

TAFATOLU O LE AIGA O LE FAIFE'AU:
A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE
AIGA SAMOA AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE
TRINITY AND THEIR VALUE TO THE
MINISTER AND HIS FAMILY IN THE
MINISTRY OF THE CCCS

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the Malua Theological College

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Theology

by

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July 2021

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a theological reflection on the nature of the minister's family (*aiga o le faife'au*) in the ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa. A look into the *aiga* and the Samoan understanding, and the Doctrine of the Trinity, and its important value within the *aiga o le faife'au*. A discussion of the nature of the Trinity is central in this endeavour as an attempt will be made to establish a theological exercise using the *Tafatolu* hermeneutic to integrate the values and qualities of the Trinity into the *aiga o le faife'au*. The objective is for the minister and his family, including the wife (*faletua*) and the children (*fanau*) to reflect the nature of the Trinity in the ministry. Furthermore, the impact that the concept of *aiga* in the Samoan understanding has on the *aiga o le faife'au* is of vital importance in the nature of the ministry in the Samoan context. The two are certainly inseparable, for the *aiga potopoto* (extended family) is always the foundation of the *aiga o le faife'au* where it belongs. This paper attempts to understand the significance of the theological richness of the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as the deeper values within the Samoan *aiga*, and to explore the application of all this in the life of the *aiga o le faife'au* in the ministry of the Church.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work in loving memory of my late grandparents Seve Ailima and Faau Ailima, as well as Vaalele Tapaleao and Saimealafo Tapaleao, whose dying wish was to dedicate my life to God and his ministry. Your prayers, blessings, and wisdom have directed me to accomplish your wish.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to develop a theological understanding on how the *aiga o le faife'au* (minister's family) can be a symbol of unity, love, and peace, within the ministry of the Church in the CCCS (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa) context. As a son of a minister and growing up within the ministry, I have experienced being part of my parents' work as they serve the Lord wholeheartedly. My siblings and I have learned the fact that our parents needed our help in many other aspects of the ministry. These include tidying up and preparing venues for different activities for the Sunday School, Youth, Men's Fellowship, Women's Fellowship, and sometimes the church for Sunday Worship. Being the minister's children makes us the focus of all the prep talks from my parents every evening after devotion. The purpose of which is to make sure we know our roles and responsibilities as children of the minister. Now that I am beginning to understand the meaning of life in the ministry of the Church, I have realized how important our role is as children in the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au*.

There are also expectations of the people of seeing the *aiga o le faife'au*, starting from the minister, his wife, and his children¹ to set an example of an ideal family, reflecting especially the highly expected qualities of unity, love and peace and other Christian values. For this reason, an attempt will be taken to look into the Samoan concept of *aiga* to reveal the hidden treasures of the Samoan culture and way of life that can influence the life of any Samoan, like someone going into the ministry of the

¹ I am aware of the fact that there are some ministers' families without children. But this work focuses on the experience within my own family in an attempt to contribute theologically in enriching the life of an *aiga o le faife'au* and its purpose in the ministry of the Church.

Church. Then the doctrine of the Trinity² will be looked at in order to find these treasured qualities of life deeply rooted in the very nature of God himself. The three qualities of unity, love, and peace are emphasized in this effort not only to justify the use of *tafatolu* hermeneutic, but also for the fact that these are central in the Trinitarian nature of God. A good understanding of these qualities would help in clarifying the reason why the *aiga o le faife'au* is not just any family, but a family being called to serve God in the ministry of the Church.

Tafatolu Perspective

The *tafatolu* (triangle or three-sided) is used as a perspective and as a theological entry point, to describe the three-sidedness of the unity yet distinctive nature of the *aiga o le faife'au* comprised of the minister, his wife, and his children. It is described as a representation of the different roles and responsibilities of each side of the *aiga o le faife'au* and for the theological development of this work, the *tafatolu* refers to the three Persons of the Trinity. The whole idea of using the *tafatolu* hermeneutic is to identify the central qualities of the Trinity as pointed out earlier – unity, love, and peace. These three qualities are central and inseparable in the nature of the existence of God himself. The unity of the Godhead or the Trinity is found in the interrelatedness of the three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the unity that is possible only because of the eternal love of God within Himself, where true peace is found.

In the context of Malua Theological College, the word *tafatolu* refers to different aspects of life in the college. For example, there is the *tafatolu o le olaga: tino, mafaufau, ma le agaga* (three sidedness of life: body, mind, and spirit). There is the

²Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Sixth ed. (Maryknoll, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 572-74.

tafatolu that refers to the three sub-sections of the college that make up Malua: Malua, Leulumoega *ma le* (and the) Atina'e (Malua Theological College, Leulumoega Fou College, and the *Atina'e* [Church Development]). Despite the different sides and their respective identities, they are complementary of each other and considered as one. There is also a theological argument that the definition of theology comes down to the truth in every individual of the so-called triangle of life, consisting of the Self, God and Others.³ It means that this triangle of life must be held strongly in faith as one's relationship with God is reflected in his or her relationship with others including creation. Alesana Palaamo also uses the *tafatolu* as a methodological framework and presents the *tafatolu* as an inverted triangle with each of its sides representing three parts of his research, the cultural, the academia, and self, indicating that all three sides of the *tafatolu* contribute to each other in a respective way.⁴

Another important use of *tafatolu* in this paper refers to the three sidedness of the *aiga* Samoa, especially in relation to the *aiga o le faife'au* during the *osiga feagaiga* (establishing of the covenant between the *aiga o le faife'au* and the congregation concerned). During this special occasion, the *tafatolu* consisting of the two sides of *aiga potopoto* (extended family) of the *faife'au*⁵ and the *aiga potopoto* of the *faletua* and then the minister and his family, *aiga o le faife'au*. These three sides of the *aiga* become united for the purpose of this covenant being established. This becomes the reality in the life of the *aiga o le faife'au* in the ministry of the Church. The minister and his family know that they are not on their own in the ministry, because they are always part of the

³ Taipsia Leilua, sharing in class, TH 101, 2018.

⁴ Alesana Fosi Palaamo, "Tafatolu (Three-Sides): A Samoan Research Methodological Framework," *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work* 30, no. 4 (2018).

⁵ These extended families include both sides of the ministers' families – his paternal and maternal families. The same goes with the extended families of the wife's families.

tafatolu together with the extended families on both sides. Their prayers and support in various ways bear so much on the lives of the minister, his wife, and their children. Thus, the saying goes: *O faiva e tapuaia e manuia*, meaning that the ministry of the minister and his family will be a success because of the prayers and support of the extended families.

Furthermore, there is the *tafatolu* of the ministry itself, on both the cultural and the spiritual aspects of the *feagaiga* (covenant). The cultural triangle is the three sidedness of the covenant between the extended families of the minister and his wife, the congregation, and the *aiga o le faife'au*. Then there is the most important *feagaiga* in the three-sidedness of God himself, the *aiga o le faife'au* and the congregation. Both aspects of the *feagaiga* are full of promises, prayers, and blessings for the *aiga o le faife'au*. This is the weight of the ministry that I have grown to understand as we, the children, see the need for us to perform our role as children to complete the triangle of the *aiga o le faife'au* in the ministry.

