted as priest or family mediator for the gods took over as leader in

⁴ George Turner, *Samoa, A Hundred Years and Long Before*, (Papakura: McMillian 1984).

⁵ L.F. Palenapa, “A study of the place of Samoan culture (Fa’aSamoa) in two New Zealand Churches” (University of Canterbury, 1993), 2.

⁶ Va’a 108)

⁷ Ava is a beverage prepared from the root of the kava plant, the piper methysticum forst. It is used in the ava ceremony—a ritual for special occasions like the bestowal of chiefly titles, village meetings and when welcoming visitors. See Augustine Krämer, *The Samoa Islands: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa*, Vol. I, 1902, trans. Teodore Verhaaren, University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, 1994, pp. 20–21.

times of worship, for they were deemed sacred because they were priests and had strong link with the gods.⁸

During the evening *tapuaiga* the family *matai* or the village chief led, as well as assisted in maintaining law and order throughout. If the *matai* was absent, the *tamaitai matua* [eldest female] or *feagaiga* [covenant] of the *aiga* would lead the *tapuaiga*.⁹ One form of worship that was prevalent before the arrival of Christianity was called '*Fanaafi o Fa'amalama*'. This was a private form of worship and would take place at a unique time at dawn or sunrise and in the evening at dusk before the onset of nightfall.

2.1.1 The Public and Private form of Pre-Christian Worship

The public *alofisā* was a unique form of worship known today as the *ava* ceremony".¹⁰ According to Aiono-Le Tagaloa,

...the *ava* ceremony/*alofisā* began with the *ava*, and ended with *anapogi* or fasting. An example of this kind of *tapuaiga* is when a dangerous expedition or *umuti* such as shark hunting takes place. The *matai* and fishermen would gather at a *fale tele*, [big house] where only two blinds would be kept up. The *alofisa* takes place with most of the blinds down then a meal would follow. The fishers then depart for their venture while the *matai* carry out the *tapuaiga* in silence until the fishermen return.¹¹

The *alofisa* illustrates a significant aspect of *tapuaiga* in pre-Christian Samoa, for it denotes a realm of divine protection, just as one would pray for God's love and daily sustenance. The *fanaafi o faamalama* if it takes place in the evening, begins when the fires are blown or *ula afi* for the embers to come alive again. The *aiga* surrounds the

⁸ L.F. Palenapa, "A study of the place of Samoan culture (Fa'aSamoa) in two New Zealand Churches" (University of Canterbury, 1993), 2.

⁹ Faanafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa, *Tapua'i. Samoan Worship*. (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., 61.

¹¹ Ibid., 73.

fireplace or *magalafu*, in the middle of the house, and fire was never extinguished. The fire would be lit in the morning if *fanaafi o faamalama* is done at dawn inside the *fale*.¹²

This communal form of worship found in the *fa'amalama* theology is equated to a modern church, where collective hearts are elevated in the name of God. Each person receives and sustains strength from the other person, thus gaining a renewed vigour in their worship life. This evoked a spirit of unity within the family, loyalty and allegiance amongst the extended family. A picture or spirit of loyalty and unity intended for the Church of God.¹³ The presence of gods were felt in the midst of both light and darkness, and it would burn continuously throughout the whole day.

The *fanaafi o fa'amalama* provided a sense of comfort and security to the family as they remained in the *malamalama* or light of the fire.¹⁴ In the evening, the ash cover of the *magalafu* would be 'blown' away (*ula afi*) and then the priest (*ositaulaga*) who covered his bare body with a cloak (*vala*) would put dry kindling on the live coal that would re-ignite fire. The shooting flames were the fire votives offered as sacrifice in flames, which presumably brought light and lit up the whole house.¹⁵ These aspects of traditional religions denote spiritual inter-connectedness, that of humanity and his or her deity. Spirituality to the Samoans meant connectedness to their ancestors, their land and their gods, and thus is one reason why the Samoan people have taken on the new *lotu* with enthusiasm and vigour.¹⁶

¹² Tunupopo Patu, "Fa'amalama Theology", (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, Apia Samoa, 2001), 16-17.

