

**THE ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF
JESUS (CCJS) FROM THE LONDON
MISSIONARY SOCIETY (LMS)SAMOA
CHURCH**

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ABSTRACT

The formation of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa and Abroad (CCJS) is a history about three village churches that broke away from the London Missionary Society (LMS) Samoa Church over issues of authority. It was an act of schism that occurred due to issues of authority that forced these churches away from the LMS Samoa Church and into discussions about joining together to form a new Christian denomination. As revealed through interviews, books, and primary and secondary sources, the formation of the CCJS encompassed struggles and challenges that threatened the peace and stability of their churches and their respective villages. This thesis attempts to uncover and piece together the historical origins and early development of the CCJS with a specific focus on the LMS Apia parish and the complex politics that occurred at both the ecclesiastical and social levels. Highlighted will be contributions and impacts of the clergy and the laity who were responsible for the first Christian denomination started by Samoans, for Samoans, in Samoa.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to Malua Theological College, for giving me a second chance to observe and realise what is relevant to my life as a future servant of God.

I also dedicate this paper to my lovely and kind mum, LafoaiHoeg, in celebration of her 53rd birthday. Her love and enthusiasm gives me comfort to live happily as a Christian to serve God in any way.

Also to my two young angels that make me laugh when I am down in the writing of this thesis.

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To God be the glory, now and forever. Amen

List of Abbreviations

AOG	Assemblies of God
CCJS	Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa and Abroad
CCCAS	Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
CWM	Council for World Mission
LMS	London Missionary Society
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
Rev.	Reverend
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society

Introduction

This thesis explores the origins and development of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa (CCJS) and abroad from the LMS in the period of 1941 to 1961. There are currently no published materials concerning the history of the CCJS during this period. The only book that highlights a short history about the CCJS is found in the book, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, written by the late Rev. Elder Oka Fauolo. However, according to current members of the CCJS, Fauolo's account that a group of people broke off and formed their own church is incomplete and therefore inaccurate as it focuses almost exclusively on the missionary accomplishments of the church. Fauolo's account did not render a critical analysed historical account of the events that transpired leading to the establishment of the CCJS.

A thesis was also undertaken by a former student of Malua Theological College named Petaia Leavai regarding the origins of the CCJS in 2012. Leavai's research is commendable as it was a pioneering effort to examine the origins of the CCJS. However, Leavai's work critically analysed the origins of the CCJS strictly through the political undertakings within the village of Apia and its parish without any consideration of possible theological and liturgical differences that members of the Apia parish may have harboured against the European LMS missionaries who were guiding the LMS Samoa Church at the time.

This thesis will therefore attempt to build upon Leavai's findings by analysing the origins of the CCJS and its early development by examining both the division and politics that existed within the membership of the Apia parish of the LMS Samoa Church (now known as the Congregational Christian Church Samoa or CCCS) as well as the theological and liturgical differences with LMS European missionaries that may have added to the break. This thesis will rely heavily on information gained through interviews and primary resources in the form of missionary reports, official minutes of meetings, and correspondence letters as I will try and piece together the motives behind the formation of the CCJS in Samoa and its development in its first twenty years. The thesis consists of four chapters.

Chapter one provides a brief historical overview of the arrival of the mainline mission societies into Samoa highlighting the importance of converting prominent matai and their villages and how village politics can impact a mission. Chapter two examines

the historical origins of the CCJS and how politics and culture within the Apia parish and village contributed to its establishment. Chapter three analyses the development of the CCJS from 1941 – 1961 and how it developed in its first twenty years.

Chapter one uses primary and secondary sources gained from books and theses that have been written relating to the arrival of the mainline churches and other Christian denominations and sects into Samoa. Chapters two and three are based on the analysis of primary resources such as minutes of meetings, church record books, church constitutions, missionary reports and correspondence letters as well as interviews that were performed of prominent CCJS and CCCS members with knowledge of the topics being covered in those chapters. Chapter four is the conclusion that will sum up the findings of the whole thesis.

Chapter 1

Christianity in Samoa

1.1. Introduction

Samoa is like a tree with roots deep in the past but watered by rain and shaped by the winds that come from the Lord to help it grow out in the World.¹

This quotation speaks of Samoa's long history and her development in light of the constant changes she has experienced from her origins until today. While the quotation is attributed to the history of Samoa as a whole, it also provides an accurate description of the way the history of Christianity began and developed in Samoa beginning in the early part of the 19th century. It was a period in Samoan history that saw the infiltration of European influences both 'water' and 'shape' a people's culture, lifestyle and religion.

The Samoa archipelago consists of nine islands divided into the independent Western islands of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa before 1997)² and American Samoa an 'unincorporated' American territory.³ These islands were isolated from foreigners until the 18th century when European explorers began visiting its shores.

The earliest recorded European visitors to Samoa were the Dutch explorer Jacque Roggeveen in 1722 and Louise Antoine de Bougainville from France in 1768, but both did not land in Samoa or have contact with the people, nor did the Samoans leave their canoes to go aboard their ship.⁴ However, other European explorers, beachcombers, traders and escaped convicts soon followed making contact and interacting with the Samoan people. This contact and interaction not only saw the beginning of the infiltration of Western civilization ideals upon the Samoans, but it also paved the way for the introduction of Christianity onto Samoan shores.

¹George Robinson, *Book of Quotation*, London: Penguin, 1987, 17.

² Manfred Ernst, *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, Suva: The Pacific Theological College, 2006, 539.

³ Manfred Ernst, *Globalization and the Re -Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific*, 584.

⁴Richard Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900 the Politics of a Multi-Cultural community*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, 65.

1.2. Arrival of Missionary Societies into Samoa: Mainline Churches

Samoans were first exposed to the Christian religion by sailors, beachcombers, and other Samoans who travelled abroad prior to the arrival of European missionaries into Samoa.⁵ There have been many articles, books, and theses that have studied that particular area of Samoan history. However, the purpose of this section is not to retrace that historical period. Rather, this section will briefly examine the emergence of the European missionary societies who came to Samoa to evangelise its islands. There are three specific mission societies, namely the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) and the Marist Society (MS) of the Roman Catholic Church that will be highlighted in this subsection. From these mission societies came forth denominational churches regarded today as the mainline churches in Samoa.

1.2.1. London Missionary Society (LMS)

The pioneer for the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Samoa was a missionary named John Williams, an English iron monger who had been inspired in 1816 to take instruction from the society and go overseas as a missionary.⁶ Williams first sailed for Samoa on his boat 'Messenger of Peace' with another European missionary Charles Barff, six Tahitian teachers and two Rarotongan teachers.⁷

Calling at Tonga on his way to Samoa, Williams met with Wesleyan missionaries in Tonga and made an informal agreement with them Samoa would be left to the LMS, since the Wesleyans were establishing missions in Fiji.⁸ Williams then collected some more passengers, a Samoan man named Fauea and his wife Puaseisei. Fauea first directed Williams to the island of Savaii. When Fauea heard from canoes sailing off

⁵Elia Ta'ase, "Beyond Samoan Christianity: A Study of the SioVili Cult and the Problem Facing the Church in Samoa Today," (BD thesis: Pacific Theological College, 1971), 46-52. Ta'ase examined the SioVili cult that arrived before John Williams and the LMS. See also Gilson, 68-69.

⁶Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, 1987, 55.

⁷John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1985, 120. See also Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 56.

⁸Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 60

Falealupo that the chief Tamafaiga⁹ had been assassinated at Fasitoo-uta, he told Williams that the main obstacle to preaching the gospel in Samoa had been removed. Williams recorded in his journal:

As soon as we neared the shore, a number of natives came off to us in their canoes, of whom Fauea asked a variety of questions...with a tremulous voice, as if afraid to hear the reply, he said, "And where is Tamafainga?" "Oh!" shouted the people, with evident delight, "he is dead, he is dead!"...Frantic with joy at this unexpected intelligence, Fauea leaped about the vessel, and ran towards me, shouting, "*Ua mate le Devolo, ua mate le Devolo!*" "The devil is dead, the devil is dead!...the people now will all receive the *lotu!*"¹⁰

The death of Tamafaiga was significant for Williams and his missionaries as seen through the quotation above. Fauea feared Tamafaiga, but now his death would make it easier for Williams and the LMS to begin their mission.

After leaving that part of Savaii, Williams and his missionaries set sail again and anchored at Sapapalii, the village where the chief Malietoa Vainuupo lived. At the time of their arrival, a war was going on between the supporters of Vainuupo in Savaii and *Aiga i-le-tai*¹¹, and the chiefs of Aana district. Malietoa was fighting to avenge the assassination of his relative Tamafaiga. However, upon receiving the news that Williams and his missionaries had arrived at Sapapalii, Malietoa returned to Sapapalii to visit Williams. An agreement was made between the two with Malietoa accepting the eight teachers from Tahiti and Rarotonga for the purpose of teaching and evangelising

⁹John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands; with Remarks upon the Natural History of the Islands, Origin, Languages, Traditions, and Usages of the Inhabitants*, London: John Snow, 1837, 85. Williams described Tamafaiga as *the man in whom the spirit of the gods dwelt; that he was the terror of all inhabitants; and that, if he forbade it, the people universally would be afraid to place themselves under our instruction*. See also Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 56.

¹⁰John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, 85.

¹¹*Aiga-i-le-tai* is a district in Samoa made up of certain villages on the western part of the island of Upolu and the villages on the island of Manono. This was a powerful district that was led by Tamafaiga until his assassination.

the Samoa islands.¹² After this agreement, Williams left and made a stop at the island of Manono, before departing from Samoa.

In 1832, Williams returned to Samoa. Before going to Sapapalii, Williams called at Manua¹³ and Leone¹⁴ where he was told that the people regarded themselves as Christians and were waiting for teachers to come to them. On Upolu Williams found a similar situation, and met two European sailors who had been baptising people. Stopping at Manono, Williams delivered a Rarotonga teacher and his wife to *Matatau*, a chief at Manono who asked Williams for a missionary when he first visited in 1830.

Finally arriving at Sapapalii, Williams found that Malietoa won the war against Aana and had taken four titles called the *papa*, which made him *tafaifa*, the four in one, the highest ranking chiefly titles in Samoa.¹⁵ Williams was also pleased that the eight teachers he had left in the care of Malietoa on his previous visit, were well looked after. Williams was also happy that Malietoa decided to become a Christian. Thus, within Williams' last visit in 1830 until his return in 1832, the LMS mission began to advance to a point where the roots of an LMS church began to settle into Samoan soil.

In 1835, Williams returned again to Samoa this time bringing with him European LMS missionaries whom he distributed to various parts of Samoa for the purpose of teaching and evangelising. These missionaries strengthened the LMS mission in Samoa through the translation of the Bible into the Samoan language, the founding of the Malua Theological College in 1844 for the training of Samoan natives for missionary work and work within the villages, the formation of individual parishes in each village, and the creation of a village hierarchy within the context of the parish with the Samoan pastor surrounded by his council of influential lay preachers and deacons who were village chiefs.¹⁶ The efforts of the LMS missionaries together with the native Samoans led to the creation of the LMS Samoa Church which later changed its name to the

¹² John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, 90. Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 56.