Methodology

Since this paper is about experience in the context of a minister's family in the ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa, a contextual approach is, therefore, appropriate. Stephen Bevans⁶ explains this method of contextualization clearly, "The contextualization of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative." He offers models of Contextual Theology to assist and merge theological ideas with biblical scripture and many other concepts. Furthermore, he emphasizes that Contextual Theology is a way of

⁶ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Faith and Culture Series (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 1.

practicing theology in which one considers the spirit and message of the gospel⁷. He suggests six models of Contextual Theology: translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, transcendental, and countercultural. The translation model is probably the most common of the six, and Bevans believes that in a way, every model of Contextual theology is in some aspect translation. There is always content to be adapted or accommodated to a particular culture. In this case, the translation model is not a mere word-for-word correspondence of the doctrinal language of one culture into doctrinal language of another, but rather a concern with translating the meaning or interpretation of a Doctrine into another cultural context. Therefore, the translation model is relevant and appropriate for the task of this paper.

Thesis' Structure

This paper consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the concept of *aiga* and its significance within the Samoan context. The *aiga* is analysed thoroughly, to highlight its *tafatolu* nature and to see the hidden qualities of the Samoan culture and way of life. These qualities of the *aiga* as a whole would help in the ministry of the Church. Chapter 2 explains the *tafatolu* nature and qualities of the Trinity and how it would help in developing a theological understanding of the *tafatolu* ministry of the *aiga o le faife'au*. Chapter 3 develops further the theological discussion of how the qualities of the *tafatolu* of the Trinity, as well as the *tafatolu* of the *aiga* Samoa, may enrich the *aiga o le faife'au* as they commit themselves to the ministry of the Church. The conclusion then highlights the main points developed throughout this paper, with the intention of laying out some useful recommendations in aiding the children of the

⁷ Ibid.

ministers in the ministry. For the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au*, a mutual recognition of one another in serving God in the ministry of the Church is vital. That the minister, his wife, and his children are always united in love, and therefore should experience the true peace of God, not only amongst themselves, but also in relation to the congregation and the *aiga potopoto* as well.

CHAPTER 1

AIGA SAMOA

This first chapter focuses on the fabric and nature of the concept of *aiga* (family) in accordance with the Samoan culture and way of life. For the Samoans, the *aiga* defines who an individual person is, in relation to his roots in a *matai* (chief or orator, head of an extended family) title, which includes relationships to all the treasures of the family especially land. Thus, one is born into a family, and that family nurtures his or her life in accordance with the cultural values, the spiritual sustenance, and all the preparation needed in facing the changing world encountered in life.

There is the nuclear or immediate family consisting of three sides - a father, a mother, and their children. This nuclear form of family is almost non-existent¹ in the Samoan culture and way of life. Which means that one is always part of the wider *aiga potopoto* formed up of a number of nuclear families co-existing in the same or several locations within the same village community. From within this form of *aiga* Samoa comes the *aiga o le faife'au*. When one enters Malua with his family (nuclear) and later become a minister of a congregation together with his wife and children, he and his family are always part of the *aiga potopoto*. This interrelatedness of the *aiga o le faife'au* with the *aiga potopoto*, as well as a deeper understanding of all the qualities and invaluable treasures of family living which have moulded the lives of all Samoans is the task of this chapter.

¹ When a couple with children live in their own separate house, they feel a certain degree of independence, though they are always part of the *aiga potopoto*.

In the next section, the emphasis is given to the views of some Samoan scholars who have contributed to the discussion of this central concept of *aiga*. A sound understanding of the deeper meaning of *aiga* and the hidden treasures it contains, would provide a solid foundation upon which a meaningful presentation of the *aiga o le faife'au* will be formulated.

1.1 The Hidden Treasures of *Aiga* Samoa

Ama'amalele Tofaeono refers to the *aiga* as a household structure, stating that the concept of *aiga* constitutes the wholeness of Samoan life.² It bonds the divine and the ordinary into a synthesis of existence. He states that a family is a household community in blood, close or distant, relations. In addition, it is a signification of relationships with people, or a social unit in a village where a *matai* directs religious, economic, and political activities.

Family or *aiga* is the foundation of Samoan society. Tofaeono explains in a more extensive manner that *aiga* is the incorporation of communal ties with the gods, the ancestors, as well as the divine heritages, which include the sea, the land, and the sky.³ Here, Tofaeono makes a compelling point that there was already an existing belief within the Samoan *aiga* of a sense of connection to a divine deity.⁴ This was always the belief in the old religions of the Samoans where a family worshipped many different

²Ama'amalele Tofaeono, "Eco-Theology: Aiga-the Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa," *World Mission Script* 7 (2000): 30-31.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 31.

gods, a family god, village god, district god and the national god Tagaloa.⁵ Worship was therefore a common practice in the everyday life of an *aiga*.

Moreover, Lalomilo Kamu states that family is not only the immediate or nuclear family, but he expresses the idea of *aiga potopoto*, which Tofaeono refers to as household, and how it is closely related to the *matai*⁶ system of Samoa.⁷ Both Tofaeono and Lalomilo agree on the importance of understanding the nature of the Samoan *aiga* as a unity of all people involved. Starting from the *matai* to the rest including children, all are responsible for the wellbeing of the family. The family that Margaret Mead⁸ believes it covers all relationships in blood, marriage, and adoption connections. So the spirit of unity and oneness was always part of the upbringing and nurturing experienced within the *aiga potopoto*.

It is clearly portrayed so far that the Samoans are born into a complex of relationships where an individual finds his true identity, not only in his immediate family, but more so in his extended family. This means that even as children, Samoans get to learn their true identity in understanding the relationships they are born into. This is well reflected in the Samoan proverbial expression, “*O le tagata ma lona aiga; o le*

⁵ George Turner, *Samoa, a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before: Together with Notes on the Cults and Customs of Twenty-Three Other Islands in the Pacific* (Papakura: Macmillan, 1884), 189.

⁶ *Matai* is the titled head(s) of an extended family. There are two kinds of *matai*, a chief and an orator, both of which can be found in every extended family.

⁷ Lalomilo Kamu and Fa'aolo Utumapu, *O Le Aganu'u Ma Le Talalelei* (Apia, Samoa: DL Kamu, 2008), 33-36.

⁸ Margaret Mead, Anna Sieben, and Jürgen Straub, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Penguin: New York, 1973), 39-41.

tagata ma lona faasinomaga.”⁹ Imoa Moa states that this is because Samoa is socially organized and oriented around family and inheritance.¹⁰

Furthermore, children are taught about basic Samoan concepts such as *faaaloalo* (respect), *tautua* (service), *va fealoai* (how to relate to others), along with others, and how they are embodied in social life¹¹. Cluny Macpherson states that families are also political entities where the children learn the fundamental elements of political power and authority along with the roles and responsibilities which these are used in. Thus, children are very much part of the family life both nuclear and extended. They are moulded and nurtured with moral values, as mentioned above, that are central in a communal way of living, a kind of life that promotes unity, love, and peace, which are central qualities in the *faa*-Samoa. These qualities intimately exist within the practices of *faaaloalo*, *tautua* and *va-fealoai*. They are in many ways the driving forces within the Samoan culture.

