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Le Laau o le Sopoaga

A Plant for a Journey: Planting Samoan Methodism in New Zealand

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Auckland, 2012.

Saunoa Sila

2012

Abstract

This thesis describes and analyses the history of Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) in New Zealand as a “plant for a journey” (*Laaui o le sopoaga*), planted by early immigrant Samoans in the 1960s in the hope of retaining a structure and organisation that would preserve the Samoan cultural understanding and outlook. Special attention, therefore, is given to highlighting the contributing factors which made possible the establishment of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, including Samoan nationalism, independence, identity, and culture.

However, since the children and grandchildren of the church’s founders have become a significant part of the church body, this original purpose seems less relevant to many of these second and third generation members, whose participation is nevertheless essential to the survival of the church. Researchers have noted that those Samoan Methodist church members born in New Zealand may have different interpretations and arguments in relation to the church’s original purpose due to their awareness of the church’s social and spiritual environment having changed significantly.

The historical data for the study has been collected from stories, focus group interviews, case studies, sermons, articles, presentations, personal conversations, journals of Samoan migrant congregations (*api o le galuega*), minutes of the MCS conference, and the analyses of statistics pertaining to population samples of Auckland and Wellington MCS congregations.

This thesis is the first written analysis of the historical development of the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) in New Zealand, and covers that story from the church’s inception to the present day. In particular, the research identifies the way in which the current structure, ministry, and theology of the MCS have evolved; the thesis also seeks to respond to the different views and aspirations of the three Samoan sub-populations living in New Zealand. The project aims to ascertain whether, and to what extent, there are diverging aspirations among the generational groups in the MCS and, based on these findings, to formulate recommendations for the church’s future pastoral strategy.

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**Aua nei ia te i matou, Ieova e, aua nei ia te i matou, a ia tuuina atu le viiga i lou suafa,
ona o lou alofa ma lou faamaoni.**

**Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast
love and your faithfulness. (Psalm 115: 1).**

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my church, the Methodist Church in Samoa, for affording me the great opportunity to continue my studies at Auckland University during these past four years. Without this opportunity, the possibility of pursuing my research interests and of writing this thesis would have been very unlikely.

I offer my sincere gratitude to our Samoan Methodist congregation in Mangere. To the Reverend Elia and Suliveta Suisala, I give my thanks for your ministry of sacrifice and for the confidence and encouragement that you continue to give me as I carry out my own ministry. I would like to thank my friends and the members of our church for their prayers, support and words of encouragement that have, at times, kept me working right through the night. From a personal perspective, I know that the entire project has been extremely worthwhile.

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I express my sincere gratitude and special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Nick Thompson, for sharing his academic and professional experience in providing me with specific challenges and offering critical analysis on the content of this thesis; this analysis has helped me to organise my thoughts and has also motivated my ambition in the field of history, as well as in this particular study. Thank you for your words of encouragement, your valuable insight and for the editing and formatting of this thesis. Additional thanks go to Dr. Amaamalele Tofaeono for assistance and support over many years. I would also like to thank Professor

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Saunoa Sila

Auckland University, 2012

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1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 LE LAAU O LE SOPOAGA:

Le-a; *laau*-plant/tree; *ole*-for; *sopoaga*- a journey (a party of people travelling together). *Le laau o le sopoaga* means ‘A plant for a journey’.

In pre-European times the Samoans used to paddle upstream by canoe and *sopo* (travel) inland through walkways (*ala sopo*) when journeying to other parts of the island. The *sopoaga*, or travelling parties formed by those who first planned and cleared the walkways desired to find a cool open space in which to rest. If they found an appropriate space, they would plant a tree there, and, as they continued to clear the way ahead, they continued planting in each of their preferred resting places. Apparently, the purpose of the planting was for each tree that had been planted to grow abundantly and luxuriantly so as to provide space for the *sopoaga* to rest and find relief from the cool fresh breeze in the open area under the shade of the tree’s branches. Due to careful planting by the *sopaga*, when others later went on journeys, they would not rest or eat along the way until they reached one of the trees of rest. Travellers, on arrival at the resting place, would assemble to feast and share fellowship. These marked trees also functioned as meeting places where the legislature (the chiefs and orators on the journey) gave orders and instructions relating to morality and security as they travelled. Like the Israelites, as they journeyed in the wilderness when the travellers rested, they piled-up stones to make an altar in front of which to worship their god. The travellers looked forward to arriving at such places where they could meet to worship their gods, acquiring protection and guidance along the way.

To ensure the survival and accessibility of the marked trees, changes to each tree and its environment were made by every group of travellers who rested to camp on the course of their journey. They pruned branches and cleared away any creeping plants that hindered the growth of the tree; they burned the tree litter and weeded the grass around the area. They piled up stones to form seats and dining tables and cleared the ground of stones so that it would be comfortable to sleep on.

Various changes occurred as travellers arrived with new ornaments and ideas; instead of stone seats and beds, they built small shelters thatched with tree branches and leaves; they cut and assembled simple pieces of wood to form beds and seats to provide places on which to rest. They planted ornamental gardens containing edible plants so as to provide drink and

food for travellers. These changes continued to occur as travellers made further changes to the trees and their environment so as to maintain accessibility and serenity at various points along the journey. Due to its significance, the tree became a social, cultural, and religious space under whose branches unity, fellowship, and Samoan forms of worship could be nurtured and developed.

When journeying inland, in the absence of houses, meeting places, and other places in which to worship, the travellers longed to reach such a tree where unity, fellowship and religious practices were nurtured.

I have chosen to begin this history of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand with the story of *Le Laau o le Sopoaga* or 'A Plant of a Journey' because of its resonance with the planting of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand and, in particular, its significance to travelling Samoans. Samoans are on a journey, and are still journeying. As they have travelled around the world, they have planted Samoan churches at places of residence and settlement. The journey to the New Zealand of the 1950s resulted in the establishment, first, of Samoan communities, and later, of Samoan churches.

Autonomous Samoan churches formed after that period of early migration emerged as a primary support structure that provided not only the spiritual, but also the essential social welfare and economic support for the emerging Samoan communities. In many ways, the Samoan migrant church resembled a 'village' for the Samoan settlers, where people, especially children, could be socialized, nurtured and developed. The migrant church's social, cultural and spiritual roles became the means by which Samoans' sense of belonging was affirmed and the principle of sharing was enacted between them. The church became a focus for their lives, their joys, their sorrows, troubles, and achievements. It was a home where culture was learned and Samoan migrants, especially those Samoans who were New Zealand-born, discovered the language, cultural values and practices, which had been incorporated into the church's traditional activities. The traditional significance of a Samoan church was embodied in the aspirations of the first migrants and became a mandate for the formation of the autonomous Samoan churches.

As successive generations of 'travellers' reached the clearings, they expected to find various types of shelter and protection; the clearings sometimes needed to be rearranged to reflect the changing needs and experience of the travellers. Sometimes, more trees of other types required planting in a clearing in order to suit the changing and varied, social, economic, and

spiritual needs of the new arrivals. When the new travellers were unable to find the type of clearing they sought, they would seek it elsewhere; there were plenty of other routes on which such shelter might be found.

1.2 IDENTIFICATION AND EXPOSITION OF THE PROBLEM

The history of the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) starting from the 1950s and up to the year 2010 has, until now, remained largely oral; to date, there have been no previously published comprehensive studies of this period of the church's history in New Zealand. This study presents an historical narrative of the establishment of the Samoan Methodism in New Zealand and identifies key events in that history. The research is based on the oral and written records of the church's progress, the setbacks encountered; it also documents the church's concepts, symbols, beliefs, and attitudes. It uses the basic historical techniques of description, narration, analysis and interpretation from a Samoan perspective.

In addition, this study of the records of the establishment of the MCS in New Zealand is also intended to serve three purposes. The first is to assist adherents of the MCS to understand how their church's faith has grown and developed since its establishment in New Zealand. Here, particular attention is paid to the ways in which the church's governance, worship and practices express cultural values and retain and maintain spiritual and cultural identity. The second purpose is to offer a critique of past historical developments (e.g. the fusion of allegiance to an independent nation of Samoa and the independent church in early 1960s). The third purpose of the study is to anticipate a possible future for the MCS as it learns to accommodate the diverse aspirations of the church's three sub-groups, who find themselves influenced by both their Samoan heritage and New Zealand's multi-cultural society, and are thus at times caught between two cultures that often contradict each other.

The Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) was established in Grey Lynn, Auckland, in the early 1960s. Its aim was to keep the 'Gospel' and Samoan culture intimately related in order to retain national identity through language and culture and indigenous forms of worship. This was the same period during which Samoa was moving towards independence. A strong commitment to the idea of developing Samoan forms of government emerged from the strong sense of Samoan nationalism that developed around the concept of independence and the period of time leading up to Samoan independence. However, the achievement of the desire for autonomy seemed impossible within the Methodist Church of New Zealand. While some Samoan migrants remained in the New Zealand Methodist Church, many joined the MCS in

New Zealand. However, like other Pacific Island churches in New Zealand, the Methodist Church of Samoa now finds itself attempting to serve the needs of three distinctive generational groups¹, the members of which frequently seem in ways that are different from the dictates of the church's original purpose.

In the case of other Pacific Island churches, researchers have noted that those members born in New Zealand may perceive their cultural and religious identity in a way that is different from that of their parents and grandparents who migrated from Samoa. Knowing that the social and spiritual environment has changed significantly, the three Samoan sub-groups within the MCS likewise have different interpretations and views of the church's original purpose. As a result of the historical development of the MCS in New Zealand, and in relation to this diversity of views, the burning question facing the MCS in New Zealand is: *Can the MCS survive and hold its adherents without major change to its structure?* In other words, if the MCS persists in its current form, does it risk losing those of the second and third groups who perceive difficulties in the church's current form?

When Samoans migrated to New Zealand and elsewhere, they brought with them their Samoan faith in their God, securely expressed in their cultural values and symbols. When they settled and established Samoan ethnic communities in their areas of residence, there was a high expectation that they would continue to uphold their Samoan faith in New Zealand. This expectation was later accomplished by the establishment of autonomous Samoan churches, including the MCS, that would be governed by Samoans so as to ease the

¹ I owe this definition to Cluny Macpherson who pioneered research on this concept of sub-groups. 'Conceptualising and Explaining Ethnic Diversity among the Children of Samoan Migrants in New Zealand' (with La'avasa Macpherson) (in) Spickard, P., (ed.) *We Are a People. Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press. 2000. (pp.70-85); 'The Changing Contours of Samoan Ethnicity' (in) *Nga Take: Ethnic Relations and Racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. (eds) P Spoonley, C. Macpherson and D. Pearson. Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1991. (pp.107-127); 'On the Future of Samoan Ethnicity'. (in) *Tau'iwi: Racism and Ethnicity in New Zealand*. P. Spoonley,, C. Macpherson, C. Sedgwick and D. Pearson. (eds), Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1984. (pp. 107-127);. Defining the Samoan population in terms of 'sub-groups' distinguishes those of the Samoan population who are migrants (the first and second group) and those who are non-migrants (the third group). These groups are generational. They refer to (1) those born and educated in Samoa; (2) those born in Samoa, who spent up to ten years of their lives there and then migrated and continued their education in New Zealand; (3) those born and educated in New Zealand. These are the three groups that are referred to throughout this thesis.

consideration of concerns relating to Samoan cultural values and practices in both governance and forms of worship.

This thesis argues that, despite the fact that the organisation may change in some ways in its new context, the MCS in New Zealand, needs to remain faithful to its roots. Its current mission is to ensure, despite change, that social and spiritual practices and language remain closely connected. In so saying the author agrees with Lalomilo Kamu, a Samoan theologian and historian, who contends that the survival of Samoan Methodism, both in Samoa and overseas, depends upon how the structure and organisation of the church is expressed and communicated through traditional cultural symbols and practices². For Samoans both in New Zealand and overseas, Samoan churches were established as primary support structures, not only to nurture Samoan spirituality, but also as a replication of the village entity such as in Samoa where Samoan life is centred and from whence, coincidentally, springs the necessity for Samoans to retain their identity as Samoan Christians³.

David Pitt and Cluny Macpherson make a similar claim in their study of the Samoan community in New Zealand, viewing the Samoan church and *aiga* (Samoan family) as providing a firm foundation from which the Samoan community derived its early identity and unity.⁴ In contemporary New Zealand, new developments such as modern technology, the falling costs of communication and travel provide Samoans with easy access to their lands, titles, and relatives back home. For Pacific island migrants, the teaching of ethnic languages in New Zealand school's curriculum and the hosting of cultural festival celebrations have become vehicles for teaching Samoan, New Zealand-born, descendants to understand and to value their own identity and culture, as well as those of others.⁵ In fact, these educational initiatives have contributed effectively to preserving Samoan spirituality and its distinctive cultural identity for Samoans whether born overseas or in New Zealand.

² Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, (Apia: Donna Lou Kamu, 1996), 176.

³ Fineaso Faalafi, *Carrying the Faith: Samoan Methodism 1828-1928*, (Piula Theological College, 2005), 9.

⁴ David Pitt and Cluny Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in New Zealand*, (Longman Paul, New Zealand, 1974), 60-61.

⁵ In September 1994: Official approval of the Samoan language Curriculum by the Ministry of Education, Provided Samoan language to be taught in these schools in the near future; Tertiary Education, University/polytechnic, Samoan language courses; Georgina te Heuheu, "Samoan Language" Paper Presented on Samoan Language Week New Zealand. May 2009. <http://www.samoabserver.ws>. (Accessed May 26, 2009).

1.3 TENSIONS BETWEEN THREE SUB-GROUPS WITHIN THE MCS

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a history of the MCS in New Zealand and to interpret the key historical events which have marked that development. The thesis explores the way in which the relationship between the Gospel and Samoan culture has developed in this setting. Moreover, it examines how the relationship between gospel and culture might be redefined to accommodate the differing aspirations and interpretations of three distinctive Samoan sub-populations to ensure the survival and growth of the church in the rapidly changing New Zealand society.

The Samoan population in New Zealand is made up of three sub-groups. The first sub-group is comprised of the original migrants who were born and educated in Samoa. Among these were the pioneers of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, some of whom withdrew from existing congregations for the purpose of establishing a Samoan church. These migrants mediated their religious faith through cultural symbols and forms. Inheriting many aspects of traditional Samoan cultural and life, this group tends to be actively committed to the belief that the survival of the MCS in New Zealand is dependent upon the way in which the church grounds its faith in traditional Samoan culture.

The second sub-group is comprised of those who were born in Samoa, but who migrated to New Zealand at a young age. They tend to value the Samoan culture (*Faa-Samoa*) as an important powerful element that moulds their Christian spirituality in New Zealand. On the other hand, they have also been drawn into the realities of the culture of New Zealand, its values and its life style, all of which serve to transform their worldview. This group's commitment to culture has been affected both by the home culture and that of the host, with the result that some group members support the point of view of the first generation migrants, while others opt for incorporating the values of the new culture. The group's main argument is that the MCS cannot survive if it retains only Samoan traditional culture, but fails to accommodate and incorporate the values and practices of the host country.

The third sub-group is comprised of those who were born and educated in New Zealand, and tends to be the most critical of the Samoan mainline church's structure, organisation and mission. Members tend to believe that the strong Samoan cultural foundation of these churches, including that of the MCS, has marginalised them in terms of church governance, decision-making, gender-balanced ministry and a gender-inclusive theology, as examples of a few of the issues of concern. This group's main argument is that the MCS cannot survive

unless it embodies aspects of New Zealand culture in a new structure, organisation and mission.

Despite these generalisations, these three generational viewpoints are not absolutely fixed. For example, some of the older people from the first group have very flexible perspectives, opting to adopt New Zealand cultural values and to pursue occupational and educational success, while some members of the third group, young people, seem very committed to the traditional ways of doing things and also to the ministry of the church. Although there continues to be a “first group” of new Samoan settlers in New Zealand, their experiences of faith communities in contemporary Samoa may differ from those of the early migrants. Some new arrivals attend the same church denomination as they attended on the island of Samoa, while others join and attend different denominations which are more convenient to access from their new homes and which help them to make friends with new neighbours. Their choices may be determined by unfavourable experiences of church worship and governance in Samoa. Indeed, some new arrivals opt to leave the church due to their social and economic aspirations.

The differing views and responses of these sub-groups have been well-documented and will be discussed later in the thesis. It is also worth noting that, in the MCS, these divergences between the generational groups centre on three major issues. The first issue is that of church governance. This question arises when the first group, which tends to be well satisfied with the traditional governance of the church, alienates the second and third groups. The predominance of an older and more hierarchical governance structure, which limits the involvement of youth in the church’s decision-making process, has put pressure on the second and third group’s commitment to the church. As a result, these two groups recommend and seek a more individual expression of faith in which they experience a greater sense of equality and unity than they would in a more corporate inherited expression of faith.

The second issue is the question of church liturgy and worship. The dominant monolingual language of worship and the inappropriateness of programs for accommodating the social and religious needs of the two groups may cause indifference and withdrawal amongst younger church members. The problem arises because church programs and activities are mainly adult dominated and may lack any accommodation for young people in leadership roles. This limits the opportunities for the young to lead activities and make decisions using their individual intellect and creativity. It thus creates and widens the generational gap between the three

Samoan sub-populations and leads to the diminution of commitment to religious, social, and communal relationships.

The third issue relates to financial practice and management in the church. The social and cultural pressure of the *Faa-Samoa* in Samoan migrant churches, including the MCS, has caused problems. The political and religious aspirations of parents, which are perceived to lead to poverty and result in children leaving school prematurely to take early employment, the new *aiga* (family) patterns, and the need to forge a Samoan identity, can be burdensome to some families. These concerns become the basis of the second and third sub-groups' argument against the traditional ministry of the church which has, until now, mainly been inherited from, and is driven by, the Samoan born and educated group of church members. These three major issues are deeply embodied and reflected in the Samoan cultural values, practices and symbols, and have become a source of tension between the three sub-groups.

This research is an attempt to reflect on, and respond to, these debates, to find answers to the following questions: What role does the Samoan culture play in transmitting the Christian gospel to the Samoan population in New Zealand? How well does the present ministry of the church understand and meet the divergent expectations of its three sub-groups? How willing is the MCS ministry to establish a new agenda for the ministry in New Zealand and to what extent must this cultural divergence be acknowledged and incorporated in ways that ensure the survival of the church? Can the MCS, for instance, accommodate the third group's arguments that, for example, the church's structure, ministry, and theology must be opened to include New Zealand cultural values if it is to survive into the 21st century?

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the relevant literature is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the planting of indigenous churches in other parts of the world, while the second part is concerned with planting Samoan Methodism in New Zealand.

1.4.1 Planting diaspora churches: A Worldwide Phenomenon

Studies of immigrant churches in Europe and America, by Phillip Hammond and Kee Warner, Yang Fenggang, Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim and R. Stephen Warner, Karen J. Chai and Mark Mullins, suggest that the purpose of the establishment of immigrant

churches was primarily for the retention of indigenous heritage through culture, language, and identity and also for the preservation of indigenous forms of worship.⁶

Although most immigrant churches were established with a similar purpose, each has encountered a diversity of social and religious problems, which, in turn have affected their strategies for survival in the context of their host nations. Phillip Hammond and Kee Warner observed that the relationship between religion and ethnicity in immigrant churches in America seems to be one of decline. This happens as “the decreasing importance of ascribed characteristics and the correlative increase in individuals’ autonomy diminishes the inheritability of both religion and ethnicity, and that means the decline in their relationship”⁷.

In line with Hammond and Warner’s argument, Karen J. Chai argued that, for the Korean diaspora churches in America to survive, they would need to de-ethnicise from a monolingual church and transform it into a multi-ethnic church. Chai argued that this would, to some extent, resolve the ‘silent exodus’ of a whole generation of Korean Americans from church because of the advocacy of values required to accommodate the social and religious needs of the second generation within the Korean Protestant Church. To ensure the survival of the church, Chai drew on Mullins’ ideal-typical model for ethnic church development. The Mullins model highlights the idea that, for immigrant churches to survive, there is a need for a monolingual congregation to be de-ethnicized and transformed into a multi-ethnic church.⁸

Central to the arguments of Chai and Mullins, is the survival of the church being dependent on the continued participation of the younger generation. Moreover, as Christians, and as a congregation of the wider church, they argue that something fundamental for the Korean church is at stake: if the Korean church chooses to retain its cultural heritage and identity; its mission to the wider world will be abandoned. On the other hand, Chai and Mullins’ model

⁶ Phillip E. Hammond and Kee Warner, “Religion and Ethnicity in Late Twentieth-Century America”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1993; 527;55); Yang Fenggang, *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, assimilation, and Adhesive Identities*, (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999), 199-200; Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim and R. Stephen Warner (eds), “Korean Americans and their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore”, *Christian Century* July 26, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003, 307; Karen J. Chai, “Competing for the Second Generation: English Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church”, in R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (eds), *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁷ Phillip E. Hammond and Kee Warner, “Religion and Ethnicity in Late Twentieth-Century America”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1993; 527; 55).

⁸ Mark Mullins, “Christianity Transplanted: Toward a Sociology of Success and Failure”, In Mark Mullins and Richard Fox Young (eds), *Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan*, (USA: Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995).

for survival may result in the loss of the Korean culture and language and the Korean religious identity that migrant Korean Christians often share in church.

Chai, Mullin and others argue that diaspora churches need to abandon their language and culture in order to continue to survive down through the generations. However, the planting of the MCS in New Zealand seems to be somewhat different. Although the MCS diaspora church has problems that are similar to those of the Korean church in terms of retaining younger generations in their church (the continuous participation of young people is essential to the survival of the church), the planting of MCS in New Zealand and its purpose of keeping its cultural roots in the *Faa-Samoa* reflects the strong aspirations of Samoan Methodists to be independent in their cultural and linguistic expression of the Methodist identity. This Methodist identity was developed around the same time as Samoa struggled for independence, and the Wesleyan chiefs and Methodists struggled for an independent Samoan Methodist Conference.

1.4.2 Planting Samoan Methodism in New Zealand

Currently, there is very little empirical research that has been published in regard to the Methodist Church of Samoa in New Zealand, and especially in regard to the planting of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand. Neither has there been much published research in regard to the Samoan Methodist Church's relationship with the New Zealand Methodist Church in catering for the spiritual development of the Samoan migrant population.

Missionaries, such as Dyson, Brown, and Allardice, wrote notable works that are relevant to the history of Samoan Methodism; however, these were written before the establishment of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand; in addition, they were written from a British or an Australian perspective with that audience in mind⁹. Fineaso Faalafi wrote about the transition of Samoan Methodism from mission to self-governing church in Samoa. However, there has been little published concerning the extension of that self-governing church in New Zealand, particularly at a contemporary level.¹⁰

⁹ George Brown, *Autobiography*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1908); Austin, J.S., *Missionary Enterprise*, (Packer, 1921); Martin, Dyson, . *My Story of Samoan Methodism: Or a Brief History of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in Samoa*. Melbourne: Fergusson and Moore, 1875; Allardice, D. W. *The Methodist Story in Samoa: 1828-1984*, (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Fineaso Faalafi, "A Century in the Making of the Samoan Church, 1828-1928", (PhD thesis, Melbourne, 1994).