¹³ *Manua* is another island of the Samoan archipelago. It is the island furthest east and it is part of the eastern islands of Samoa that are now known as American Samoa.

¹⁴ *Leone* is a village on the island of *Tutuila* which is also part of the eastern islands of Samoa now known as American Samoa.

¹⁵ Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the Modern History of Samoa*, Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987, 18.

¹⁶ Kerry R. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Seas Islands History from First Settlements to Colonial Rule*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984, 242.

Congregational Christian Church in Samoa in 1962 after becoming independent from the LMS.

1.2.2. Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS)

The first Wesleyan mission in the Pacific was established in Tonga in the 1820s. However, a number of Samoans had already been converted by the Wesleyan Church, before 1830. The chief Saivaaia of the Tafua-Salelologa area of Savaii had brought news of the Lotu Tonga to Samoa in 1828.¹⁷ Furthermore, constant travel between Tongans and Samoans between their islands also made Samoans aware of the Lotu Tonga, but it was not until 1835 that the first official Wesleyan missionary to Samoa arrived. Upon his arrival, 40 villages of Savaii and 25 villages of Upolu already had Wesleyan congregations.¹⁸ The ancient connections between Tonga and Samoa were instrumental in the establishment of the Wesleyan or Methodist church in Samoa.¹⁹

The official entry of the Methodists into Samoa goes back to 1832 when John Williams met a chief named Lilomaiva who asked for a teacher. Williams told him that he should make arrangements with Malietoa, or else wait until more teachers could be brought to Samoa.²⁰ However, Malietoa refused to send a teacher to Lilomaiva for political reasons. His ability to control the native missionaries with whom Williams had left under his control made him more powerful politically in the eyes of the Samoans as it showed he had strong ties to the Europeans. Malietoa was not willing to share that power with a rival chief. However, Lilomaiva had been in Tonga and had family connections there. He turned to Tonga for a teacher. In June 1835, Peter Turner, came from Vavau, Tonga on an American whaling ship bringing with him some Tongan teachers.²¹ Thus, the entrance of the Wesleyan Mission into Samoa was unique as compared with most Pacific Islands as it became a reality through kinsman ties with another island.²²

¹⁷Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga, A Short History of Samoa*, 60. Manfred Ernst, *Globalisation and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, 552.

¹⁸ Manfred Ernst, *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, 552

¹⁹Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 60

²⁰Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 61

²¹Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 61

²²Fineaso T.S. Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism: 1828-1928*, 66

Turner and his company reached Manono on June 16, 1835. Upon their arrival, they were hosted by Teava, a Tahitian teacher.²³ On Manono, Turner found people already conducting services in the Tongan language. When he visited Apolima the small island next to Manono, he also found a Wesleyan teacher and all the people belonging to the Methodism.²⁴ Turner then wanted to move to the bigger islands of Upolu and Savaii to seek a place to settle. He visited Upolu where the villages of Lalovi and Samatau had requested teachers, and at Samatau, in particular, a chapel had been erected. Turner then visited Savaii, and in June decided to settle at Satupaitea, the residence of Lilomaiava, who had earlier gone to Tonga to request a missionary.²⁵ He spent the rest of 1835 in Satupaitea as the main station. On January 1, 1836, Turner moved to the western side of Savaii at Matautu.²⁶ At that time, the western side of Savaii where Matautu was an ally of Sapapalii, the village of Malietoa, the most influential and powerful in warfare. Sapapalii had embraced the LMS as their religion, while Matautu and a few other villages had accepted Methodism.²⁷ Conflict between the Methodist and LMS high chiefs were aroused. The LMS villagers offended the Wesleyan teachers while the Wesleyan villagers did the same to the Tahitian teachers. Turner's life was also terrorized. However the villagers were planning to enter in war. Turner was forced to leave Matautu in July of the same year.²⁸ He returned to Satupaitea and continued the work of the Wesleyan mission.

However, another issue arose when John Williams, upon returning to London in 1836, pleaded through the LMS to the WMMS in London to remove Turner from Samoa based on the informal agreement that was first made prior to his trip to Samoa in 1830. The WMMS office in London, for the sake of harmony between the two mission societies, agreed to remove Turner and the Wesleyan mission together from Samoa.²⁹ It was not until 1857 that Rev. Dyson was sent to Samoa to reopen the Methodist mission.³⁰ Upon Dyson's arrival to Samoa, he came to find that the Wesleyan mission

²³Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 67

²⁴Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 67

²⁵Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 68

²⁶Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 68

²⁷Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 69

²⁸Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 69

²⁹Fineaso T.S Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoa Methodism 1828-1928*, 70

³⁰Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short of History*, 62

had been sustained by Tongan missionaries. This made it easier for Dyson to restart the mission in Samoa which became successful over the years.

1.2.3. Society of Mary: Marists (Roman Catholic Mission to Samoa)

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) was the third of the historic mainline churches to appear in Samoa.³¹ When they arrived they experienced strong opposition from the Protestant missionaries.³² The Catholic Church was established in Samoa by two French missionary priest of the Marist order. They were Father Foudaire and Father Violette, they came to Samoa on the ship I'Etoile de la Mer (Star of the Sea) from Wallis Island and anchored at Falealupo on the 25 May 1845. The ship carried two lay brothers, young Samoan men, Ioakimo and Kosetatino and five others. The two Samoans went ashore, and Ioakimo went straight to Lealatele, his home village while Kosetatino explained their mission to the people in Falealupo.³³

When the RCC arrived in Samoa, the LMS and WMMS missionaries had visited all the villages in Samoa, and they tried to tell the Samoan people not to accept the RCC because of the differences in theological teachings and practices. The first person that welcomed them was Tuala the chief of the family whose Ioakimo belonged. The first mass held in Samoa was celebrated in the house of Tuala. Following that Tuala and his whole family were baptised on 15 September 1848.³⁴ They were then referred by a chief in eastern Savaii to Mataafa Fagamanu, the high chief of Mulinuu near Apia. Fagamanu, accepted the Marists in recognition of help he received in 1842 by the Catholics on Wallis to himself and a party of drifters.³⁵ Fagamanu later became their most prominent convert and protector.³⁶ While their mission struggled early on, the Marist mission began to see success in the early 1860's through the leadership of Louis Elloy, who would become future bishop of the Catholic Church in Samoa and

³¹ Manfred Ernst, *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Island*, 550

³² Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*: Pacific Council of Churches, Fiji, 1994, 169

³³ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 63

³⁴ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 63

³⁵ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 130.

³⁶ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 130.

Iosefa Mata'afa, a prominent chief in Samoa.³⁷ Through their patience and endurance, they were able to spread the RCC throughout Samoa.

1.3. Conclusion

It can be seen through this brief survey that Samoa has a strong history with missionary societies that came into the country. While the reasons vary from mission to mission, it can be seen clearly that the acceptance of the mainline churches into Samoa began with the conversion of a prominent chief and the work of both European and Pacific Islander missionaries in establishing and consolidating the missions within the villages of the chief they were able to convert. In some cases, political motives among chiefs such as Malietoa and Tuinaula played important roles with the acceptance of the LMS and arrival of the WMMS. In other cases, the returning of a favour was significant as with Mata'afa Fagamanu accepting the Catholic mission allowing for it a place to begin and grow.

However, other types of churches that have enjoyed success in Samoa are the new churches that have formed through schism, or the splitting up of people from the mainline churches to create a new Church. This shall be examined in the following chapter through the lens of the origins and development of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa (CCJS) which served as a break-off of the LMS Samoa Church now known as the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS).

³⁷John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 131. See also Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change Rapidly Growing of Religious Group in the Pacific Islands*, 169.

Chapter 2

The Rise of the CCJS

2.1. Introduction

The establishment of the CCJS was different from the establishment of the missionary churches in Samoa because it was a church born from divisions. It was a church started by Samoans from three different LMS Samoa Church parishes who decided to divide away to establish independent churches within their villages. At the heart of these divisions and the eventual establishment of the CCJS were issues that arose from the complexities of church and village politics.

This chapter aims to critically analyse the politics that led to the separation of the three parishes from the LMS Samoa Church and the events that led to their joining together and founding the CCJS. While the events in each parish will be examined separately in this chapter focusing on the differences between people and the motives that led to separation, extraemphasis will be given to the events that occurred both within the Apia parish and village. Through information gathered through interviews as well as primary and secondary sources, this chapter attempts to highlight the intricate tensions that existed in the relationships between the authority of the LMS missionaries and Samoan pastors, as well as the complex nature of village politics and its impact when brought into the context of the church.

2.2. Schism in the Apia Parish due to Issues of Authority

The issue of authority is a central theme in the history of Samoa throughout the mid-19th and 20th centuries. From the mid-19th century onward, Samoans were forced to adjust to foreign meddling in their governmental and cultural affairs. It created a tense situation in terms of authority as an attitude of revolt grew among Samoans that culminated in the *Mau Movement*¹ in 1926. According to Rev. Dr. Featuna'i Liuaana², the

¹Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence 1900-1962*, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004, 192. Liuaana devotes an entire chapter of his book to the influence of the Mau movement upon the LMS Samoa Church. According to Liuaana, the *Mau Movement* was a movement of Samoan nationalism that embodied Samoan patriotism. It was a movement that began due to Samoan dissatisfaction toward the New Zealand administration that had been governing in Samoa since the Germans were forced out at the beginning of World War I in 1914. Michael Field, *Mau: Samoa's Struggle for Freedom*, Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1984. Field wrote a thorough history of the *Mau Movement* and its political and social impacts upon Samoa.

Mau was the single event in Samoan history that had the greatest impact on the magnitude and direction of Samoan patriotism.³ The LMS Samoa Church was not spared from this tension as its adherents carried over this spirit of revolt in their dealings with the foreign missionaries of the LMS.⁴

This chapter examines this spirit of revolt in light of the fragile relationship between the Samoans and the LMS missionaries heading into the 1930's. It was a fragile relationship that began to crack in the 1930's when feelings of mistrust infiltrated both the Samoans of the LMS Samoa Church and the LMS missionaries over the sharp decline of the *taulaga* contribution throughout the 1930's.

2.2.1. Taulaga Controversy between the LMS missionaries and Apia District

When Norman Goodall⁵ visited Samoa in 1939, he described the relationship between the LMS missionaries and the Samoans as unpleasant.⁶ One example of this unpleasant relationship was evident in the controversy between the LMS missionaries and Rev. Namalaulu Pouesi⁷, the pastor of the LMS Apia congregation. It was a relationship that took an unpleasant turn when LMS missionaries removed Pouesi from his post as Secretary⁸ of the Apia District of the LMS Samoa Church.⁹ This

²Rev. Dr. Featunai Ben Liuaana is an ordained minister of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa. Liuaana currently serves as the pastor of a CCCS parish at Sandringham, New Zealand. Prior to his post at Sandringham CCCS, Liuaana served as Head of Department for Church History, Vice-Principal and Academic Dean at Malua Theological College. He has published several articles in Church History journals and his book *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence 1900 – 1962* was published in 2004. He is also recognized as one of the prominent Pacific Church Historians by his fellow colleagues for his past work in the field of Pacific Church History and his research into the history of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa.

³Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 192.

⁴Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i*, 190-214. Liuaana devoted an entire chapter of his book to the influence of the *Mau Movement* upon the LMS Samoa Church.

⁵Goodall served as the General Secretary of the LMS.

⁶*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Letters: South Seas Letters (SSL)*, Goodall to Barradale, 22 April, 1939.

⁷Rev. Namalaulu Pouesi will be referred to as Pouesi for the rest of this paper.

⁸The position of Secretary of a district in the LMS Samoa Church is a position that is held by a pastor of one of the churches that comprise of that district.

⁹Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i: O le Talafaasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, Apia: Malua Printing Press, 736. The late Rev. Elder Oka Fauolo served the CCCS in many different capacities. He once served as Chairman of the CCCS for several years. He also served as Principal of Malua Theological College from 1979 – 1994. After resigning as Principal of Malua, he was commissioned by the CCCS to write a book regarding the history of the CCCS. This book,

decision caused serious misgivings among Pouesi and some of the members of the Apia congregation toward the LMS missionaries. It was a decision that had its origins in the decrease in the LMS Samoa Church's annual contribution known as the *taulaga*.

*2.2.1.1. A Brief History of the Taulaga Offering
in the LMS Samoa Church*

The *taulaga*¹⁰ is the annual monetary contribution of the LMS Samoa Church. It was through the *taulaga* that the LMS was able to finance their missionaries working in Samoa. This practice of the *taulaga* dates back to the early part of the LMS mission activity in Samoa in the 1840's. However, a revolt occurred in Tutuila, American Samoa by Samoan native teachers. They demanded that local contributions be given to all Samoan teachers instead of the normal practice of sending it to London. This led to the implementation of a second *taulaga*.¹¹ This new *taulaga* was created and started in 1854. This contribution was collected by individual parishes and given as an allowance to the Samoan teachers. The support for the new *taulaga* was so great that in some cases the contributions collected were greater than that given to the LMS *taulaga*.¹²

Taulaga contributions increased when LMS missionaries began the practice of recording total contributions by villages and reading out the contributions at the General Assembly of 1860.¹³ As Gilson records in his book,

...the London Missionary Society representatives, alarmed by the renewed Wesleyan activity, soon began to agitate for another build-up of European mission staff. To help their case they set out to raise additional funds, doing so by making their local collections more competitive. Some, it is true, found the appeal to 'base motives'

written in the Samoan language, is titled *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i: O le Talafaasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* which can be translated as *The Miracle of Saving Love: The History of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*. This book was completed and published in 2005. Fauolo also served as the Chairman of the National Council of Churches in Samoa, an ecumenical Council. Fauolo was a well-respected clergyman in Samoa as was evident when the government of Samoa treated Fauolo's funeral in 2012 as a State funeral which was attended by Samoan government and church leaders. Interview with Liona Teleaga, 21 May 2013. Teleaga is a minister of the CCJS and served as pastor of the CCJS parish in Siufaga, Samoa.

¹⁰*Taulaga* is simply translated as sacrifice.

¹¹John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 124.

¹²Richard Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 130.

¹³Richard Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 131.

distasteful, but such objections were overridden by the favourable results.¹⁴

The result of the scheme by LMS missionaries was a success and the *taulaga* became one of the main public activities of the *lotu* and one of its principal attractions as LMS parishes and districts made it a form of competition as to who can give the most in seeking favour with God and respect of men in the volume of their *taulaga*.¹⁵ According to Goodall, this *taulaga* competition continued to flourish well into the 1920's.¹⁶

However, the *taulaga* contribution in the 1930's decreased from that of the 1920's due to the economic hardships caused by the Great Depression of 1929. This saw a change in the Samoan attitude toward the *taulaga* as Samoans felt the impact of economic hardship.¹⁷ However, Rev. S.G. Phillips, a LMS missionary who served in Samoa at *Leulumoega* College¹⁸ during the 1930's, wrote a letter to Goodall in 1936 that described the decrease of the *taulaga* offering as misleading. Phillips states in his letter to Goodall:

...the Samoans are better off now than they have been for number of years. There is more in the country now than for some years past owing to trade revival. In the old days, people gave their money freely because they did not realise its value. But today, money plays a very definite part in their lives, and they are much more loath to part with it.¹⁹

¹⁴Richard Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 131.

¹⁵Richard Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 132-133.

¹⁶Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954, 372-375. Goodall provides a clear picture of how the LMS Samoa Church contributions continued to increase between 1900 and the 1920's. Goodall provides information that shows how the LMS Samoa Church annual contribution far exceeded the amount that the LMS Board had set for them in being able to fully become an independent self-supporting church.

¹⁷The Samoan economy did not recover until the 1940's with the entry of American forces into Samoa during World War II according to Goodall.

¹⁸*Leulumoega* College was an all-boys school established by the LMS in 1866. It is adjacent to the Malua Theological College and it was originally established as a preparatory school for boys. The hope was that *Leulumoega* served as an educational training ground for future candidates to be admitted into Malua Theological College. *Leulumoega* still exists today and is known as *Leulumoega Fou* College. It is still operated by the CCCS and is no longer an all-boys institution.

¹⁹*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Files, South Seas Letters (SSL) 1928 – 1940*, S.G.F. Phillips to Rev. Norman Goodall, 12 November, 1936.

Phillips claim that the Samoans reluctance to contribute to the *taulaga* in 1936 is further supported by Goodall who wrote that the Samoans began to take interest in the mission expenses that their contributions were helping to pay as the undesirability of sending all this money out of Samoa began to permeate throughout the Samoa church.²⁰

This newfound curiosity by the Samoans in the mission expenses and their reluctance to give more to the *taulaga* was met with a negative reaction by LMS missionaries in Samoa. The missionaries felt that the Samoans refusal to contribute hindered the mission as the Samoans were only willing to support four men and two women missionaries to serve throughout all of Samoa.²¹ This meant that the bulk of the work depended largely upon the efforts of the Samoan pastors, which they believed lacked the necessary competence to guide the church. This viewpoint is captured in another correspondence letter sent to the LMS headquarters in London from Phillips in November 1936. Rev. Phillips wrote:

...the shortage of staff gives the control into the hands of the Samoans, and as they – through no fault of their own – are incapable of exercising this power, it makes happy and congenial labour difficult, if not impossible.²²

Phillips negative view toward the ability of Samoans to lead is further captured in a report that he gave to LMS headquarters regarding his visitation to Samoan pastors in the Aana district.²³ The negative report is not confined only to the pastors in the Aana district. Phillips wrote:

The work in the districts is rather depressing during these days in Samoa, for the simple reason that the Samoan has not arrived at a stage when he can govern himself...Our pastors, who sometimes for long

²⁰Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*, 374.

²¹*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Files, South Seas Letters (SSL) 1928 – 1940*, S.G.F. Phillips to Rev. Norman Goodall, 12 November, 1936.

²²*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Files, South Seas Letters (SSL) 1928 – 1940*, Phillips to the Chairman of the Southern Committee at LMS Headquarters, 2 November, 1936.

²³*Aana* district is consists of village parishes in the western part of the island of Upolu.

periods are left to their own devices need refreshing...There is a very definite need for one man in each district in order to correct the slackening off which is very apparent these days.²⁴

In analysing Phillips negative assessments of the Samoans, several issues become clear. The first is that Phillips did not believe that the Samoans were hurting financially by the mid-1930's meaning the decrease in the *taulaga* could not be attributed to the claim that Samoans were impacted negatively by the Great Depression. Secondly, the reluctance by the Samoans to contribute more to the *taulaga* meant that the LMS missionaries were short-handed and unable to carry out the mission work for all of Samoa. Thirdly, Phillips believed that the Samoans were neither capable nor competent enough to lead or guide the church, let alone complete the tasks that were assigned to them to do due to the lack of LMS European missionaries at the time. Thus, in critically analysing the issues related to the *taulaga* offering in the 1930's as stated above, it becomes clear that the decrease in the *taulaga* offering throughout the 1930's stimulated negative feelings between the Samoans who felt pressured to give more than they could afford at the time and the LMS missionaries who felt that the Samoans were financially stable enough to contribute more to the *taulaga* for the sake of the LMS mission. It was within this backdrop that controversy came to the fore in 1939 with the issue of the *taulaga* offering again at the core.

By the 1930's, it was normal practice for the LMS to set certain goals of finance for the LMS Samoa Church to reach which became unhappily known as the "London Bill" in assisting the LMS and its mission activities.²⁵ However, the economic situation of the 1930's dictated that changes had to be made. It was the Apia District, which Rev. Pouesi served in his capacity as Secretary of the District that urged the missionaries at the LMS Samoa Church General Assembly of 1939 to ease their financial demands.²⁶

Lolagi Mika, the current pastor of the CCJS parish in Newton, New Zealand who was raised in the village of Apia, provided insight into the *taulaga* controversy with the Apia District. Mika feels that this was one of the major contributing factors that led to the formation of the CCJS. The Apia District felt that it was unfair for the LMS to set

²⁴ Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Files, South Seas Letters (SSL) 1928 – 1940, Phillips to the Chairman of the Southern Committee at LMS Headquarters, 2 November, 1936.

²⁵ Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*, 374.

²⁶ Interview with Rev. Lolagi Mika, 8 May 2013.

financial standards for the LMS Samoa Church to reach in light of the economic situation of the time. They therefore proposed at the LMS Samoa Church General Assembly of 1939 known as the *Fonotele*²⁷ that all financial standards imposed by the LMS should be abolished and that the village parishes and districts should be allowed to contribute what they can afford.²⁸ According to Mika, the LMS missionaries in Samoa strongly opposed the *taulaga* issue that the Apia District brought into the General Assembly as the *taulaga* was the main source of financial income for the LMS mission in Samoa.²⁹ Mika believes that the result of the strong opposition from the LMS missionaries in Samoa surfaced after the General Assembly when Pouesi was relieved of his secretarial duties of the Apia District.

2.2.2. Motives behind Pouesi's Removal as Secretary of the Apia District

The controversial removal of Pouesi as Secretary of the Apia District has been documented by other Pacific church historians and theologians. However, those historical accounts fail to provide a solid motive to explain Pouesi's grounds for dismissal. The lack of a solid motive is what makes this event a controversy. This subsection will examine the possible motives behind Pouesi's removal following the LMS Samoa Church General Assembly in 1939 and its impact upon Rev. Pouesi and the LMS Apia congregation.

2.2.2.1. Varying Opinions from the CCJS and Samoans about Rev. Pouesi's Removal

Testimonies gathered through interviews differ as to the exact reason Pouesi departed from the LMS Samoa Church. Rev. Teleaga stated that Pouesi was hurt by the decision of the missionaries and their actions while he was absent. Others, such as Viliamu Falevaai, the current minister of the CCJS parish at Siufaga, and

²⁷*Fonotele* can be translated as the 'Great Meeting'. This was the name that communicants of the LMS Samoa Church gave to their annual General Assembly that was held at Malua Theological College. When the LMS Samoa Church became an independent church and changed their name to the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) in 1962, they continued on with the tradition of having their General Assembly in the month of May. The newly formed CCCS also continued to refer to this General Assembly as the *Fonotele* which it is still referred to by CCCS members today.