1.1.1 *Autasi* (Unity) in the *Aiga*

Tolu Muliaina emphasizes unity in the case of *aiga potopoto* (extended family), where family affairs are administered together for family matters and all¹². Despite the many tasks and roles, responsibility is shared as everyone is gathered from one single provision, cook from one fire, share from one pot and hearth, and regenerate from one

⁹*O le tagata ma lona aiga; o le tagata ma lona faasinomaga* (A person and his family; a person and his inheritance/heritage: A translation made by myself)

¹⁰Imoa Moa, "“O Le Suli Va’aia O Le Atua”[a Visible Heir of God]: A Trinitarian Theology for the Faifeau Identity of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand" (Research Space Auckland, 2018), 120.

¹¹Cluny Macpherson, *The Warm Winds of Change: Globalisation and Contemporary Samoa* (Auckland: University Press, 2013), 13.

¹²Tolu Muliaina, "Grounding Malaga in ‘Aiga Samoa: Alofa as Manifested in Population Movement," PhD Thesis, University of South Pacific (2017): 51-52.

cooking house¹³. Muliaina sums up this unity in one sentence, “The individual is ‘in’ the community and the community is ‘in’ the individual”. When looking at an individual or person in the Samoan society, you are not only seeing the mere individual, but you are looking at the face of the cosmic-community¹⁴. Perhaps this is an indication of unity within the community as a mirror of Samoan culture in the *aiga*. The individual is never alone; he or she is never alone in life.

1.1.2 Alofa (Love) in the Aiga

Alofa is deeply rooted in the culture of the people and their way of life within the family context. This is the nature of how the Samoans live, as reflected in the kind of houses they used to live in before the European styled houses. Latu Latai refers to the Samoan *fale* (house) as an illustration of the openness within their lifestyle. The Samoan *fale* is open all around, no walls and no doors, which means everyone can see everyone else. Thus, no one can pass by without being invited for a meal or for a rest before continuing on his/her way. It is an atmosphere where love becomes a norm in everyday experiences. Even the house itself looks inviting, and it speaks volume of the communal way of living where sharing in mutual love and compassion amongst themselves becomes natural.

The *fale* is also symbolic of how the *aiga* was complementary to other *aiga* around their open *fale*. It is where the family lived together and took on a holistic approach where responsibilities are shared amongst one another within the household¹⁵. The men cooked and the women cared for the kids, where the kids would at least care

¹³Ibid., 52-55.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵ Latu Latai, "11. From Open Fale to Mission Houses: Negotiating the Boundaries of “Domesticity” in Samoa," *Divine domesticities: Christian paradoxes in Asia and* 211 (2000): 299-324.

for another child once in their life. This vital feature of Samoan architecture is symbolic of culture and connection with kinship, ancestors, the land and most notably the community¹⁶.

1.1.3 *Filemu* (Peace) in the *Aiga*

When houses belonging to an extended family of three or more nuclear families stand close to each other, there would always be peace experienced by the whole family. The openness, the sharing, the love and the unity amongst themselves are seen as pillars upon which the family stands. This is reflected in the caring concern felt amongst the members of the same extended family. They look out for the safety and wellbeing of one another. This harmonious atmosphere can actually become a reality in the lives of many families in Samoa. So the experience of peace is always real in the context of the *aiga*.

This *filemu* (peace) in the context of the *aiga* reflects the interrelatedness not just of people, but of the inter-connectedness with all things that belong to the *aiga*. Fineaso Fa'alafi discusses this as the cosmic-community, the people, land, chiefhood, dead ancestors, spiritual gods, are all included as part of one's identity¹⁷. This leads to the general understanding that the pain or the suffering of an individual in the Samoan *aiga* is the pain of the whole family. They feel for one another in every aspect of life and in any negative consequences of whatever is carried out as a family. Thus, peace, together with unity and love, become rivers of blessings, which nurture the life of the family amongst all its members, from the *matai* to the children.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Fineaso T.S. Fa'alafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoan Methodism, 1828-1928* (Apia: Piula Theological College, 2005), 28.

1.2 The *Matai* System and the *Aiga*

Within the Samoan culture, the *matai* system is the backbone of the *faa*-Samoa or the Samoan way of life. The *matai* (chiefs and orators) are leaders of the extended families, and they represent their extended families in the *Fono a Matai* (council of chiefs) where all the rules and regulations in running the village community are made and finalized. The *matai* system represents stability, promotes unity, advocates social order, and encourages communal living within the Samoan society. Despite the various descriptions aforementioned that portray a unified and seemingly harmonious image of the *aiga*, it is not without fault. The *aiga* itself is clearly hierarchical. Such hierarchy is advocated in the Samoan culture by the *matai* system. Such hierarchical order recognizes the *matai* as the head of the family, but it also recognizes the *matai* diminishing the status of other family members when the power they have is abused for selfish reasons. It is the claim of this thesis that the strong influence of the *matai* system can really be life affirming for the *aiga*, when the *matai* perform their role as leaders of the *aiga* and the community, for the wellbeing of all.

1.3 Spirituality and *Aiga* in Traditional Samoa

Long before Christianity arrived, Samoans were deeply spiritual/religious people. They conducted worship and held a unique connection to a higher deity. In John Williams second visit to Samoa, he found that Samoa had “gods many and lords many”¹⁸. Samoans were polytheistic and every person at his or her birth was to be taken under the care of some god or *aitu*¹⁹. According to Turner, everyone in the Samoan

¹⁸ James Joseph Ellis, *John Williams: The Martyr Missionary of Polynesia* (London: SW Partridge, 1890), 136-38.

¹⁹ *aitu* can mean ‘god’ or ‘spirit’ in the Samoan language.

society had four gods: a family god, a god of the village, a district god and god of war.²⁰ In Samoa, religion was always part of the family system.

Such a connection is clear within the Samoan *aiga* where the fear of these very gods or *aitus* became a means of social control in the life of the *aiga*. Samoans believed that the life of their ancestors never ended but were instead reincarnated as spirits or *aitus*. Each *aiga* was headed by a *matai* who was the family priest and meditated on behalf of his family members for good health and prosperity for his family according to Faatulituli Setu.²¹ Such practice was an everyday activity attended by all members of the family. This reveals the fact that the Samoans highly respected their gods, and trusted in them for prosperity and strength. When Christianity arrived, it was only a matter of replacing the old religion with the new, from a polytheistic to a monotheistic religion. Interestingly, the *matai* stood before the gods for the family, and before the family for the gods²². In other words, they were and are totally responsible for the wellbeing of the family in all aspects of life.

1.4. Conclusion

It is clearly seen throughout this chapter, that the *aiga* Samoa and the *faa*-Samoa are inseparable. The nature of the *aiga potopoto* reflects the kind of life the people live, and it reveals the essence of the *faa*-Samoa, which is unity in love and in peace. The communal way of life where the people experience the intimate sharing of almost

²⁰George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia: Missionary Life, Travels, and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific* (London: J. snow, 1861), 238-42.