Tupu Folasa's history of Samoan Methodism, which was written in Samoan, is merely a compilation of the annual minutes and church reports of the Samoan Methodist Conference¹¹. The only source of literature in regard to Samoan Methodism in New Zealand is a book written in Samoa by the Reverend Setu Faaniniva; however, it contains little analysis or detailed research on church growth and patterns of evangelisation.¹² There is a collection of unpublished literature from personal journals, reports, dairies of individual churches, essays and presentations; these offer important information that is relevant to the history of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand. Some of the writers that have been included in the collection, such as Tupe Timoteo and Taulealeausumai Sione, were pioneers of the church.¹³ Some were written and collected by final year students of the Piula Theological College as a requirement of their history course. However, their research is sometimes superficial and sporadic. This is due to the fact that most of the research undertaken was dependent upon the availability of students and was completed in their spare time. Such was the case for the following researchers; Gagae Uelese, Olataga Elu, and Masele Tolai.¹⁴

Some studies of the Samoan church and church diaspora, such as those of Levesi Afutiti, Faafetai Lesa, Makelusa Porotesano and Felise Leulu Vaa, were written from the perspective of migrant Samoans living away from home.¹⁵ These researchers have written of denominational diaspora churches in a variety of locations in the Samoan diaspora. These studies are not specific to the Methodist Church of Samoa in New Zealand, however their analysis reveals the general significance of diaspora churches for Samoan migrants, in which the church is not only a social institution where people congregate and have fellowship, but is also a place where faith is nurtured and mediated through its cultural aspects. This shared

¹¹ Tupu Folasa, *Amataga ma le Faavaega o le Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa 1827-1968*, (Apia: Matafele, 1970).

¹² Faaniniva, Setu. *Foafoa-I-Vao-Ese: Amataga o Lotu Metotisi Niu Sila ma Ausetalia, 1964-2000*, (Australia: Perfection Press, 2000).

¹³ Tupe Timoteo, "Amataga o le Lotu Metotisi Samoa I Niu Sila 1963-1965" Personal Dairy, 1965; Ioane Tupu, "History of the Grey Lynn Samoan Methodist church," Paper presented on the 40th birthday celebration of the Church, 2004; Taulealeausumai Sione, "Talafaasolopito o le Lotu Metotisi I Niu Sila," Personal Dairy, 1964.

¹⁴ Gagae Uelese, "Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand," Essay Presented in fulfilment of his final year Probation, 25 June, 1994; Olataga Elu, "History of the Grey Lynn Samoan Methodist Church" Essay Presented in fulfilment of his final year Probation, 20 June, 2004; Masele Tolai, "The history of the Samoan Methodist church Grey Lynn", Essay presented in fulfilment of his final year probation, Piula Theological College, 20 June, 1998.

¹⁵ Levesi Afutiti, "Samoan Church and Church Diaspora", *Pacific Journal of Theology* 6 (Series II 1996); Makerusa Protesano, "The Samoan Church in Suva: An Image of a Diaspora Church", (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1996); Vaa, Leulu Felise. *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, (Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies and Iunivesete Aoao o Samoa, 2001), Faafetai Lesa, "The Impact of Samoan Christian Churches on Samoan Language Competency and Cultural Identity", (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawaii, 2009).

experience through church membership creates a sense of connectedness with family and property back home and also minimises feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Subsequent studies by Malama Meleisea, Malama and Penelope Meleisea, Elise Huffer and Asofou Soo, and Cluny and Laavasa Macpherson have revealed that many Samoans are proud of the spirit of their *Faa-Samoa* or Samoan customs and practices. In the view of the those authors, the incorporation of a number of key elements into the political structure and organisation of the independent state of Samoa lies behind the political and social stability that has characterised the country in the period since its constitutional independence in 1962. It is argued that, central to this stability is: the availability of a coherent culture that values unity; clearly defines social roles and the relationships between them; embodies participatory decision-making processes, and provides comprehensive dispute resolution procedures and the bodies that administer these. According to the authors, this cultural stability has effectively contributed to the growth and continuation of the MCS faith in New Zealand.¹⁶

Studies relating to Samoan churches in New Zealand have taken a variety of approaches. Writers such as David Pitt and Cluny Macpherson, Feleterika Nokise, P.L.Palenapa and Melani Anae have written from within the framework of a multiethnic church, the Pacific Island Congregational Church (PICC). Their focus of interest is the integration of Pacific Island cultures with other cultures as a way of providing ecumenical fellowship between cultures and also of exploring the ways in which to express the unity of Christ within an ethnically and culturally diverse church. In addition, the researchers have attempted to provide a comparative history of the differences and similarities between the multi-ethnic and ethnic Samoan churches.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cluny Macpherson and Laavasa Macpherson, 'The Nature and Limits of Traditional Dispute Resolution Processes in Contemporary Samoa', *Pacific Studies*, Vol. 29, Nos. 1/2, May/June 2006.; Malama Meleisea and Penelope Shoefell Meleisea et al, *Lagaga*, (Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific, 1987); Malama Meleisea, *Change and Adaptations in Western Samoa*, (Christchurch, New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch New Zealand, 1992); Asofou Soo, *Democracy and Custom: an uneasy aalliance*, (Suva, Fiji: institute of Pacific Studies, Univeristy of the South Pacific, 2008); Elise Huffer and Asofou Soo (eds), *Governance in Samoa: Pulega i Samoa*, (Suva, Fiji: Asia Pacific Press, Australian National University and Institute of the South Pacific, 2000).

¹⁷ David Pitt & Cluny Macpherson. *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in New Zealand*. (Longman Paul: New Zealand, 1974). Feleterika Nokise, "History of the PICC in New Zealand, 1943-1969" (MTh thesis, University of Otago, 1978). Palenapa P.L., "The Place of Samoan Culture in two New Zealand churches: PICC and CCCS", (MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1993). Melani Anae, "Foa-foa-i-Vao-Ese" (PhD thesis, Auckland University, 2002).

The majority of studies that have been conducted in the area concerning the way in which the lives of the second and third sub groups have been affected by the cultural foundation of the church, are the work of New Zealand-born Samoans. The work of Jemaima Tiatia, Melani Anae, Feiloaiga Taulealeausumai and Rosarina Vai, reflects the concern, oppression and marginalisation felt by New Zealand-born Samoans in terms of church structure, gender balanced ministry, theology and leadership in church. According to them, the predominance of adult-centred ministry, the monolingual Samoan church's traditional ministry, the inappropriateness of youth programs, and the lack of involvement of younger church members in church governance may cause indifference and withdrawal amongst church members.¹⁸

The Samoan migrant population in New Zealand owes a debt to these researchers for taking the initiative to research this particular sector of the Samoan population, of which these same researchers were a part. It is not the intent of this study to belittle or diminish the value of such studies, as these studies express the reality experienced by this particular segment of the Samoan population in New Zealand. However, as Laumua Tunufai asserted, from the New Zealand-born Samoan's perspective, there is a need to look at these questions through the eyes of the Samoan born Samoans and the *Faa-Samoa* who shaped the religious identity of the Samoan first sub group.¹⁹

Given this, and in relation to the second and third sub groups' arguments, the current form of the Samoan church ministry, which is culturally mediated through culture, language and Samoan values, shaped the religiosity of the first group. This strong commitment of the first group to the church is therefore developed from within the context of Samoan nationalism and identity preservation. In this respect, the studies of the third group seem to lack any analysis of the involvement of culture and traditions in the formation of the first group's identity through church commitment.

¹⁸ Jemaima Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures: A New-Zealand- Born Perspective*, (Auckland: Christian Research Association, 1998); Melani Anae, "The Identity Journeys of New Zealand Born Samoans", (paper presented to the Pacific Vision Conference, Auckland: July 1999); Feiloaiga J. Taulealeausumai, "The Samoan Face of God" (MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1994); Rosarina Vai, "Crossing Boundaries to Care: A Study of Pastoral Care in the CCCS for Samoan New Zealand Youth" (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1990)

¹⁹ Laumua Tunufai, "The Price of Spirituality and Social Survival: Investigating the Reasons for the Departure of Young New Zealand-born Samoans from a South Auckland Seventh-day Adventist Church", (MA thesis, Auckland University, 2005)

Epeli Hauofa, a Tongan historian and theologian stated that ‘to understand the Pacific, one is better served by attending to people’s daily experiences of the interconnected webs of exchanges and kinship than by focussing on the disconnections and isolations integral to a Western perspective’²⁰. In fact, these interconnections are changing and dynamic. Helen Morton described the way in which the *anga fakatonga*, the Tongan way, has changed among diasporic Tongans in Melbourne, Australia. Morton’s findings reveal that, although there are some Tongans who are assimilating into the Australian culture, there are also others who are becoming ‘born again’ Tongans in the diaspora.²¹ However, while it is clear that migrants in diasporas can, and will, make a range of free choices in relation to the retention of their language, culture and religion, this thesis will argue that Pacific Island churches and their associated networks are crucial to the preservation of cultural heritage within multi-cultural societies.

1.4.3 The Church and the Economy

Much of what has been said and written about the impact of the economy on church life is probably journalistic in nature. For instance, several articles in the *New Zealand Herald* and the Auckland based *Samoa Observer* point to the church as the cause of poverty amongst Samoan families.²²

As will be revealed, the financial demands and mission structure of Samoan churches have affected both its members and its ministers. Some ministers were excluded from their calling due to their acceptance of economic privileges and material greed. As a result, they withdrew from their local parishes and migrated to New Zealand to look for larger congregations where they would be likely to earn more money. The study by Rev.Taulafo Avei and Manfred Ernst

²⁰ Epeli Hauofa, The Contemporary Pacific 6:148-161. First published in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, edited by Vijay Naidu, Eric Waddell, and Epeli hauofa, 2-16. (Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, 1993).

²¹ Helen Morton, “Creating Their Own culture: Diasporic Tongans” in Spickard, Paul et al, *Pacific Diaspora*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 133.

²² Amata Tuisuga, “Poor Allocation of Funds” in Respond to the Editorial titled “Time for the Church to show some real love”. June 2009. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws>. (Accessed July 15, 2009). *Samoa Observer*, “E le pule se faifeau i se Ekalesia”, Letter to the Editor dated on 26 April, 2011, (accessed on 28 April, 2011). Vaiao Eteuati, “Methodist Secretary defends Church”, *The Samoa Observer*, 16 July, 2011. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws>. (Accessed on 18 July, 2011). Leuluaialii Olinda Woodroffe, “Church accused of Blackmail” *The Samoan Observer*, 15 July, 2010, <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php>, (accessed 16 July, 2010). Feiloakitau Kaho Tevi, “Church not Perfect”, *The Samoa Observer*, 25 July, 2011. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws> (accessed 26 July, 2011). Leuluaialii Olinda Woodroffe, “Church accused of Blackmail” *The Samoan Observer*, 15 July, 2010, <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php>, (accessed 16 July, 2010).

revealed that the struggle for economic success has also affected the MCS ministry within Samoan migrant families and the church in New Zealand. The material greed of some ministers and their neglect of the poor and underprivileged members of the church is often correlated to their dependence on the wealthier members of their congregation and this can compromise the quality of their ministry.²³

There are claims that certain financial practices that have been adopted by the Samoan Church have become burdensome to some families, including some families belonging to the MCS. This is an issue of concern. In this study, within the Samoan Church's structure and governance, worship and liturgy, I will discuss thoroughly the way in which offerings have been culturally manifested and mediated for the church. The accepted structure relating to offerings may create a social divide amongst congregants and financial pressure for some families because of the pressure from church authorities and ministers.

There is an urgent need for an easily accessible history of the Samoan Church, written in Samoan, employing modern techniques for researching historical evidence in combination with Samoan cultural perspectives to explain the development of the MCS in New Zealand. If such a history does not eventuate, Samoans are unlikely to have the type of memoirs that are important and very informative for present day Christians.

1.5 THESIS

As stated earlier, this thesis argues that the MCS in New Zealand needs to remain faithful to its roots, while, at the same time, giving due recognition to the different arguments and interpretations raised by the three Samoan sub-populations in New Zealand, and also to the fact that New Zealand is shaped and moulded by a European based culture.²⁴ On the other hand, it argues that, if the existing relationship between gospel and culture and between the three sub-groups does not change, some groups may leave the church and thus imperil its survival.

For survival, a plant planted in new soil needs to adjust its life to the reality of the new environment. As a plant grows in new soil, each new branch adds changes or qualities of life

²³ Taulafo Avei, "New Vision of Roles for Methodist Ministers in Contemporary Samoan Society" (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1993), 52. See also Manfred Ernst, "We need Prophets," lecture to Ecumenism 430, Pacific Theological College, Suva, 13 May 2003.

²⁴ Ete, Rīsatisone, "A Bridge in my Father's House," Research Essay in Systematic Theology, University of Otago, 1996, 1.

to the growth of the tree. For survival, the MCS, as a plant replanted in the new soil of New Zealand, needs to adjust to the realities of life in New Zealand. Albert Wendt, a Samoan author, compares the changes in the Samoan culture and Samoan churches to a growing tree that changes from season to season; ‘like a tree, a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage and roots...no culture is perfect or sacred even today’.²⁵

The process of planting takes into consideration two basic elements, ‘gospel’ and ‘culture’. In the case of the MCS, this planting process has occurred in various locations around the Pacific Rim where Samoans have settled since 1950. It will continue to occur in the new locations in which Samoans have only recently begun to settle. While the ‘planting’ process is occurring simultaneously in New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, and the United States, this thesis will only focus on this process in one of these locations, New Zealand.

This thesis argues that in planting the MCS in New Zealand, the MCS needs to retain its role of saving souls and the nurturing of faith in Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. However, for the MCS to fulfil this role in the context of the three sub-groups in New Zealand, it needs to build a new structure and governance in which to provide space for all three sub-groups to be able to express their faith without resistance. If the church’s structure, style of worship, and financial practices remain culturally rooted, the second and third sub-groups of the church, who may differ in their ideas and style of worship, will leave the church, because of a perception that the MCS does not cater for their needs. Yet, conversely, if the MCS caters solely for the social and spiritual needs of the second and third sub-groups, it risks losing its heritage of the *Faa-Samoa* and language.

For the MCS to survive in New Zealand, and in relation to the different interpretations and aspirations of the three sub groups, it needs to become a “bridging” church. A bridging church does not renounce its ties to the MCS teaching and doctrines but endeavours to offer new expressions of ministering in a contemporary society to encourage people, especially young members, to attend church. This, as similar to Vaa’s argument that, for change to be made in the *Faa-Samoa*, the foundation is one and unchanging, but that it can be expressed in many ways. This philosophy is often described by Samoans as: *E tele faiga, ae tasi le faavae*,

²⁵ Albert Wendt, “Towards a New Oceania,” *Mana Review*, *South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature* (January, 1976), 3-4.

which means there is only one foundation but many ways of expressing it.²⁶ The MCS in New Zealand, if it chooses to survive in the contemporary society, needs to be open to changes such as the incorporation of bilingual preaching and the implementation of programs which open leadership roles and involvement to the New Zealand born generations. At the same time the bridging church should still incorporate cultural practices and activities and language for the Samoan born generations.

It is the writer's hope that telling the story of the Samoan Methodism in New Zealand will have similar significance by helping modern Samoans, especially the second and third sub-groups of the Samoan migrant population, to understand how their history connects with the *Faa-Samoa* whilst shaping Samoan spirituality and enhancing Samoan identity giving its people the courage to face the future. History also helps to better inform parents and grandparents of the needs of contemporary society, in terms of religious aspiration, in meeting the influx of social change.

It is also this writer's opinion that Samoan migrants should be encouraged to understand the richness of their own history, both in its telling and its writing. It is the people's history that establishes their identity, authority and family heritage, expressed in possession of land and chiefly titles. Samoan Methodists need to be able to understand the struggles and conflicts of their past, so that they can see the presence of God in creating the present identity of their church and nation.

This author hopes that telling the story of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand through the re-visiting of Western sources and the collection of oral histories from the people involved, will revitalise the interaction between traditional culture and the present. Last, but not least, this history is offered as a contribution to the study of modern church history in the Pacific region, in the hope that other Pacific peoples will be able to find a better balance between their past and their present. From this view point, this thesis aims to determine how the MCS has devised new strategies with which to balance ministry in the context of the three sub-groups of the Samoan migrant population in New Zealand.

²⁶ Felise Vaa, "The FaaSamoa," (paper presented in the Samoa National Human Development: Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing Samoa, National University of Samoa, 2006), 114.

1.6 METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

The history of the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) in New Zealand has not yet been written. That in itself is part of this study's value. However, on its own, that value is limited. The aim of the study is not simply to find out how the current structure, ministry, and theology of the MCS has evolved, but to use this historical research as a basis for reflection on how the church might more effectively respond in future to the differing aspirations of the three Samoan sub-populations in New Zealand.

Thus, the first task of this study is to offer a historical narrative of the establishment and growth of the MCS in New Zealand from 1950s to 2010 and to identify key events in that history in order that the story will not be lost. The account of the church's progress and its setbacks should intimate to readers the reasons as to why the various changes in the church's structure and processes that occurred over time were made. The historical data for this part of the study is collected from; stories, focus group interviews, case studies, sermons, articles, presentations, personal conversations, journals of Samoan migrant congregations (*api o le galuega*), Minutes of the MCS Annual Conferences and, the analyses of statistics and statistical trends in the Auckland and Wellington MCS congregations.

As stated previously, to date, no comprehensive study of this period of the church's history in New Zealand has been published. However, while written resources are limited, there are a number of survivors from the early wave of Samoan migrants who were the pioneers of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand. This group's narratives can, with other resources, become the basis of a history and an analysis of that period. Group members' accounts will be supplemented with those of others who have become a part of that history more recently, especially those who have been raised in New Zealand. This study relies heavily on the participants in the story to speak for themselves in order to reveal something of the diverse experiences and expectations of the three groups who together make up the MCS.

Data on participants' perceptions and experiences was collected using semi-structured, in-depth, interviews. Once participants had given their informed consent to participate in the study, the interview questions were sent to participants via e.mail or mailed to them prior to the interview, so that participants would have time to reflect on, and record, their experiences and perceptions in detail. Face-to-face interviews were then held at selected MCS churches in New Zealand; the participants had the option of deciding whether they would be interviewed in Samoan or English. These interviews were, with the consent of participants, audio-taped

for later transcription, and notes were also made by the researcher at the time of the interview and on subsequent occasions.

The research approach of the oral history was qualitative rather than quantitative. Ten participants were selected from each of the sub-groups mentioned previously. A face-to-face interview was deemed to be the most appropriate for Pacific people, as this method provides the opportunity for both parties to gain a realistic sense of commitment to the process, and ensures that free interaction and discussion is conducted in a respectful manner.

Because those chosen as interviewees from the first group were mostly elderly participants who might have difficulty in writing in English, it being their second language, the interviews were conducted orally in the respectful and honourable register of the Samoan language and manner, '*gagana faaaloalo*' and '*va fealoai*'. A one-to-one approach was selected as some participants might feel inferior in the presence of others. It was anticipated that this approach would allow the participants' opinions to be freely shared.

Historical sources are never neutral, and participants in oral history have biases. For example, they may view the research with suspicion and either give false information, or withhold information. Hence, this study adopted the interview strategies proposed by Murray Thomas and Dale Brubaker²⁷, of a loose-question strategy merged with a Samoan cultural dialogue of '*faatalatalanoaga*'²⁸; this method was used in an attempt to circumvent (as far as possible) the biases and conservatism of participants. '*Faatalatalanoaga*' connotes a communal and inclusive sharing in the *Faa-Samoa* (Samoan way). The New Zealand raised sub-groups seemed more willing to be frank about their positive and negative experiences of the church, since they had been raised in a secular educational tradition in which open questioning and criticism is encouraged. The purpose of adopting '*faatalatalanoaga*' was to try to minimise boundaries relating to status or academic expertise which might limit the opportunity of sharing between the interviewee and the interviewer. On the other hand, some people, especially church members, would be unlikely to criticise their church to a pastor of that

²⁷ Murray R., Thomas & Dale, L. Brubaker, *Theses and Dissertations: A Guide to Planning, Research, and Writing* (London: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), 150-151.

²⁸ '*Faatalatalanoaga*' means an open conversation with interviewees in a Samoan way. It offers all interviewees unrestricted boundaries relating to status or academic expertise which may somehow limit the opportunity of sharing between the interviewee and the interviewer. However, the opportunity to reflect without restraint to tell their stories and their experiences and to identify something that appeals to them will be made available.

church. In order to circumvent this, they were given the opportunity to reflect without constraint, to tell their stories and their experiences and to identify some topic that appealed to them. Interviewees were also guaranteed anonymity in order to make them feel less worried about the consequences of criticising the church.

Despite this, as a consequence of my being heavily involved in the community in this role and having to visit the congregations around me and being required to sit through meetings in which these issues were discussed, I came to the realisation that I could not always create a complete separation between the things that I was asking about, and the things about which I heard and could not avoid hearing.

Geographically, the research covers the MCS in New Zealand and its two synods, North (Auckland) and South (Wellington). Yet, even though the study focuses on New Zealand, one cannot escape paying close attention to Samoa and the *Faa-Samoa* which are continually shaping the developmental processes within the MCS in New Zealand. The research incorporates a comparative study of MCS ministry in migrant congregations in New Zealand and in their counterpart congregations in Samoa.

The context of the researcher is that of a Samoan minister with a personal stake in the outcome of the research. Through its historical component, the research seeks to highlight the significance of the Samoan church to its migrant people. From this it seeks to offer insights which can assist in the formulation of new visions for the MCS ministry which are needed to accommodate the needs of the three sub-groups in New Zealand.

In describing and analysing the complexity of life in one migrant church in New Zealand and the challenges that multiculturalism poses to its ministry, a further purpose of this thesis is to raise readers' awareness of the challenges which may be faced by other Samoan churches in New Zealand and, indeed, by other Christian ethnic minority groups in developing their understanding of the roles of the church in their new cultural environments.

1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis has two parts. The first part includes chapters one to six. The next section of chapter one contextualises the research problem and defines some of the basic concepts underlying this dissertation.

Chapter Two focuses on how Methodism was introduced in Samoa via Tonga and how the work of the Wesleyan missionaries in Samoa came to be in contradiction with Samoan cultural values. Later, as Christianity was localised in Samoa, it came to embody Samoan cultural values in its structure, process, and ministerial formation.

Chapter Three explores the role of the Australian Methodist Conference in the re-opening of the Wesleyan mission in Samoa and the impact of the Western political influences on Samoan affairs. Samoan nationalism and identity were bound up in a strong determination to win a Samoan Methodist Conference independent from the Australian Methodist Conference and Samoan political independence.

Chapter Four focuses on migration, a process contributing to the establishment of Samoan churches in New Zealand and in other parts of the world. It also discusses how the religious, political and mission structure of the New Zealand churches affected the Samoans' early incorporation into the New Zealand Methodist churches, and the circumstances which later led to the departure of the Samoan group from these churches. The division resulted in the establishment of the MCS by the dissident group.

Chapter Five discusses the mandate upon which the early wave of Samoan migrants desired to form Samoan autonomous churches that were to be governed by Samoans and to operate according to their own culture and language. The discussion of this first stage in planting Samoan Methodism in New Zealand covers the geographical and chronological planting of diasporic Samoan churches, and how further socio-economic migration contributed to the growth of the church. It also discusses the way in which the MCS faith was developed and spread in New Zealand by the process of chain evangelism among the Samoans living in the country. Chapter Six discusses the period of planting missionary churches in New Zealand, when the Samoan Methodist Conference saw New Zealand as a mission field. In this respect, local Samoan Methodist missionaries were deliberately appointed for the purpose of planting more congregations of the home Conference in locations in which Samoan migrants had settled. Planting missionary churches was a struggle, not only for the congregants but also for the missionaries, occurring as it did during a period of rapid social change that affected church life.