²⁸Interview with Rev. Lolagi Mika, 8 May 2013.

²⁹Interview with Rev. Lolagi Mika, 8 May 2013.

SeumanutafaPogai, a prominent *matai* in the village of Apia who served also as a leading figure in the Apia congregation, believe that the origins of the ‘LotuPouesi’³⁰ was based on the biased decision making of the church authorities.³¹

TuiletufugaLeapaiSiaosi, another *matai* of the Apia village, pointed to a deeper problem of Pouesi refusing to submit to the leadership and control of the missionaries.³² Rev. Victor Pouesi supports Tuiletufuga’s claim by stating that his grandfather was very upset with the European missionaries and did not wish to remain under the control of the European ministers.³³ Rev. TuifaoSauaga, the current principal of the CCJS Theological College at Vailima, during a presentation that he gave during the General Assembly of the CCJS in 2012, pointed to a lack of communication between the leaders at the time as a major reason for the creation of the ‘LotuPouesi’.³⁴

MisipalauniTuiasosopo, a music composer of the CCJS, believes that to understand the situation that occurred at the Apia congregation that one must look at it in light of the tumultuous relations between the LMS missionaries and the Samoan people and the lack of a strong voice in the Samoan community to speak out against unfair decisions.

The Samoan and CCJS perspectives listed above vary. While each reason listed above holds a certain amount of relevancy, the varying opinions show that the events that transpired regarding this particular event are vague due to a lack of sources. However, in critically analysing the writings and letters of the LMS missionaries who served in Samoa at that time, one can obtain solid data that can assist in trying to piece together the events of that time while creating concrete arguments for possible motives that led to Pouesi’s removal. In this case, the beginning of the chain of events that led to Pouesi’s removal finds its origins in the General Assembly of 1939 and the controversial issue proposed by the Apia District to cut back the amount of the *taulaga* offering.

³⁰‘LotuPouesi’ is translated as Pouesi’s Church. This was the name that people gave to Pouesi’s newly formed independent church.

³¹Interview with Rev. ViliamuFalevaai, 28 May 2013. Interview with SeumanutafaPogai, 22 May 2013.

³²Interview with TuiletufugaLeapaiSiaosi, 22 May 2013. Tuiletufuga and his family are members of the CCCS Apia congregation who remained loyal to the LMS Samoa Church even after Rev. Pouesi left to form a new parish.

³³Interview with Rev. Victor Pouesi, 6 May 2013.

³⁴Rev. TuifaoSauaga highlighted this point of lack of communication during his presentation at the CCJS General Assembly of 2012.

2.2.2.2. *General Assembly of 1939 and Controversy over the Taulaga Offering*

The General Assembly of 1939 was controversial due to the proposal of the Apia District. It was a proposal that would end with the removal of Pouesi as the Secretary of the Apia District. This subsection examines the *taulaga* issue. It aims to verify if the *taulaga* was the main factor behind the decision of the LMS missionaries to force out Pouesi as the Secretary of the Apia District.

Rev. Lolagi Mika asserts that the motive behind Pouesi's dismissal was based on an assumption by the missionaries that Pouesi, served as the catalyst to the aforementioned proposal regarding financial contributions.³⁵ Mika's assertion concerning the opposition of the missionaries to the proposal of the Apia District regarding the *taulaga* also concurs with the CCJS' view as stated in their official constitution.³⁶ Thus, Mika's assertion runs concurrent with the CCJS' view and is solidly confirmed by a letter that Miss Evelyn A. Downs wrote on the 20th of June, 1939 to LMS headquarters in London, England. Miss Downs was a former LMS missionary who served at the *Papauta Girls College*³⁷ during this period. Included in Miss Downs' letter was a copy of the official minutes of the LMS Samoan Church General Assembly that was held from May 9th – 13th, 1939 which states that the missionaries objected to a suggestion that was made regarding the annual offering as seen in the issue numbered (11).³⁸ This objection by the missionaries provides a solid motive behind their decision to remove Pouesi when considering this problem in light of the decrease in the *taulaga* contribution of the 1930's and the feelings of mistrust that existed between the missionaries and the Samoans due to this issue as discussed in section 2.2.1.1. of this chapter.

³⁵Interview with Rev. Lolagi Mika, 8 May 2013.

³⁶O le Faavae, Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Iesu Samoa ma Atunuu i Fafo, EFIS Printing Press, 14. This is the Samoan translation of 'The Constitution of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa, CCJS Printing Press, 14.

³⁷*Papauta* was established in 1891 by the LMS at *Papauta* village which is near Apia. This school was founded for the purpose of educating and training Samoan girls, namely daughters of prominent Samoan chiefs for the ministry. In the past, students and graduates of Malua Theological College courted *Papauta* students with the hopes of getting married and working together in the ministry due to the training they received at *Papauta*. Today, *Papauta* is still operated by the CCCS in Samoa and it continues to remain an all-girls college for any girl who wishes to attend.

³⁸*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Files, South Seas Letters (SSL) 1928 – 1940, Downs to LMS Headquarters, 20th June, 1939.*

While the official minutes do not state which district was responsible for the proposal, it can be deduced that it was the Apia District who led the charge as stated by Mika and the official constitution of the CCJS. The motive established in this subsection becomes even more convincing when examining the unorthodox manner in which the decision was executed. This will be discussed in the next subsection.

2.2.2.2. *The Unorthodox Removal of Rev.*

Pouesi

The manner in which the missionaries carried out their decision regarding the removal of Pouesi was not in line with usual protocol. This subsection will examine the unorthodox manner in which this decision was executed and the impact it had upon Rev. Pouesi and members of the LMS Apia parish. Firstly, the subsection will analyse the terms and conditions of election and re-election that had been agreed upon by the Apia District for the position of Secretary and how these conditions were not met in regards to Rev. Pouesi's situation. Lastly, this subsection will discuss the benefits and influence that one can wield as the Secretary of an LMS Samoa Church District and how this opportunity was not lost upon Rev. Pouesi and the members of the LMS Apia parish.

The terms of conditions approved by the Apia District as recorded by Fauolo in his book states that the position of Secretary of the District should be rotated after every three years.³⁹ This means that a ballot to elect anyone to the position of the Secretary of the Apia District could only take place every three years. The only way this can be changed is if the Samoan pastor was dismissed due to immoral behaviour which then would mean removal from his post as parish minister also. This was a difficult issue in Pouesi's case as his three year term had not expired when he was replaced by Rev. Mavaega.⁴⁰ Also, the decision was made while Pouesi was in London attending a meeting of the LMS thereby not allowing Pouesi to defend himself in regards to the decision.⁴¹ It is obvious that Pouesi was not removed due to immoral behaviour because he was not relieved of his pastoral duties at the Apia church. This led to feelings of a

³⁹Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*, 736.

⁴⁰Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*, 736.

⁴¹Interview with Rev. Liona Teleaga, 21 May 2013.

conspiracy theory and foul play as Pouesi did not understand the reasoning behind the decision to replace him.

Pouesi's ousting before his term was finished coupled with the decision being made while he was overseas was factors behind Pouesi's dissatisfaction with the missionaries and their handling of the situation as it seemed to be of the sneaky sort according to Rev. Liona Teleaga⁴². Thus, the actions taken by the missionaries validates Mika's belief that they engaged in negative measures to oust Pouesi as they violated the rules and conditions that the LMS Samoa Church operated under.

2.2.2.3. LMS Missionary Mr. Whyte's Role and Motives in Pouesi's Removal

Furthermore, the violation of these rules and regulations was quite out of character for the LMS missionary who was in charge of the LMS work in Apia named Mr. Whyte. Prior to the LMS Samoa Church General Assembly of 1939, Mr. Whyte was the LMS missionary in charge of Apia. He was reconfirmed at the General Assembly of 1939 to continue his work in the Apia area as stated in number (4) of the official minutes.⁴³ His duties as stated in the official minutes included serving as treasurer of the LMS Samoa Church, power of attorney, and leading and guiding the Apia Protestant Church and the LMS Samoa Church Apia District.⁴⁴

As can be seen in his responsibilities, Mr. Whyte was in a position of considerable influence especially in terms of the Apia District as he was the missionary who was delegated with the responsibility of that particular district. His role as treasurer meant that he was cognisant and familiar with the *taulaga* issue of the 1930's and the importance of increasing the *taulaga* back to the heights of the 1920's for the sake of obtaining more LMS missionaries to stabilise the mission work in Samoa. It can therefore be deduced that Mr. Whyte possibly had inside information regarding the possible role that Pouesi played in orchestrating the Apia District proposal to curb the *taulaga* offering. Also, it is hard to fathom that Mr. Whyte would have approved such a proposal to be presented considering his position as treasurer of the church and the

⁴²Teleaga is an ordained minister of the CCJS.

⁴³*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Letters: South Seas Letters (SSL)*, Downs to LMS Headquarters in London, 20 June 1939.

⁴⁴*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Letters: South Seas Letters (SSL)*, Downs to LMS Headquarters in London, 20 June 1939.

desire that missionaries dating back to 1936 expressed in the need for additional missionaries in the Samoan mission field.⁴⁵ Therefore, the proposal itself reveals the possibility of conflict in terms of authority that may have existed in the relationship between Mr. Whyte and the Samoans of the Apia District.

Hence, it can be argued from the analysis above that the sacking of Pouesi was a decision spearheaded by Mr. Whyte. It was a decision pushed by Mr. Whyte and accepted by his colleagues as a means necessary for the sake of controlling Pouesi's influence upon the Samoans and the Apia District. It was an effort to silence the voice of dissension as perceived by the LMS missionaries that was in a position to be elevated into a role of considerable influence if he were elevated to the status of *Toeaina*, or Elder of the Apia District. This will be discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.2.4. Future Impact of Pouesi's Removal for Himself and Apia Parish

The position of Secretary of an LMS Church District carried considerable influence amongst the Samoans because a Samoan pastor who held the position of Secretary in a District was considered to be a serious candidate for the position of Elder of their District in the future. The position of Elder was created at the General Assembly of 1906 when it was decided that a small advisory council known as the *Au Toeaina* be formed consisting of forty-five members – some ordained pastors and some lay deacons – who were elected by the District meetings for their reputation as men of good report and wisdom in counsel.⁴⁶ Rev. Elia Taase wrote that the position of Elder assured more support from within the district especially when the missionaries delegated more duties to the Elders in 1938.⁴⁷ Goodall highlights these responsibilities that were given to the *Au Toeaina* and their prominent role within the Samoa Church in his book stating:

...in due course special functions of the larger assembly were only discharged on the advice of the *Au Toeaina*. These included the

⁴⁵Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, *Correspondence Letters: South Seas Letters (SSL)*, Phillips to LMS Headquarters, January 1936.