²¹Fa'atulituli Setu, "The Ministry in the Making: A History of the Emergence of the Ministry of the Church in Samoa 1830-1900" (Pacific Theological College, 1988), 1-3. MTh

²²Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia: Missionary Life, Travels, and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific*, 427.

everything shapes the kind of people the Samoans were. From this womb of the *aiga potopoto* comes the *aiga o le faife'au*.

For the next chapter, a theological search into the nature of the Trinity is appropriate, to retrieve the deeply rooted qualities of unity, love and peace. That is, to qualify the theological statement that the Triune God was always with the people of Samoa from the very beginning. It is also for the purpose of developing the theological meaning of the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au*.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

This chapter focusses on a brief theological reflection on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in an attempt to highlight three qualities of unity, love and peace, which are central attributes of the Triune God himself. These same qualities are found in the Samoan concept of *aiga* and there is a need to justify the relevancy of these qualities in the life of the *aiga o le faife'au* as it serves God's people in the ministry of the Church.

The historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity involved many debates and councils that discussed the validity and importance of the doctrine over many years. The main concern was whether the doctrine was biblically rooted or not. This, therefore, is an attempt to provide that brief historical development of the coming into being of the doctrine, with an emphasis on how the trinitarian theologies of Athanasius and the Cappadocians solidified a solution for the debates that had occurred over time. While reflecting on the development of the doctrine, an attempt will be made to extract the qualities as mentioned above using the *tafatolu* perspective.

2.1 Biblical Foundation

There are only two verses in the New Testament where the Trinitarian formula, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is found. Matthew 28:19 where Jesus gives commission to his disciples, and 2 Corinthians 13:13 about the blessings given by Paul to the Christians in Corinth. Alister McGrath¹ believes that these two verses alone are

¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 17.

not efficient enough to constitute the doctrine of the Trinity and therefore the grounds of the foundation for the doctrine are to be found in the pervasive pattern of divine activity to which the New Testament bears witness. The Father is revealed in Christ through Spirit.² Quite often these three are linked to one another in New Testament passages as part of a whole.

Edward Henry Bickersteth states that scripture in the Old and the New Testament alike, proves the coequal Godhood of the Holy Spirit with that of the Father and the Son. He believes that when reading the Bible, one must observe the strong collateral evidence of the possible essence of plurality in unity.³ Bickersteth strives on the concept of eternal as an assurance of a God that is three in one. One of the scriptures he mentions is Isaiah 14:5, "I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." This, he believes, is an establishment of the truth within the Trinity and these Three must together subsist in one infinite or eternal Divine essence, called Jehovah or God. It is an essence that is indivisible, with each possessing not a part or portion of it, but the wholeness or perfection of the essential Godhead, in an unity of nature: One Eternal Jehovah. Bickersteth believes with this solemn qualification, God is in truth but one Jehovah; a Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁴

McGrath also believes that this same Trinitarian structure is found in the Old Testament.⁵ He speaks of wisdom, the word of God and the Spirit of God pointing to a divine pattern of activity and presence in and through creation where God is all powerful, and transcendent. It is seen in the history of Israel in their life and their

² Ibid.

³ Edward H Bickersteth, *The Trinity: The Classic Study of Biblical Trinitarianism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 118-19.

⁴ Ibid., 144-45.

⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 585-87.

ministry. However, the interpretation of the separate persons of the Triune God was open for discussion and caused many debates over the concept of hierarchy and subordination. What is clear from the biblical account is the fact that God is indeed One in Three. A unity in diversity. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2.2 Three in One – Scholarly Reviews

Ralph Smith implies that the doctrine of the Trinity is far-reaching and deep.⁶ He also believes that it is impossible for us to fully unfold and understand the meaning or the implications of the doctrine. Of all gods in all other religions in the world, Smith believes, the triune God of the Bible is truly wholly personal. The Bible does not necessarily deal with the problem of the One and the Many as an abstract philosophical problem, and Christians are not given principles to enable them to discover the harmony of One and the Many in their lives, but the answer to the problem for any Christian is obvious and simple: the doctrine of the Trinity provides a solution to the intimacy of the One and the Many in God with the solution being God himself.⁷ Because God is One, there is unity in Him and in what he created, but he is also Three.

Robert Jenson argues that traditional understandings of the divine nature of God have led to an ‘incoherent’ and ‘contradictory’ christology and a heretical one. He blames Augustine for failing to grasp the idea of the Cappadocian distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* (‘essence’ and ‘substance’).⁸

⁶Ralph Allan Smith, *Trinity and Reality: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press & Book Service, 2004), 2-3.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Colin E Gunton, *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson* (Grand Rapids: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011).

One of the biggest arguments David Jensen believes is the cause of the preassumed notion of inequality within the Trinity which is the third of these personas: the Holy Spirit. He argues that the basic reason is that the Spirit was subtly and firstly experienced in Christian life and community: “Long before the Spirit was a theme of doctrine, He was a fact in the experience of the community.”⁹ Jensen validates the point that Gregory of Nazianzus that the Spirit came to dwell in the disciples, measuring Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him, at the beginning of the Gospel, after the Passion and the Ascension, making their powers perfect, and appearing in fiery tongues.¹⁰ He is also declared by Jesus. The reasons for pneumatological confusion until at least the third Christian century are clear: the focus on the Spirit’s activity in salvation, the lack of New Testament clarity about the relations between trinitarian members, and the parallelism in the Old Testament between Word and Spirit. Jensen equates the dual role the Son and the Spirit play in salvation.

Najeeb Awad gives an account of John Zizioulas who develops an understanding of personhood from an ecclesiological approach in his book, *Being as Community*, where he construes the church as the image of the triune personhood of God.¹¹ Zizioulas according to Awad extends the boundaries of the theology of personhood by locating his theology within a framework of a trinitarian hermeneutics of the concepts of ‘relationship’ and ‘communion’. He begins this with his theological understanding of ‘personhood’ from the doctrine of the Church. Zizioulas alleges that the substance of God, ‘God’ has no ontological content or true being, but it has

⁹ David H Jensen, *Christian Understandings of Christ: The Historical Trajectory* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2019), 292-94.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Najeeb G Awad, "Personhood as Particularity: John Zizioulas, Colin Gunton, and the Trinitarian Theology of Personhood," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4, no. 1 (2010).

communion and that it is communion which makes beings 'be'.¹² Furthermore, the idea of 'theology of communion' is the basis or the crux of Zizioulas understanding of human personhood. He states that if the church is the image of God's communion in himself and if the human is person in the image of God ultimately in and as the community of God, then Zizioulas according to Awad argues that the human is therefore theologically a 'person' only when their personhood reflects the personhood of God. Moreover, according to Awad, Zizioulas believes that this understanding was inherited from the Cappadocians trinitarian theology with the idea of mutual inclusiveness.¹³

2.3 Athanasius' Trinitarian Theology

In Athanasius' theology of the Trinity, we see the initial stages of the development of the concept of mutual inclusiveness of the three Persons of the Trinity, also called *perichoresis*.¹⁴ The idea of mutual inclusiveness reflected in the Nicene term of *homoousios* was vital to the theology of Athanasius and his trinitarian theology. He not only answers the question of the subordination of the Son to the Father, but he argues against the Arians and their mentality which excluded the Son in favour of the Father. He emphasises the importance of the inseparability of God's eternal being that is revealed through Jesus Christ. Athanasius argues that the reason we know God is through Christ himself, and the Spirit who makes this knowledge possible. The incarnation of God in Christ makes the world fit for communion with God and the

¹²Ibid., 2-3.