¹³ Patu., 51.

¹⁴ Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga, The Household of Life. A perspective From Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 160.

¹⁵ Tofaeono., 16.

¹⁶ Philip Culbertson, Margaret Agee, and Cabrini Makasiale, *Penina Uliuli: Contemporary Challenges in Mental Health for Pacific Peoples*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 69.

The locals were quite acceptant of the new *lotu* due perhaps to the similarity of *Tagaloa* to the Christian God. Samoans believed in the immortality of the soul and the guilt of sin. Prayers and offerings were made to the gods, whom they relied upon for prosperity and protection. Their belief and fear of the gods helped maintained order in society and added dignity to their culture. Thus, the Samoans always maintained the communal and divine aspirations of *tapuaiga* and *fanaafi o fa'amalama*, prior to the arrival of Christianity.

2.2 Assimilation with or rejection of Traditional Samoan Understanding and Practices of *Tapuaiga*

The integration with or rejection of the traditional understanding and practices of *tapuaiga* for the Samoans was not a linear process nor a smooth transition. Although Samoan religion was polytheistic, Samoans also believed in the supreme god, *Tagaloa*. Lalomilo Kamu pointed towards the similarities between Samoa's creation myths, and those found in the Bible. Samoa's ideas of worship, spirituality, atonement and redemption were pre-Christian concepts which fitted the Christian concepts of God brought by the missionaries.¹⁷ Latu Latai reflected on this similarity, asserting that,

....similarities are another viable explanation of the successful introduction of Christianity to Samoa. Redemption and atonement, central to Christian teachings are perhaps best illustrated in the practice of *ifoga*, where a culprit would cover himself with a fine mat in front of the offended family. The family *matai* takes the place of the culprit. If he is killed in the act, he or she has spared the life of the offender. Samoans also believed in a spiritual world, *Pulotu*, where the spirits of the dead descend. Gods dwell in the *Fafa*, *Salefee* and *Pulotu*, places Samoans believe to be the spirit world. *Fafa* or Hades

¹⁷ Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996), 31.

is the entrance to *Salefee*, the Samoan Tartarus or dread place of punishment.¹⁸

Kamu stated that the more he understood the pre-Christian concept of God as revealed by the creation myths, the firmer he was convinced that essentially, we are talking about the same God in whom the Christians believed.¹⁹ Samoans somehow, could identify their religious concepts with those of the new *lotu* to the point where they did not completely disregard their old beliefs and replaced them with new ones. Rather it implies a much more active role of Samoans in the process of conversion, in negotiating between old and new values.²⁰

The arrival of Christianity led to the eventual disregarding of old religious beliefs, and way of life. Symbols of traditional gods or *atua* were consumed in a public ceremony as to signify their conversion.²¹ Warring factions were reduced, and pagan practices like cannibalism were done away with.²² Thus, it is clear that the gods and ancestral spirits in ancient times were highly respected. Nevertheless, missionary influence created valued judgments that spirits were evil.²³ They were more than determined to see that these traditional religious beliefs were taken care off, and removed.

¹⁸ Latu Latai, "Covenant Keepers: A History of Samoan (LMS) Missionary Wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1979", PhD, dissertation, The Australian National University, 2016., p42. The *ifoga* ritual resonates with the doctrine of atonement, and it was practised long before the arrival of the missionaries. On pre-Christian religion see Stair, *Old Samoa*, p. 217; George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, London: Macmillan, 1884., p 42.

¹⁹ Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, 31.

²⁰ Va'a, Unasa L. F. "The rise and fall of the Samoan war god, Le Fe'e." (4th Measina a Samoa Conference. National University of Samoa), 106. According to Va'a, in pre-Christian religion animals served as the physical incarnations of *aitu*, ancestral spirit, and respect was channelled towards these gods through the peoples' reluctance to eat the *ata*, physical incarnations, of their *aitu*.