⁴⁶ Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*, 367.

⁴⁷ Elia Taase, *Ina ia Tatou Iloa: O le Talafaasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Amerika Samoa mai le amataga i le LMS e oo i le 2005*, Tamaligi: Malua Printing Press, 2006, 117.

approval of candidates for ordination, the discipline of the ministry, the settlement of difficulties referred from the District Meetings, the issuing of advice regarding the conduct of public worship, and the handling of questions arising out of relationships between the churches and the government. In subsequent revisions of the constitution of the Church there were alterations in the specific responsibilities laid upon this body, but it remained the most significant feature in the organization of the Samoan Church, and its moral and spiritual influence was greater than that of any other single group within the Church.⁴⁸

The chance of becoming a *Toeaina*, or an Elder of the Church carried significant weight and was considered a position of great responsibility and power.⁴⁹ This was not lost upon Rev. Pouesi and members of the Apia congregation. Fauolo records that several prominent members of the Apia congregation were distraught at the decision of the missionaries as Pouesi's chances at becoming an Elder in the Apia District were hampered by his demotion.⁵⁰

2.2.3. Factors in Pouesi's Decision to Leave the LMS Samoa Church

Pouesi was left with few options as the decision made by the LMS missionaries was final. In 1941, he decided to leave the LMS Samoa Church and formed an independent Christian parish in Apia that became known as the 'LotuPouesi'. This decision was a reaction to Pouesi's discontent toward the LMS missionaries and their decision against him.⁵¹ It was also a decision that was made in light of the negative motives that factored into the LMS missionaries decision to remove him and the feelings of mistrust and misgivings that Pouesi felt afterward.

⁴⁸Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society 1895-1945*, 368.

⁴⁹Interview with Rev. Victor Pouesi, 6 May 2013. Rev. Victor Pouesi is an ordained minister of the CCCS and currently serves a CCCS parish in New Zealand. He is also the grandson of NamulauuluPouesi.

⁵⁰Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le AlofaLavea'i*, 736.

⁵¹*O le Faave, EkalesiaFaapotopotogaIesu Samoa ma Atunuu i Fafo*, 1983, 13.

2.2.3.1. *Disunity of LMS Missionaries in 1940*

One factor that could have influenced Pouesi's decision to leave and go independent was how the manner in which he was removed by LMS missionaries served as a microcosm of the work of the LMS missionaries in Samoa at that time – a microcosm of a mission that was experiencing its own power struggles as disunity between the missionaries became a major problem that was not lost upon the Samoans. This becomes clear in a letter written by Bartlett that reads:

I wrote you before Christmas, giving you a fairly full account of the position in Samoa, particularly in regard to certain matters concerning the staff. I told you of our high hopes and perhaps I was too optimistic...and at once the difficult was apparent: Disunity. I have no fear of Samoan problems, great as they are. Samoans can be led. More than that, they are eager to be led...but when it comes to staff difficulties I fear greatly...I mentioned the fact that the Samoans themselves had said to me, 'Misi, we cannot be blamed for all the troubles in Samoa. Some of them have arisen because the missionaries have so divided.' (A statement I know to be true too!).⁵²

Two things can be discerned from Bartlett's letter to Barradale. Firstly, the issue of disunity was a serious problem and detrimental to the mission work. Secondly, the Samoans were well aware of the disunity between the LMS missionaries and the Samoans were also cognisant of the point that the struggles and challenges in the LMS mission work in Samoa were not because of their lack of ability; rather it was a combination of things that began and ended with the lack of leadership that the missionaries had displayed.

This lack of leadership and blatant disunity among the LMS missionaries was on full display at the General Assembly of 1940. Bartlett wrote a letter to Mr. Whyte to discuss the disaster that occurred at the General Assembly:

⁵²*Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Letters: South Seas Letters (SSL), Bartlett to Barradale, 9 January, 1940.*

I am writing to you in reference to the most serious problem that is facing us as missionaries and also the Samoan church at the present time. , i.e. the lack of unity in the staff. This division has already continued to long. Personally I anticipated the recent *fonotele* and its committees with dread fearful of what might happen. Events exceeded my worst fears. Never have I attended such meetings, never have I seen such a disgraceful exhibition by missionaries. Not only was our lack of unity and good fellowship apparent to the Samoans, but it astonished them, so much so that I was approached during the *fono* – and since – by leaders of the church and – very respectfully – I was asked to do my utmost to urge the missionaries to put their house in order.⁵³

Bartlett's letter to Whyte shows a mission endeavour with serious problems begging the question, how could the Samoan pastors work with the missionaries if the missionaries themselves could not work together? Their disunity was a sign of weakness to the Samoans and this was perhaps one motivating factor for Pouesi's departure from the CCCS as it was only a year later that Pouesi and several members of the LMS Apia parish decided to leave and form their own independent church.

As can be seen from above, people have different opinions as to the start of the 'LotuPouesi'. However, while the viewpoints vary, it can be seen from critical examination of the situation that all these viewpoints serve as solid motives and factors in Pouesi's decision to leave the LMS Samoa Church. It was a decision that was made by Rev. Pouesi because although he respected the Church, he resented its leaders and their decision against him.⁵⁴

The formation of a newly independent church by Pouesi within the village of Apiawas a form of rebellion by a minister who felt mistreated. It was a statement made by a pastor and members of the Apia parish that followed him that encapsulated a general feeling that was brewing among Samoans for a period of time in their relations with the missionaries. It was also a move that had serious implications within the membership of the Apia congregation as members were forced to decide between their

⁵³ *Council for World Mission (CWM) Archives, Correspondence Letters: South Seas Letters (SSL), Bartlett to Whyte, 22 June, 1940.*

⁵⁴ *O le Faavae, EkalesiaFaapotopotogaIesu Samoa ma Atunuu i Fafo, 13.*

loyalty to the LMS Samoa Church or their loyalty to Pouesi. Rev. NamaiaKofe⁵⁵ stated that Pouesi did not intend to create friction within the Apia membership.⁵⁶ However, Kofe also stated that cultural issues were the source of conflict within the Apia village and the newly started 'LotuPouesi'.⁵⁷ This will be covered at length in the following chapter.

2.3. Similar Schisms in Tutuila, American Samoa

The newly independent Apia congregation established by Pouesi was not the only case of schism that occurred within the LMS Samoa Church during that time. Similar problems erupted in two parishes in Tutuila, American Samoa. The circumstances that led to the formation of independent parishes in the villages of Fagatogo and Pago Pago are similar in that one involved a decision by LMS church authorities against one pastor and another evolved from a conflict that arose between a pastor and a prominent deacon and *matai*.

2.3.1. The Controversy at Fagatogo

While Pouesi was engaged in conflict with LMS church authorities in Apia, a similar event was occurring at the Fagatogo parish in Tutuila, American Samoa.⁵⁸ The controversy began when LMS authorities advised the village of Fagatogo to remove Rev. Levi as their pastor and to vacate the congregation for six months.⁵⁹ According to Tuiasosopo, the problem that arose between Levi and the missionaries stemmed from a policy of the LMS that did not allow pastors to receive an external salary other than the

⁵⁵Kofe is an ordained minister of the CCCS. He is currently the minister of the Vaaitupua CCCS parish in Savaii. His father is TuiletufugaKofe, a high ranking chief in the Apia village. His father left the LMS Apia parish and followed Pouesi.

⁵⁶Interview with Rev. NamaiaKofe, 19 May 2013. Rev. Kofe's father, TuiletufugaKofe was one of the founding members of the 'LotuPouesi' and the CCJS where he served side by side with Rev. Pouesi at the newly formed independent Apia parish.

⁵⁷Interview with Rev. NamaiaKofe, 19 May 2013.

⁵⁸EliaTaase, *Ina iaTatouIloa*, 2006, 117. Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le AlofaLavea'i*, 736. Interview with Flo Wendt, 13 April 2013. Wendt has been a member of the Fagatogo CCJS parish for over 30 years. She is also one of the main music composers of the CCJS church at this time.

⁵⁹Interview with Rev. FaamaoFeret, 19 April 2013. Rev. Feret is the current pastor at the CCJS Fagatogo parish. Interview with MisipalauniTuiasosopo, 19 April 2013. Tuiasosopo is one of the founding members of the CCJS parish at Fagatogo and continues to be an active member up to this day. Tuiasosopo is also a leading music composer for the CCJS church.

monthly church contribution by the village congregation.⁶⁰ The LMS missionaries accused Levi of being in violation of this rule because he was receiving extra financial support.⁶¹ Tuiasosopo explained that Levi had been receiving money was from his children's barbershop business. Levi, in accordance with the decision of the missionaries, complied with the decision.

However, Levi's demotion angered members of the Fagatogo village as they felt that Levi was not guilty of the accusations levied against him. Furthermore, Levi was very popular in his parish and many of the members felt loyally connected to him. Tuiasosopo described Levi as a:

...superb teacher of the Word of God, and as someone who ministered to all the needs of the parish. He demonstrated his message through personal action. He was a farmer and a builder who guided his parish with conviction and firm, but loving care.⁶²

Tuiasosopo's description of Levi shows why members of his parish protested the decision of the church authorities. Despite their protests, Levi initially complied with the missionaries and began to serve his suspension.

While Levi served his suspension, the village of Fagatogo continued without any spiritual feeding without a pastor. It was a difficult time for both the village and parish as the pride of the village people of Fagatogo was damaged through what they deemed an unfair decision by the missionaries.⁶³ With their pride bruised and their anger with the LMS authorities still strong, members of the Fagatogo parish decided to act.

Through the leadership of a deacon and prominent chief named TuiasosopoMariota, supporters of Levie gathered together with their pastor and conducted a worship service with Levi leading the worship. The sacrament of the Eucharist was also performed. After, Tuiasosopo challenged the authority of the missionaries and formed a new independent parish within the village of Fagatogowith

⁶⁰Interview with MisipalauniTuiasosopo, 19 April 2013. *O le Faavae, EkalesiaFaapotopotogaIesu Samoa ma Atunuu i Fafo*, 14.

⁶¹EliaTaase, *Ina iaTatouIloa*, 117.

⁶²Interview with MisipalauniTuiasosopo, 19 April 2013.

⁶³Interview with Glenn Tofilau, 19 April 2013. Tofilau is a deacon of the CCJS parish at Fagatogo. Interview also with MisipalauniTuiasosopo, 19 April 2013.