¹³John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 15-23.

¹⁴John R Meyer, "God's Trinitarian Substance in Athanasian Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59, no. 1 (2006): 81-97.

power in the Spirit. Moreover, Athanasius sums this up by claiming that there is mutual inclusiveness in the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Although Athanasius argued his point and attempted to highlight the mutual inclusiveness of the three Persons of the Trinity, his interpretation of the word *homoousios* was thought to be too closely identifiable in particular of the Father and the Son with the expense of their respective distinctive natures. His development of the idea of mutual inclusiveness and the one essence of Father and Son made no distinction on the differences between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. According to Edmund Fortman, Athanasius did not explain how the distinctiveness of the three Persons could take place.¹⁵ Many people in the beginning of the fourth century thought that the word *ousia* and *hypostasis* had the same meaning and were used simultaneously. However, the Cappadocians' contribution to this concept of mutual inclusiveness grounds the development of the orthodox formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the council of Constantinople in 381 AD.¹⁶

2.4 Cappadocians' Theology of Mutual Inclusiveness

The Cappadocians are unique to the doctrine of the Trinity and its development due to fact that they could clarify the relational aspect of the 'unity' and 'distinction' within the Triune God. The best known Cappadocians were Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Boris Bobrinskoy describes them as the "triad that celebrated the Triad".¹⁷ Their contribution to terminological and doctrinal debate of the

¹⁵Edmund J Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 75.

¹⁶ Anne Hunt, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998).

¹⁷Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1999), 248.

Trinity gave Eastern Trinitarian theologians a distinctive direction for its theology. This section will attempt to emphasise and highlight the idea they enhanced about mutual inclusiveness within the Trinity.

The Cappadocians carefully used scripture as a foundation of the concept of mutual inclusiveness by firmly rooting their understanding of God in the salvation history.¹⁸ They believed that God exists only as persons in relation and that this should become the ground of our human relationships. They began their case with the unfinished and unresolved issue left by Athanasius. For the Cappadocians, relation is possible only through distinction, but such a distinction does not ruin the idea of oneness in being apart, but creates a paradoxical union or unity. The Cappadocians believed that to believe in God is to believe in the Trinity, and mutual inclusiveness is their central idea behind their understanding of the Triune God.¹⁹

2.5 Mutual Inclusiveness

The debate over the many years about the nature of the Triune God has led to conflict and dispute by many Christians. However, understanding the mutual inclusiveness grounded by the Cappadocians, a relation that is only possible through distinction. It is through distinction that relation is existent, further emphasising the points discussed that without relationality, there is no communion and unity. However, the question begs as to what the relational aspect of the Trinity is. But over the course of the development of the doctrine, it solidified the truth that relation within the Trinity is rooted in the ultimate factors of love and peace, which unites the Triune being of God.

¹⁸ Denis Edwards, *Human Experience of God* (New York, Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1983), 60.

¹⁹ Albert C Meesters, "The Cappadocians and Their Trinitarian Conceptions of God," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 54, no. 4 (2012): 407.

2.5.1 God is Love in Unity and Unity in Love

Jürgen Moltmann understands God as the triune God, who in himself constitutes the unique and perfect fellowship of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. He begins his opinion on the doctrine of God with the trinity of the Persons and goes on to ask about the unity of the Triune God²⁰. For Moltmann, the divine unity is the ‘unitedness’, the at-oneness of the three persons with one another. This makes God a personal God, therefore making him essentially relational. Now Moltmann maintains throughout his work the fellowship of the Trinity within relation in the essence of love and freedom. He further emphasises this point by understanding the suffering God because of his love. His theology of the cross shaped the way he understood the Trinity²¹. The confession that God is indeed love is central to the view of Moltmann, because he reveals himself as love in the fellowship of this very Trinity and it was from eternity an open love, open to man, open to the world, and open to time.

Millard Erickson explains the concept behind the need for more than one person to be in Trinity if God is to be love²².

The fact that God is three persons rather than merely two also is a demonstration of the character of love. There is an old statement, --”two’s company; three’s a crowd.” It is possible for two human persons to have a relationship of love for one another that is much more difficult for three persons to have among themselves. Two persons may simply reciprocate love, not having to share the other person’s love with anyone else. With three persons, there must be a greater quality of selflessness, of genuine *agapē*. This Trinity founded upon love is a demonstration of the full nature of *agapē*.

²⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 150.

²¹ Dennis W Jowers, "The Theology of the Cross as Theology of the Trinity: A Critique of Jürgen Moltmann's Staurocentric Trinitarianism," *Tyndale Bulletin* 52, no. 2 (2001): 245-66.

²² Millard J Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity (Three Crucial Questions): Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 58-61.

He inquires the idea that a full and abiding love requires at a minimum three persons. If there was only one existent, it would result in narcissism. If two persons existed it would be classified as only mutual love. But when there is a relation of three persons, a requirement of love that expresses itself toward the other two is needed.

2.5.2 God is Peace

Peace is wholeness and completeness of life. There is no true peace apart from God for true peace comes only from God himself. It is the establishment of wholeness and goodness in relationships not only with God, but also with others. Additionally, it is also a 'peace of mind or serenity'.²³

When viewing the Hebrew understanding of peace, Taipisia Leilua²⁴ looks into the Hebrew word *shalom*. He insists that the central meaning of *shalom* is rooted in the Hebrew understanding of *shalom* as peace in heaven. Leilua borrowing from Hans Ucko²⁵ goes on to say that the Hebrew word for heaven is *shamayim* and is formed by two words that are each other's opposite: *esh*, which is fire, and *mayim*, which is water. Therefore, peace in heaven according to the Hebrews is the living together in unity and communion of two opposites, fire, and water. The water does not put out the fire and the fire does not cause the water to vaporise. Fire and water are coexistent, where despite their differences, they are united because God is all powerful. This is the beauty of harmony and mutual respect among opposite and different forces sharing in love and in peace.²⁶ The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1-9; 61:1-3) describes this kind of life that can

²³ Willard M Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 419-21.

²⁴ Taipisia Tafa Leilua, "Covenant for a New Oceania: A Theological Response to the Environmental Crisis from a Samoan Perspective" (Melbourne College of Divinity, 2001), 252-54.

²⁵ Hans Ucko, *Common Roots – New Horizons* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 86.

²⁶ Leilua, "Covenant for a New Oceania: A Theological Response to the Environmental Crisis from a Samoan Perspective," 252-54.

be made possible by the *shalom* of God. The things that destroy one another in this sense can find peace and harmony in the *shalom* of God.

2.6 Conclusion

This theological reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity, though slightly falling to the historical development of the doctrine, did cover some very important theological arguments about the nature of the Trinity. What is clear in the discussion is the undeniable truth about the doctrine of the Trinity. It is also clear that the three persons of the Trinity are truly One. In their Oneness is the truth of their multiplicity. This means that they are always One in Many because of the love that unites them in a communion, where peace or shalom is found.