Part Two of the thesis comprises of Chapters Seven and Eight; in these chapters the three issues over which the three sub-groups have some level of disagreement are discussed. In Chapter Seven the Samoan church's worship and liturgy and its financial practices are

discussed along with their impact on some Samoan migrants. Chapter Eight explores the impacts of economic, educational and social developments upon Samoans' commitment and affiliation to the church.

Chapter Nine concludes the study. This chapter offers a discussion on the contribution this thesis makes to the understanding of the relationship between the three sub-groups of the Samoan population in New Zealand. It is hoped that the analysis will become the basis of recommendations for new ways in which MCS ministry in New Zealand can be structured by the reclamation of traditional practices; the role of ministers in the teaching of the Bible is also discussed. The thesis may assist in the creation of meaningful alternatives to accommodate the religious needs of the three Samoan populations in New Zealand.

2 HOW METHODISM WAS INTRODUCED AND RECEIVED IN SAMOA

The 18th century Evangelical Revival in Britain gave birth to missionary societies.²⁹ With the promise of a practical hope founded on their experience of God, men and women were inspired to take up the mission of saving the souls of the newly discovered peoples of the rapidly expanding world. This chapter will briefly discuss the historical background of the London Wesleyan Missionary Society with an emphasis on its introduction and expansion into the Pacific. Information concerning the arrival of the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga and the relationship between Tonga and Samoa forms an essential background for understanding how Methodism was introduced to Samoa, via Tonga, by Samoan native missionaries in the late 1820s.

The relationship between Tonga and Samoa became one of the most important historical aspects in the history of Methodism in Samoa. This relationship shaped both the political history of Samoa and that of its churches. When Methodism was introduced in the 1820s by the native missionaries, it was introduced, not as a national programme for the whole of Samoa, but rather as a village-based religion which was gradually extended to neighbouring villages. In the course of the development of Methodism in Samoa, the Tongan Wesleyan Mission became a channel through which the Samoan mission could negotiate with the Wesleyan Missionary Society in London. This chapter will discuss the Methodist withdrawal from Samoa in 1839 due to an unofficial agreement with the Directors of the London Missionary Society and the Committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

This chapter will also discuss how Methodism was introduced and incorporated into a new structure which was mediated through the Samoan chiefly system. In the early stages of the advent of Christianity in Samoa, the expectations of the English Wesleyan Methodist missionaries appeared to be in contradiction with the way in which the Samoan chiefly system mediated its cultural values and consequent interactions. Later, as Christianity developed in the context of Samoa, it came to embody Samoan cultural values, practices,

²⁹ Andrew F. Walls *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York: T&T Clark Edinburgh, 2000), 160.

symbols and aspects of Samoan culture in its structure, process, and theology. This integration of Samoan culture and Christian values has been coined in the Samoan national motto: *E Faavae i le Atua Samoa*; Samoa is founded on God.

2.1 THE WESLEYAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Wesley brothers' aspiration was not to renounce their ties with the Church of England; rather they sought to provide a ministry to cater for those most affected by the social changes of the early Industrial Revolution. The priority in the ministry of John Wesley was the saving of souls for Jesus.

John Wesley's desire to save the souls of all people enabled him to break with the established church tradition of preaching from the pulpit in favour of what is known as 'field preaching'³⁰. Wesley realised that there could be no better way to reach the lost souls who had been abandoned by the elite, than to reach out to them on their own ground in every available place. Wesley's concept of extensive ministry is coined in his well-known claim, as quoted by Turner:

I look upon the entire world as my parish; I mean that in whatever part of it I am, to judge it right and my bounden duty, to declare unto all who are willing to learn the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work I know God has called me to do. And sure I am that his blessing attends it, great encouragements have I therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work he has given to me to do.³¹

The evangelical priorities, as laid down by John Wesley, became the founding principles which Wesley's associate, Dr. Thomas Coke (often called 'the father of the Methodist Mission') used in 1784 to propose the 'Plan of the Society for Missions among the heathen'. Immediately after the Society was established, Wesleyan missionaries were sent to the West Indies and West Africa.³²

³⁰ John M. Turner, *John Wesley: The Revival and the Rise of Methodism in England*, (London: Epworth Press, 2002), 33.

³¹ Turner, *John Wesley: The Revival and the Rise of Methodism in England*, 32.

³² Harold A. Wood, *Overseas Mission of the Australian Methodist Church Vol.1* (Tonga and Samoa), (Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1975), vii.

2.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TONGA AND SAMOA

Samoa was conquered by Tonga in about 950 A.D. under the Chief of Tongatapu, Ahoeitu, who was the first to succeed and to be honoured as *Tui* (King of) Tonga. Ahoeitu was known for his friendly treatment of the Samoans and this relationship continued through the reigns of many Tongan kings until, in 1250, Talaifeii, became known as the fifteenth *Tui* Tonga.³³ The first years of Tongan rule over the Samoans had not been years of slavery and hostility as were those when Talaifeii ruled over the Samoans³⁴.

In 1250, King Talaifeii (Talaakafaiki in Tongan), the fifteenth *Tui* Tonga, ruled Samoa. For a long time the king resided in the village of Safotu on the island of Savaii. He was believed to have been a great warrior, who was a cannibal and practised slavery in Samoa.³⁵ He was relentless in the pursuit of his aims and even cruel to the Samoans. At Safotu Savaii, the people who were victims of his cruelty demanded revenge.³⁶ Despite their slavery, the cry for liberty grew stronger among the conquered Samoans.

The sufferings of the people during the days of Talaifeii created much hatred against Tongans and, in turn, it initiated the growing struggle to retaliate in the cause of liberty. The famous Samoan brothers, Tuna and Fata, were promising young warriors, whose fame permeated throughout Samoan society. The brothers urged the Samoans to unite and prepare to fight against the Tongans and terminate Tongan rule in Samoa. They encouraged Samoans to fight for their liberty, if necessary, to their death. A plot was hatched to kill the Tongans on the day of the king's birthday celebration in Aleipata, to which all Tongans would be invited. Tuna and Fata teamed-up with Tapuloa, a warrior from Aleipata to perform a Matamatame, a Tongan club dance.

³³ Fred Henry, *History of Samoa*, (Apia Samoa: Commercial Printers, 1979, reprinted 1983), 21-25.

³⁴ C. Stubel, A. Kramer and Brother Herman, *Tala o le Vavau: Myths, Legends and Customs of Old Samoa*, (Auckland New Zealand: Pasifika Press, 1995), 36-40

³⁵ He forced his victims to dig a 30 yard hole in which to keep his prisoners. Some of these prisoners were used as daily food for the king. At Lalovi in Mulifanua, where he anchored his ships, he built forts to protect him from being attacked. Through those moments of slavery, the cry for liberty grew stronger among the conquered Samoans. (Henry, *History of Samoa*, 21).

³⁶ When the king arrived in Safotu, Savaii, he ordered the people to reclaim his residential place now remembered as *Matauea*, on the eastern side of the village where there were huge stones. By that time, stories of the two Samoan warriors Tuna and Fata from Upolu became known to the king. Hence, the arrival of Tuna and Fata at Savaii created strong fear and the king thought to end the Samoan power by ordering them a difficult job to do. One day, when Talaifeii and the Tongan group came across a huge stone blocking the road, he (Talaifeii) commanded Tuna and Fata to remove the stone. The brothers frantically sailed to Upolu to seek assistance from their families. (Kramer and Herman, *Tala o le Vavau*, 36).

During the dance, they drove the Tongans to the side of the field (*malae*) where they hid their clubs and when they arrived at the spot, the Samoans rushed in with clubs and began to do battle. Many Tongans were killed at the scene while others fled for their lives. Fortunately for them, their king, Talaifeii, and some of the other Tongans were able to get to their ships and prepared to sail for Tonga. As Talaifeii sought to set sail for Tonga, Tuna and Fata approached the ships to kill him. The defeated king, King Talaifeii of Tonga, immediately rose and spoke these departing words of surrender:

Ua malie-toa! Ua malie-tau! O le a ou alu oute le toe sau. Afai oute toe sau oute sau i le Aoauliuli-folau ae oute le toe sau i le Aoauliuli tau

The words are translated as follows:

Congratulations on your bravery! Congratulations on your battle! I shall never return. If ever I come back, I will come for a friendly visit but never to do battle.³⁷

The king, although defeated, arose and acknowledged the courage of the Samoan warriors. He also presented his '*tui*', (Tongan club) as a sign of surrender to the victorious Samoans. Customarily, whoever took that symbol of victory would be automatically become leader. However, Tuna and Fata fought over the weapon to establish which one of them would succeed as leader of the Samoans.

This fight indicates that the brothers both desired power. Savea, their older brother, observing the fight, knew that one brother would win only when the other was confirmed dead. He realised that one of his brothers would be lost and thus he intervened in the fight to save his brothers from being killed. As the brothers kept pulling at both ends of the weapon, Savea, took hold of the centre of the weapon and trembled. The brothers both fell down, dead. Savea then prayed for his brothers' lives saying; '*ia ola oe Tuna, ia ola foi oe Fata* - peace be with you Tuna and peace be with you Fata'. The brothers were resurrected and agreed that Savea, their older brother, would be honoured with the title 'Malietoa', which is derived from the words *malie toa*; brave warrior. The title was conferred on the eldest son, Savea, by Leatiogie, the father of the three sons, and Savea subsequently announced the establishment

³⁷ I owe this translation to Faalafi, 2005, 33.

of his government. The title is mainly recognised by Samoans as '*E Faalogo-i ai-Samoa*', or 'the one to whom Samoa listens'.³⁸

The question of who first held the name, Malietoa, is disputed by the districts of Tuamasaga and Aana.³⁹ However, most historians have accepted that Savea was the first one to be honoured as Malietoa. This lineage of kingship from Malietoa Savea continues through Malietoa Vainuupo, who accepted Christianity from the London Missionary, John Williams, in 1830, down to the last Malietoa Tanumafili II, the former Head of State of the Independent Samoan government, who passed away in 2007.⁴⁰

2.3 THE INTRODUCTION OF METHODISM INTO SAMOA.

Talaifeii's parting words, "If ever I come back I will come on a friendly visit, but never for a battle..." have been invoked as a treaty of peace between the Tongans and the Samoans. One historical implication of this treaty of peace was the introduction of Methodism to Samoa from Tonga in the late 1820s. Christianity was introduced to Samoa when privately-funded, self-motivated Samoan missionaries, who had learned about and preached Christianity in Tonga, returned home to Samoa with Methodism.

The Samoans also interpreted the arrival in 1830 of the missionaries, John Williams and Charles Barff, of the London Missionary Society (LMS) as the fulfilment of an old prophecy by *Nafanua*, a Samoan goddess of war.⁴¹ However, while LMS historians (perhaps correctly) give prominence to the work of Williams and Barff, in terms of the Christianisation of the whole of Samoa, there seems little doubt that the first missionary work had been undertaken by Samoan Methodist teachers and the English missionary, Peter Turner, who arrived from Tonga in 1828.

³⁸ K. R. Lambie, *History of Samoa*, (Apia: Western Samoa, Commercial Printers, 1979), 32

³⁹ '*Tuamasaga*' which is one of the districts of Upolu located in the west of the island Upolu, between the east and west of Upolu. This part of the island was named after the third son of Pili, who, as some historians believed, was the progenitor of the Samoans. '*Aana*' was another district of Upolu located on the west part of Upolu. It was named after the twin son of Pili, Ana whom believed the founder of the district of *Aana*. *Tuamasaga* and *Aana* had disputed over the question as to who was the first Malietoa: *Tuamasaga* traditional story argued that Tuna and Fata, in order to avoid further war, consented to confer the title Malietoa to their older brother Savea. In contrast, the *Aana* story argued that the brothers sister's son, Ulumasui, whom Tuna and Fata called as '*o lo la Faaola*' their Saviour, was the first Malietoa, which is evidence that Ulumasui was a man of *Aana*, and Savea was a *Tuamasaga*. Moreover, he did not fight and did not deserve to be honoured by the title. On the other hand, as in Samoa, the eldest has due respect in the lineage of the family and Savea is also remembered for saving the lives and retaining peace among his brothers.

⁴⁰ J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), 428.

⁴¹ Lambie, *History of Samoa*, 141.

Saivaaia was the first native Samoan missionary to whom Allardice and Wood had accorded the honour of being the first Samoan to represent the Wesleyan Church⁴². Saivaaia was visiting Tonga through ties of intermarriage and family visiting during the time when the Wesleyan Mission was introduced to the Tongans. He had been converted to Christianity in Tonga during the great conversion of the Tongans; this had included the conversion of Chief Taufaahau of Haapai and Vavau. As evidence of his conversion and baptism in Tonga, he bore the name Benjamin, given after he had been baptised in Tonga. Late in 1828, he returned to Samoa in a double-hulled canoe with the hope of sharing his religious teaching as *Lotu Tonga*⁴³ with his people in Tafua and Salelologa⁴⁴. His *lotu*⁴⁵ (religion) was well received by his own people. The Methodist church remains the dominant Christian denomination in the villages of Salelologa and Tafua. As an enduring tribute to Saivaaia's remarkable work, a monument is still to be found in the village of Tafua. The establishment and long survival of this *lotu* in the villages of Salelologa and Tafua remains as a tribute to those pioneers who brought Christianity to Samoa via Tonga before the arrival of white missionaries.

The third native Samoan, whose historical significance resulted from the ties of the Tongan-Samoan relationship, was Tuinaula, also known as Lilomaiaava⁴⁶, who John Williams wrongly referred to as, Saivaaia. Tuinaula was from the village of Satupaitea while Saivaaia was from the village of Tafua, Salelologa; they were both from the Savaii Islands.⁴⁷ In 1830, John Williams left eight Tahitian teachers in Samoa under the control of Malietoa with the hope of bringing Christianity to outer villages. Malietoa failed to comply with John Williams's

⁴² D.W. Allardice, *The Methodist Story in Samoa: 1828-1984*, (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1984), 2-4; Wood, 257

⁴³ '*Lotu Tonga*' described by Findlay and Holdsworth as the child of the Friendly Islands Mission. See G. Findlay and W.H. Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, vol. 3, first edition, (London: The Epworth Press J. Alfred Sharp, 1921), 341.

⁴⁴ Salelologa is located in the island of Savaii where the wharf is located and Tafua is part of the village of Salelologa.

⁴⁵ The word *lotu* generally means, religion, but has been variously interpreted by missionaries and church historians. John Williams translated the word, *lotu*, as 'praying system'. He adopted the Tongan use of the word meaning 'to pray'. (Richard Moyles, ed., *Journals of John Williams, 1830-1832*, (New York, London: Australian National University Press, 1984), 69; Pratt defined *lotu* as 'to turn from heathenism (1911:186). Fineaso Faalafi, a local historian of the Methodist Church, defines its meaning from its cultural perspective saying that *lotu Tonga* was a child of the traditional cultural exchange between Tonga and Samoa. (Fineaso Faalafi, "A Century in the Making of the Samoan Church 1828-1928" (PhD thesis, Melbourne University, 1994), 36).

⁴⁶ Lilomaiaava was one of the chiefs of the village of Satupaitea. Other sources named him as Tuinaula, abbreviated to Tui.' He was a strong supporter of the Methodist Church of Samoa.

⁴⁷ Moyles, *Journals of John Williams*, 74.

instructions. In 1831 Tuinaula approached Malietoa to send a Tahitian teacher to teach Christianity in their village. Tuinaula's request was rejected by Malietoa which, in turn, caused disgrace to Tuinaula.

Malietoa's denial of Tuinaula's request has to be understood in Samoan terms. At that time Malietoa had defeated the Aana district in a war of revenge for the killing of Tamafaiga.⁴⁸ The victory had elevated Malietoa's political status in relation to other tribal chiefs who now regarded him as the high chief of Samoa. Because of Malietoa's victory, John Williams chose to approach Malietoa to petition for his support for the introduction of Christianity. At the time, the chiefs who sought political power and whose priority it was to maintain the status quo sought to do so by achieving victory in war. Thus Malietoa thought that in detaining the white missionaries in his district would ensure that he would be honoured as a great and powerful leader.

The possibility of war remained in Malietoa's mind and led him to suspect that there would be further tribal wars against him. Detaining white missionaries had elevated his political status and had, to some extent, provided military support to defend his power against other tribal chiefs of Samoa. These reasons explain Malietoa's rebuff of Tuinaula's request for a missionary teacher.

Tuinaula was a Samoan with a gift of leadership and fearless determination to secure a missionary for his people. Hence, he decided to approach the Tongan Wesleyan Mission for a missionary and in 1831, he went to Tonga in a vessel belonging to Walter Lawry. He first approached King Josiah of Tonga (*Tui Kanokupolu*, Aleamotua Tupou) and John Thomas and they promised that they would send a missionary to Samoa. Tuinaula returned with a promise of a missionary for Savaii and, while awaiting the arrival of the missionary, he erected a chapel at Satupaitea as preparation for his *lotu*. Tuinaula, due to his willingness and courage in negotiating, is still honoured as the first Samoan to have had official contact with the Tongan Wesleyan Mission, who formalised the appointment of Peter Turner in 1835.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Tamafaiga was a war-priest of Manono. He was also known as a cannibal, the devil, as being cruel; he had the power to inflict disease and death. He was related to Malietoa. He was killed for his cannibalism at Fasitoo in the district of Aana. Malietoa Vainuupo and Manono took revenge in a war and defeated Aana. When John Williams arrived Malietoa was fighting in the war of Aana. (Moyles, *Journals of John Wesley*, 129).

⁴⁹ Faalafi, "Century in the Making," 39; Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 259.

Amongst other Samoan Christian converts from Tonga who pioneered Christianity in Samoa was, Teoneula, a chief of the village of Satapuala. John Williams incorrectly referred to Teoneula in his journal as Tuinaula the Chief of Satupaitea who went to Tonga. The two chiefs, Teoneula of Upolu and Tuinaula of Satupaitea, both embraced the form of Methodism that originated in Tonga. Teoneula was another who was believed to have been humiliated by Malietoa's decision to withhold white missionaries. Hence he, in turn, favoured teaching the Wesleyan faith and is believed to have been the first to teach Methodism in the west of Upolu, at the same time as Tuinaula was building the chapel at Satupaitea.⁵⁰

This method of introducing Christianity through traditional exchanges between Tonga and Samoa, led the Methodist Church in Samoa to recall the 1820s as the time when Christianity came to their country. However, Wood commented that the early mission had no official missionary authority because it had no European missionary and regarded them as 'unofficial Tongan and Samoan Wesleyan teachers'. From Wood's perspective, the evangelisation of the Pacific was considered by rights to be work for white missionaries who were authorised and directed by the European church.⁵¹

However, although the initiative first came from European missionary societies, the great effort and significant contribution made by the Samoans who pioneered the introduction of Christianity should be acknowledged and appreciated. Most importantly, from a Samoan perspective, it was the early and determined efforts of Samoan native missionaries that enabled Samoans to enjoy the benefits of Christianity within their own cultural boundaries without interference from white missionaries. They were able to share and explain Christianity in their own language and from the perspective of their own cultural values; this ensured that it was quickly understood in their own country.

2.4 THE FIRST WESLEYAN MISSIONARY IN SAMOA

The arrival of the 'official' Wesleyan Mission in Samoa was viewed by Neil Gunson as a 'follow-up' – a continuation of the earlier work of the native Samoan missionaries who had first introduced Methodism to Samoa.⁵² However, Fineaso Faalafi described it instead as 'an invited mission' that had been formalised by Lilomaiaava's appeal for a white missionary

⁵⁰ Martin Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, (Melbourne: Ferguson and Moore, 1875), 14.

⁵¹ Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 259.

⁵² Neil Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17.

through the King of Tonga and the Reverend John Thomas.⁵³ Both views seem appropriate in describing the advent of the ‘official’ Wesleyan mission to Samoa. Yet, the continuing support and impatience of the Tongan Wesleyan Mission in making urgent representations and negotiations for missionaries to be sent to Samoa deserves to be remembered and acknowledged.

It was not until late in 1833 that the Tongan Wesleyan Mission received approval from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society of what they had sought at their District meeting on 31 December, 1831. The resolution in their annual report stated;

The brethren of the District will adopt the best means their circumstances allow for improving the favourable opportunity presented for introducing Christianity into the Navigators’ Islands⁵⁴

On the approval of their recommendations by the Wesleyan Committee in London, the Tongan Wesleyan District met in 1834 and appointed Peter Turner⁵⁵ as missionary, and some Tongan teachers to open a Wesleyan Mission in Samoa in the same year. On January 15, 1835, Peter Turner and his wife left Vava’u for Samoa with five Tongan teachers. But strong hurricanes struck the island of Niua, almost killing them and thus their arrival in Samoa was delayed for five months. While delayed at Niua, Turner continued to study the Samoan language and the instruction book on missionary work in Samoa.⁵⁶

Turner had worked, in accordance with strategies laid down by the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga and in compliance with the mission to preach the Word of God to every village, to hold prayer meetings and regular visitations to home villages. In order to do this he travelled continuously, beginning with canoe voyages around Savaii and opening up communication with Methodists around Savaii, Manono and Upolu.

On a voyage around Savaii, Turner, who had earlier gone to Tonga with a request for a missionary, chose Satupaitea as his residential home. In June 1835, he settled in Satupaitea, in the village of Lilomaiaava. From that time, the village of Satupaitea became the main

⁵³ Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 66.

⁵⁴ ‘Wesleyan Missionary Society Annual Report 1832-33,’ 46, in Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 259.

⁵⁵ Peter Turner was one among the group of missionaries appointed from London to resume the work in Tonga in 1831. He was a missionary at Vavau Tonga when he was reappointed to open a mission in Samoa in 1834.

⁵⁶ Peter Turner, ‘Journals’, 1836-1839,1.

station of the Wesleyan Mission in Samoa. Turner spent the rest of 1835 in Satupaitea but after several trips around Savaii, decided to establish a new station at Matautu on the western side of Savaii where he moved to on January 9, 1836. Turner also visited and preached in the west of Upolu at Lalovi and Samatau and his labours later led to the construction of the chapel at Samatau. The Wesleyan congregations in Lalovi and Samatau later disappeared as their members joined LMS congregations after tensions developed between the two missionary societies between 1836 and 1839. This tension led to the eventual withdrawal of Peter Turner from the Wesleyan mission to Samoa.⁵⁷

2.5 THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE MISSIONARIES AND THE SAMOAN CULTURE

The white missionaries' expectations of achieving early conversions among the Samoans revealed a lack of understanding of the way in which Samoans integrated the teachings of Christianity into their cultural practices. The missionaries also misunderstood the importance of accepting and adapting Samoan cultural practices. Their reports reveal conflicting interpretations and views on several issues.

One important aspect of the Samoan culture which Turner strongly opposed without really understanding its cultural significance was the custom of giving and receiving presents. He commented in most of his letters to London on such cultural practice being unacceptable in relation to the teaching of Christianity. The following are some of his comments concerning this deeply embedded Samoan cultural practice:

I have avoided as much as possible commencing the bad system of present making and should have done very well if we had not had another body of Christians who are in the habit of making presents to nearly all the chiefs...This makes it very difficult to make presents, as by making a present to one, you may offend 20- they will tell you that the one who has got the present is no greater chief than themselves.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Turner, Journal, 2.

⁵⁸ Peter Turner, 'Letter' to Mission Centre, England, July 16, 1836.

I have also heard of some murmured at me because I have not distributed presents among them, they say what good is the *lotu* or my love if I do not give them the riches of this world...Covetousness is a principal characteristic of this people⁵⁹.