Levi being installed as their pastor despite his status with the LMS as a suspended pastor.⁶⁴

2.3.2. The Controversy at Pago Pago

A similar act of schism ensued at the parish in the village of Pago Pago, American Samoa. However, the circumstances were different. The Pago Pago parish controversy transpired due to an incident between Rev. Ueligitone and a deacon named Mauga. Rev. Ueligitone accused Mauga in front of the entire Pago Pago congregation of using church funds. Mauga, one of the high ranking chiefs in the village, was humiliated. Through his chiefly status within the village, Mauga took offence to the accusations levied against him and banished Ueligitone from the village. However, other *matai* from the Pago Pago village who supported Ueligitone did not agree with Mauga's decision. Ueligitone's supporters, led by another high ranking chief in the village named Mageo, decided to branch off and form their own independent parish with Ueligitone serving as the pastor.⁶⁵

2.4. Origins of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa

The incidents that led to newly formed independent churches that were discussed above were not related. However, in breaking away from the main LMS Samoa Church, their circumstances and the challenges they faced were similar. In embarking on new journeys separate from that of the LMS Samoa Church, the three parishes led by their leaders, Rev. Pouesi, Rev. Levi, and Rev. Ueligitone reached out to one another. They interacted and supported each other in their transitions.

This interaction and support for one another led to a meeting between the respective pastors. This meeting was held in April, 1941.⁶⁶ At this meeting, the pastors discussed the possibility of taking their support for each other and their fellowship to another level. The pastors agreed to unite together to form their own Christian denomination within Samoa. This new denomination was named, "The Congregational

⁶⁴Elia Taase, *Ina ia Tatou Iloa*, 77.

⁶⁵Interview with Lauoi Mageo, 19 April 2013. Mageo is the current pastor of the CCJS parish at Pago Pago. Interview also with Misipalauni Tuiasosopo, 19 April 2013.

⁶⁶Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*, 736. *O le Faavae, Ekalesia Faapotopotoga a Iesu i Samoa ma Atunuu i Fafo*, 16.

Church of Jesus in Samoa and Abroad” (CCJS) which is translated into Samoan as “O le EkalesiaFaapotopotoga a Iesu i Samoa ma Atunuu i Fafo.”

2.5. Conclusion

Although the challenges and struggles that led to the formation of the CCJS were difficult experiences for those involved, it served as a momentous moment in the history of Christianity in Samoa. Prior to the formation of the CCJS, all churches were established by foreign missionaries. Although the LMS Samoa Church was the majority church in Samoa, issues such as the *taulaga* created a strained relationship between the missionaries and the Samoans. The situation reached a boiling point when schisms occurred within the Apia, Fagatogo and Pago Pago parishes.

The parishes exhibited courage and conviction to break away from the LMS Samoa Church. It must not have been easy, but their faith in God, patience and courage to unite together in forming the CCJS serves as a special moment that was captured in comments by Rev. Victor Pouesi and MisipalauniTuiasosopo that summed up the significance of the formation of the CCJS. Rev. Pouesi stated that the name ‘LotuPouesi’ translated literally as ‘Pouesi’s church’ was a name given to belittle and mock the newly formed Apia congregation as it was associated with the rebellion of an individual from church authority;⁶⁷ however, despite the troubles they faced when they first established the CCJS, Tuiasosopo stated that the significance of the establishment of the CCJS and the pride of the CCJS that they will always carry with them is being the first Christian denomination formed by Samoans for Samoans in Samoa.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Interview with Rev. Victor Pouesi, 6 May 2013.

⁶⁸ Interview with MisipalauniTuiasosopo, 19 April 2013.

Chapter 3

The Early Development of the CCJS in Apia

3.1. Introduction

The development of the CCJS was challenging according to the interviews and information from pastors in the village of Apia. According to Rev. Utufua Naseri,¹ the village of Apia does not speak much about the division that occurred within the LMS Apia parish in 1941 because it threatened the peace within the village of Apia. Prominent *matai* of the Apia village were entangled in this division leading to a difference of opinions and a testing of village loyalties. While it began as a period of conflict, the idea and movement of reconciliation within the Apia village and between the two churches took several years to complete enabling the CCJS to entrench themselves in Apia.

This chapter analyses the differences within the village and churches of Apia, focusing on the events that transpired and the struggles that arose through the complexities of village politics and its impact upon the relationship of the LMS Apia parish and the newly formed independent Apia parish. This chapter also highlights the challenges that the independent Apia parish faced with the LMS missionaries in Samoa in its early years. Lastly, this chapter briefly covers the reunification of the Apia village.

3.2. Apia Village Conflict

The conflict that erupted in Apia originated from the division of the LMS Apia parish. When Pouesi resigned as pastor of the LMS Apia parish, the members of the LMS Apia parish were left without a Samoan pastor for three years. Furthermore, when the new independent parish was founded, some prominent *matai* of the Apia village followed Pouesi while others continued to attend the LMS Apia parish. This created tension between the top members of the Apia village hierarchy as not only was the village church divided, but now so were the village leaders. This led to an unstable situation within the Apia village as boundaries became marked and family and village loyalties tested as attempts at reconciliation proved futile in the beginning. This section

¹ Interview with Rev. Utufua Naseri 28 June 2013. Rev. Utufua is the current pastor of the CCCS parish in the village of Apia that was formerly known as the LMS Apia parish.

examines the process of reconciliation highlighting the political divide within the village that slowed down the reconciliation process.

3.2.1. The Faletolu and Rev. Tapeni Ioelu Seek Reconciliation

Pouesi's resignation from his pastoral duties from the LMS Apia parish and the subsequent division of the church created a period of transition for the members of the Apia village as village *matai* who stood on opposite sides severed relations with each other for several years.² Other factors also affected the transitional period. Firstly, the LMS was forced to put a missionary to oversee the parish. In putting a European to replace Pouesi, the LMS Apia parish members began to lose interest because of the language barrier. Secondly, the LMS moved slowly in appointing a Samoan pastor to resume the pastoral work. With a missionary overseeing the pastoral duties at the LMS Apia parish, this meant that attempts at reconciliation and possibly even reunification of the two churches were unlikely. Reconciliation could only become a viable option once a Samoan pastor was put in place at the LMS Apia parish who understood the village dynamics and the importance of initiating a process of reconciliation that could foster peaceful and harmonious relations between the members of the two churches for the sake of the whole village. This subsection analyses the process of reconciliation by highlighting the main characters that played prominent roles both in the periods of division and restoration within the churches and villages.

According to Fauolo, Rev. Tapeni Ioelu was appointed pastor of the LMS Apia church on September 12th, 1944. Ioelu previously served as treasurer of the LMS Samoa Church before he was called to look after the Apia congregation.³ Once Ioelu became immersed in his role as pastor of the LMS Apia parish and became familiar with the events that had occurred, he realised and understood the seriousness of the issue that divided the churches and the village and the need for a solution to end the dispute. Therefore, Ioelu attempted to initiate a process of reconciliation within the village of Apia between the LMS Samoan church and the Lotu Pouesi. He focused his initial

² Interview with Rev Utufua Naseri 28 June 2013.

³ Oka Fauolo *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i; O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, 737.

efforts on the *matai*, specifically the orators and high chiefs of the Apia village as this was where the root of the problem lies.

The *matai* orators from the Apia village are known as the *Faletolu*.⁴ Rev. Ioelu engaged the *Faletolu* to discuss options that they could pursue to restore order and peace to Apia. Ioelu felt that peace between the two churches could not be ensured without first repairing the differences within the village itself. This was an important strategy as the division within the village existed at the top level of the village hierarchy between the members of the Seumanutafa⁵ family who hold the high chief titles of Apia. The Seumanutafa family members involved in the dispute were SeumanutafaPogai who was a staunch Pouesi supporter and SeumanutafaLoligi who continued to remain loyal to the LMS Apia parish.

The *Faletolu* agreed that reconciliation within the village was crucial as the differences that had arisen between the two village churches stemmed from the relationship of Pogai and Loligi in village affairs. Ioelu and the *Faletolu* understood that fixing the village conflict first would automatically resolve the issues of the two churches. The *Faletolu* orators decided to carry out a peace march to the residence of SeumanutafaPogai on June 11th, 1946.⁶ The *Faletolu* met with Pogai to seek a resolution to reunite the village. Initially Pogai's response was favourable as he was quoted as saying everything will be alright and that it will be done soon.⁷ However, Pogai's response was nothing more than empty words.

Despite being rejected by Pogai, Ioelu and the *Faletolu* remained determined to find a solution to the problem. Ioelu approached Pouesi to discuss the situation in an effort to bring unity to the village.⁸ After their meeting, the two pastors came to the conclusion that both churches had an obligation to work together in trying to reunite the

⁴The *Faletolu* is the Samoan traditional name for the Apia village *matai*. In simple English, it means the three houses that are representative of the three major orators of Apia, namely: Tuiletufuga, Pupuallii, and Leta'a. These prominent orators represent the voice of the whole village of Apia whenever in village councils or gatherings with the high chief. Tuiletufuga is the orator for those in the central part of Apia. Pupuallii speaks on behalf of those in the villages of MatautuUta and Matautu Tai. Leta'a represents the people who dwell in the villages of Tanugamanono, Vailima and Alamagoto. The significance and importance of the *Faletolu* for the Apia village are evident in the fact that they must be present in any meetings or discussions that involve or pertain to the village of Apia.

⁵ Like every other settlement in the country, Apia has its own *matai* chiefly leaders and *fa'alupega* (genealogy and customary greeting) according to the Samoan way of Life. The Seumanutafa is one of the high chief titles in the village of Apia.

⁶ Interview with Rev UtufuaNaseri, 21 May 2013. Also SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai 28 June 2013.

⁷ *Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia, 1944-1957, Apia Church Records*, 67.

⁸ Interview with Rev. UtufuaNaseri, 21 May 2013.

village. Pouesi then discussed the issue with Pogai in the hopes of swaying Pogai to forgive and forget the events that occurred so that peace could be restored.⁹ However, Pogai and his family resisted Pouesi's efforts.

According to Rev. Naseri, Pogai's refusal to accept Pouesi's proposal for peace was a missed opportunity for not only the reunification of the village, but also the reunification of the two churches. SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai¹⁰ agrees with Naseri that had his father accepted Pouesi's advice, both the village and the two churches would have reunited under the banner of the LMS Apia church because of Pouesi's genuine wish to end the conflict. When Pouesi's plea was rejected, the *Faletolu* again approached Pogai for further consultation on the issue on July 1st, 1946.¹¹ Again, the *Faletolu* were turned away.

Ioelu and the *Faletolu* visited Pogai again.¹² This time SeumanutafaPogai accepted the proposal by the *Faletolu* orators contingent upon one condition: that his rival SeumanutafaLoligi and his family leave the village. This condition was rejected by the *Faletolu* as the *Faletolu* recognised that Loligi had not engaged in activity of wrongdoing that should warrant his removal from the village as is normal protocol in the Samoan custom. Thus, the *Faletolu* rejected Pogai's condition for acceptance and the proposed meeting never came to fruition. The dispute amongst the Seumanutafa clan continued to divide the village into the beginning of the next decade.¹³ While this dispute continued throughout the 1940's, other issues between the two churches arose that threatened further the stability and peace of the village. These issues will be discussed in the next subsection.

3.2.2. Disputes between the Two Churches that Delayed the Reconciliation Process

The establishment of the LotuPouesi in the village of Apia meant that Pouesi and his church had to make decisions related to their newly independent church. There were two specific issues that created tension between their parish and the LMS Apia parish

⁹Interview with Rev. UtufuaNaseri, 21 May 2013. Also SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai, 28 June 2013.