The final chapter will be dealing with a *tafatolu* theological perspective on the *aiga o le faife'au*. It is an attempt to highlight the richness of the doctrine of the Trinity together with the cultural qualities, which are found central in the Samoan way of life. The objective is to enrich the life of service of the *aiga o le faife'au* by realising the fact that they are One in Many and are a Unity in Diversity.

CHAPTER 3

A *TAFATOLU* THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE *AIGA O LE FAIFE'AU*

This final chapter brings to a climax the purpose of this paper. It is clear throughout this journey that the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* needs to be understood well for the sake of the ministry of the Church. At the beginning, the objective was to reflect theologically on the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au*: the minister, his wife, and his children. It was clear then, that I as a son of a *faife'au* have seen the need for the role of the children to be recognized as an important part of the *tafatolu*. So, the topic of this chapter points to the fact that my name is Tafatolu, and this is my theological reflection on this vitally important aspect of the ministry of the Church. As a hermeneutic though, the *tafatolu* perspective fits in well with the purpose of this endeavor.

3.1 *Aiga o le Faife'au*

The *aiga o le faife'au* is an immediate or nuclear family. It is really a miniature form of the *aiga potopoto*. It started as a nuclear family within an extended family before attending Malua Theological College to prepare for the ministry.¹ After four years of theological training, then it is ready to be called for the *galuega a le Atua*.² The aim now is to discuss the *tafatolu* nature of the *aiga o le faife'au*, highlighting the roles and responsibilities of each *tafa* (side) of the *aiga o le faife'au* in the context of the

¹ I am aware that there are single students in the Malua community, but this paper solely focuses on families within Malua and their preparation for the ministry.

² *Galuega a le Atua* is a common Samoan phrase that is used to denote the mission, work, and the ministry of God in and through the Church.

ministry. At the same time, an attempt is made to recognize the pressure of being a member of the *aiga o le faife'au*.

3.1.1 *The faife'au*

The church minister or the *faife'au* in Samoa is viewed as the leader of the congregation who holds authority and is trusted by the church members to lead the congregation in all aspects of the ministry. As an institution of church leadership, the *faife'au* was introduced to Samoa in the 19th century with the arrival of Christianity and the London Missionary Society, in order to meet their European missionary's view of the ministry. Status was therefore elevated to another level in the church and the Samoan society. The *faife'au* is referred to in a highly respected way within the community as shown in the titles used by the people when referring to him. Setefano lists these as: *Sui Vaaia o le Atua* (Visible Representative of God), *Auauna a le Atua* (Servant of God), *Faafeagaiga* (Covenanted One) and *Tamā Faaleagaga* (Spiritual Father) amongst others.³

Setu also refers to different answers when people were asked of how to describe a minister.⁴ A farmer calls the *faife'au* an "*Auauna a le Atua*" (Servant of God) and a very holy man. A school child answered that it was difficult to relate to such a holy man, as he feared that the *faife'au* would curse him. A banker answered that the *faife'au* is a *failotu* or a leader of worship. Therefore, we can already see the different views that individuals have on the *faife'au*, furthermore identifying the idea that the *faife'au* is

³Moa, "'O Le Suli Va'aia O Le Atua'[a Visible Heir of God]: A Trinitarian Theology for the Faifeau Identity of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand," 65.

⁴Setu, "The Ministry in the Making: A History of the Emergence of the Ministry of the Church in Samoa 1830-1900," vi-ix.

held in high esteem and as someone who is looked upon highly by everyone. Imoa agrees with this highly respected position given by the Samoans to the *faiife'au*.⁵

This high position or status given to the minister sometimes create problems when the minister does not preform his role as a servant of God starting from within his own family. The expectation not only from his own family but from the whole community of the congregation is enormous. He is expected to be a good leader who leads in everything; to be a good father in his own family and the best father figure in the whole community; to know how to relate to all kinds of people in all walks of life; to always preach well on Sundays and any other day; these and many other expectations are sometimes too much for the minister to bear and therefore ended up drinking..etc.⁶

Another negative impact of the high status of the *faiife'au* is the abuse of power in relation to his wife and children as well as the congregation. It creates a negative sense of the hierarchical nature of the *aiga* when the *faiife'au* does not respect and love his wife and children. This applies also with the congregation, when the *faiife'au* does not consider himself as one with the people in what they are and who they are. Nevertheless, this thesis and the research done shows the mutual inclusiveness within the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faiife'au* itself, of how each of the three *tafa* are one in the sense of complementarity rather than equality. So is the situation with the congregation. The *faiife'au* and the congregation must at all times enjoy a mutual understanding and recognition of each other. One way of seeing that is a mutual inclusiveness in their roles

⁵ Moa, "'O Le Suli Va'aia O Le Atua"[a Visible Heir of God]: A Trinitarian Theology for the Faifeau Identity of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Aotearoa New Zealand," 65-66.

⁶ Taipisia Leilua, conversations with author during the writing of this paper. Leilua is currently teaching Theology at Malua Theological College, was a lecturer in theology before serving as a minister at the Moataa EFKS from 2008 to 2013, and then resumed his teaching career at Malua at the moment.

and responsibilities in which they respect their complementarity in their duty for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

3.1.2 *The faletua*

The *faife'au* is only one part of the E.F.K.S. ministry team in the village. The *faletua* may be like the small *faleo'o* behind the big *afolau*, but she is the one holding up what you see in the E.F.K.S. ministry in the village; don't forget the *Faletuas*!⁷

The wife of the minister is commonly known as the *faletua*. The origin of this title, *faletua*, comes from the wife of a chief or *ali'i*, the first lady in the Samoan society even prior to the arrival of Christianity.⁸ The word is a combination of two words: *fale* is the word for all types of houses from small to large, and *tua* which literally means 'the back' or 'behind'. Therefore the *faletua* is a metaphoric positioning of the wife as someone who is at the back or behind of the *faife'au*. There is, however, another meaning of the word *tua* as 'relying on' or 'depend upon', which this paper develops. So, the role of the wife in this sense, must be understood as someone upon whom the *faife'au* relies or depends upon in almost everything in the ministry.

Another important role of the *faletua* consists of modelling support for the *faife'au* in all aspects of the ministry. They are always the reliable shoulders upon which the *faife'au* leans on for support most of the time. They provide a skillset of natural nurturing skills of being mothers, teaching of the children, running pre-schools and kindergartens. Tielu states that looking back at his life, he learnt more from the *faletua* than the *faife'au*, and this does not diminish the role of the *faife'au* but it shows

⁷ Apelu Tielu, "Don't Forget the Faletua," 2018 Samoan Observer, <https://www.samoaoobserver.ws/1640>.

⁸ Sailiemanu Lilomaiaava-Doktor, "Women Matai (Chiefs): Navigating and Negotiating the Paradox of Boundaries and Responsibilities," *Pacific Studies* 43, no. 1 (2020).

an aspect of complementarity within the family of the *faife'au*: what the *faletua* does complements what the *faife'au* does and vice versa.