They (LMS) act much more on the giving plan than we do. But I was convinced the more we give to these natives, the less they will prize the word of God.⁶⁰

These cultural practices were differently interpreted by the two parties. Turner believed that, from the Christian perspective, such practices of giving and receiving gifts might be offensive to those who could not afford to give or contribute. If they could not contribute to any family occasions, they felt offended and inferior at being counted as being poor. What Turner did not understand was that it was customary in the *Faa-Samoa* that one who could not afford to give or contribute to any occasions was not barred from them; participation was far preferred to absence from cultural celebrations and family obligations due to an absence of contribution.

The idea of exchanging gifts stems from the Samoan concept of *va fealoaloai*. The expression *va fealoaloai* in the *Faa-Samoa* refers to occasions on which two people meet each other face to face and greet each other in a very respectful manner. This tradition manifests itself in the village context when Samoans host guests. In respect for, and to honour, their guests the villagers conduct a welcoming ‘ava ceremony’⁶¹, after which, the village prepares a feast and presents the visitors with gifts. This cultural spirit of *va fealoaloai* is embodied within this practice of giving and presenting gifts to the missionaries. The presentation of gifts is an expression of obedience (*usitai*), respect (*faaaloalo*), and love (*alofa*). It integrates and perpetuates the concept of *va-fealoaloai*. In view of this, the presentation of gifts is the manifestation of honour, respect and trust for chiefs, elders, and even visitors⁶². The natives’ presentation of gifts to Turner and the other missionaries honoured their presence and reflected the acceptance of their mission. An awareness of this spirit of *va fealoaloai* would have been essential to the understanding of how the message of Christianity should be communicated and taught in Samoa.

⁵⁹ Peter Turner, ‘Letter’ to Mission Centre, England, July 19, 1836.

⁶⁰ Peter Turner, ‘Letter’ to Mission Centre, England, October 10, 1835.

⁶¹ ‘Ava’ is a traditional drink made of the roots of the *ava* plant. The untitled men (*aumaga in Samoa*) collect the roots, pound and mix with water to make this traditional drink, *ava*. When Samoans host guests, they prepare an *ava* ceremony to welcome the visiting party.

⁶² Saunaoa Sila, “The Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand: A Quest for a Contemporary Ministry” (masters thesis, Pacific Theological College, Suva, 2004), 1-2.

Turner commented on the nature of this cultural practice as being covetously oriented. In the communal way of life in Samoa, goods and services were exchanged in an act of reciprocity. There was no cash involved. All transactions reflected the Samoan saying; *A e iloa au i Togamau, oute iloa foi oe i Siulepa*⁶³. Literally, the saying guarantees that, ‘if you host me with love and care at *Togamau*, I will return that favour when I see you at *Siulepa*’. Reciprocity is enacted when a visiting party arrives, and the hosts present the visitors with gifts. In response, the visiting party returns that favour by presenting gifts to the hosts to acknowledge their satisfaction with the hospitality offered. From a political viewpoint, such practices strengthen the social relationships between chiefs or villages. Since cultural practices that are enacted on the basis of respect, honour and love, people are sensitive about them, and it can be a serious insult if wrongly performed or distributed.⁶⁴

At Matautu, Turner was threatened when the village of Sapapalii, whose people had embraced the L.M.S. mission, planned to do battle with the people of the village of Matautu,. The LMS villagers had insulted the Wesleyan teachers while the Wesleyan villagers had done the same to the Tahitian teachers. Consequently, the villagers planned to go to war and the villagers of Sapapalii intended to terminate the Wesleyan Mission at Matautu by burning all the properties belonging to it. When Turner found that the two villages were ready to take up arms, he immediately consulted the chiefs of Satupaitea in an effort to settle the dispute⁶⁵. The chiefs of Sataupaitea met with the Methodists at Matautu and sought to reconcile with the village of Sapapalii. The dispute was resolved through *va fealoaloai* between the two village councils (Matautu and Sapapalii councils)⁶⁶. The chiefly system, as described by George Turner, constituted of chiefs and orators (*faa-matai*) and functioned as the judicial council and the legislative body of the place and as the common court of appeal in all cases of difficulty⁶⁷. It was this chiefly system that determined and enforced moral and social standards, settled disputes and made decisions for the common good of society. Turner believed that the settlement of the dispute could be interpreted as an evangelical or spiritual revival, but he did this without recognising the cultural influences that were involved.

⁶³ ‘*Togamau* and *Siulepa* are the two known meeting places (*malae fonu*) of the two villages in the district of Safata, located on the west of Upolu. ‘*Togamau*’ is the name of the meeting place (*malae fonu*) of the village of Vaiee and *Siulepa* at the village of Sataoa in Safata District Upolu.

⁶⁴ Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 191.

⁶⁵ Peter Turner, ‘Journal’ Vol. 4, 2 July, 1836.

⁶⁶ Turner, ‘Journals.’

⁶⁷ George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, (1884; reprint, Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1989), 177.

In pre-Christian times, the social and political networks in which Samoans were involved were closely aligned to family and village entities. This was evident in the strong influence of the chiefly system in the Samoan culture.⁶⁸ Turner was misinformed regarding his expectation between corporate and individual conversion. Turner expected that the choice to be baptised should be an individual decision rather than a collective one that would require approval and sanctioning by entire families or villages. For instance, when Turner asked the natives to join the Christian religion, their customary response was unhurried and non-committal; however, they implied that, after consultation with others, they would let the missionaries know their answer if, and when, they returned. Turner thought that he needed to approach the people individually, rather than collectively, in regard to baptism. However, the replies he received indicated that such matters had to have agreement of either the family and, or, the village and with the consensus of their chiefs. One example of such a village decision that offended Turner occurred at the village of Sataoa, Upolu. When Turner asked villagers to convert to Christianity, they replied that they desired to join but that their cohesion would stand until they knew more of own their minds and those of their friends. Later, when Turner returned to Sataoa, he was informed of the villagers' collective decision to be baptized. The ignorant, ethnocentric, white missionary interpreted the incident as the people's foolishness and simplicity, without knowing the cultural context in which church relationships were being considered.⁶⁹

2.6 MISSIONARY CONTENTION

When the two Protestant Missions entered into a denominational conflict in 1836, it was generally believed that Samoa was regressing into an atmosphere of rivalry. The agreement made by the Directors of the LMS and the Wesleyan Committee, on the issue of the field of labour in the Pacific, determined that Samoa must be left to the LMS missionaries and Fiji to the Wesleyan missionaries. The LMS missionaries, George Platt and Samuel Wilson, arrived in Manono from the Society Islands on March 20, 1836, two months after the arrival of Turner. They informed Turner that they were there to make arrangements for a group of missionaries who were soon to arrive from England. Turner, although troubled by the news, ignored this and continued on with his work. On 18, June 1836, Turner was again informed

⁶⁸ Cluny and Laavasa Macpherson, "The Changing Contours of Migrant Samoan Kinship" in *Small Worlds, Global Lives: Islands and Migration*, edited by Russell and John Connell, (New York, 1999), 279.

⁶⁹

.Turner, Journal, October 5, 1836.

by Platt of the arrival of the six L.M.S. missionaries and their families from England in the ship, the Dunnattar Castle.⁷⁰ These new missionaries became Turner's rivals and expressed resentment at Turner's continuing mission. On the 13th of June, a week after the arrival of the new LMS missionaries, they commented that Turner's mission was:

...an unwarrantable intrusion. It was ungentlemanly, not to say unchristianlike conduct. His work was a direct attack upon them, in order to wrest from them the fruits of their labours...to claim the conversion of these islands as the result of his labours.⁷¹

On April 7, 1837, Turner received a letter from the LMS missionaries informing him of the agreement had been entered upon between the two societies. Hence, Turner, according to the agreement, had expected a letter of removal from the London Missionary Society.⁷² The information on which the Wesleyan Committee and the Directors of the London Missionary Society based the agreement came from John Williams. According to the LMS accounts, John Williams had visited Nathaniel Turner in Nukualofa on July 4, 1830 and had determined that in regard to field of labour for the missionaries, the LMS would go to Samoa and the Fiji Islands would be proselytized by the Wesleyans. The grounds on which this agreement was arrived at were that, because the Islands of Fiji were close to Tongatapu and politically associated with it, Fiji was best suited to the Wesleyan mission, while the Navigator Islands should be reserved for the L.M.S as its language seemed similar to the Tahitian language.

Nathaniel Turner was surprised when this, seemingly informal, discussion reached him in the form of an agreement. According to Wood, Nathaniel Turner did not report such matters to the committee in London or record any conversation in his journals regarding the conversation with John Williams.⁷³ The agreement appears to have been such that misinterpretation, misapprehension and suspicion were all interwoven through it. The question of whose interpretation of the agreement was correct remains unclear, although several observations can be made about it. When tensions arose and conflict occurred, this reflected, to some degree, the differing backgrounds of the white missionaries.

The agreement subjected to by Turner was considered to be the work of two people: Nathaniel Turner and John Williams, but not that of the Samoan district. Turner was also

⁷⁰ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 20; Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 259-260.

⁷¹ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 20;

⁷² Peter Turner, *Journals*, Vol 5, April 7, 1837.

⁷³ Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 264.

suspicious of John William's commitment to this agreement when he later found him sending Tahitian teachers to the Fiji Islands. Indeed, John Williams wrote of his intentions for Fiji before calling at Nukualofa:

To take teachers to the Samoas is the primary object of our visit, and, after calling at Nukualofa, to call at Haapai and Vavau, and, after finishing the distribution of our native teachers in that quarter, to sail to the Fijis.⁷⁴

The news of the agreement, and Turner's removal, was circulated around the LMS missionaries and matters became difficult for Turner and the Tongan teachers. Letters of complaint and contempt from LMS missionaries in regard to Turner's conduct and his mission brought temptations with them, but he decided to remain patient and wait to learn what God had decided for him. On April 19, 1837, he received a letter from the LMS missionaries at Tutuila labelling his conduct as 'unchristian and impure to spread religion to a sectarian spirit'.⁷⁵ Another offensive letter was received on September 26, 1837 from the LMS missionary at Safune claiming that the Samoan and Tongan Wesleyan teachers were 'foolish, dark and evil'.⁷⁶

Turner did not expect that the tension between the Tahitian teachers, the LMS personnel, the Tongan teachers and the Wesleyan converts would be serious. The Tahitian teachers and LMS missionaries called meetings⁷⁷ with the Wesleyans, told them of their missionaries' removal and urged them to transfer their membership to the LMS. They (the LMS and the Wesleyans) protested against each other and resorted to fighting. The inter-denominational conflict between the two societies badly affected the early stages of faith development and commitment of the people to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although Turner wrote letters and presented reports of the progress of their work in Samoa in order to convince the committee in London that he should remain in Samoa, his request was,

⁷⁴ L.M.S., Records, Box 7, 1830, M.L.S, in Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 264.

⁷⁵ Peter Turner, Journal, 4, (April, 19, 1837), in Gilson, Richard Phillip, *Samoa 1830-1900 and Other Research Materials*, PMB (Series) 1003. Canberra, ACT: Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Australian National University, 1989. 13 microfilm reels; 35 mm.

⁷⁶ Turner, Journal, Vol.4, September 26, 1837.

⁷⁷ Peter Turner reported in his journal on the 17 of February, 1838, that he had received letter from the Tongan teachers telling him of how the LMS teachers had tried to convince the Wesleyans to go over to the LMs when Turner and the Tongan teachers would be removed. On the 2nd Sunday of December, 1838, a meeting was held at Lepuiai Manono, Rev. Heath and Hardie attended the meeting with the Wesleyans and persuade them to unite with the LMS missionaries. Many seemed to dislike what was discussed.

regrettably, denied. The Committee came to a decision on December 6, 1837, in which it stated:

The Committee have fully and carefully considered...and have given due weight to the representations made, but in the fear of God and in obedience to the principles of unchanging equity and Christian brotherhood which ought to regulate the conduct of kindred Societies...consider their former decision, under all circumstances, both right and fitting and likely to promote the evangelization of the South Seas.⁷⁸

According to the resolutions made by the Committee, the LMS appeared to win the controversy and Turner received a letter approving his removal on November 27, 1838.

Without any further attempt to approach London to consider Turner's appeal, all the principal chiefs of Upolu and Savaii met at Manono to discuss what they should do. The purpose of the meeting was to strengthen the spirit of Methodism among its converts and they determined to petition King Joel Mafileo of Tonga and the Wesleyan District. The chiefs sought to petition the King to authorise the Tongan teachers to remain in Samoa and, if possible, to write to London for permission for Turner's mission to remain in Samoa. After some consultation, the meeting resolved to write to the King. Following is the extract of the letter which was read in the meeting in the presence of Turner, as quoted by Martin Dyson;

Our minds are very much pained with the news from England, that Mr. Turner and Mr. Wilson must leave Samoa. Mr. Turner tells us to join the other missionaries, but we cannot do so. No, we cannot do that. Our minds are fixed upon Mr. Turner...It is not right that the good people should take away our missionaries whom we cleave to, and try to make us unite with those whom we do not know how difficult Samoa is.⁷⁹

The Samoans offered to support him if he remained with them, as the islands were very productive and there was no fear for his safety. The conviction of one of the participants in the meeting was emotional as he expressed how he felt that his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ had been tortured. These were his words:

You told us to give up our many wives, and we gave them up, so that now we have only one woman each. You told us that it was very bad to have night dances, and we gave

⁷⁸ Wesleyan Missionary Committee, Minutes, 6 December 1837, NLC, in Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 278.

⁷⁹ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 30-31.

them up. You told us to repent of our sins, and to believe in the Lord Christ, and we should be baptized...Will you go astray...If you leave us, we will die with love to you, and our spirits shall follow you on the mighty deep.⁸⁰

There was great controversy when Turner and Wilson attempted to persuade the Wesleyans to unite with the LMS missionaries. In response to Turner and Wilson's proposal, they invited The Reverend Macdonald, an LMS missionary, to preach in one of their services. From that service, Turner noticed the objection of the chiefs in voicing their strong desire to remain true to their Wesleyan faith, and they pleading with Turner not to influence people against their will and to let them remain faithful to their religion. During Macdonald's sermon, one chief stood and said, "Mr. Macdonald, you are not our missionary. We will not hear you, friends, do as we do."⁸¹

The endeavours of Turner and Wilson could be variously interpreted. Turner's attempt to persuade the Wesleyans to unite with the LMS was to prevent those children of Christ from returning to their old ways. Wood described the attitude of the chief as '...intractable spirit [that] sprang from tribal rivalry rather than sincere religious feelings'⁸². However, Wood lacked understanding about how people felt about the situation. Turner and Wilson had taught them to stay firm in the Wesleyan faith and all of a sudden, when they were ordered to leave, they told them to join the LMS missionaries. The situation was confusing and people were unsettled. Hence, the spirit on which Wood commented stemmed from rivalry between the white missionaries' and not from tribal rivalry.

The decision for removal accepted by Turner was personal and was, arguably, not in accordance with the will of God. Turner and Wilson had struggled to establish social and cultural relationships and had shared the feelings of the natives in a foreign land. But after all these achievements in mission, the relationship had unexpectedly been dashed by the unfortunate attitude of the white missionaries in this inter-denominational conflict.

The decision made by the two missions to unite the Samoan Wesleyans with the LMS was rejected by the Wesleyan converts. Most of the Wesleyan converts continued to hold their own services and class meetings; some others joined the LMS and some even left

⁸⁰ Dyson, *My Story of*, 31.

⁸¹ Peter Turner, Journal December 12, 1838.

⁸² Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 281.

Christianity. Turner and Wilson and the Tongan teachers and their families left on the ship, ‘The Camden’, on May 23, 1839. Turner prayed for the last time for the Samoan Wesleyans who had been left with ‘no shepherd’. This was the final entry in his journal on May 11, 1839 and marked the end of Turner’s days in Samoa;

We left Samoa May 23 with heavy hearts. My mind has been much pained for the poor Samoans. They are now as sheep having no shepherd. Great shepherd of all, have mercy upon them and save them from hell. O Lord let it be seen in the great day of accounts that our labours in the Samoan group have been in vain.

Turner’s work was significant in the history of the Samoan Methodist Church. According to Faalafi ‘the removal of the Wesleyan missionaries and the Tongan teachers was only a removal of the mission, but never the dissolution of the Methodist Church in Samoa’⁸³.

Turner and Wilson, in their report from Satupaitea to the Wesleyan Missionary Society in London in 1837, revealed the growth in Wesleyan membership. The report is as follows:

Statistics for 1837:

	MEMBERS	TRIALS	LEADERS	PREACHING PLACES	MARRIAGES	BAPTISM	CHURCH MEMBERS.
SAVAII	1914	766	143	50	580	789	7139
UPOLU	1202	140	185	53	320	250	5992
TOTAL	3116	906	328	103	900	1039	13131

The table shows that Savaii had a larger membership (1914), more trials (766), more marriages (580) and more church members (7139), than Upolu. This indicates that Savaii, whose leaders first petitioned the Wesleyan Tongan District for missionaries, was the main station of the Wesleyan Mission. This may reflect the fact that the pioneer missionaries, Turner and Wilson had served longer in Savaii than in Upolu.

At the close of their mission in 1839, Turner and Wilson had recorded a tremendous increase in church membership. The membership, which totalled 2000 at the time of their arrival,

⁸³ Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 85.

which was around 4% of the total Samoan population in 1839, had risen to about 12,000 (21%) at the time of the closure of the mission. Turner and Wilson had also established several churches in Upolu and Savaii. There had been great social, moral and spiritual change among the Samoans. Turner preached in the Samoan language and translated some portions of the Bible into the Samoan language. The people gave up their night dances, aborted their polygamy and showed themselves willing to learn more of the road to Christ's salvation.⁸⁴

2.7 THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS INDEPENDENCE

The traditional relationship between the Tongans and the Samoans was then strengthened due to the struggle of some of the Wesleyan chiefs to keep their own religion. As Turner, Wilson, and the Tongan teachers left, the Wesleyan Mission was in jeopardy. Some of the converts, and also some of the LMS people claimed that the case for Methodism was hopeless and that it could no longer survive because of the absence of white missionaries. At this point, some converts, who had been discouraged by the removal of the white missionaries but who were still willing to continue on their faith journey, responded by joining the LMS because it had white missionaries. Others opted to return to their old ways as they had no trust in the native missionaries. However, those who still held firm to their Wesleyan faith struggled to continue with it.

On the part of the Samoan Wesleyan chiefs, there were political motives that surrounded their demand to keep Methodism. The removal of the mission was considered a disgrace to the chiefs in the society. It diminished, in one way or another, their social and political recognition in the village. At family and village level, the removal of the mission affected, not only the chiefs, but also the individual members of the mission. As is customary in Samoan culture, while religion is always related to the status of a family or a village, the loss of status is a sign of humiliation.

Such reasons led some of the Wesleyan chiefs to hold meetings amongst themselves to discuss whether to abort or continue the church. At this point, Masua of Lufilufi and Alaiasa of Falefa, the chiefs of the Wesleyans in Upolu, hosted a meeting in Upolu to send a petition to the King of Tonga for Tongan teachers. With only one exception, the assembled chiefs supported Masua and agreed to send Alaiasa of Falefa, Sosiua of Falealili, and Samuela of

⁸⁴ Tupu Folasa, *Amataga ma le Faavaega o le Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa 1827-1968*, (Ekalesia Metotisi, Matafele: Apia, 1970), 17.

Vailele to ask King George Tupou I (Taufaahau) of Tonga and the Wesleyan Mission for Tongan teachers and for instructions as to how they should proceed in mission.⁸⁵ Tonga had a centralised government in which the king was the sole ruler of all the people. Yet, in Samoa, which had no form of centralised government, there was hardly any unity among the people. For this reason the chiefs considered it essential to ask the Tongan king to act on their behalf and to intercede with the Methodist Missionary body.

In a letter sent to King Taufaahau and the Tongan Wesleyan Mission, the chiefs stated:

...we write to make known our minds to you, Mr. Turner, Mr. Thomas and the King, that ye may be merciful to us and allow missionaries to return to us in Samoa. We continue in this religion from our love to the meaning of that which Mr. Turner made known in Samoa. King George Taufaahau, if Samoa be thrown away by the missionaries, do you select some Tongan teachers and send them unto us. We will not by any means change our minds, for our religion is well established in Samoa.⁸⁶

The Wesleyan Tongan Mission remained silent in respect of the resolution by the Committee. However, the resolution by the Committee had limited power in regard to the state rule of the King Taufaahau. As king, he had the right to exercise his power to consider such matters on behalf of his people and in relation to his neighbouring brethren. In reply, King George of Tonga appointed Banabas Ahogalu, Benjamin Latuselu and the other three Tongan teachers to resume the Wesleyan mission in Samoa. They arrived safely on Upolu in 1841. From 1841-1847, the Tongan Wesleyan Mission took over the Wesleyan Mission in Samoa, notwithstanding the rulings from the Committee in London.

When they heard of the resumption of the Wesleyan Mission in Upolu, the chiefs of the Wesleyan remnants in Savaii and Manono asked King George of Tonga to consider Savaii and Manono as being islands that were also in need of some Tongan teachers⁸⁷. On hearing this appeal, the King George of Tonga decided to visit Samoa to inspect in person the religious situation of the mission in Samoa. The King arrived in Manono in 1842 with the

⁸⁵ Folasa, *Amataga ma le Faavaega Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa*, 17.

⁸⁶ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 34.

⁸⁷ Representatives of Savaii and Manono who went to Tonga included Pau of Safotulafai, Talo of Manono, Aufai of Saleaula, and Piliai of Leulumoega. (Dyson, *My Story*, 35).

second deputation of Tongan teachers⁸⁸. During his visit to Savaii and Manono, King George attended large meetings held by the ruling chiefs and noticed that the majority of people took solemn oaths to remain faithful to Methodism, the religion that Mr. Turner had taught them. The natives' conviction and commitment to their religion, witnessed by the King, revealed that there was still hope of survival for Methodism in Samoa, and on his return to Tonga the King once again petitioned the Committee in London, for a review of its resolution. Unfortunately, the resolution remained unchanged.

In one respect, the relationship between the chiefs of Upolu, Savaii and Manono, in the absence of the white missionaries, revealed the parochial nature of chiefs' concerns about the mission. The exclusion of Savaii and Manono Methodists from the work of the first deputation of Tongan teachers in Upolu reflected on the way in which the Upolu chiefs had thought primarily of advancing the mission in their own island. It appeared that, in the absence of the white missionaries, the chiefs pursued their own interests and resorted to their own ways for the organisation of the mission in their respective islands. It revealed also that there was little common commitment to unity in the mission enterprise among the Wesleyan chiefs of Upolu and Savaii and Manono. Their differing views were based on chiefly status and their views on how best to achieve their goals of mission for their own islands and people.

It was expected that the removal of the Wesleyan white missionaries would diminish religious rivalry between the Wesleyans and the LMS; however, that was not the case, the situation worsened when the Tongan teachers took over the Wesleyan Mission in Samoa. The infidelity and deceitfulness of some of the Tongan teachers created indifference among the people making the situation worse. Benjamin Latuselu, a Tongan teacher who came on a first deputation to Upolu, had joined a political party. Latuselu, after five years of service to the Mission, became a political meddler, and gave much offence by it to the Methodists on Upolu. This action was in conflict with his involvement in missionary work in Upolu and some Wesleyan adherents abandoned him and joined the LMS. For the second time, Methodism appeared to be declining in membership and growth. Natives returned to the holding of night dances and to their old ways; Methodist places of worship became empty as others joined the LMS. One of the Wesleyan chapels at Manono was taken over by the LMS

⁸⁸ Folasa, *Amataga ma le Faavaega Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa*, 15; Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 35; Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 284-285.

and the other was closed until 1857. On the island of Tutuila, where Methodism was eventually banned by the chiefs, the churches were burnt to the ground by order.⁸⁹

2.8 CONCLUSION

The history of Samoa, from the defeat of the Tongan Empire down to the arrival of the Methodist Mission and its establishment in Samoa, expresses the Samoan people's determination to keep their freedom against the European powers and those of other Pacific countries. With the defeat of the Tongan Empire, there emerged a strong sense of Samoan independence. The sufferings experienced by Samoans during the time of the Tongan Empire created much hatred against the Tongans and, from that period of time, the Samoan struggle for liberty became increasingly strong. With this in mind, the Samoan people felt that having independent control over their own affairs would allow them to enjoy greater freedom for the expression of their identity as Samoans in their own land and in possession of their own culture and resources.