²¹ Va'a, Unasa L. F. "The rise and fall of the Samoan war god, Le Fe'e," 108.

²² Philip Culbertson, Margaret Agee, and Cabrini Makasiale, *Penina Uliuli: Contemporary Challenges in Mental Health for Pacific Peoples*, 69.

²³ *Ibid*, 69.

Interestingly, one of the elements of worship that has been adopted from the old religion is that of evening prayer service, as depicted in *fanaafi o fa'amalama* but with an amendment. The missionaries acknowledged the “theology” behind *fanaafi o fa'amalama*, yet countered it by advocating evening prayers in the dark, a complete opposite to *fa'amalama*.²⁴ Today, this can still be seen, where lights are turned off during evening prayer. Although there are no longer any fire votives offered to the gods, the old form of worship is still evident today, and referred to as *afiafi*.

According to Tunupopo Patu, Samoans still retain the reverence, awe, solemnity and attitude of the *matai* and *āiga* of the *fa'amalama* type of worship, now seen in the *afiafi* of Christian times.²⁵ Many Samoan villages respect that sacred time or *sa* in the evenings, a solemn time devoted to family prayers. Another cultural aspect of worship is that of ‘silence,’ during prayer times, now adopted by today’s Church services.

The communal nature of traditional worship is also reflected in one of the famous Samoan sayings, “*E lē sili lava le Ta’i nai lo lē tapua’i*”, meaning the individual out on venture/mission is not greater than the people who await and pray for success. Otele Perelini concurred by saying that blessings are not only a result of the individual merit but the response through blessings and prayers of families and communities toward God.²⁶ Therein again highlights what *tapuaiga* meant to the Samoan people, something which they carried over into their newly-found faith.

An issue however arises, when one’s faith and commitment appear to take precedence over and above that of the communal, something that Clive Pearson recognized as a major factor for second-generation Pacific Islanders. Some would leave

²⁴ Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years and Long Before*, 260.

²⁵ Patu, “Fa’amalama Theology,” 20.

²⁶ Otele Sili Perelini, “A Comparison of Jesus healing with Healing in Traditional and Christian Samoa,” Phd dissertation, (Edinburgh University, 1992), 94.

their ethnic Church for charismatic denominations, and as outcasts, would hurt for their parents, whose hearts remain in the islands and value their culture and customs.²⁷ Thus, the communal aspect of the *faa-Samoa* parallels those of Congregational worship principles, where each individual relies on one another for strength and blessings.

The merging of traditional religions and Christianity did not affect, to some extent, Samoa's existing social and political structures. Many of the basic tenets of ancient Samoa which were fundamental to the culture still existed and were similar to these of Christianity.

This what makes the *faa-Samoa* a precious gift, like all other cultures, which is lived by people who are not perfect. The very core value of the *faa-Samoa* is *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and in addition to *alofa* (love, mercy), *fa'amagalo* (forgiveness), and *tautua* (service) make up key virtues of the *faa-Samoa*. Before Christian missionaries set foot on Samoan soil, these virtues were common amongst a people who were committed to their gods, making it easier for the transition to Christianity.

The identity of the Samoan community saturated in the *faa-Samoa* affects everything that the community does. This is reflected in Richard S. Vosko's belief that the self-identity of a faith community affects everything that the Church does. The way it teaches, serves, governs and worships lends credence to its understanding of itself. For example, if a Church is defined as the baptised people of God, this implies that all members are all equal and share equal status in everything the Church does.²⁸

In summary, the Christian principles of respect and worship were part of the identity of the Samoan people despite the perceived absence of the Christian God. For

²⁷ Clive Pearson, "Telling Tales: Following the Hyphenated Jesus-Christ," (ATLA Religion Database, Date accessed, 05/05/2020), 15.