Moreover, the *faletua* is required to fulfill many other duties within the ministry which includes *teufalesa*⁹. The *faletua* is also greatly involved in the Sunday School. The minister is obviously the leader of the Sunday School, but at the time for Sunday School to start every Sunday morning, the minister prepares to lead the worship and the *faletua* steps in to take control of the Sunday School. This is one of the many responsibilities the *faletua* has that is fundamentally important in church growth. Then there is the *Mafutaga a Tina*¹⁰, which is the backbone of the church community. This fellowship of women is under the leadership of the *faletua*. It takes care of almost everything regarding the physical and material wellbeing of the church. The number one priority in the list of the women's fellowships responsibilities is taking good care of the *aiga o le faife'au*, particularly the furnishing of their residence. So, every year during the *faamati* (in the month of March) is when the *Mafutaga a Tina* supplies all the necessary things needed by the *aiga o le faife'au* and even more, like buying a new and expensive car for the *faife'au*.

3.1.3 The fanau

Ua faavaeina nei se mafutaga a alo o susuga i faafeagaiga mai soo se Ekalesia i totonu o Niu Sila nei, e faasoa ma mafuta faatasi ai e faamalosiā ai foi la latou pito laau e lagolago ai i galuega a o latou mātua o loo tausia tovine a le Atua.
(A fellowship is founded for all children of pastors from any church within New Zealand to share and to fellowship together which is a way of enhancing their

⁹ *teufalesa* – This word translated literally from the Samoan language means ‘cleaning the church’. It refers to the actual cleaning and preparing of the church for worship on Sundays and other services taking place during the week. This task is commonly assigned to members of the Women's Fellowship.

¹⁰ Refers to the Women's Fellowship. It is a group where all mothers and young women, except those still in school, to take care of the church, the minister's house, the hall and the whole compound.

part in supporting the ministry of their parents who are taking care of God's vineyards)¹¹

This fellowship aims to encourage the *fanau a faife'au* (children of the ministers) to realise their worth and importance within the ministry of their parents. The article believes that the congregation tend to *faasinosinolima* (finger pointing) to the *fanau a le faife'au* when things go wrong within the ministry. This indicates the high expectation of the people for the children of the minister to perform their role as they are expected to do in their parents' ministry. This means that even the *tafa* (side) of the children is perceived significant in the ministry. The *tafatolu*, therefore, of the *aiga o le faife'au* is incomplete without the children's *tafa*.¹²

There are many other roles of the children that need to be mentioned, such as waking up early in the morning to sweep the carpark, setting up the church microphones for church services, helping maintain youth activities, cooking and helping their parents in the house as usual, and many more. These roles for some may be of minor importance, which becomes the reason why many *fanau a faife'au* fail to realise the need of their contribution in their parents' ministry. Their role is complementary to the other two sides of the *tafatolu*.

3.2 Tafatolu: Three in one in Aiga o le Faife'au

There is no denying that the *tafatolu* is deeply rooted in the life of the *aiga o le faife'au*. They are indeed a three in one reality about who they are, what they do, why they do it and how they do it. All these questions are expected to clarify the nature of

¹¹Admin, "Mafutaga Fanau a Faifeau Soo Se Ekalesia I Niu Sila," SAMOA TIMES, <https://www.samoatimes.co.nz/mafutaga-fanau-faifeau-soo-se-ekalesia-niu-sila/>.

¹² I pointed out at the beginning of this thesis that I am aware of the fact that there are some ministers in the ministry who have no children. This work focuses on my own experience as a son or one of the children of my parents in the ministry.

the *aiga o le faife'au*. They need to live up to the standard of life expected of them in the ministry. As Filifilia Tamasese points out:

O le mau faavae a o'u mātua e faapea: o le tapasā ma le taula o le galuega faa-Faife'au, o le olaga faaleagaga o le Faife'au ma le faletua ma le la fanau. E lē sili atu le lauga o upu mālīe i le falesa ma tāga i le sauniga lotu, i lo le lauga o le olaga faaleagaga o le Tamā ma le Tinā o le Galuega ma le la fanau.¹³

Tamasese points directly to the heart of the life of the *aiga o le faife'au*. The spiritual life of this *aiga* becomes the measure for the spiritual life of the congregation as a whole. This is exactly why the whole family, the minister, wife, and children, must reflect in their lives, the sermons, and the teachings of the minister and even the words of encouragement from the wife to the children of the community in Sunday School and Youth. Tamasese solidifies the idea of what an *aiga o le faife'au* must embody. They must embody the values of unity, love and peace as shown within the nature of the *aiga* in the Samoan context as covered in the first chapter. It is also significant to see the centrality of these qualities and values in the nature of the Triune God himself as discussed in chapter two. Now that the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* is clearly explained, this, therefore, is a theological reflection from a *tafatolu* perspective, highlighting how God is portrayed within the *aiga o le faife'au*. Particular emphasis is put on the mutual recognition of the role of the children as an important *tafa* of the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* in the ministry.

¹³ My parents' motto was: the compass and anchor of the ministry, is the spiritual life of the minister, his wife, and children. There is no greater sermon in church than the service that is portrayed in the spiritual life of the father, mother, and the work of their children.

3.2.1 *Tafatolu*: Unity in Diversity - Complementary Relation in Distinction

There is unity in diversity in the Trinity. Meaning that the power within the Trinity is his Unity or Oneness within the diversity of his *persona*. It speaks loudly of the true nature of God himself as uniquely distinctive in his roles as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, yet One and the same God. Such unity in diversity is also seen and practiced by the people of Samoa. Especially with the kind of communal living where they see themselves as one with one another. Such understanding of Samoan life is reflected in the slogan: ‘What is mine is yours and what is yours is mine.’ This underlines the way of life people live, in which they believe in the unity and oneness of the whole community in the diversity of duties and roles to perform for the common good of all. Thus, the *aiga potopoto* is really about unity and oneness, though in the multiplicity of its members. All know that one life blood flows within them. This truth is well reflected in the saying that goes: “*E uō mo aso uma, ae uso mo aso vale*” (Friends are for everyday, but brothers/sisters for stormy days¹⁴).

The *aiga o le faife’au* must be a unity in diversity, or it would fail in its ministry. The *faife’au* cannot perform the ministry by himself for that is narcissism as stated by Erickson¹⁵, and neither can he fulfill all the roles and the responsibilities that come with it. The diversity or three-sidedness of the *aiga o le faife’au*, where the wife and the children perform their roles wholeheartedly in helping the minister in the ministry, must be respected and encouraged. Thus, these three *tafa* co-exist in unity, though in diversity.

¹⁴ Authors translation

¹⁵ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity (Three Crucial Questions): Three Crucial Questions*, 58-61.

3.2.2 *Tafatolu*: Unity in Love and Peace

Unity, Love, and Peace are inseparable. Where unity is, love is the uniting factor, and peace is always the outcome or fruit of such a combination. From a *tafatolu* perspective, these three can only be found in the heart of God himself. The Trinity is only the Trinity because of the oneness in unity of the three Persons, but such a unity is possible only because of God's eternal love. Then peace exists amongst the three persons of the Trinity in unity and in love, because they are the *tafatolu* of God.