The introduction of the Wesleyan faith in Samoa owed credit to the determination and remarkable efforts of the early Samoan missionaries. This introduction occurred prior to the arrival of white missionaries and despite the initiative that first came from European missionary societies. It was the Wesleyan's early teaching of Christianity that enabled Samoans to acquire prior knowledge of Christianity, whereby natives could share and express Christian values in their own language and culture from the perspective of their own cultural values, ensuring the values of Christianity that had long been familiar to the people of Samoa. This expresses the strong sense of '*saili malo*' in the *Faa-Samoa*, or, the finding of blessings for the benefit of Samoan people.

As a result of decisions made in London, and without consultation with the existing Christian community in Samoa, the LMS expected the Wesleyan missionaries to close down the Methodist Mission in Samoa, and also that all Methodist converts would transfer their allegiance to the LMS; by this means the LMS hoped to achieve the closure of Methodist Mission in Samoa. For some of the remaining Wesleyan chiefs and their adherents, this was not acceptable; their commitment and loyalty to their church was, in part, derived from what they saw as the potential for old kinships and political ties in advancing their interests. However, they became active, determined, agents of the Wesleyan church who, without any

⁸⁹ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 36-37.

dependence on European missionaries' direction, assumed the right and competence to resist becoming Congregationalists, and sought further assistance from the King of Tonga for their teachers. This assistance was mainly required for the continuity of the Methodist Mission in Samoa.

Furthermore, the Wesleyan adherents remained true to the Methodist Mission, even when Peter Turner and Mathew Wilson, after years of mission achievements, tried to persuade the Methodists to unite with the LMS. Fortunately for the Samoan Methodists, after being confronted by many contentious issues during the early period of the history of Methodism, Methodism in Samoa survived. The survival of Methodism owed much to the determination and commitment of the Wesleyan chiefs and Methodist adherents who had striven to retain their religion. The Samoan Methodists desired to be independent in their religion, without interference from the LMS.

The missionaries' understanding, of Samoan customs and traditions (or the lack thereof) influenced the success of the mission at various times in its early history. In some cases, missionaries had discredited Samoan cultural rituals and practices because they viewed them as being un-christian or pagan. Nonetheless, without being allowed proper consultation with the missionaries, the native Samoans disputed what they were being taught on the grounds that it reflected the missionaries' ignorance of the significance of the practices and rituals to the life of native Samoans. Consultation was needed in order to arrive at an understanding of the way in which the practices and rituals of *Faa-Samoa* might be intimately appropriated to the teaching of the Gospel to the Samoan people.

The Samoans needed to be independent in their decision-making rather than letting the missionaries decide for them. For instance, decisions in relation to baptism were not, as the missionaries had expected, those of an individual, but were made through corporate decision making. In some cases, the decision to baptise was made upon the agreement either, of an individual's family, or of the villagers with the consent of their chiefs. This reflects the fact that the social and political networks in which Samoans were involved were intimately related to family and village bodies. The missionaries lacked understanding of this situation and it was this state of unawareness that generally led them to interpret such practices as being simplistic and foolish.

Samoan attempts to ensure their cultural survival and the retention of their language within the confines of the teaching Christianity in Samoa provided a strong sense of spiritual

autonomy and church independence amongst native Samoans. In light of the subsequent history of the formation of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, the struggle of the Samoan Methodists to keep their church, and their commitment to the life and work of the church, expresses a strong sense of church independence. It was this strong spirit of political and spiritual autonomy inspired the Samoan migrants who pioneered the formation of Samoan autonomous churches in New Zealand.

3 THE REOPENING OF METHODISM IN SAMOA (1857-1863) AND WESTERN COLONIAL RULE (1900-1962)

This chapter discusses the reopening of Methodism in Samoa from the late 1850s, which owed much to the determination and approval of the Australian Methodist Conference. After Peter Turner's removal, the Wesleyan mission in Samoa remained under the protection and management of the Samoan chiefs and the Tongan teachers. The resumption of Methodism in Samoa reflected the strong aspirations of Methodist Samoans to keep the church and be self-governing. This was accomplished when the Samoan Methodist became first a synod and then later an Independent Samoan Methodist Conference.

This chapter will also discuss Western political influence on Samoan affairs and how the political strife in Samoa led Samoans to plead for their independence. At this time, the Samoan people began to be deeply involved in extensive consultation with one another, and this gave them a taste of what it would be like to be part of a self-governing, independent nation.

3.1 THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN METHODIST CONFERENCE

It was not until 1855 that negotiations for the resumption of the Wesleyan mission in Samoa were undertaken by John Thomas. When Thomas, a missionary who had served in Tonga since 1826, visited Sydney, he petitioned the newly independent Wesleyan Church in Australasia for missionaries to resume the Wesleyan mission in Samoa. The following year he was appointed by the Australasian Committee to investigate the Wesleyan situation in Samoa. At a meeting of the Australasian Wesleyan Missionary Committee, held in Melbourne in February 1856, approval was gained for the reopening of Methodism in Samoa. The resolution, based on John Thomas' report, is as follows:

That in the opinion of this meeting, the arrangements made in the year 1837, between the London Wesleyan Missionary Societies, to leave the Navigators' group entirely under the charge of the London Missionary Society have not answered the end originally designed, and learning from the report of the Rev. John Thomas' recent visit to Samoa, that serious evils have occurred, and are likely to be perpetuated and aggravated, if Wesleyan missionaries are not immediately sent to meet wants and wishes of the Wesleyan Societies residing in these islands, this meeting recommends that a missionary shall, as soon as possible, be appointed, and that the reasons of this

decision shall be forwarded to the Committee of the London and Wesleyan Missionary Societies.⁹⁰

The resolution was later discussed at the Wesleyan District Meeting in Lifuka, Haapai, on August 10, and it was resolved that Martin Dyson⁹¹ be appointed to resume the mission in Samoa. On September 8 1857, Martin Dyson and his wife arrived at Manono with four Tongan teachers. During his early years in Samoa, Dyson was in total ignorance of both the Samoan and the Tongan languages and was dependent upon his Tongan teachers for the translation of Samoan language.⁹² On arrival, Dyson discovered that the country's discouraging situation, which was the consequence of political wars and inter-denominational controversies, had led former Wesleyan converts to revert to heathen practices.⁹³

Dyson also noticed the dominance of the LMS on the most populous island, Upolu, and the eastward islands of Tutuila and Manua. Most of the former Wesleyans had joined the LMS and some had left Christianity. Of the surviving Methodists in Upolu, in the Atua district, out of the thousands of Wesleyan converts there remained only one Wesleyan family in Salani village and 200 other remaining Wesleyan converts in the village of Tiavea. In the Tuamasaga district, only Mulivai village retained a Wesleyan mission. About fifty Wesleyan adherents remained at Aana; a few were left on Manono, but not one remained on the island of Apolima.⁹⁴

The resumption of the Wesleyan Mission had not been accepted by the LMS missionaries who served in Samoa at that time. The Reverends Mills and Sunderland of the LMS expressed their disappointment in regard to the position of the Australasian Wesleyan Conference and the interference of the Tongan teachers and outlined several arguments against the resumption of the Wesleyan Mission. Firstly, the agreement that had already been endorsed by the two Societies in London was sacred and should not be violated by any local committee without the consent of their directors in London. Secondly, they blamed the interference of the Tongan teachers in distracting some of the former Wesleyans and causing them to unite with the teachers. Thirdly, they reminded the Australian Conference of the

⁹⁰ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 44

⁹¹ Martin Dyson was born in 1830 at Walsh, near Huddersfield, in Yorkshire. He had entered the ministry in Victoria in 1855. He arrived in Tonga on 17 May 1857, with the expectation of working there but was reappointed by the Tongan District Meeting to re-establish the mission in Samoa. (Wood, 292)

⁹² Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 47.

⁹³ Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 293.

⁹⁴ Dyson, *My Story of*, 51.

waste of men and means which had resulted from having two missions operating at the same time in such a small population.⁹⁵

At this point in denominational confrontation, Fineaso Faalafi observed that the Australian Wesleyan Mission Committee had highlighted a very common misapprehension which affected most missions and missionaries with regard to the native people's rights and power to decide for themselves the religion of their preference.⁹⁶ The Committee stated that:

No body of men in England or elsewhere has any right to decide upon the section of Christian Church to which the Samoans or portions of them shall attach themselves.⁹⁷

The LMS missionaries had, in fact, effectively undermined the power and rights of the native people: the Samoans had their own way of expressing and the right to express both their religious and political preferences. This had become evident when some Samoans exercised their rights and power when, after Peter Turner's removal, they had petitioned King George I of Tonga to appoint Tongan teachers to resume the teaching of their particular type of Methodism which was the Samoan form of Wesleyan Methodism. Under the stately rule and rights of King George I, and without interference from the London authorities, Tongan teachers had been appointed in response to the request of the neighbouring Samoan people in order to continue their Wesleyan mission in Samoa.

The LMS missionaries should have realised that the reason why the surviving Wesleyans had rejected their offer to join them was strongly linked to the Samoan Wesleyans' political and family relationships with the original Wesleyan converts. Those involved in these family connections had ensured that the existing chiefly system, as manifested in the close kinship between the chief and his family, continued to be honoured and respected. Each of the chiefs, or *matai*, who were honoured and respected by all family members as the heads of their families, had the consensus of their entire family when they decided on the religion of their choice.

⁹⁵ Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 291-292.

⁹⁶ Faalafi, "Century in the Making," 170

⁹⁷ Dyson, *My Story of Samoan Methodism*, 42.

3.2 FINANCIAL GIVING INTRODUCED

It was not until 1857, after Martin Dyson had reinvigorated the Methodist mission in Samoa, that a new religious doctrine of giving to the church was introduced. This practice of giving was implemented for the purpose of collecting financial donations for the development of mission enterprises, and for this reason, the mission relied heavily on its members for its survival and development. Giving was a cultural ritual which had been passed down by the generations of Samoans long before Christianity was established. It was, and still is, customary in *Faa-Samoa*. As Lotofaga Lima has stated, this cultural giving is executed on a, “freewill basis where the Samoans generously offer gifts so as to give social and economic support for the Samoan cultural celebrations and for family obligations, given as an expression of love, support and care”.⁹⁸

This newly introduced religious practice, as Fineaso Faalafi has pointed out, had its cultural roots in Samoan cultural rituals. When this new religious practice was introduced, the Samoans understood it as it was closely associated with their own cultural hospitality, namely *Faaaloaloga*. According to Faalafi, *Faaaloaloga* can be generally translated as “present-giving”.⁹⁹ However, the word can have a variety of meanings. It embraces the chiefly presents which are regarded as a most respected part of the Samoan culture. *Faaaloaloga* also conveys the Samoan cultural virtues of honour, respect and trust. Traditionally, in honour and acceptance of the visiting party, a host village presented material gifts such as mats, oil, and tapa cloth. There was no money involved in this form of giving. However, Dyson’s aim was to encourage donations of money rather than material gifts.

From the Samoan perspective, it was just as creditable to offer valuable gifts for the work of God, rather than money, such as those that had been presented to the chiefs and to the missionaries. Dyson was misguided in his expectation of monetary offerings and claimed that the way that giving for the church had been previously executed was mistaken. This was seen in the instance of the village of Tiavea on the island of Upolu where the village residents gave between thirty and forty cooked pigs, a variety of other foods and a little money as their

⁹⁸ Lotofaga Lima, “Towards a Christian Ethic of Economic Wealth in the Context of the Methodist Church in Samoa” (BD thesis, Pacific Theological College, Suva, 1992), 42.

⁹⁹ Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 115.

offering for the work of the church.¹⁰⁰ Dyson's disappointment had led him to treat this act of giving as wrong, as people had devoted more to their hospitality than to the donation of money for God's work. An objection to the new act came from the village of Neiafu where the chiefs voiced their complaint:

Turner never taught this, that Wesleyans are now becoming like the LMS, or doing this because LMS does, such meetings will impoverish Samoans, will deprive them of what little money they have.¹⁰¹

The complaints about, and the misunderstanding around how this giving practice for the church should be executed show that Dyson did not present a clear and true demonstration, as an example for the people to follow of the expectations for church offerings. As the need was for money rather than for material gifts, the Samoans needed to be taught that material gifts could be traded for cash. Fine mats and other items were regarded by the people as the most valuable form of currency they ever had. Despite the value and significance of these traditional goods that had always been essential in the traditional reciprocal exchanging process during ceremonial occasions, the Church needed the goods to be traded in order to receive monetary offerings rather than material goods. Thus, it was clear that Christianity had introduced a new dimension to the religious life of the Samoan people in order to secure a supply of money for the traditional May church offering. In addition, this new economic ideology of trading for cash involved the incorporation of commercial transactions within the development of the ministry of the church.

When the chiefs understood the need to be a cheerful giver for the work of God, they adopted the practice of giving to the church in the form of financial donations. This was evident in the increasing amount of annual monetary offerings collected within the first three years:

Church Offerings 1860-1862.¹⁰²

1860: £134 15s 4d

1861: £296 2s 6d

¹⁰⁰ Martin Dyson, *Journals*, Vol. A2580, 24 April, 1859, in Gilson, Richard Phillip, *Samoa 1830-1900 and Other Research Materials*, PMB (Series) 1003. Canberra, ACT: Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Australian National University, 1989. 13 microfilm reels; 35 mm.

¹⁰¹ Dyson, *Journals*, 12 May, 1859.

¹⁰² Dyson, *Journal*.

1862: £304 11s 8d

Dyson stated that this was sound evidence of the good work accomplished in leading the congregation to prove that, “it is more blessed to give than to receive and no longer to foolishly boast in a religion which cost them nothing.”¹⁰³ However, while Dyson demanded money from all members’ pockets, he never donated any money to the church offerings himself.

3.3 THE SAMOAN MISSION ACHIEVES A NEW STATUS (1863-1873)

Six years after the re-institution of Methodism in 1857, missionary work came under the supervision of the Wesleyan Headquarters in Tonga. Hence, the church in Samoa was a ‘branch’ of the Tongan District and had parallel standing with the other islands of the Tongan group. In 1863, the Australian Annual Conference approved the inclusion of Samoa as a separate District of the Australian Methodist Conference. The Conference also agreed to divide the Samoan district into two circuits: the first circuit was to be comprised of the Upolu and Manono Islands, while Savaii Island was the second circuit. Martin Dyson was, according to the Conference Minutes of 1863, appointed as the first Chairman of the Samoan District, and first minister of the Upolu circuit; he was to be assisted by Alfred Rigg, who was appointed to Samoa by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference on May 15, 1862. He was appointed to open a new station at Falealili, Upolu. George Brown (1859-1864) took charge of the Savaii circuit with the assistance of Barnabas Ahogalu, a Tongan teacher.

The following extracts, quoted from letters and reports by Dyson and Brown, which, prior to 1863, had been published in several issues of the Wesleyan Missionary Notices, give a sense of why the mission church had achieved this new status:

I do not wish to lessen my work, but to do all the work we have taken to do. There has been an increase of upwards to 1000 in our congregations during the year and upward of eighty in our classes. The collections at our ‘Mayo’ in Samoa will reach nearly eighty pounds this year, a sum which considering the state of our people here, may be called a good beginning.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Dyson, Journal.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from the Rev. M. Dyson, dated Manono, July 4, 1859, in Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 211.

On comparing the present and past stages of our people in Samoa, I feel there is great cause for thankfulness. For twenty five years Samoans were living in semi-heathenism, obstinately refusing to have teachers from the London mission, preferring their own darkness to the light; prejudice and political feeling even caused them to drive away a Missionary who wished to reside among them, and to refuse to acknowledge members of the London Mission in any way as their pastors. Now we can say with truth and gratitude, old things are passed away; they are anxious for teachers, and will do anything to have a Missionary amongst them.¹⁰⁵

3.4 THE IMPACT OF WESTERN COLONIAL RULE ON SAMOA AND CHURCH AFFAIRS (1900-1962)

When the early European settlers and missionaries arrived in Samoa in the mid-nineteenth century, the European traders and missionaries discovered that Samoa had no centralised government. The national power of the native Samoans rested mainly on the authenticity of the *matai* system which took control and care of families' social, political and economic development. However, colonial rule seemed to show little respect for Samoan custom and this gradually resulted in the political subordination of the Samoans to colonial governing authority. Dissatisfaction arose amongst the Samoans because the colonial administration (German 1900-1914 and New Zealand 1915-1961) seemed ignorant of Samoan politics. Without consultation, the two powers took Samoan national power entirely into their own hands, despite village administration being in the care of the Samoan *matais*, as even this was closely supervised and controlled. Consequently, the Samoans developed objections to German and New Zealand rule, and informed the two foreign administrations that it was necessary for Samoans to remain independent due to the existing, traditionally determined, framework for their cultural values and practices through which their lives were organised.

3.5 GERMAN RULE (1900-1914)

The German annexation of Samoa was motivated by the interests of the plantation company, Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft (D.H.P.G).¹⁰⁶ The company was a very large operation; it was based in Germany and had branches in German New Guinea. For this large

¹⁰⁵ Letter from the Rev. George Brown, dated Satupaitea, Savaii, February 26, 1861 in Wesleyan Missionary Notices, 1863, 357.

¹⁰⁶ Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel (eds), *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of South Pacific, 1987), 108.

operation, the need for employees became an issue, as Samoans revealed little interest in working on large plantations. Accordingly, as Samoans were generally neither willing, nor deemed to be sufficiently hard-working to serve as labourers on foreign plantations, the Germans brought in Chinese indentured labour from Hong Kong to serve the growing need for foreign planters as ‘steady’ workers. This policy was to have a marked, long term effect on the population composition of the islands. The reluctance of native Samoans to work hard on German plantations can be viewed in terms of Samoans’ unwillingness to work under the control of any foreign power as they had been used to working for themselves. The Samoans nonetheless felt the indignity of not being consulted by the German powers when they took control.¹⁰⁷

Dr. Wilhelm Solf, following the raising of the German flag on March 1, 1900, was appointed as the first Governor of German Samoa. His leadership seemed to be disputed by the natives relating to matters of Samoan customs and practices. Solf called a meeting of Samoan chiefs, two months after his appointment as governor; he declared his government’s support of Samoan culture and traditions, but he gave it only when it fitted in with his plans.

With regard to native affairs, his government’s intention was...to respect your old traditions as far as these are not against the laws of Christianity and against the welfare and security of...individuals.¹⁰⁸

Solf’s first move was to formulate a new political structure for the future of the Samoan administration. He abolished the kinship structure (*Tupu o Samoa*) and established that the Samoan administration ‘...shall be one paramount chief, *Alii Sili*.’ This office was given to Mataafa Iosefo.¹⁰⁹ As a result of this, Solf declared that there was to be no recognition of

¹⁰⁷ Meleisea and Schoeffel, *Lagaga*, 108-109.

¹⁰⁸ Solf’s address to the chiefs, April 11, 1900, GCA2/74, in Malama Meleisea, *Change and Adaptations in Western Samoa*, (Christchurch New Zealand: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1988), 30.

¹⁰⁹ Mataafa Iosefo, was the eldest of Tama-a-aiga and he was supported by the majority of Samoans. he is addressed as ‘the highest chief (not as king). Accordingly, Solf soon declared that there was to be no recognition of other claims by the Tama-a-aiga or Tumu and Pule. (Meleisea and Schoefel, *Lagaga*, 111).

other claims by the *tama-a-aiga*¹¹⁰ or Tumua and Pule.¹¹¹ The role of Tumua and Pule was to bestow the *papa*¹¹² and make their own kings.

Solf's first interference with Samoan custom was in 1901, when Mataafa and his *aiga* prepared a *momoli* or *oo*, a ceremony to confirm Mataafa's new status or position as *Alii Sili*. The ceremony took the form of the distribution of fine mats (collected by Mataafa's extended family), in the name of a chief of high rank to reward the chiefly representatives of the districts which had recognised him. Fine mats were distributed according to the status of chiefly titles. Solf instructed Mataafa to make clear to Tumua and Pule and the other recognised groups of orators such as Ituau and Alataua and Vaa o Fonoti, whose role in such ceremonies was highly respected, that they were no longer to be recognised and that their share of fine mats was to be equal to that of the other chiefs representing each of the districts. Moreover, the ceremony was to be held at Mulinuu, the seat of the government, rather than at Amaile, the village of the Mataafa title. No food was to be distributed and every district was to be given equal recognition in number and quality of fine mats presented. Solf also gave orders that, as soon as the party had received their gifts, they had to leave without staying to see what others were being given. This was to avoid any conflict from chiefs pertaining to the way in which the mats were being apportioned. Such a procedure was in complete violation of Samoan custom and, as a result, Mataafa declared his dissatisfaction in his speech during the ceremony stating that his position had been granted by the German Emperor. This was a new thing indeed for Samoan leaders: in the past, only Samoans could create a paramount chief to be held in such a manner, and there was no omission of the traditional recognition of Tumua and Pule. Solf, when confronted by conflict from many members of the Native Administration, declared that he alone had final authority in any matter that in which he chose to be involved.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ '*Tama-a-aiga*', literally "sons of the families". The term used since the late nineteenth century to refer to the four titles now recognised as being of paramount rank nationally; Malietoa, Tupua, Mataafa and Tuimalealiifano. (Meleisea, *Change and Adaptation*, 72).

¹¹¹ '*Pule*', a college of *tulafale* (orator chiefs), whose headquarters are in Savaii; '*Tumua*', a college of *tulafale* (orator chiefs) whose headquarters are in A'ana and Atua, Upolu. (Meleisea, xviii-xix).

¹¹² '*Papa*', the four ancient paramount titles Gatoaitale, Tamasoaalii, Tui Atua and Tui aana. (Meleisea and Schoefel, *Lagaga*, xviii).

¹¹³ Meleisea, *Change and Adaptation*, 113.

3.6 THE PULE LEAGUE (MAU A PULE)¹¹⁴

In 1905, Namulauulu Lauaki Mamoe, a famous orator of Faasaleleaga, a district of Safotulafai which was one of the traditional Pule districts of Savaii, recognition of which Solf had denounced, expressed objections to German rule. The first of these objections was that *matai* were losing the power to represent their families in the Government of Samoa. Customarily, prior to the German administration, executive authority was shared among groups of *tulafale* and they had a voice in making the rules which governed the country. Secondly, it was wrong for a foreign authority to imprison and threaten Samoans, and thirdly, Namulauulu felt that Samoans should take part in all aspects of national development and were not be excluded, as they had been by the German administration. These objections were shared by many leading Samoans, particularly among members of the Pule in Savaii. This created a *Mau a Pule* or the Opinion of Pule. The priority of the *Mau a Pule* was an attempt by Samoans to reinstate their independence and assert their authority in their own country. Lauaki's petition to Solf's administration made the following points;

German authorities should show more respect to Mataafa as he was the representative of the dignity of the Samoan people. All the *tama-a-aiga* should stay at Mulinuu to assert the dignity of the Samoan government. Mataafa's signature should appear beside that of Solf on important government papers. The German administration should account to the Samoan people for their expenditure. Samoa should become fully independent as soon as possible.¹¹⁵

On March 29, 1909, when Lauaki and his supporters resisted surrender to German rule, Solf exiled Lauaki and some of his supporters to the Marshall Islands putting an end to the *Mau a Pule*. However, the struggle for self-government amongst Samoans was never likely to diminish, as is shown in the following cases.