²⁸ Richard S. Vosko, *Shaped by what we Shape: How the Environment for Worship Affects Ritual Behaviour* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 4.

this reason, the *faa-Samoa* becomes an integral part of worship and the expression of faith.

Chapter 3

CCCS Worship in Diaspora

Introduction

This chapter will focus on CCCS worship in diaspora; and in particular, the CCCS Church in Sydney Australia. A brief history of the early beginnings of the CCCS Fairfield, Sydney, shall be discussed, together with its approach to traditional Congregational form of worship on Sundays. Whether or not the traditional CCCS Sunday worship can accommodate changes in its liturgies and worship formation could embrace and reflect a more diasporic Congregation, shall be the concluding point of argument.

3.1 Diaspora and Christian Theology

The term “diaspora” means dispersion, scatter or spread out, and normally refers to the dispersion of the Jews outside Israel from the time of the Babylonian Captivity until the modern era. Diaspora also describes the dispersion of the Christians after A.D. 70 when Rome sacked Jerusalem and thousands of Christians fled and scattered throughout the Mediterranean area.²⁹ More recently the term has been associated with the process of modern migration (due to employment, education, health, persecution, asylum, poverty, to name a few reasons) from one place to another.

Diasporic theology is a recent trend of articulating God’s revelation with the human context. It emerged from within the scope of contextualization, where human

²⁹ "Diaspora | Judaism" *“Encyclopedia Britannica.”* (Retrieved, 2018).

context and personal experiences become key factors of theological discourses, in addition to scripture and Church traditions. During the past 30 - 40 years there has been a rise in diasporic type of theologies in Australia, as the country becomes increasingly multicultural with greater flows of immigrant refugees from the Middle East, the African continent and Asia. They bring with them their culture, religion and worldview to their new host country.

Resettling in a new country is never an easy task. Coming to terms with being identified as a foreigner has its own issues, as in the case of one Samoan-Australian, Auatama Iese. His attempts at re-defining his new identity made him realize that one ought to embrace the fusion of two horizons, the Australian lifestyle, synchronized with his Samoan ethnicity.³⁰ Thus, one's identity can be described as an inter-cultural experience in diaspora, simultaneously living in between and embracing both cultural traditions. Furthermore, for Samoans living in diaspora, families and Samoan the community play an important role in shaping their identities, particularly when they converge as the Samoan *Lotu* or Church.

3.1.1 Sunday Service Worship

Sunday is considered a sacred day in Samoa. Being a sacred day, or *Aso Sa*, (as stated earlier) Sunday is accorded as a holy day to be observed. The Church building or *Falesā* (literally the sacred house) is where most locals would congregate in worship on Sundays, giving praise and honour to the Lord. An orderly Sunday worship service began from the LMS missionaries, and adjusted over time by the mother Church, and

³⁰ Auatama Peleti Iese, "Shaping a Tama o le Va Christology for fatherless child": An Australian Samoan Perspective" (B.Th Thesis, Malua theological College, Apia Samoa, 2015),11.

Malua Theological College. A normal Sunday routine begins with a Sunday school programme, followed by the Church service, after a bell is sounded. At Malua, and in most CCCS parishes, there is a prelude instrumental before the service, and the liturgy is done in an orderly manner, commencing with a call to worship until the sermon concludes, with hymns sung in between. A children's story and scripture readings also form part of this communal worship.

This structured form of worship is common to most Protestant churches, though offerings or tithe may be dealt with differently in others. Amongst North American Protestants, worship is preacher-centred, in tandem with music and singing, and the preached sermon. A non-member of such an organization may feel left out, for it is limited in the form of congregational participation.³¹ The laity could be regarded as mere spectators in such an ordered-environment. However, in other congregations, preaching plays a leading role towards congregational vitality. This vitality is not measure on the numerical growth of the church, but on the pastor's responsibility to preach, and inspire discipleship.³²

This important aspect of worship can be seen amongst CCCS Churches in diaspora as they make the necessary adjustments. The "variations" in service include the reading of the bible, the children's story, and the sermon, all done in Samoan and English. This is being adhered to in most Sydney-based churches, mindful of its English speaking members, youth, teenagers, young couples, adopted/foster children and other non-Samoan speakers.