¹⁰SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai is the son of SeumanutafaPogai who played a major role in the establishment of the independent Apia parish that came to be known as the LotuPouesi.

¹¹*Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia, 1944-1957, Apia Church Records*, 68.

¹²*Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia, 1944-1957, Apia Church Records*, 68.

¹³*Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia, 1944-1957, Apia Church Records*, 67.

that impacted the slow process of reconciliation. Firstly, they needed to secure land where they could build a church to conduct their worship services. Secondly, they had to decide whether there would be changes to the way they conduct their services or if they would continue to worship in the manner that they practised under the LMS Samoa Church. This subsection examines the controversies surrounding these two issues.

3.2.2.1. Apia Church Land Dispute

When Pouesi and his followers left the LMS Apia parish, they had no venue to conduct their worship services. In the beginning, they continued to use the women's fellowship hall of the LMS Apia parish.¹⁴ However, the failure for reconciliation in the village led the LMS Apia parish to sue the LotuPouesi for using their property without their consent. The court ruled in favour of the LMS and Pouesi was ordered to vacate the Apia premises within two months.¹⁵ The court also ordered that the LotuPouesi look for another venue to conduct their services. Pouesi obeyed the orders of the court and left before the two months to reside at his family's property opposite of MaluaFou College near Apia.¹⁶

The ruling of the court was a setback for Pouesi and his supporters as they no longer had access to the LMS Apia parish grounds. Also, some followers of Pouesi decided to abandon the new church and return to the LMS Apia parish as they were not willing to endure through the financial strain and hardship that they were sure to face in buying a land for the new church. One such person was chief TuiletufugaLafo¹⁷ who initially left the LMS to follow Pouesi. After the court ruling, he left the LotuPouesi and returned to the LMS.¹⁸ Supporters of Rev. Pouesi tried to protest the court ruling. However, the court's decision was final and the LMS was more than satisfied with the court's decision meaning there was no room for compromise as the verdict was in their favour. The court ruling and LMS's refusal to listen to the protests of the LotuPouesi further strained the relations between members of the two churches and therefore the

¹⁴*Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia 1944-1957, Apia Church Records*, 63. Interview with SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai 26 April 2013.

¹⁵Interview with EpenesaPouesi, 29 May 2013.

¹⁶ Oka Fauolo, *OVavega O le AlofaLavea'i: O le TalaFaasolopito ole EkalesiaFaapotopotogaKerisiano Samoa*, 737. Also interview with EpenesaPouesi 29 May 2013.

¹⁷TuiletufugaLafo is one of the orators of the Faletolu.

¹⁸ Interview with Rev. NamaiaKofe 19 May 2013.

village as a whole. In response to the court ruling, the SeumanutafaPogai family offered a piece of their family land in Apia where the pastor's house and church were to be built.¹⁹

3.2.2.2. *Conflict over Music Rights*

The second conflict that arose between the two churches also impacted the slow process of reconciliation. It was the controversy over the LotuPouesi's right to continue using the worship hymns and music of the LMS Samoa Church.²⁰ As stated above, Rev. Pouesi and his followers had to decide on their type of worship that they would practise. They decided to continue the worship practise that they were familiar with during their time in the LMS Apia parish which included the singing of LMS hymns. This marked the beginning of another conflict between the two churches.

When the LMS received word Pouesi and his church were using LMS hymns in their worship services, they informed the LotuPouesi that they were not allowed to use their hymns any longer as the LMS were confident following the court ruling over the land dispute that fell in their favour. According to SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai, an LMS missionary visited Pouesi and his followers with the following message:

You left the church, and you are no longer children of God. You are not good enough to use the Bible, and you cannot use our music.²¹

This action by the LMS angered the LotuPouesi and hardened its stance against the LMS missionaries' authority as Pouesi and his family such as KareneSolomona and MatautiaPeneSolomona wrote and composed many of the hymns for the LMS Samoa Church.

Nonetheless, Pouesi and his followers adhered to the demand of the LMS regarding music rights. They halted any usage of LMS hymns in their church services and they utilised their prolific song writing talents to write and compose new hymns for their church. They wrote and composed over four hundred hymns that continue to be used by CCJS churches today. These hymns became very popular in Samoa because of

¹⁹ Interview with SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai, 28 June 2013.

²⁰ *TusioIugafonoa le Au- Toeaina 1952-1978, EkalesiaFaapotopotogaKerisiano I Samoa*, Malua Printing Press, 1979, 165.

²¹ Interview with SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai, 28 June 2013.

their original Samoan tunes which differed from those of the LMS Samoa Church which borrowed European tunes for their music.²²

3.2.3. Reunification of the Apia Village

After the failure of the consultation between the *Faletolu* and Pogai that was held on July 1st, 1946, another attempt at reconciliation with Pogai and his family did not take place for another five years. The conflicts explained in the previous subsections did not ease the possibility for reconciliation. It actually led to hardened feelings between both sides and drove a wedge between the two parties. The court rulings and harsh treatment administered by the LMS toward the LotuPouesi coupled with the forward movement of the Pouesi and his followers to build upon the land that was donated to them by the Pogai family made it clear that the possibility of the reunification of the two churches in the Apia village was a lost hope. However, it was through this realisation of lost hope in terms of reunification of the two churches that reconciliation finally became realised. This subsection examines this realisation.

1948 was a significant year for both the LMS Apia parish and the LotuPouesi. For the LMS Apia parish, 1948 marked the church's jubilee anniversary. It was a year of joy, celebration and hope. On January 26th, 1948, the LotuPouesi laid the foundation for their new church. The land upon which their church was to be built was next to the location of the Apia Protestant Church²³ which was less than 50 metres from the LMS Apia parish church grounds. Based on the spirit of celebration and joy within the momentous events that occurred in the two churches, a new spirit of reconciliation spurred the possibility of another discussion to reunite the village. The *Faletolu* again spearheaded the new round of talks. On October 9th, 1948 the *Faletolu* proposed that a village gathering be held to try and seek the possibility of reconciliation between Pogai and Loligi. The proposal was accepted and the village assembled October 6th, 1948. Despite the spirit of joy over the events that occurred in 1948, reconciliation would have

²² Interview with Rev NamaiaKofe 19 May 2013. Also interview Rev Victor Pouesi 9 May 2013.

²³The Apia Protestant Church was another LMS operated church in Apia. Its pastor was the LMS missionary assigned to the Apia area. It was a church established for foreign European settlers who stayed in Samoa and wanted a place to worship. This church continues to exist today serving the European and half-caste community in Samoa. It also has many Samoan members who have joined their church membership. The current pastor of the Apia Protestant Church is a former Malua Theological College graduate. Its location has not changed.

to wait a bit longer as the Pogai family was not ready to mend their differences with Loligi.²⁴

This was the last attempt at reconciliation nearly another four years. It was not until the month of July 1952, that the *Faletolu* again marched in unity to the Pogai residence to advise Pogai about the need for peace between himself and Loligi. At this meeting, Pogai finally accepted the overture of the *Faletolu* for reconciliation. It was agreed that both parties involved would assemble on the 9th of November, 1952 at the Pogai residence to discuss a new way forward.

It is not clear the reason behind Pogai's change of heart in accepting to commence talks with his rival. However, an important event in the history of the LotuPouesi occurred at the end of 1951 as the LotuPouesi opened its newly built church on the 6th of December 1951.²⁵ This was the culmination of a long transitional period for the LotuPouesi as the completion of their church building meant that the LotuPouesi was there to stay in Apia. In analysing the events that took place from the time Pouesi left the LMS Apia parish to the day that he and his followers opened their new church in 1951, it is arguable that the many conflicts that occurred between members of the two churches, and especially the two factions of the Seumanutafa title created an atmosphere of hostility that made reconciliation impossible. However, in securing a piece of land and moving forward with the completion of their new church building, the LotuPouesi was able to create a platform from which their church and the CCJS as a whole could develop. It was a symbol of their patience and strong faith in God that ensured that the CCJS was here to stay.

It is through this lens that one can understand the sudden change of heart that Pogai experienced in deciding to meet with Loligi his adversary as the completion of their church building gave them a sense of confidence and pride. It was this sense of confidence and pride that opened the door to forgiveness and a spirit of reconciliation. This spirit of reconciliation was finally realised on November 9th, 1952 when the district of Apia gathered at the Pogai residence for a meeting. At this meeting, Pogai and Loligi in the presence of the *Faletolu* sought and gave forgiveness to one another and settled their differences.

²⁴ Interview with SeumanutafaTiavoloPogai 28 June 2013.

²⁵Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia 1944-1957 Apia Records 82.

It was at this same meeting that Ioelu and Pouesi met and agreed to forgive each other over what had happened in the past. Pogai and Loligi followed suit and the day ended with a worship service to thank God for restoring peace between the two factions. The village of Apia was reunited and this led to tears of joy and overwhelming happiness as some villagers cried at the new found peace.²⁶ Rev. Ioelu called this event one of the most memorable happiest days in the history of the village of Apia.²⁷ According to Rev. Naseri, the significance of this event in the history of the village of Apia is still commemorated at the beginning of each year when the entire village of Apia holds a communion service to proclaim the oneness in the village, while also asking for forgiveness of things that may have happened in the past within the village.

3.3. Conclusion

The Apia village conflict was a difficult endeavour that divided not only a church, but an entire village. This conflict began with the division of the LMS Apia parish and this led to a difference of opinions between two prominent high chiefs who stood on opposite sides in the division. This escalated the situation from a church problem to a village problem as the peace and harmony in the Apia village was threatened. Furthermore, continual disputes over land and music rights between the two village churches did not ease matters; rather it made the hope for reconciliation seem dire.

Through the work of the pastors of the two churches and the *Faletolu*, numerous attempts to reconcile the differences between high chiefs SeumanutafaPogai and SeumanutafaLoligi continually failed. Pogai's reluctance and stubbornness in succumbing to the wishes of the *Faletolu* was a reflection of the situation and the hard feelings that existed between the two factions at the time. However, through time and faith in God, reconciliation became possible.

In finally realising that there was no hope for the two churches to reunify, people were able to accept what had happened in the past and moved on into the future through reconciliation of the Apia village conflict. Once the peace and stability of the village was restored, then relations between the two churches also improved allowing for the independent Apia parish, together with her sister parishes in American Samoa who joined together to establish the CCJS, to begin a process of development.

²⁶*Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia 1944-1957, Apia Church Records, 82.*

²⁷*Tusi o le Galuega LMS Apia 1944-1957, Apia Church Records, 82.*

Conclusion

The basis of this thesis was to find out the motives that led to the schism and the establishment of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa (CCJS). Due to the nature of primary sources and data obtained through interviews, it was critical to sift through the data and try to piece together the events that occurred while uncovering possible motives behind the events and the actions of the people who were at the centre of the different controversies. However, through a careful reading of the primary sources in the form of correspondence letters written by LMS missionaries to their headquarters in London, one can discern valuable information that helps fill the gaps in getting a better understanding and a clearer picture of the motives that led to the division of the LMS Apia parish.