3.7 THE NEED FOR A FINANCIALLY SELF-SUPPORTING SYNOD (1900-1914)

While, during the period of German administration, the Samoans struggled for self-government, that spirit of self-government inspired the Samoan Methodist Church to petition the Australian Methodist Conference for a financially self-supporting synod. In 1902, the

¹¹⁴ 'Mau a Pule', the opinion of a college of *tulafale* (orator chiefs), whose headquarters are in Savaii. (Meleisea, xviii-xix).

¹¹⁵ Meleisea, *Change and Adaptation*, 118-119.

amalgamation of various sections of Methodism resulted in the formation of the Methodist Church of Australasia. From that time onwards, Samoa became a synod of the New South Wales Conference, and again, the name 'Methodist' instead of 'Wesleyan' was adopted in Samoa. This period could be deemed a preparatory stage towards the creation of a financially self-supporting synod. Both the missionaries and Samoans of the time were unanimous about the desirability of a self-supporting synod. However, the motives which inspired them appeared to be different.¹¹⁶

While the developments of the mission of the synod were funded by the Australian Methodist Conference through its Mission Board, proposals from the Samoan synod, which included application for funds, were either accepted, rejected, delayed, or required further information. In consequence, there was frustration among the missionaries due to the length of time they had to wait for the Board's approval of funds for mission activities. A letter from E.G. Neil sought to reassure the Board that these developments would be 'without cost to the Board.' However, it is also likely that the missionaries wanted to take the financial authority into their own hands.¹¹⁷

The author believes that the missionaries may have realised that, as Samoan families had so far lived quite adequately upon the country's subsistence-level economy, any wealth from agriculture and fishing resources would likely provide a reliable source of finance for the proposed self-supporting synod. Families who had a large tract of land had planted them with root crops such as *taro*, *ufi*, *taamu* to provide an ample supply of staple food. Young men and women caught sufficient fish, including shellfish, and also raised an adequate supply of livestock (pigs/poultry) for their protein supply. As long as the produce of this economy could be converted into cash, the missionaries may have thought that the members of the Samoan Synod were financially able to provide for the mission's activities. The financial competency of the Synod seemed to provide another positive indication.

The proposal for a self-supporting organisation was finally approved by the Executive Committee and signed in 1914 after a series of consultations. A report on it was published in the Society's Annual Report (magazine) of 1914:

¹¹⁶ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, *Toe Iloiloina o le Faavae mai le Tausaga 2008*, (Faleula, Momoli Laau i Fogaa, 2012), 9.

¹¹⁷ Faalafi, "Century in the Making," 297-298.

‘A Self-supporting District’

‘Samoa is the farthest advanced of our Mission fields in the matter of self-support. It has asked to be made a self governing district, and promises to be no charge upon the Mission funds. The Church in Australasia has agreed to this request, and a Constitution has been prepared and adopted which will give it the freedom it seeks. This does not mean that they will be cut off from the European guidance and control, for white Missionaries will still continue amongst them and help them by their advice and wisdom; but there will be a fuller measure of self-government granted, and gradually the people will approach the ideal of a purely native Christian Church.’¹¹⁸

3.8 NEW ZEALAND RULE (1914-1962): THE PNEUMONIC INFLUENZA AND MAU MOVEMENT

Following the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Western Samoa was administered by New Zealand under a mandate from Great Britain. The new administration that was decreed on August 29, 1914, leading to the unanticipated ending of German rule in Samoa, began with a period of military administration. The New Zealand military administration, however, lacked experience in Pacific Island culture and was often ignorant of, or unsympathetic towards, Samoan customs and practices.

Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Logan, leader of the New Zealand military force, was the first appointed administrator to Western Samoa. Logan was unexpectedly appointed to this office and, therefore lacked the leadership and direction concerning the manner in which the islands should be administered. Due to this, Logan, in the absence of instructions from New Zealand, pursued administration methods gleaned from his military background in the administration of Samoan affairs.¹¹⁹

The first influential move of the New Zealand military administration in Samoan affairs was in 1917, when Logan introduced regulations that deprived village and district councils of their authority over the regulation of inter-village boundaries, fishing rights, and the allocation of land-use rights. The settlement of disputes over rights to be addressed by special kava-cup titles (*igoa-ipu*), to confer *sao tamaitai* titles, and to wear *tuiga* (headdresses) was

¹¹⁸ Minute Executive Committee (Sydney), August, 30, 1912, in Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 310.

¹¹⁹ Asofou Soo, *Democracy and Custom in Samoa: An uneasy Alliance*, (Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific, 2008), 45.

also controlled. With this in mind, Logan believed that these rights were related to the rank of particular titles, therefore, he decided that all of these matters should be decided by the Land and Title Commission, as these matters were related to the question of rights to land and titles, despite the fact that his actions would bring disgrace to the hierarchy of the *nuu*.¹²⁰

Logan's reasoning was to encourage Samoans to seek recognition of claims from the central government rather than from the local chiefly councils. However, Samoan leaders felt suspicious of this new change as it not only undermined the basis of their traditional authority, but also had a disorganizing effect on the local polity. The interference of the New Zealand administration in affairs relating to traditional authority and rights over titles created a spirit of rebellion amongst the native people. Due to this state of affairs, the Samoans began to feel that the western power, as its administrator had shown no respect for the Samoan culture and no love for its people. This is evident in the cases discussed below.¹²¹

3.8.1 Pneumonic Influenza

Two major incidents occurred for which the new administration was directly blamed, both at a national, and an international level. These were, the 'pneumonic influenza' and the 'Mau movement'.

In September, 1918, the steamship 'Talune' arrived in Samoa bringing with it pneumonic epidemic influenza from Auckland via Fiji. The influenza virus had been classified as a notifiable disease in New Zealand only two days before the ship docked, but the administration in Apia had not been advised. Thus it was that the ship arrived in Apia without any quarantine arrangements having been made by the New Zealand officials on board; the passengers were allowed to disembark without proper medical check-ups. Influenza claimed an estimated ten thousand Samoan lives. At the international level, the blame was placed on a number of officials, including the Administrator, who were found to be guilty of negligence,. Despite the fact that an offer of medical assistance was made by Pagopago authorities to help with the influenza epidemic, Colonel Logan unfortunately made the decision to ignore it.¹²²

¹²⁰ Meleisea, *Change and Adaptation*, 38-40

¹²¹ Meleisea, *Change and Adaptation*, 41.

¹²² Michael J. Field, *Mau: Samoa's Struggle against New Zealand Oppression*, (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd, 1984), 45. Meleisea and Schoefel, *Lagaga*, 129.

The influenza outbreak proved disadvantageous for church development. In the Methodist Church, in particular, the church membership in 1917 was 6,972, but by 1918, it was 5822. The church lost 1150 of its members due to the influenza epidemic. In memory of the MCS victims of the influenza epidemic, a complete list of deaths remains available in the memorial building at Avoka Girl's School, Faleula, Apia.¹²³ Moreover, during this period, resignations among the missionaries increased and the terms of service were curtailed. The Rev. E. G. Neil, a popular chairman and church builder who had arrived in 1902, resigned at the end of 1918 and immediately returned to England. The Rev. N.G. Graham arrived in 1919 and returned to England due to his wife's ill-health during the same year. The Rev. A. L. Sherlock and the Rev. F.G. Lewis both arrived in 1920, but returned to England in 1924. The Rev. F. Humphrey arrived in 1921 but left the following year. The only surviving missionary that remained in ministry from 1917 until 1933 was the Rev. G. Shinkfield who endured the hard times of the period along with the Samoan people. He remained as Chairman of the Samoa District from 1919 until 1933, despite the political unrest between the Samoans and the New Zealand Administration.¹²⁴

Many Samoans blamed New Zealand for the 1918 epidemic influenza which had killed about 22% of the Samoan population due to their failure to quarantine the islands, as had been done in the case of Fiji and American Samoa. Due to this, the continuing responsibility of New Zealand for the rule of Samoa was not welcomed by many Samoans and a series of objections was formed against the New Zealand administration.

3.8.2 The Mau Movement

The frustrated desire for greater participation in government was to bring the majority of leading Samoans and local Europeans into a coalition against the New Zealand administration. In 1923, Colonel Richardson, who succeeded administrator Tate (New Zealand Administrator 1920-1923), took control of Samoan affairs. Richardson admired the Samoans and wanted to help them, but with only a partial recognition of Samoan customs and practices, Richardson did not realize that Samoans were proud of their own way of life, and

¹²³ Folasa, *Amataina Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa*, 192.

¹²⁴ Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 333.

felt reluctant to live and behave as Europeans. The Samoans did however, desire some of the knowledge and tools to which Europeans had access.¹²⁵

This relationship lasted for only a short time. In 1926, leading Samoan leaders and local Europeans came to criticize Richardson. He ordered a chain of command that all matters raised by Samoans for his attention must first go through the *faipule* (Samoan representatives in the New Zealand Administration). *Faipule* were also given the power to pass regulations for Samoans, and went on to impose a wide range of them. These ranged from food and crop planting through to bans on various *faa-Samoa* customs. One such ban was on the custom of the fine mat *malaga*, on the grounds that it was wasteful of time and resources.

The members of the Citizen's Committee (representing the leading local Europeans and the European-Samoans of European status) and members of the leading group of Samoans formed an organisation called the Samoan League, 'O le Mau'. The Mau was a representation of local views as expressed in its motto 'Samoa mo Samoa' or 'Samoa for Samoa'.¹²⁶

The European connection included such men as, Samuel Meredith, E. W. Western, A. Williams, G. E. L. Westbrook and O. F. Nelson, whose mother was a Samoan from the village of Safune. Savaii, fell under suspicion of the new administration as being the 'master mind' of the movement. The involvement of these European supporters of the Mau, brought the political disturbance in Western Samoa to the New Zealand public's notice.¹²⁷

The attempt of the government to dissolve the Mau led to the issuing of banishment orders to the Mau supporters. Fifty nine orders of banishment were issued by the Administrator between late 1926 and mid 1927. Following an arrest order, on 6 December 1928, Tupua Tamasese, the leader of the Mau, after pleading guilty to the charge of contempt of court for ignoring a summons relating to the non-payment of poll tax in 1927, was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment. In accordance with Colonel Stephen S. Allen's suggestion (New Zealand Administrator 1928-1931), Tupua was transferred to New Zealand to serve his sentence. He was released in early 1929.

The banishment of the leader of the Mau was thought by many observers to put an end to the Mau, but it became a cause of Samoan support for the Mau. On Sunday 25, December 1929,

¹²⁵ Meleisea and Schoefel, *Lagaga*, 134.

¹²⁶ Meleisea and Schoeffel, *Lagaga*, 135.

¹²⁷ Feild, *Mau*, 86.

violence broke out after four years of peaceful protest. A large procession marched through Apia to welcome the local Europeans, E.W. Gurr and A.G. Smyth from exile. A fight occurred between the police and Mau supporters which resulted in the death of a military policeman. The police opened fire on the procession. Amongst the total of eleven people killed was Tupua Tamasese. Before he died, Tamasese spoke these words:

My blood has been spilt for Samoa. I am proud to give it. Do not dream of avenging it as it was spilt in maintaining peace. If I die, peace must be maintained at any price.¹²⁸

Meleisea and Schoefel's understanding of the reasons for native rebellion presented by the Mau movement was:

...the paternalism of the New Zealand authorities, the lack of consultation and power sharing, the apparently arbitrary laws which had been imposed without the consent of, or understanding of, the people, and, most of all, the interference with traditional authority and rights over titles.¹²⁹

The strife continued until, in 1936, the Labour government of New Zealand took over the administration of Samoa and agreed to hold consultations regarding Samoan independence. Prior to this, the New Zealand Government asked the Samoan government and the Mau faction to resolve their differences. However, the spirit of reconciliation was not felt by the government, until Timu, the Malo Faipule of Safotu stood up and said: "What are we waiting for? God calls. Our brothers await us. Let us move to Vaimoso and make up with our brothers." Timu's words broke the impasse and created a bridge for forgiveness and reconciliation.¹³⁰

In 1954, by order of the New Zealand government, the Constitution Commission was formed and began conducting a large extended series of consultations around the islands. The Commission's officials spoke to Samoans in every village, in every district. The Constitution submitted was approved by 83% of the plebiscite, and 79% favoured its coming into operation on 1 January 1962.¹³¹ At midnight on 31 December 1961, church bells throughout Samoa rang and prayers were offered to mark the birth of a nation with its official motto

¹²⁸ Meleisea and Schoefel, *Lagaga*, 137.

¹²⁹ Meleisea and Schoefel, 133.

¹³⁰ Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, "Head of State of Samoa's 50th Anniversary of Independence Speech," Tiafau, 01 June 2012, <http://www.head-of-state-samoa.ws>, (accessed 15 June, 2012).

¹³¹ Wood, *Overseas Mission*, 331

“Samoa is founded on God”; this motto expresses the union of the Samoan culture and the Christian Church. At Mulinuu on the following morning, the lowering of the New Zealand flag for the last time and the raising of the Samoan flag marked the birth of the independent nation of Samoa.¹³²

3.9 MEMORIES OF AN INDEPENDENT NATION

On June 1, 2012, Samoa celebrated its 50th anniversary as an independent nation. The Samoan Independence Day marks an historic celebration whereby the people of Samoa come together from far and near, to bear witness, reflect on and share their stories in the remembrance of the past years that Samoan people struggled for Samoan Independence. In his Golden Jubilee celebration keynote speech, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, the current Head of Sate of the independent Samoan nation suggested that the celebration was one of reminiscence, as the “day to remember the pain, the heartache, the anger, and the struggles, our forefathers went through to achieve the independence we now enjoy”¹³³

Efi said that he is proud of the legitimate role played by the surviving chiefs of the Mau, in resisting the taking of revenge, remaining in peace and moving forward with faith in God so that one day the New Zealand administration would understand the way in which the Samoan people had aspired for their freedom. In his address, Efi reminisced on the support of the two Maori politicians in the New Zealand Government at the time, Sir Maui Pomare and Sir Apirana Ngata, who, in their roles in the New Zealand Government, had sought to make social and political reforms to enable greater harmony between the Pakeha and the Maori people. The New Zealand Maori politicians had similar concerns to those evident in the Samoan cause; the Samoans were also struggling for equality of privilege with the Europeans and the two New Zealand Maori politicians supported the Samoan Mau.

Although the New Zealand administration often had an oppressive impact on the lives of the Samoan people, the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation also espoused goodwill. In 2002, New Zealand’s Prime Minister, Helen Clark, on behalf of her government, officially presented New Zealand’s apology for the wrongs of the early administration in dealing with the people of Samoa. The redemptive power of her words soothed the broken hearts of the people of Samoa. This encouraged Samoa’s people to move forward with hope and faith in

¹³² Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 410.

¹³³ Efi, “Independence Speech,” 2.

God and work cooperatively with New Zealand for the development of a better future for Samoa's future emerging generations. Dwelling on the spirit of forgiveness and friendship was the theme of the host district for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Samoan Independence. Vaimauga Sisifo was given the task of singing the final traditional song in the celebration. Men and women of the district sang with the spirit of forgiveness and the urging that the spirit of the New Zealand/Samoa relationship be maintained in accordance with the words of the song. This is the English version:

Thank you New Zealand for your apology, but we do not want to go back to days gone by. We have accepted your apology so come let us work together for the betterment of future generations.¹³⁴

The support of the New Zealand Labour and National Party Governments from 1936 to 1962 in the creation of Samoan independence is highly valued in Samoa's history of independence. The following remark by Davidson is worthwhile quoting, as it expresses what Samoans struggled for:

'Samoa is a nation. Her people are sensitively aware of their own identity. They continue to find the framework of their own lives in the values and institutions of their own culture'.¹³⁵

3.10 AN INDEPENDENT SAMOAN METHODIST CONFERENCE

While negotiations were being undertaken by the New Zealand government and the Samoan people (1936-1962), towards drafting a constitution for Samoan independence, the Samoan members of the Methodist Church met to make proposals for a Samoan Methodist Conference that would be independent of the Australasian Methodist Conference. In a meeting of the Samoan Methodist District Synod held on November 27, 1956 at Gagaemalae, Savaii, consultations were held over the proposal for a Samoan Methodist Conference, and this was given unanimous agreement.¹³⁶

The Methodist Church of Australasia, through its Mission Board and the General Conference, gave emphatic encouragement to the proposal which, in 1957, led the Mission Board in its

¹³⁴ Vaimauga i Sisifo, Samoan Traditional Song, performed on the 50th Anniversary of Samoan Independence, Tiafau, 2 June, 2012.

¹³⁵ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 3.

¹³⁶ Tupu Folasa, *Amataina Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa*, 251.

Annual meeting to ask the General Conference of that year to give general approval to the preparation of a Constitution to be presented to the 1960 General Conference.¹³⁷ General approval was given and this led to the appointment of the Rev. J. Maddox to work with G. L. Cook (Piula Theological College), G. R. Ross (Young People's Department) and F. G. Savage (Satupaitea), together with Tupu Folasa and Pene Matua as District Secretaries. The work involved the final planning stage of the movement towards the establishment of the Samoan Conference.

The Samoan Synod, after having been given general approval for preparation for the Samoan Conference, began upgrading its ministerial structure and mission formation, and more development was undertaken in terms of the acquisition of more resources and facilities, lands and properties. In 1960, a new administrative office was built in Matafele, Apia, which is the town which has since become the centre for the MCS in Samoa. Aside from this, the readiness of the Samoan synod to be constituted as a conference was aided by the potential and capability of those Samoans who were able to visit the Church in Australia and participate in several conferences. Sega Ropati was an early visitor to several Australian Conferences as were, Lene Milo, Amani Amituanai, Taeao Tauanuu, Titi Maea, Toleafoa Filipo and Tala Faamatuainu.¹³⁸ The participation of these people in the work of several Australian Conferences highlighted their good reputation and their potential to become future leaders of the church. To some extent, their leadership could be seen as a reliable basis for the General Conference's decision that Samoa be constituted as a conference. When the Samoan Methodist Conference was eventually constituted, the Reverends, Lene Milo, Amani Amituanai and Taeao Tauanuu became its presidents over a period of years.

Finally, in 1963, after considerable consultation between Samoa, the Conference of New South Wales, and the General Conference of Australia, the completed document was presented to the General Conference for ratification. The representatives of Samoa at that Conference were the Rev. J. Maddox (Chairman) the Rev. Tupu Folasa and the Hon. Fainuulelei Utu (Speaker of the House, Parliament of American Samoa); the Rev. R.W. Allardice was also present on this historic occasion. The General Conference, meeting in Perth, Western Australia, unanimously ratified the new constitution and arranged for the

¹³⁷ This Constitution was drafted largely by Russell Maddox, who had returned to Samoa as Chairman of the District, C.F. Gribble and Eben V. Newman, General Secretary and Assistant Secretary, respectively, of the Mission Board. (Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 330).

¹³⁸ R.W.Allardice, *The Methodist Story in Samoa 1928-1984*, (Malifa, Apia, 1984), 38.

President-General to be in Samoa for the inauguration of the Methodist Conference of Samoa in 1964.

At the final synod meeting held from August 6 to 17, 1963, in Wesley, Apia, a Conference an Arrangements Committee was appointed and the following appointments were made by the Synod:

President Elect: Rev. Russell J. Maddox

Secretary Elect: Rev. Tupu Folasa

Five Synod Districts were constituted from 42 parishes as follows:

Sinoti Upolu Sisifo (Upolu West synod): 9 churches,

Sinoti Upolu Sasae (Upolu East synod): 7 churches,

Sinoti Tutuila (American Samoa Territory synod): 6 churches,

Sinoti Salafai Sasae (Salafai, Savaii East synod): 10 churches,

Sinoti Salafai Sisifo (Salafai West synod): 10 churches.¹³⁹

In Adelaide, in May, 1963, following a unanimous decision in regard to the Constitution, the Australasian Methodist Conference finally approved the Samoan synod as the Independent Methodist Church of Samoa Conference.

The inauguration of the Conference was marked by a service of Thanksgiving in Wesley Church on July, 13, 1964. Attending the celebration of this historic achievement in the history of the Methodist Church of Samoa were the President of the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Rev. Dr. W. F. Hambly, accompanied by the Rev. C. F. Gribble, Secretary of the General Conference, also the Secretary for the Overseas Mission, the Rev. N. G. Pardey, Principal of Piula (1934-1940), the Rev. Athol Barr, President of the Conference of New Zealand and President of the Conference in Tonga, the Rev. G. C. Harris.¹⁴⁰

The inauguration service was followed by the induction of the Samoan Conference officers dedicating them to their new calling: The officers were as follows:

President: The Rev. R. J. Maddox

Secretary: The Rev. Tupu Folasa

¹³⁹ Allardice, *Methodism in Samoa*, 42; Folasa, *Amataina Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa*, 264-266.

¹⁴⁰ Allardice, *Methodism in Samoa*, 43.

Treasurer: The Rev. Asi Faleao.

The whole church expressed their joy at having achieved independent status within the Methodist tradition through cultural and traditional songs, and on July 15th 1964 a great feast was prepared in Samoan style. This was followed by the performance of traditional songs and dances.

The following remark by Harold Wood is worth quoting:

The spirit of devotion that has animated its people through difficult stages of their history can well be expected to inspire both Church and nation in the changing conditions of today.¹⁴¹

3.11 CONCLUSION

The revival of the Methodist Church of Samoa under Martin Dyson, the missionaries and the Tongan teachers, was a clear assertion of Methodist identity; the church desired to be independent in their Methodist tradition. While there was dissatisfaction among the LMS missionaries in regard to the position of the Australian and the Tongan teachers in the resumption of the Wesleyan mission in Samoa, the work of retaining the church by the Wesleyan chiefs and the Methodists who remained after Peter Turner's removal expressed a strong sense of church independence amongst Methodist adherents. This also highlights the point that the LMS missionaries were ignorant of the Samoans' power and right to decide for themselves the religion of their choice. It was also an assertion of Samoan self-determination, in that the Samoan Methodists were not willing to accept decisions made in London without any consultation. On the other hand they were happy to work with European missionaries, when they had freely chosen to do so.

The years 1900 to 1964, in the history of the people of Samoa and the Samoan Methodist Church, marked a period of dedication, devotion and enthusiasm for the people of Samoa. During this period, the Samoans began their involvement in political disturbances which caused great dissension between the Europeans and the native Samoans. The dissension was fuelled by the misunderstanding of the two peoples about their goals for governance which then resulted in physical contention.

¹⁴¹ Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 332.

The colonial powers, (the New Zealand administration, for example) in pursuit of military power believed themselves to be worthy of guiding the Samoans, ignoring the Samoans as a people who were aware of their own identity and who knew how to live as a nation. The Samoans determinedly stood for their right to seek peaceful consultation with the New Zealand administration, believing that if the new administration understood Samoan concerns, political strife would end. The refusal of the new administration to negotiate and the failure of the Samoans to comply with the new administration order ignited the Mau movement as the representation of the determined opinion of the people for independence. The political disturbances in Samoa emphatically strengthened the Samoans' desire for self-governance and autonomy. The native people, although seen as inferior and unintelligent in the eyes of white people, were gifted people of God to whom God had given the heart and faith to live as a nation.