³¹ Susan Brown Snook, "Preaching for Congregational Vitality," in *Anglican Theological Review*, (ATLA, January 2019), 78.

³² *Ibid.*, 145.

Thus, in the following section I will look at how the diasporic Churches can adapt to changes in liturgical developments and worshipping arrangements. The aim is to determine if a revised theology of worship may assist in reclaiming our people, especially the youth of our Churches.

3.3 A Revised Theology of Worship and Declining Youth Attendance

Many establishments and mainline Churches have difficulty maintaining attendance of young adults. It is an experience common in many churches today, including the CCCS. Different denominations have different approaches to solving the issue, that of ensuring our 25-35 and younger age groups are not led astray. Whenever people from all walks of life congregate in a single location, such as in a church, one is always reminded of the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, where he urged his fellow Christians that "for just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ."³³ For Paul, people ought to embrace the essence of unity in diversity, united in one God.

The CCCS in diaspora ought to acknowledge that a more inclusive model, founded on the strength of the *faa-Samoa* and Christianity but also acknowledging the multicultural Australian society, of which the CCCS is now a part of. Losing one's identity as a Samoan, and that of the *faa-Samoa* may be a danger, for one carries one's identity to a foreign land. However, we also need to respect and be receptive of other cultures by using the English language in worship, through singing, prayers, Holy Communion, and sermons.

³³ 1 Corinthians 12: 12. Holy Bible, NRSV.

Young people should also be encouraged to participate more in Church liturgies, through hymns, or sharing moral skits. This gives them an opportunity to express themselves, utilizing contemporary songs and tunes. Our young people could also lead the weekly *Au Taumafai* (Christian endeavours) or *Au Leoleo* (members of the prayer meeting groups or the Watcher's Prayer Union) services, rather than the *Faifeau* and deacons. A youth may also do the Children's story or read the assigned scriptures, so as to remove some of the barriers in our current CCCS worship services. Extra-curricular programs, such as charity and awareness programs, fundraising activities may also help in drawing the attention of our young members and non-members back to Church.

The communal aspect of congregationalism ought to be seriously revisited, for it is a vital clue in helping to reclaim our youth, now firmly embedded in western values of individualism. Their participation, and our roles as elders in their spiritual formation and ensuring their inclusion in all aspects of our worshiping community is a must. As one Waldemar Kohl suggests, we should pay attention to what our young members do, not only in our worship service but outside.³⁴ Thus, the involvement of the Church in re-gathering its youth ought to start, not only within the realms of our Church communities, but as well as outside the Church which will inevitably influence the path that young people take.

³⁴ Waldemar Kohl, "Theological and Philosophical Understanding of Church Liturgy/Worship" in *International Congregational Journal*. 76.

3.4 A Reinterpretation of CCCS Worship in Diaspora as Reverence, Devotion, Respect, and Reliance on God

The CCCS Mother Church is based in Apia, which is located at Malua Theological College, Samoa, where the pioneers of the CCCS Australia were trained and educated for God's ministry. The Church holds its Annual Conference at Malua in May each year, where Ministers and their wives, deacons, parishioners, and youth leaders of the Church gather to discuss matters pertaining to the welfare and development of the Church, locally and internationally.