Moltmann states that the relational aspect within the Trinity is the essence of love and freedom¹⁶. Such freedom is indeed the freedom of God in unity within himself through the Holy Spirit. It is the freedom of the *agapē* that flows within God himself. The love that became enfleshed in Jesus Christ, the Son, and flows freely through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is often known as the participation of God and the engaged knowledge here on earth¹⁷, which this paper stated at the beginning in relation to the existence of these three qualities of God - unity, love, and peace within the culture and the way of life of the Samoans from of old. This speaks volume in this attempt to reflect theologically from a *tafatolu* perspective, to give a proper recognition to the role of the children in the *aiga o le faife'au*, in order to meet the expectations and the demands of life in the ministry of the Church.

3.4.2.1 The *Tafatolu* of Unity, Love and Peace in the *aiga o le faife'au*

Unity in the *aiga o le faife'au* is a certain priority. The *faife'au*, the *faletua* and the *fanau* are the three *tafa* (sides) of the *aiga o le faife'au*. Thus, a mutual recognition of

¹⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1981), 150.

¹⁷ Donald Adrian Claybrook SR, "The Emerging Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Writings of Jürgen Moltmann" (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983).

one another in love would certainly assure unity and oneness of heart. This becomes a solid foundation for true peace within the family, where the three *tafa* are able to live together as one despite their obvious differences in status and in roles played. Such peace can only be true peace if it is of God. This peace within God the Trinity is truly founded upon unconditional love which unites all things within himself.

Furthermore, the Triune God of peace, must be the foundation upon which the *aiga o le faife'au* should establish itself. Peace, as the co-existence of fire and water in perfect harmony as it is in heaven, must always be a reality in the *aiga o le faife'au*.

3.5. Conclusion

The *tafatolu* perspective has enabled this reflection to visit the wealth of the concept of *aiga* in the culture of the Samoans, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity and to see the continuity between the two. It is believed that the God of the Bible and of the Christians was always the God of the Samoans of old, and is still revealing himself in the life of his Church and his people. It is, therefore, with confidence that this chapter would end with a statement that the *tafatolu* of God the Trinity as was underlying the culture of the Samoans must always be reflected in the life of the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au*.

CONCLUSION

The *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* has become the key to the whole discussion and development of this paper. The objective is to raise the awareness of the Church specifically about the nature of its ministry in relation to the minister and his family, particularly the role of the children. It has been clearly established throughout this endeavour that the *faife'au* truly needs his *faletua* as well as his *fanau* in the ministry. It is for that purpose this thesis was designed to achieve.

This thesis has developed a theological understanding on how unity, love, and peace became so central in the culture of the Samoans in the past, especially in the context of the *aiga potopoto*. The life of which was guided and enriched by the belief in the many gods they worshipped, which somehow impacted upon the way they lived. A life of communal sharing in everything as symbolized by the kind of houses they lived in – open and inviting. Every aspect of life in unity, love, and peace was deeply interwoven with the fabric of the Samoan culture and way of life. Hence, the *aiga o le faife'au* is in many ways a child of the *aiga potopoto*, and the two are inseparable even in the ministry of the Church. So unity, love, and peace have become natural assets of family life in the culture of the Samoans.

These qualities of unity, love, and peace are, however, central in the nature of the Triune God of the Christians and of the Bible. It is the belief in this paper that God the Trinity was always in his creation and in Samoa through the work of the Holy Spirit, revealing the inner treasures of His nature. Thus, the *tafatolu* of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, transmits the qualities of unity, love, and peace through the *aiga potopoto* and the culture of the Samoans to the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au*. It is, therefore, the calling of the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* to reveal and to reflect these central qualities of God in and through their life of service in the ministry.

From the day of the *osiga feagaiga* (establishing of the covenant) between an *aiga o le faife'au* and a congregation, all the *tafatolu* in the lives of the minister's family have been switched on. (i) the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* within itself, (ii) the *tafatolu* of the *aiga potopoto* (both families of the minister and his wife), the congregation and the *aiga o le faife'au*, (iii) the *tafatolu* of the *aiga potopoto*, the congregation and God, (iv) the *tafatolu* of the *aiga potopoto* of the *faife'au*, the *aiga potopoto* of the *faletua*, and the *aiga o le faife'au*. Common in all these *tafatolu* is the existence of unity, love, and peace which have become the main subject of all the prayers and words of encouragement and good wishes. My parents and us children were called by God into the ministry of the Church at the Manurewa EFKS¹ Church in Auckland New Zealand in 1996. With the *osiga feagaiga* completed, my father recalls the day as emotional, watching both sides of the family, the *aiga potopoto* of my father's side, and the *aiga potopoto* of my mother's side all come together to present us to the Manurewa EFKS Church.

It is with hope that this effort would amplify the need for the *aiga o le faife'au* in the ministry of the CCCS, to know and understand their role as a family, as well as their individual roles in the ministry. While the whole discussion focusses on the *aiga o le faife'au* as a whole, there is weight being put on the children of the *faife'au* to recognise the importance of their role in the ministry. Malua Theological College has done so much in preparing the *aiga o le faife'au* for the ministry, but it always comes down to the *faife'au*, the *faletua*, and their *fanau*, in how they carry out their calling. It is, therefore, the establishment of the *tafatolu* of life in which everyone in the *aiga o le faife'au* is experiencing a life of faith in a personal relationship with God and

¹ Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa is the Samoan translation of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.

relationships with others that becomes vital in the ministry. This raises the issue of a concern regarding the spiritual life of the *aiga o le faife'au*. It is a genuine problem facing the ministry of the Church, when ministers or their wives misbehave and gone astray from the path, or even the children committing all sorts of evil things that are unacceptable from them. What can the Church do?

There is an annual renewal fellowship for the ministers in which they come together to worship and to participate in sharing from papers provided by the teaching staff of Malua. During these 4 to 5 days of sharing in the Word of God and different theological views on a variety of themes, the general response is always of being satisfied and renewed not only mentally but spiritually. There is also an annual fellowship for the wives of the ministers for the same purpose of renewing and enriching their spirituality.² I, hereby, recommend a similar fellowship for the children of the ministers organised by the Church through the Matagaluega (Districts) or Pulega (Circuits) for the same purpose of renewal of their spirituality. This is a must, if the Church loves the ministry of the *aiga o le faife'au*. The children's role in the ministry must be taken seriously and a special attendance must be given to enriching their spirituality all the time.

Finally, the *tafatolu* of the *aiga o le faife'au* must always reflect unity in love and in peace for all to see and appreciate, for they are in their lives the manifestations of the *tafatolu* of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

² My parents always attended these fellowships even though they were/are held in Samoa at Malua Theological College. They always enjoyed their time together with other ministers and wives, but especially the experience of learning more for the ministry.

GLOSSARY

<i>aiga o le faife'au</i>	-	minister's family
<i>aiga potopoto</i>	-	extended family
<i>aiga</i>	-	family
<i>faaaloalo</i>	-	respect
<i>fale</i>	-	house
<i>faletua</i>	-	minister's wife
<i>matai</i>	-	chief/orator
<i>tafatolu</i>	-	triangle/ three sidedness
<i>tautua</i>	-	service
<i>va fealoai</i>	-	how to relate to others

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