Significantly, in every independence celebration, Samoa needs to reflect critically on its history, both through the eyes of faith and in order to see how the past can teach people to work towards a better future. Reflecting through the eyes of faith, we acknowledge God's unconditional love and care for both the people of Samoa and New Zealand. Believing that 'With God, everything is possible' guided Samoans' faith towards the achievement of its goal of independence.

The remembrance of the determination, courage and the promises of the leaders and people of Samoa who sacrificed their lives for Samoan independence, became a spur to Samoan involvement in extensive consultations on a centralised government. The establishment of a Samoan Government was a step forward for Samoa, in order to be able to negotiate with other nations on ways to build a sustainable nation and to let Samoans decide for themselves without the interference of foreign powers.

The often oppressive nature of the New Zealand colonial administration led to a desire for political independence, and this sentiment was mirrored among the Samoan immigrants in New Zealand who wanted to maintain a high degree of autonomy over their church and cultural life in the new country. The post-independence relationship between New Zealand and Samoa is friendly, but is not an uncritical one, in that many Samoan migrants living in New Zealand aspire to live on their own terms within the dominant culture, as far as possible retaining as much as possible of an autonomous *faa Samoa* that maintains close connections with its place of origin in a politically independent nation.

To address the question of how the Samoan independence struggle contributes to our understanding of the formation of the Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, the MCS in New Zealand, when it was founded in the 1960s, was formed by those people who had struggled and were heavily involved in the series of consultations bringing about Samoan independence.

4 THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST SAMOAN METHODIST CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The increasing Samoan migrant population in New Zealand contributed to the establishment of Samoan migrant churches in New Zealand. As the Samoan migrant population grew in New Zealand, there was a strong aspiration among many migrants to retain their cultural identity and Samoan faith.

As to the reason why Samoans were so determined to uphold their culture and identity in a foreign land, Arbuckle's view may give some clues: "a person without a culture is without a sense of belongingness".¹⁴² Retaining cultural values and ethnic relationships is the key to retaining one's identity and faith and to strengthening links to extended family kinships, both in New Zealand and in the islands.

The Samoan migrants' commitment to their faith was also closely bound up with their commitment to political autonomy, which had developed around the period leading up to independence. This strengthened Samoans' aspirations to form Samoan communities and even Samoan indigenous churches in New Zealand. According to Cluny Macpherson and David Pitt in their 1974 study of the Samoan churches and communities, the formation of Samoan churches revealed the strong determination of Samoan migrants to form their own institutions in which simplicity of communication and feeding of the Samoan faith through language and culture took place.¹⁴³ Peter Sterns aptly describes such a movement as "culture in motion," meaning that when people migrate, they take with them, and cherish, their ideas, beliefs, and religious practices.¹⁴⁴

Danny Ioka's study of the origin and beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) in New Zealand similarly emphasises the socio-cultural significance of the Church as both a cultural institution and a spiritual fellowship. Ioka asserts that the distinctive worship and community environment of the CCCS was seen as the necessary means of

¹⁴² Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers*, (West Broadway: Wipf and Stock Pub., 2001), 1.

¹⁴³ David Pitt and Cluny Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism: The Samoan Community in New Zealand*, (Longman Paul: New Zealand, 1974), 60-61.

¹⁴⁴ Peter N. Sterns, *Cultures in Motion: Mapping Key Contacts and their Imprints in World History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 1174.

preserving Samoan Christianity in all its indigenous social and cultural forms and expressions.¹⁴⁵

According to Makerusa Porotesano, this is the same sentiment that inspired the establishment of the only Samoan Church in Suva, Fiji:

The Samoan church is a home away for all Samoans who came to Fiji for a short time or another and also a church ... conducted in Samoan in order to give a Samoan sense of worship¹⁴⁶.

These social institutions communicate the spirit of the *Faa-Samoa* (Samoan way) which is pursued in communal living and through language and cultural involvement. Social activities were organized to retain social relationships, which also reflected a significant degree of independence, unity and distinctiveness. These institutions were later transformed into the establishment of autonomous Samoan churches. This chapter will discuss the history of the establishment of one of those; Samoan Methodism, in New Zealand. The progress and setbacks of the Samoan Methodist church tell the story of a minority ethnic Samoan group, who established Samoan Methodism in Aotearoa New Zealand.

4.2 MIGRATION TO NEW ZEALAND

Following World War II, New Zealand engaged in economic restructuring from a largely agricultural to a more industrialised economy which tapped into two major immigration streams: the skilled manual and white collar workers from the United Kingdom and Europe and the unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers from the Pacific.¹⁴⁷ The impetus for these two immigration streams was largely economic, and, in the case of Samoan migrant communities, the incentives are well demonstrated in studies by Brosnan and Wilson¹⁴⁸ and Pitt and Macpherson.¹⁴⁹ Samoans migrated to New Zealand in increasing numbers after

¹⁴⁵ Danny Ioka, "Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Aotearoa, New Zealand," (PhD thesis in Church History, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1998), 201.

¹⁴⁶ Makerusa Porotesano, "The Samoan Church in Suva: An Image of a Diaspora Church", (MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1996), 22.

¹⁴⁷ Patrick Ongley, "Immigration, Employment and Ethnic Relations" in Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Cluny Macpherson, eds, *Nga Patai: Racism and Ethnic Relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1991), 17.

¹⁴⁸ P. Brosnan and H. Wilson, "Labour Market Segmentation, Migrant Workers and Restructuring", in *Proceedings of the SSRFC Seminar, Economic Restructuring and Migrant Labour in the South Pacific*, (Victoria University of Wellington, 1989), 22.

¹⁴⁹ Pitt and Macpherson, *Emerging Pluralism*, 23-24.

World War II. During that early period, particularly in the 1950s, the Samoan population in New Zealand grew very rapidly, particularly around the industrial areas where new jobs were being created.

New Zealand provided its migrant workers with relatively highly paid and secure employment, increased educational opportunities and increased access to a wide range of health services and consumer goods. Moreover, New Zealand incomes also allowed migrants to provide financial support for their families and relatives back in the islands. However, this did not imply free entry to New Zealand, as the demands of labour had priority. Entry was restricted by the Immigration Act of 1964. All persons other than New Zealand citizens, including those born in the Cook Islands, Niue or Tokelau, required entry permits for either permanent or temporary residence¹⁵⁰.

Church relationships and scholarship opportunities signed and awarded by overseas churches, also contributed to Samoan migration, even if only in small numbers. For example, in the 1960s, the New Zealand Methodist Conference enquired about the availability of Samoan ministers to serve in the New Zealand Methodist Conference. The appeal was for a Samoan minister to provide pastoral care and service for the Samoan Methodist adherents incorporated in New Zealand Methodist churches. The Samoan Methodist Conference endorsed Reverend Faatoese Auva'a, to whom, in recognition of his service, the New Zealand Conference awarded a scholarship for further pastoral training at Saint John's Theological College.¹⁵¹ This was followed by an agreement between the New Zealand and Samoan Conferences, signed in 1973, in which more Samoan ministers were required to serve in the New Zealand Conference. The Reverend Siauala Amituanai, the Reverend Seilala Maposua, and the Reverend Ioane Afoa were recruited to serve in the New Zealand Conference for a designated period. Their work and service in New Zealand churches will be discussed later in the thesis.¹⁵² During this same period, the Congregational Church also provided ministers and ministry trainees, and the Mormon Church sent many missionaries abroad for service, and

¹⁵⁰ Andrew D. Trlin and Paul Spoonley, eds, *New Zealand and International Migration: A Digested and Bibliography, Number 1* (Palmerston North: Department of Sociology, Massey University, 1986), 3.

¹⁵¹ The Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Taahi Weteriana O Aotearoa, "Samoan Congregation", <http://www.wesleychurch.org.nz> (accessed 15 October 2010).

¹⁵² The Methodist Church of New Zealand, "Samoan Policy Committee, Annual Report 1973", Minutes of the Annual Conference, Christchurch, 1973, 210.

many students to New Zealand and Brigham Young University (BYU), Hawaii for education.¹⁵³

Samoan migrants moved along migration chains to these enclaves and formed Samoan communities, which, in many cases, reminded the Samoan migrants of the villages from whence they came.¹⁵⁴ These early settlements then became the centres of a new international Samoan community that was connected by kinship to almost every village in Samoa.

In the decade after 2000, the restructuring of the New Zealand economy, which required less unskilled labour from Samoa, caused a decline in demand for Samoan migration. The New Zealand economy increasingly recruited only skilled and professional migrants from the Pacific, resulting in the loss of skilled and professional Samoans from Samoa. Asenati Liki saw such movement of skilled migrants into industrial nations as a problematic brain drain causing a shortage of skilled and professional workers in the Pacific, particularly in the public sector.¹⁵⁵

The current Samoan migration quota allows 1100 people and their families to migrate annually to New Zealand, and the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme offers employment in planting, maintaining, harvesting, and packing crops to non-New Zealand national or resident workers. This allows temporary seasonal migrants from Samoa to work in New Zealand for varying periods annually.

4.3 INCORPORATION OF SAMOANS INTO THE NEW ZEALAND METHODIST CHURCH

4.3.1 Pitt Street Methodist Church

The Pitt Street Methodist Church that was established in 1866 became known as the mother church of Auckland Methodism. Located in the centre of Auckland city, where a large

¹⁵³ Cluny Macpherson, "The Polynesian Diaspora: New Communities and New Questions", in Kenichi Sudo and Shuji Yoshida, eds, *Contemporary Migration in Oceania: Diaspora and Network*, (Osaka : Japan Center for Area Studies, National Museum of Ethnology, 1997), 79.

¹⁵⁴ Cluny and Laavasa Macpherson, "Evangelical Religion among Pacific Island Migrants: New Faiths or Brief Diversions," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15, no. 2 (2001): 28.

¹⁵⁵ Asenati Liki, "Moving and Rootedness: The Paradox of the Brain Drain among Samoan Professionals," *Journal of Asia-Pacific Population* 16 (March, 2002): 70.

population of Pacific Island migrants had settled, from the early 1940s Pitt Street Methodist Church began to attract Pacific Island Christian migrants to its services.¹⁵⁶

From that period of early Pacific Island migration and settlement, Pitt Street began valuing its multicultural affiliation with minority ethnic migrant groups from the Pacific. Integrated migrant groups included Samoans, Tongans and Fijians who were determined to retain their faith, spirituality and commitment as part of church life, and had made Pitt Street Methodist Church their 'home'.

As Samoan membership increased with the inclusion of parents and grandparents of migrants, Samoan migrant members felt moved to ask the New Zealand Methodist Conference for Samoan language services for those, especially older parishioners, whose second language was English. They felt uncomfortable in a multicultural environment of worship, and estranged in services in the English language. Consequently, they requested Samoan language services to provide a sense of ethnic belonging in the midst of an immense, and strange, dominant culture.

In June 1956, the Board of the New Zealand Methodist Conference first approved Samoan language services for the Wellesley Methodist congregation in Wellington. This was followed three months later, in October, by approval for Samoan language services for the Pitt Street congregation in Auckland. The Board approved one Samoan service a month at first. This was later extended to two services per month, and these were to be held only in Pitt Street parish. Hence, the Samoan Methodists attending Otahuhu, Central Mission, Ponsonby, and Otara Methodist churches were all welcome to worship at Pitt Street.¹⁵⁷

Although the Samoan group was offered Samoan language services, there was no official recognition of the Samoan ministry in parishes. It was only identified in the life and work of the church as a series of "Samoan fellowships". Teti Macarthy,¹⁵⁸ a New Zealand Methodist accredited lay preacher, was appointed by the New Zealand Conference to lead Samoan language services.

¹⁵⁶ E. W. Hames, *100 Years in Pitt Street: Centenary History of the Pitt Street Methodist Church, Auckland*, (Auckland: Pitt Street Methodist Church Trustees, 1950), 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ Asofiafia Samoa Saleupolu, "A Brief Recount of Samoan Methodists Migration" Paper Presented to the New Zealand Methodist Conference, 2002, 1. Rev. Asofiafia Samoa Saleupolu was the first Superintendent of the Sinoti Samoa of the New Zealand Methodist Conference in 1996. He is now Director of Mission Resourcing (Pacific Ministries) and Tauivi Executive Officer of the Methodist Church New Zealand.

¹⁵⁸ Teti Macarthy, son of the late Rev. Fereti Tupou, a retired minister of the Methodist Church of Samoa. Teti was a lay preacher of the New Zealand Methodist Church at Pitt Street.

Later, the Board looked for more Samoan lay preachers to assist Macarthy with the Samoan ministry, as the membership continued to grow. Amongst the Samoan group in church, there were a few lay preachers of the Samoan Methodist Conference, who had left Piula Theological College to migrate to New Zealand before the completion of their pastoral training. When the need for supporting ministers was evident, the New Zealand Methodist Board recruited these men as assistant, self-supporting lay preachers to provide pastoral care for the Samoan group. For that reason, they were not entitled to full financial privileges, as they were employed as lay workers, unless ordained.¹⁵⁹

Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the rate of increase of Samoan members in the church had alerted the New Zealand Methodist Church to consider seriously how the Samoans could best be served in the life of the church. This led to the establishment of the *Komiti Samoa Faa-Itumalo* (District Samoan Committee). Its role was to advise the Conference on matters relating to the needs of the Samoan group. However, in the New Zealand Methodist constitution and policies, this committee was not a recognised entity of the church and had no executive power in church governance or organisation, all of which were vested in the New Zealand Conference administration. Hence, any decisions and approvals for proposed projects or matters relating to the development of the Samoan ministry had to be granted by the governing body, the New Zealand Conference. At this stage, there was no way in which a distinctive Samoan voice could be heard.¹⁶⁰

The migrant Samoan Methodist minority cherished their faith and spirituality while living in New Zealand. This was evident from the steadily increasing membership, despite the lack of recognition in church governance and administration. Their commitment to their church illustrates a strong determination of the Samoan ethnic minority to uphold its spirituality and faith by attending services in the New Zealand branches of the church which they had attended in their respective villages. It also indicates the value and place of the church in their lives and service in the hearts and faith of the migrant Samoan minority.

4.3.2 Auckland Methodist Central Mission and the Formation of Schisms

The Auckland Methodist Central Mission came second to Pitt Street Church in attracting Pacific Island Methodist migrants. The Samoan members felt that the time was right to

¹⁵⁹ Interview with church minister, 29 July, 2010.

¹⁶⁰ Church minister, interview.

conduct Samoan language services in their own Central Mission church, rather than attending the combined services at Pitt Street. In support of the motion, the Central Mission, on behalf of its Samoan members, applied to the New Zealand Conference in 1963 for Samoan language services. The request for one Samoan service a month was approved and the Reverend Everill Orr was informed that the Samoan group could hold their monthly Samoan language services at a different time on Sunday so as not to affect the English services. The approval for Samoan language services further elevated the status of the Central Mission as the “church to attend,” for the Samoan migrants.

Tupe Timoteo,¹⁶¹ a leading chief and chairman of the Samoan group at the Central Mission, chaired a group meeting on March 24, 1963¹⁶² to make plans for the Samoan language services. The meeting resolved that the Samoan services would be allocated the third Sunday of each month at 3:00 in the afternoon. The Reverend Everill Orr, the Superintendent of the Auckland District Synod and minister of the Central Mission parish, declared his great support and made a sincere offer of assistance to support the Samoan fellowship in the Central Mission Church. In honour of the Reverend Orr’s support and interest, Tupe and the Samoan group invited him to conduct the first Samoan service on April 28, 1963, despite his limited fluency in the Samoan language.¹⁶³

The decision, however, infuriated the *Komiti Samoa* and the members of the Pitt Street congregation, who considered this move a breach of the decision approved by the Conference in June, 1956, in regard to a combined service at the Pitt Street church. For that reason, a breach developed in the relationship between the Pitt Street church and the Central Mission. Poor relationships were exacerbated when, at the November Conference 1963, the *Komiti Samoa* and the Pitt Street members tabled an appeal to amend the decision made for the

¹⁶¹ Tupe Peter Timoteo Faamatau came from the village of Salelesi, Upolu West. He has served in the Methodist Church both in New Zealand and Samoa since the 1950s. Tupe is a prominent and strong willed Methodist who struggled with determination to establish the Samoan Methodist Church to serve the social, cultural aspirations of Samoan people. He founded many Samoan Methodist congregations in both Auckland and Wellington. He was ordained in 1967 under the Samoan Methodist Conference and his first appointment was at Te Atatu, reappointed to Otahuhu then his appointment to Samoa. In Samoa, his first appointment was at Maagiagi. After four years at Maagiagi, the Conference reappointed him to Leloaloe Tutuila, then to Manono after another four years. His last appointment in Samoa was at the Methodist Church Agriculture Department. (Interview with church member, 21 March, 2010).

¹⁶² The Samoan members who attended the meeting were; male members, Tupe Timoteo, Isaia, Sam, Asesela Inu, Vaoiva Seve, Faoa Seve, Lemuelu Faamatau, Setai Matai, Tupu Matai, Sione, Alapati Iopu, Ioane Vaa, Mose Galuvao, Arona Enoka. Female members; Maude Tupe, Matauaina, Mele, Luisa, Lau, Sili Ualesi, (Tupe Timoteo, “Amataina o le Lotu Metotisi Samoa Niu Sila 1963-1965” Personal narratives, 1963, 1.

¹⁶³ Church member, interview.

Central Mission. Unfortunately, the decision remained unchanged. In his diary, Tupe described the events as follows:

E fai pea le lotu a tagata Samoa i Auckland Methodist Central Mission Church ae ia fuafua lelei e Tupe ma tagata Samoa, aua nei vavalalata ma le Aso Sa o loo fai ai le lotu a Pitt Street nei afaina ai.¹⁶⁴

Samoan services at Auckland Methodist Central Mission remained and it was resolved that Tupe and the Samoan group should consider an appropriate time for services so that they would not clash with Pitt Street Samoan services.

The breach became marked and it affected Samoan services at the Central Mission. This resulted in recommendations by the *Komiti Samoa* to the Board to revise the decision, and the Board decided to reduce the annual number of Samoan language services (at the Central Mission) from twelve to six. The decision may be interpreted as an attempt either to create unity through combined worship, or to maintain autonomy within the Pitt Street European group. The Pitt Street church membership statistics for 1965 show a 17 percent net decrease,¹⁶⁵ while at the same time the Island membership at Auckland Methodist Central Mission had increased.¹⁶⁶ This suggests that Pitt Street had lost some of its Samoan members to the Auckland Methodist Central Mission and this was the reason why Pitt Street wanted to keep holding the combined Samoan language services, in the hope of keeping the Samoans in their church. The Reverend Orr and the Samoan group of the Central Mission saw the move as insensitive.

4.3.3 Period of Uncertainty

Meetings of the Samoan group commenced at the Central Mission in order to formulate a response to the decision. The first meeting, chaired by Tupe Timoteo, was held in December 19, 1963, at the Auckland Methodist Central Mission. The majority of people at the meeting, were angered by the discouraging attitude of the *Komiti Samoa* and, in reply, declared their preference to withdraw. A few members remained silent, as they had to seek the consent of

¹⁶⁴ Timoteo, "Amataina Lotu Metotisi," 2

¹⁶⁵ "Auckland Methodist Central Mission Annual Report, 1964" in the Methodist Church of New Zealand: Minutes of the Annual Conference held at Hamilton, 1964, 160.

¹⁶⁶ "Auckland Methodist Central Mission Church Membership, 1964" in the Methodist Church of New Zealand: Minutes of the Annual Conference held at Hamilton, 1964.

their *matai* and their extended *aiga* to commit to a position. The meeting, after a long discussion, was adjourned.¹⁶⁷

On January 13, 1964, a second meeting was hosted by Asesela Inu (a member of the group) at his home in Kingsland. At this meeting, the majority, who had earlier decided to withdraw, changed their minds. They decided to remain at the Central Mission to preserve the appearance of unity amongst the Samoan members at the New Zealand Conference. They also rejected claims that the intention to form a Samoan church was to imitate the newly formed Samoan congregation of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) or *Ekalesia Faalapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS)¹⁶⁸ who, for reasons particular to their own situation, had withdrawn from the PICC to gain greater autonomy. Aside from this, there were no ordained Samoan ministers available who could conduct Samoan language worship. Tupe, the chairman of the meeting, replied to the comments, thus:

E le o le taumafai e tetee i le ekalesia palagi...e faatatau lava i tagata Samoa o loo i Niu Sila, ma ole tasi manatu maua luga, o matua malaga mai Samoa ele malamalama ile gagana palagi, poo le Igilisi. Poo le faatusatusa i le lotu LMS, e leai. E le o le Agaga lea o le Atua ia fai faatusatusa i isi tapuaiga.¹⁶⁹

It is not an attempt to reject the *palagi* church...it refers only to Samoans in New Zealand, and one of the main concerns was that parents who migrated to New Zealand do not understand the *palagi* language or English. It is not the intention to imitate the LMS, as it is not the will of God to imitate to other religions.

Tupe's determination reflects the recognition that part of their responsibility was for the spiritual care of their people residing in New Zealand. This also indicates that Samoans at this stage had the capacity and potential to take control of their Samoan language services, their church's structures and leadership, but Tupe hesitated to take action whilst he waited to hear the opinions of the meeting.

¹⁶⁷ Timoteo, "Amataina Lotu Metotisi," 4.

¹⁶⁸ In 1962, the Samoan group left the Pacific Island Church (PICC) and formed the first Congregational Christian Church of Samoa or *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS). The key factor leading the Samoans to a split was that, in the PIC, they were only one part and one vote in a larger collective of other Pacific voices. Ioka, "Origin and Beginning of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in New Zealand, Aotearoa," 32.

¹⁶⁹ Timoteo, "Amataina lotu Metotisi," 5.

After a few days, on February 24, 1964, the third meeting of members of the Central Mission group was held at Faoa and Lau's (members of the group) home in Arthur Street, Ponsonby at 7.00pm. At this meeting, Tupe sought to convince the members at the meeting to withdraw. However, the majority of members at the meeting revealed their allegiance and preference to continue to serve and work under the New Zealand Conference.

This change of heart may have occurred because, when the *Komiti Samoa* and the church leaders at Pitt Street heard of the intention expressed at the first meeting at the Central Mission, they began approaching members individually in an attempt to persuade them to remain as church members at the Central Mission. One church member said that, after that time, they (church leaders at Pitt Street and the *Komiti Samoa*) had circulated notices around the New Zealand parishes seeking to ban the hire of any New Zealand Methodist halls or churches to the leaving party if the group split. They also prohibited any Samoan lay preachers from preaching at their services. This reaction by the *Komiti Samoa* and Pitt Street leaders subsequently created fear on the part of some members who decided to remain in the New Zealand church. They were frightened of being ridiculed and insulted by the New Zealand Conference, labelled as rebellious people who had violated the unity of the church which was contrary to the promise of the gospel. For that reason, they chose to remain in the New Zealand Church.¹⁷⁰

Lastly, after several complicated meetings, Tupe announced his own decision, as follows:

Ia finagalo malilie le fono, o e mananao e o pea i lalo o le itu palagi ona o lea, ae o au (Tupe) ma lou aiga o le a o e faatuina se tapuaiga Faa-Samoan moni a la tatou Ekalesia i Niu Sila.¹⁷¹

The meeting should humbly agree. Those who want to be under the *palagi* side shall join. But I (Tupe) and my family will form a real Samoan church in New Zealand.

The meeting concluded with a decision which allowed members to decide, in their own right, which group to support. Following the meeting, Tupe and his family left the Methodist Church of New Zealand and formed a Samoan church of their own.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with church member, 21 March, 2010.