The migration of our people to overseas countries come about due to family, employment, and educational opportunities, others for leisure and change of scenery. As religion and *fa'asamoa* go hand-in-hand in the Samoa society, it was inevitable that migrants will eventually join or help set up a Samoan Church. The *fa'asamoa* became a key ingredient in the structure and organization of Samoan Congregationalism. In other words, Congregationalism in Samoa was channelled into the *fa'asamoa* and became Samoan Congregationalism.³⁵ Establishing a Samoan Church in Australia (and Sydney for that matter) in order to maintain their cultural identity as Samoans was a key factor, for *lotu* is an integral part of *faa-Samoa*. For Unasa Felise Va'a,

the Samoan migrants continue to practice their religion when they migrate, the Church acting as a source of spiritual comfort and guidance. Furthermore, the Church becomes a safe haven, where they feel a sense of belonging in a familiar communal setting. The Church is looked upon as their own *nu'u* (village), where the community depend on as a system of mutual support.³⁶

However, the incorporation of the *fa'asamoa* became a challenging issue for the younger generations born and raised outside of Samoa. They struggle to adapt to a rigid

³⁵ Muaiava Sadat, *The Samoan parsonage family: The concepts of feagaiga and tagata'ese*, Vol.3, No 1 (Victoria University of Wellington, Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies, 2015), 77.

division of two cross-cultural psychological societies, or what is termed as “living in the gap, accommodating both cultures simultaneously.”³⁷ This power struggle within diasporic Churches with the *faa-Samoa*, particularly the influential *matai* system imposing itself upon Church affairs is clear for all to see, according to Rupi Apaola. A suggestion is then made that the classification and hierarchy of the village council are more applicable in the Samoan context because it is a way of life for the people.³⁸ However, if it were to apply in a different context such as Australia it can create friction or disunity due to the different social upbringings of its members.

There are also other factors that contribute to CCCS members lacking in participation, or leaving our Churches completely. Traditional cultural aspects such as the *taulaga* (offering) and the missionaries’ initiative of annual contributions which are financial burdens on the families, contribute to a mass exodus away from the CCCS and also from other mainline churches.³⁹ This is a common denominator amongst most CCCS Churches, and other denominations in Samoa and overseas.

Historically, the first CCCS parish, was established in 1980 at Marrickville, Sydney NSW, Australia.⁴⁰ It was not all plain sailing at the start, particularly when the Mother Church in Samoa had not approved the establishment of a Church in Sydney. This was due largely to the pressure from the Uniting Church of Australia demanding

³⁶ Leulu Felise Vaa, “*Saili Matagi*.” in the *Samoan Migrants in Australia*, (University of the South Pacific Institute of Pacific Studies and National University of Samoa, 2001), 107-108.

³⁷ Ibid. 47,48

³⁸ Rupi Apaola, “Maota Tauave: A cultural hinderance in the Ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), Australia – A case study in CCCS Liverpool, Sydney Australia, (Bth Thesis, Malua Theological College, Apia Samoa, 2016), 8.

³⁹ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*, ed (Suva: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1994), 164-166.

⁴⁰ Fauena Leilua, “A History of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) at Fairfield, New South Wales, Australia, from 1984 to 2016”, B.Th Thesis, (Malua Theological College, Apia Samoa, 2016), 5.

that all Samoan Congregationalists be under its administration.⁴¹ It was not until May 1985 at the CCCS General Assembly in Samoa that the *Matāgaluega Ausetalia* (District Australia) was finally recognized and approved.⁴²

Thus, the CCCS in diaspora has evolved, despite the challenges both culturally and spiritually. The Samoan language has become secondary for the younger generations, for lack of use or spoken in the family homes. However, a balance ought to be established, in order to maintain the *faa-Samoa* and traditional forms of worship, especially with our youth, born and raised in Australia or have lived in Australia for a long period. Incorporating English in most, if not all parts of CCCS liturgies, and led by the youth, may help alleviate some of the challenges facing diasporic Churches like the CCCS Sydney. This inclusive form of worship will cater for both old and young, and not just the *Faifeau* or elder members of the Congregation.

⁴¹ Leulu Felise Vaa, “*Saili Matagi*.” *Samoan Migrants in Australia*, (2001), 111.