Past works that have touched upon this topic offer several possible explanations regarding the breakaway of the Lotu Pouesi from the LMS Samoa Church. While these opinions are valid, critical analysis of the sources supports the argument that the *taulaga* controversy that created a stir in 1930's created an atmosphere of distrust between the missionaries and the Samoans. The missionaries believed that the Samoans were capable of meeting their annual contribution fees to the LMS. That would have enabled the coming of more missionaries to stabilise the mission work in Samoa.

This set the scene for a backlash from the LMS missionaries when the LMS Apia District proposed a decrease in the annual *taulaga* offering at the General Assembly of 1939. The missionaries were not pleased with the proposal because they felt more help was needed. They reacted by stripping Pouesi from his role as Secretary of the Apia District. This move makes sense when considering that Mr. Whyte, the LMS missionary responsible for overseeing the Apia District also served simultaneously as the treasurer of the LMS Samoa Church. As treasurer and the missionary responsible for the Apia District, it can be argued that the proposal made by the Apia District at the General Assembly of 1939 must not have pleased Mr. Whyte as he was one of the missionaries that advocated for the need of additional missionaries – a need that could not be met without the *taulaga*.

Furthermore, it can be argued that there was a possibility that Mr. Whyte was not aware that this issue was going to be raised as he had the power to block any issue from the Apia District. If this issue was raised without the approval of Mr. Whyte, such an action can be perceived as a threat to his authority. This perceived threat to Mr. Whyte's

authority was not only a threat to his job in the Apia area, but it served as a threat to the entire LMS mission in Samoa. This meant that the missionaries were forced to react. In being forced to react, a case can be made that a motive has been established behind the sudden removal of Pouesi from his post as Secretary of the Apia District has been established.

This motive is further supported by the manner in which the removal of Rev. Pouesi was executed. Firstly, he was removed before his three year term was completed and secondly, the action of removal was carried out while Pouesi was abroad attending a meeting of the LMS in London. Both of these actions run counter to the normal procedure that was followed when a Samoan pastor was relieved of his duties. The fact that Pouesi was allowed to continue as the pastor of the LMS Apia parish shows that he did not commit an act that warranted his removal as pastor.

Therefore, the question begs, why was Pouesi removed from his post as Secretary of the Apia District? It can be argued that the missionaries saw this as an opportunity to silence the voice of rebellion that was behind the proposal of the Apia District. Furthermore, it may have been an attempt to extinguish Pouesi's chance at becoming an Elder of the Apia District as it was common that a person who served as Secretary was next in line to become the next Elder of the District. It was a position of power and influence within the LMS Samoa Church and perhaps the missionaries worried that this would give Pouesi the necessary clout to be a thorn in the side of the missionaries.

Upon reflection, there was a lack of foresight on the part of the missionaries in dealing with the proposal for the reduction in the *taulaga* offering. This is evident in the removal of Pouesi from his secretarial duties despite allowing him to continue in his role as pastor of the Apia parish. This action calls into question the character of the missionaries. Another strong argument that reinforces the questioning of the missionaries character was the evidence obtained through primary sources that portrayed the missionaries as a group lacking unity in their work which was not lost upon the Samoans. It presents a picture of a dysfunctional group who had difficulties working together; and yet these were people responsible for leading the Samoan LMS mission.

Although much evidence points toward the missionaries and their poor handling of the situation, there is also evidence that supports an argument against the actions of Pouesi. As leader and overseer of the Apia District, Mr. Whyte must have been aware of the people who pushed the *taulaga* issue within the Apia District through

conversations with others in the village. This can be seen in the actions of the LMS missionaries in only removing Pouesi from his district post and yet leaving the Elder of the Apia District in place. While the position of Secretary is a position of respect and honour, it does not surpass the prestige that comes with the position of Elder. This suggests that the Elder of the LMS Apia District either was blameless or he too conspired together with the missionaries to have Pouesi removed.

Furthermore, it is quite odd that Pouesi's removal occurred without any objection from his fellow Samoan pastors in the Apia District. The accounts that covered this event present paints a picture that is lacking as there is no mention of any action or reaction of the Samoan pastors of the Apia District. This is intriguing in that the *taulaga* proposal that they made came under the name of the Apia District. It was not common for a district of the LMS Samoa Church to table a proposal at the General Assembly without first agreeing upon it by a vote. This means that while the Apia District supported the proposal to be taken into the General Assembly, they were not as willing to support their colleague who was bearing the brunt of the punishment for a proposal that was presented by them as a whole. This lends credence to the notion that the Samoan pastors were not willing to voice their support for Pouesi due to fear that the LMS missionaries could remove them from their posts if they did not accept the punishment handed to Pouesi.

However, in the overall scope of things, the missionaries' failure to address the *taulaga* controversy properly, a controversy that had begun around the mid-1930's, allowed for matters to escalate into a bigger problem as feelings of mistrust led to the eventual schism of the Lotu Pouesi from the LMS Samoa Church. From this schism, a division within the village of Apia resulted behind the high chiefs Seumanutafa Pogai who supported Pouesi and Seumanutafa Loligi who remained loyal to the LMS Apia parish. This conflict lasted over a decade before reconciliation was finally achieved. It was a reconciliation process that took years to succeed as the Seumanutafa clan's differences coupled with the harsh offensive that the LMS took in evicting Pouesi and his followers from the LMS Apia parish land and banning them from utilising LMS hymns in their worship services continued to drive a wedge between the villagers and the churches. However, in securing a land donated by Pogai's family and building a church for them to use and worship, the village of Apia came to the realisation that the two churches were going to have to co-exist as hopes for reunification were now dashed. This served as a blessing in disguise as it allowed for understanding and

reconciliation to take place as the Apia villagers came to accept the current situation as it was.

It must be noted also for the sake of balance that again the missionaries were not the only ones at fault in the problem that occurred within the village of Apia. It is overwhelmingly obvious that Pouesileft the LMS and created his own church due to his conflict of authority with the LMS missionaries. However, although Pouesi had genuine grounds for being disappointed with the LMS missionaries, it is easy to question whether leaving the LMS and creating a new church within the vicinity of the same village was the correct and proper action to take. It is difficult to believe that Pouesi was so naïve to think that his actions would not cause a problem within the village. The notion of Pouesi being naïve that friction would not occur from his decision is supported by Pouesi's willingness to let members of his former parish follow him instead of advising them to stay with the LMS Apia parish for the sake of maintaining unity within the village. It presents further questions concerning Pouesi's motives in establishing the new church and whether or not the interests and well-being of the village of Apia were truly something that Pouesi was really concerned with, or if SeumanutafaPogai who is quoted as being his staunchest supporter, played a greater role in the schism in influencing Pouesi to leave the LMS.

According to Richard Gilson, SeumanutafaPogai was a very influential person in the Apia village as he was a major figure in the early commercial development of the Apia harbour. He was treated by the Europeans as the highest chief in Apia. He was also once a loyal and strong member of the LMS Samoa Church who was viewed by the missionaries as a religious man who was willing to take their advice. However, it is possible that something happened between Pogai and the missionaries as Pogai never returned to the LMS after he left for the LotuPouesi. It can be argued that Pogai never left the LotuPouesibecause it was his family that donated the land for the new church, but it is possible that Pogai's power and influence within Apia could have influenced Pouesi to make his move with Pogai's assurances that he would support him.

Finally, this brings to light another issue highlighted in this thesis regarding the impact that village politics can have on church affairs, especially in terms of division. The village politics between the high chiefs of Apia were the reason that the Apia conflict lasted long. However, it was not only in the Apia conflict that village politics came to the fore. It was evident also in the schism that took place at Pago Pago, American Samoa when issues over improper use of finances created friction between

the Rev. Ueligitone and deacon Mauga of the LMS Pago Pago church who was also a high chief of that village. When Rev. Ueligitone blamed deacon Mauga for using the money to build the church building, Mauga became angry and he used his authority within the village of Pago Pago to punish Rev. Ueligitone. In Rev. Ueligitone's defence, another prominent chief of the Pago Pago village named Mageo stood up for him. The end result again was a new church and division within the village. A similar problem occurred in the schism of the LMS Fagatogo church in American Samoa when LMS missionaries dismissed Rev. Levi from his pastoral duties. Fagatogo high chief Tuiasosopo Mariota disregarded LMS demands and started his own church in Fagatogo with Rev. Levi installed as the pastor.

It was the coming together of the three independent churches that broke away from the LMS Samoa Church that led to the formation of the CCJS. While their stories and situations are different in some ways, they share also several similarities. The first similarity is that in each case, prominent *matai* in the villages were major players in the events that led to the division of those churches. The second similarity is that village politics between *matai* were carried into the context of the village churches which caused a division of both churches and villages. The third similarity is that although reconciliation was a success in reuniting villages, the division of churches through the formation of new village churches was the end result in all cases. A fourth and final similarity can be found in the power struggles for authority that existed between the LMS missionaries and the Samoan pastors, the Samoan pastors with other fellow pastors, and the Samoan pastors and the laity.

These similarities are challenges that continue to exist even today. With the intertwining of the Christian religion and the Samoan culture, the delicate balance between both village and church affairs as well as the relationship between the clergy and laity represents a fine line to balance because of the independent autonomy of the villages and the way that the church functions within each village. While the clergy in Samoa are treated with respect and honour by the Samoan people as servants of God, there is a reciprocal respect and honour reserved for the laity because of the important roles and positions that members of the laity fulfil inside the context of both the church and the village. There are times when disagreements and differences of opinion between the clergy and laity in both church and village affairs threaten to offset the delicate balance between the two groups resulting in divisions from the church.

Schism and division in the church and in villages are not new to the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS). In 1941, the CCJS broke off from the LMS Samoa Church which today is known as the CCCS. In 1980, another schism led by prominent members of the laity in American Samoa saw the establishment of the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCAS). On a smaller scale, there have been village churches that have left the CCCS and joined other Christian denominations due to village and church politics that caused a rift leading to separation. The challenge for the CCCS today is to reflect upon past events and past schisms and to question whether the necessary and proper steps were taken by both the clergy and the laity in trying to solve a problem that eventually led to permanent division. With the expansion of the CCCS overseas and the missing dimension of the autonomous Samoan village protocols that help maintain the peace within the village and the church, schism and division are a threat that still exists. In reflecting upon the various controversies that led to the formation of the CCJS, and in general, the formation of the CCCAS, the CCCS can learn and better prepare itself faithfully and spiritually in discerning viable alternatives that can help to keep the CCCS as a united congregational church of God. Furthermore, the clergy of the CCCS are also challenged if they reflect back to the individual situations that Rev. Pouesi, Rev. Levi, and Rev. Ueligitone faced to get a better understanding of the type of faith, sacrifice and patience that is demanded of a servant of God in times of distress and trouble so that the clergy can learn from the history of those who walked before God first so that they can continue to fulfil God's work effectively while learning from past mistakes with the hope that we do not repeat them.

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