⁴² Fauolo Oka: *O Vavega o le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 680.

Conclusion

The current form of worship adopted by the CCCS Church in Sydney, to some extent, does not address nor cater for the needs of the young generations. Being a communal-based denomination, the current CCCS autonomous form of worship was born out of Congregational principles. Influential and shaped in its current worship and liturgies were the LMS missionaries, as well as Samoa's pre-Christian religions. However, this has not prevented our young people leaning towards more charismatic Churches, where they experience social media platforms, spiritual awakening and emotional aspect of worship at play.

The challenge for the EFKS in diaspora is to incorporate an inclusive model that has its strength in the *faa-Samoa* Christianity, but also acknowledges the multicultural Australian society we now live in. Perhaps the Church may start by re-visiting a theology of worship that gives reverence to the Hebrew meanings of *hodah*, to worship openly and freely, and *zamar*, to sing hymns or praises, and *zamach*, to shine cheerfully, to be joyful, glad or to express joy.⁴³ The guiding principle is that of an unrestrained believer, who has offered himself or herself fully to the Lord in praise.

Furthermore, our diasporic Church ought to engage its members in promoting unity in diversity, an inclusive theology of worship that is geared towards a life-oriented mission. A mission that begins with a proper and sound theological awareness of our young people within our Church liturgies and extra curriculum programs. This is the prerogative of our Church leaders, to see that the young people, the future of the Church, are firmly entrenched in a re-newed theology of worship. Therefore, there should not be any religious and cultural hindrance in the spiritual formation of a young

⁴³ Oshun, 188.

person, something that Otele Perelini alluded to when he said that freedom in the gospel of salvation has to be promoted, and that if any culture and religion should deny anyone from this freedom is considered false.⁴⁴ In all, a theology of worship that encompasses the true elements of joy, and gladness, as one comes face to face with our Lord, the heart of our worship, and to serve Him, and worship Him eternally.

⁴⁴ Otele Perelini, "Gospel and Culture: A Biblical Perspective," in *The Cross and the Tanoa*, ed. Russell Chandran (Suva: USP Press, 1988), 39.

Glossary

- Afiāfi – Evening or night
- Aiga - family (both immediate and extended, related, home).
- Aitu - class of pre-Christian gods of human origin, usually took the form of animals, birds, humans, or other natural objects.
- Alofa – love, mercy
- Alofisā – Public form of worship known as the *ava* ceremony
- Aso Sā – Sunday or Sacred day
- Atua - God, also pre-Christian gods of non-human origin.
- Au Leoleo - members of the prayer meeting groups or the Watcher’s Prayer Union
- Au Taumafai - Christian endeavours
- Ava - kava (shrub, ceremonial drink), orator's cup.
- Fa’aaloalo – respect, honor
- Fa’a-Samoa - Samoan culture or custom, Samoan way, Samoan language.
- Faifeau – Church Minister
- Fale – House
- Falesā – Church or Sacred house
- Fanaafi o Fa’amalama – Private form of worship conducted within the Samoan family household.
- Feagaiga – Covenant
- Ifoga – A traditional Samoan practice conducted by the culprit and family or village to the offended family in order to forgive them.
- Lotu - Church

- Matai - titled family head, general term applied to both chiefs and orators.
- Magalafu – a fireplace located in the centre of a *fale* Samoa
- Nu'u – Village
- Ositaulaga - Priest
- Papalagi – white people considered sky breakers or heaven busters
- Pulotu – Spiritual world where the spirits of the dead descend.
- Tagaloa – Pre-Christian God who was considered the supreme ruler and creator of the universe
- Tamaitai matua – elder female.
- Tapuaiga - Worship
- Taulaga - Offering
- Tautua – service
- Tupua – Pre-Christian gods who were the defied spirits of dead chiefs or deceased persons of high rank.
- Vala – cloak

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