¹⁷¹ Timoteo, "Amataina Lotu Metotisi," 3.

As indicated, the differing views and perceptions of Samoans during the first of these meetings show that there was no automatic unity in culture and language, and that, as a consequence, splits could occur. The tensions arose first because of different approaches toward adjustment to life in New Zealand and the form of organisation best fitted to meet this challenge. The contrary argument advanced by some Samoan families emphasized retention of Samoan cultural and spiritual values, while those Samoans in the New Zealand Conference favoured a more rapid integration into New Zealand church life. It does not necessarily mean that those Samoans in the New Zealand Conference rejected their cultural and spiritual heritage. They wanted to retain their links with these, in so far as this was possible, especially their relationships to extended family, the *matai* and relatives back home.

The question of whom to blame for the mishandling of the case when amalgamation was unsuccessful, was another emerging dispute. In the minutes of a meeting held at Pitt Street Church on February 10, 1967, between the New Zealand Methodist Conference and the Samoan Conference, the Reverend Gristle, Secretary of the New Zealand Methodist Conference, laid responsibility on the three missionaries who had earlier served in the Samoan Methodist Church for many years. He stated that:

..o manatu uma nei mai ia Alatise, Matoka ma Tilipele. O a latou fautuaga nei e pei ona matou faia. O lea sa fautuaina lava matou i mea uma nei. Ia talia tagata Samoa ma ia tutusa ma tagata Niu Sila.¹⁷²

...these ideas were Allardice's, Maddox's and Gribble's. We acted upon their advice. They cautioned us. We should accept Samoans in the same way as New Zealanders.¹⁷³

On the other hand, the Reverend R. F. Clement, President of the New Zealand Methodist Conference, laid the responsibility on the *Komiti Samoa*:

O le Komiti Samoa lea oute manatu ua ala ai ona tutupu nei faalavelave ma lenei feitagai.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² New Zealand Methodist Conference and Samoan Conference Meeting, 'Minutes' held at Pitt Street, Auckland, 10 February, 1967, 2.

¹⁷³ I owe the translation of the minutes of the meeting to Miss Malae Aloalii, lecturer in English at Aorere College, Auckland, New Zealand. Malae, before lecturing at Aorere College, was a senior lecturer in English and Geography at Maluafou College, Apia Samoa.

¹⁷⁴ New Zealand Methodist Conference and Samoan Conference, Minutes of Meeting, 1967, 2.

I think the Samoan Committee started all the trouble, especially the rift that now exists among us.

When the schism got worse, Allardice and Maddox were requested by the New Zealand Conference to assist in settling the disputes but they were unsuccessful. Consequently, it seemed difficult to identify precisely who was the cause of the schism, as both the President and Secretary of the New Zealand Conference formed divergent views of the issue and its causes.

However, the New Zealand Conference seemed to have little appreciation of their Samoan members' views and aspirations, and was assuming that the Samoans would be subservient and would fall into line without resistance. This further intensified the Samoans' deep desire to develop a separate establishment.

4.3.4 Several Factors Contributing to the Split

After the split, not all the Samoan community in the NZMC left its fellowship; there were people who stayed. The question of what shaped the decisions that led to the split is crucial to our understanding of the situation of the Samoans in the New Zealand Conference at that period. A question that has particular bearing on those who left the NZMC is why after years of shared worship within the NZMC, they were so determined to leave the NZMC? To answer this, it is important to understand the priorities of the NZMC at that time in relation to its relationship with Pacific minorities in the church, and how those priorities may have affected others' participation in the church.

Political Factors. New Zealand Methodism was closely affiliated with early Tongan Methodism, and each helped the other. Wesleyanism began in both countries in 1822 and they were jointly made a separate district in 1826. However, this relationship was never without its difficulties, and these left a legacy for the NZMC.¹⁷⁵ For example the NZMC

¹⁷⁵ Both the NZMC and Tonga suffered the consequences of incomprehension of a Missionary Society on the other side of the globe, and when in 1855 control was transferred to Sydney, each found the problem of misunderstanding continued and each, at one time or another, rebelled against Australian rule. Each church achieved independence at a cost, and in these latter days when a re-united Tongan Church elected to continue with the General Conference of Australasia, New Zealand has sought to deepen and strengthen its fraternal relationship with Australia (George G. Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972 (150th Anniversary of New Zealand Methodism)* (Auckland New Zealand: Institute Press, 1973), 8).

Another division broke out in the Tongan Church in 1865, and this resulted in the exile of some Wesleyans to Fiji, and some who supported the new church were persecuted by the order of the King of Tonga. In 1924

faced the consequences of splits among Tongan Methodists, as well as Tongan Methodism's ongoing need for financial assistance for educational purposes.¹⁷⁶ For this reason, the NZMC's priority at that time was Tongan Methodism rather than the needs of other migrant groups within the church, and at this stage, Tonga had a strong voice in the Pacific Committee. As in the case of Samoans who withdrew from the PIC, it is possible that the group leaving the NZMC felt that Samoan concerns and preferences (regarding worship, for example) were overlooked because of attention being paid to other migrant groups within the wider church.¹⁷⁷

The question why the Pacific Committee of the Methodist Church in New Zealand was not more accommodating during the 1960s and early 1970s has to be explained. There were very practical reasons why they were stuck. Firstly, the NZMC did not know how much Pacific numbers were going to grow. They saw it as a short term problem until the 1976 court case made clear that all Samoans born before 1962 had a right to settle in New Zealand. The Pacific Committee at this point was probably not contemplating an abiding or major Samoan Methodist presence in New Zealand. It was reasonable to assume that these people were only here for a short time. Today however, New Zealand Methodist Church membership is almost 50% Polynesian.

Another salient feature of Methodist church politics was the composite nature of the Pacific element and the complexity of the Tongan element. The split of the Tongan Methodism into three major groups was something the New Zealand Methodist church found very difficult to deal with and never approved. The NZMC, in attempting to deal with the Tongan Methodist issues had spent most of its time with the Tongans, attending less well to the other members' needs. These factors seem likely to have encouraged the Pacific Committee and the NZMC to

when the union of the two parties was achieved, it resulted in a continuing Free Church. There was a series of further break-away groups from the Free Church in 1979 and 1987 leading to the establishment of a new Constitutional Free Church. (Reverend Dr. Sione 'Amanaki Havea, "The Tongan Response to the Gospel." (paper presented to the South Pacific Regional Conference of the World Methodist Historical Society, Paerata, Auckland, New Zealand, 1987), 84-85).

¹⁷⁶ "The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga" in *The Methodist Church of New Zealand: Minutes of the Annual Conference held at Christchurch, 1970*, 103.

¹⁷⁷ Similarly, the Samoan group incorporated in the Pacific Island Church (PIC) were also confronted with some challenges. The founding vision of those founders that left the PIC was that, after years of service, there was only one Samoan vote in the synod which comprises strong Niuean, Cook Island and Samoan voices. Consequently, the leaving party felt dissatisfied over decisions made on some issues pertaining to political and financial matters, which, according to their views had shown little recognition of their roles in the governance of the PIC.

regard all schisms as bad and thus to have created unworkable structures in which Samoan needs were poorly accommodated.

This is evident in the reduction in the regularity of Samoan services, and the lamentable reaction of the NZMC authorities in a series of letters employing threats to encourage people to return to the NZMC. This group of Samoans resisted being bullied by those people and felt that they did not want to come under the dominance of New Zealand again in church.

This may have influenced the leadership of the church in Samoa which was always aware of what was going on in the NZMC, as all Samoan Methodists tended to know each other. Samoan Methodists were talking to their relations who were in the NZMC and were hearing stories about how they were not able to do what they wanted. All these factors may have had quite an impact on people's decision to leave the NZMC and form their own church.

Cultural Factors. The early Samoan migrants were culturally conservative and felt deeply attached to Samoa, and the *faa-Samoa*. Retaining control of their church was a way of preserving their identity and culture. Their social, economical, familial and spiritual upbringing was nurtured and developed within villages in which the church was a central element of social organisation. Likewise, the church has been central to the life of the Samoan community in New Zealand as a home and space where Samoan identity is nurtured and conveyed in their own language and cultural forms.

The spirit of Samoan independence is another contributing factor. Samoa had recently gained its independence in 1962, and the founders of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand were among those who had struggled for Samoan independence. A pride in independence which the Samoan migrants brought with them also shaped a desire to form Samoan communities independent of former colonial authorities in New Zealand. Eventually, this led them to form autonomous Samoan churches where they could worship as they preferred and maintain their *faa-Samoa*. In other words, the Samoans had had enough of the New Zealand governance and opted for institutions governed by their own people as a way of retaining both their identity and Samoan faith, expressed in their language and cultural values.

4.3.5 Several Factors Shaping the Decision of the Samoans who stayed in the NZMC

There were Samoans who, after the split, remained loyal to the NZMC, as they perceived things differently from those who left. They had their own reasons leading to their decision to stay and these reasons need to be explained.

The first of these is personal choice. In New Zealand, choosing one's religion became a personal choice rather than one which relied on the *matai*'s authority or the decision of elders, as practiced in Samoa. Some Samoan Methodists expressed the conviction that God could be worshipped either in the Samoan church or the New Zealand church, and that it was anyone's right to choose the church of their preference.

A second concern seems to have been a desire to keep the peace within the church. They might have been anxious to retain a good reputation for the Samoan people among other Pacific ethnic groups in church. To keep that good relationship and reputation meant remaining loyal to the NZMC.

A third reason for staying was financial pressure. Besides serving their families back home and looking for a better future for their children (which were the main reasons for moving to New Zealand) those people who stayed in the NZMC might have felt concerned about the consequences of funding a new church. It would result in financial pressure and also consume much valuable time at some stage for building and construction. The New Zealand Methodist Church had stable resources and facilities, which all the ethnic groups in the church were able to access and utilize free of charge.

Integration into New Zealand life and the need to upgrade pastoral skills was another reason some Samoans stayed. Some Samoan ministers and lay preachers wished to upgrade their pastoral training and this could only be achieved by serving the church and attending training courses provided by the New Zealand Conference for Samoan ministry. Others wanted integration into New Zealand life, the culture and language of the host culture and friendship with other ethnic groups. This group accordingly favoured the spirit of ecumenism within a multi-ethnic church. Staying in the NZMC would accomplish that purpose better.

The underlying reasons for the split to some extent strengthened the role of the church in the lives of all Samoan Methodists in New Zealand. The NZMC would not have been made aware of the Samoans' needs unless some Samoans had walked out and formed their own

institution. This would direct the church (NZMC) into creating possible new ways of ministering to appropriately the needs of people in a multi-cultural church. The split also emphasised the Samoans' determination to be independent in their own church.

It is interesting that, immediately after the initial split, the NZMC appears to have offered some inducements to keep the Samoans in their church. The annual report of the Auckland Methodist Central Mission in 1965 reads as follows:

Samoan work

A service is held bi-monthly, and is well attended. There is a fortnightly club and a Brass Band. We minister to 100 Samoan people and three have a seat on the Quarterly meeting.¹⁷⁸

After that, however, there are no references regarding the progress of the Samoan ministry in the church until the 1970s, when the NZMC recognised the growing number of Samoan membership. In 1971 a Samoan Policy Committee was founded as an advisory committee to the New Zealand Conference on matters relating to the pastoral ministry for the Samoans. This committee's advice may have raised the NZMC's awareness of Samoan needs, and in good relationship with the Samoan Conference, it began holding consultations between the two Conferences on creating pastoral ministry appropriate to accommodate the needs of Samoan Methodists in New Zealand.

4.3.6 The First Samoan Methodist Congregation

On the 12 of April, 1964,¹⁷⁹ the first Samoan church meeting was held at a Druids Hall. Those in attendance consisted of twenty six active members¹⁸⁰ who were also founding

¹⁷⁸ "Samoan Work, in Auckland Methodist Central Mission Annual Report, 1965," in *The Methodist Church of New Zealand: Minutes of the Annual Conference held at Christchurch, 1965*, 203.

¹⁷⁹ This was the date Reverend Setu (Setu Faaniniva, *Foafao-I-Vao-Ese: Amataga o Lotu Metotisi Samoa i Nuu Ese, Niu Sila ma Ausetalia 1964-2000*, (Australia: Perfection Press, 2000); 5) attributed to the official opening of the new church. However, the official opening was rightly dated on 8 March, 1964, as recorded in the church's diary (*api o le galuega*) by Tupe Timoteo. A similar date cited by Reverend Gagae Uelese, Reverend Olataga Elu (Gagae Uelese, 4; Olataga Elu, 5) and Tipalelupe Lalaosalafai (Tipalelupe Lalaosalafai Toatasi Tuua, "The Concept of Tautua (Service or to Serve), in the Samoan Methodist-Church in New Zealand" (MA thesis, University of Auckland, 2005), 46) in their historical writings of the Samoan Methodist church in New Zealand, the similar date, it also proves right as on 8 March, 1965, the new church celebrated its first birthday at its new location (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Aukilani, Faavaeina o le Lotu, Api o le Galuega, 1964-1989, 1). Hence, the right date of the opening of the church is dated as March 8, 1964.

¹⁸⁰ Members at the founding of the church: Tupe & Maude Timoteo, Pai & Talalelei Aiolutepotea, Toeaso & Mareta T.Tiatia, Ioane & Va I. Savea, Vaimaila Tuagalu, Toetu & Tapaau Nuualiitia, Manu, Elizabeth & John

members of the church. New office bearers of the church were voted and agreed upon at that meeting.¹⁸¹ After five months, on 8 August, the church took a step forward by conferring titles of ‘Superintendent’ and ‘Secretary’ upon its new office bearers: Tuagalu Iu as *Sea o le Ekalesia*, (Superintendent of the Church), Tupe Timoteo as *Taitai* (Elder/Leader) and Onosai Futi as *Failautusi* (Secretary).¹⁸² The self-designation of these titles, although not officially endorsed by the Samoan Conference, seemed appropriate to members who felt that such titles should be conferred on the chosen office bearers in any Methodist church in its practices and administration. The implementation of the titles was perceived as an attempt to authenticate, as much as possible, their place in society as a church of Christ.

Another issue discussed at this meeting, was church finance. The donations collected from members’ pockets since the first service on 8 March to the 12 April totalled £29/4/4.¹⁸³ The members of the new church saw the need for more financial aid to assist its development rather than being dependent on the contributions from members’ pockets. It was decided in that meeting that alternative means of fundraising would need to be executed. A *siva* (social night) and *tusigaigoa* (census)¹⁸⁴ was to be held on several occasions for this purpose. As it turned out, the *siva* earned more money than the *tusigaigoa*.¹⁸⁵

With nine families, including Tupe and his family, the new church was officially opened on 8 March, 1964 and was marked by a service of worship. This service was to dedicate a newly established Samoan Methodist Church, and was held at the Druids Hall in Galatos Street, Newton Auckland¹⁸⁶. The Reverends Siaosi Ieriko and Fuafiva of the newly-formed congregation of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), *Ekalesia*

Nuualiiitia, Nasareta Tiatia, F. Leaupepe, Mose Galuvao, P. L., J. M., U. D., M. G. Faamatau, Malili Lele, Ualesi Timoteo, Ema Springer. (Timoteo, “Amataina Lotu Metotisi,” 3).

¹⁸¹ Office bearers of the church were: Taitai (Leader/Elder): Tupe Timoteo; Failautusi (Secretary): Mareta Tiatia; Komiti (Church Committee): Toetu Nuualiiitia, Somaile Sua, Aiga Sa, Malili Lele; Ao Taualaga (Ushers): Ioane Savea, Toeaso Tiatia, Aiga Sa, Emma Springer, Tupe Timoteo. (Timoteo, 5).

¹⁸² The first office bearers of the church chosen by members’ consent were; Tupe Timoteo as minister, Mareta Tiatia as Secretary, Aiga Sa, Malili Lele, Toetu Nuualiiitia, Somaile Sua as church Committee, Ioane Savea, Ioane Tiatia, Aiga Sa, Ema Springer, Tupe Faamatau as ushers.

¹⁸³ Within six Sundays (8 of March to the 12 of April 1964), donations were as follows; 8/3/1964: £4:4:0.5; 15/3/1964: £3:5:3.5; 22/3: £3:3:8; 29/3/1964: £5:0:0; 5/4/1964: £4:14:4; 12/4/1964:£6:6:6.5. (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Grey Lynn, Api o le Galuega, 1964-1989, 6)

¹⁸⁴ *Siva* and *Tusiga igoa* were Samoan cultural fundraisers in which relatives and friends of the church donate money and write their names in the financial records of the church. It is similar to organising a walkathon.

¹⁸⁵ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Grey Lynn, Church Diary (Api ole Galuega) 1964-1989, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Tupe T. Faamatau, 1963, 3-4; See Setu Faaniniva, 5; Gagae Uelese, “The Establishment of the Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand,” Paper Presented at 2001 Samoan Methodist Youth Camp, Samoan Methodist Parish Otara, Auckland, 26th December, 2001.

Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS) established in 1962 in New Zealand, were invited to lead services: the Reverend Siaosi Ieriko conducted the morning service at 11 am, and the Reverend Fuafiva led the afternoon service at 3:00 pm. The office bearers¹⁸⁷ of the church were also inducted in this service. These services marked the commencement of the first Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand, despite the fact that it had not been approved by the Samoan conference. The invitation of the Reverends Paulo Ieriko and Fuafiva to lead the opening services of the newly formed church inspired a high level of support from the EFKS, as they had the same rationale for establishing an autonomous Samoan church for their own people.

4.3.7 Schism Continued

Although the newly formed Samoan congregation was created, the New Zealand Methodist Conference continued to resist the establishment of a separate Samoan Conference in favour of one New Zealand Methodist Church. Several attempts were made to address this. Firstly, the New Zealand Conference invited the Reverend Ronald Allardice, a former Australian missionary who had served for fifteen years in the Samoan Conference, to visit Auckland with the purpose of settling the division. The New Zealand Conference expected that the Reverend Allardice, as a result of his extensive service in the Samoan Conference, his understanding of the Samoan language, culture and religious circumstances would prove an essential asset for resolving the case. The Reverend Allardice arrived in November 1964 and began working as mediator and translator between the Samoans at the Central Mission and the New Zealand Conference.¹⁸⁸

The New Zealand Conference paid for Tupe and Allardice's visit to Tokoroa where another Samoan church was being formed. The aim of the visit was to unite the Samoans under the New Zealand Methodist ministry. On this trip, Tupe met Tuagalu Iu¹⁸⁹, the leader of the

¹⁸⁷ A part of the opening service was the induction of the new church office bearers elected on the 12 of April 1964 as follows; Taitai (Leader/Elder): Tupe Timoteo; Failautusi (Secretary): Mareta Tiatia; Komiti (Church Committee): Toetu nuualiitia, Somaile Sua, Aiga Sa, Malili Lele; Ao Tualaga (Ushers): Ioane Savea, Toeaso Tiatia, Aiga Sa, Ema Springer, Tupe Timoteo.

¹⁸⁸ Rev. Allardice arrived in Samoa and commenced serving in the Samoan Methodist Church in 1943 as Principal of the Piula Theological College for eleven years (1943-1954). Later he was appointed District Chairman of the Samoan Conference for four years (1955-1959). While serving in the MCS, he was greatly indebted to the encouragement and wise counsel of Tupu Folasa, who later became the first Secretary of the Samoan Conference.

¹⁸⁹ Tuagalu Iu was a leader of the Samoan church at Tokoroa in the 1960s. He was a Samoan preacher. He retired in 1965, and joined Tupe Timoteo in the same year. He went with Tupe Timoteo in 1965 to request the

Samoan Church at Tokoroa and sought to begin negotiations for it to join the new church he had just formed in Auckland. Tuagalu, when he retired in 1965, joined the new church formed in Auckland.

After serving the invitation, the Reverend Allardice returned to Australia, hoping that Tupe would discuss with his group a reversion of allegiance to the New Zealand Conference. After some time, the New Zealand Conference approached the Reverend Allardice to draw his attention to the fact that there was still no sign of union, as Tupe and the group continued to insist on the development of the new church. Allardice made a second visit and met with the Samoans from the Central Mission, pleading with Tupe to find a place and serve in the New Zealand Conference. However, according to Tupe, he reluctantly declared that his decision to work under the Samoan Conference still stood.¹⁹⁰

The second attempt to negotiate came from Reverend Russel J. Maddox¹⁹¹, the first President of the Samoan Methodist Conference after its independence from the Australian Conference. Maddox approached Tupe with a request to cease forming the new church and rejoin the New Zealand Methodist Church. Tupe responded to the Reverend Maddox's advice with silence and continued organising fundraising for the new church.

The third attempt was in a letter dated 1 November 1965. The Reverend Leslie Gilmore, the Secretary of the Auckland District Synod wrote on behalf of the New Zealand Conference and, following the Synod Standing Committee report, to inform Tupe Timoteo of his unconstitutional use of the name "Methodist" to describe the new church he had started. The letter as it was written is as follows:

At the last meeting of the Synod Standing Committee, it was reported that you have been using the name "Methodist" to describe the church you have started.

Samoan Conference for acknowledgement and endorsement of the newly formed church. (Timoteo, "Amataina Lotu Metotisi," 5)

¹⁹⁰ Timoteo, "Amataina Lotu Metotisi," 4.

¹⁹¹ Reverend Russel Maddox, was a former Australian missionary to Samoa who served the Samoan Methodist Church for twenty years, 1929-1943 and 1960-1966. He bore heavy burdens, sometimes alone, during a great part of that time. Returning to finish his ministry in 1960, he was elected the first President of the Samoan Methodist Conference, from 1964-1966. (Harold A. Wood, "New Zealand Administration and the Missions" in *Overseas Mission of the Australian Methodist Church* Vol.1 (Tonga and Samoa), (Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1975), 325).

We repeat what was said before- You have no right to use that name. You have not been given permission to use it by our New Zealand Church and our Samoan Church cannot give that permission as they have no control in this country.

What we would really like is that you should return to the established Methodist Church and find a place of service there. We pray God may guide you to do this.¹⁹².

The letter from the *palagi* congregants and the *Komiti Samo*, was misleading in suggesting that the new church had no legal claim to the name “Methodist”. Tupe consulted a New Zealand lawyer for legal advice. With the help of the lawyer, Tupe was directed to apply under the law and constitution of incorporated societies for approval for the use of the name. Under this law, all companies, clubs, societies and even churches had access to apply to the Government of New Zealand for the registration of their societies and even churches and also for the use of a name. Tupe, with the assistance of the lawyer, applied to the Registrar for the use of the name ‘Methodist’ in order to name the newly established church. He succeeded in gaining approval for the use of the name from the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. Tupe, a man of considerable toughness and resilience, regardless of his limited understanding of English, struggled to organise the church lawfully in New Zealand, and set an example to Samoan migrants of how to avoid behaving as if inferior, and of how to ask and seek assistance regarding obstacles to their involvement in church and in everyday New Zealand life.¹⁹³

On the approval of the name by the Registrar of Incorporated Societies, the new Samoan church was first registered on 8 May 1967 under the name ‘EKALESIA METOTISI SAMOAN MISSION IN NEW ZEALAND’ (EMSMNZ). After two years, on 11 August 1969, the name was again altered to ‘SAMOAN METHODIST CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND’ (SMCNZ). The third change, which was duly signed by Maata Kolove, Assistant Registrar of Incorporated Societies on 10 April 1992, was ‘SAMOAN METHODIST CHURCHES IN NEW ZEALAND’ (SMCNZ).¹⁹⁴ It is likely that the

¹⁹² Reverend Leslie R. M. Gilmore, Letter to Tupe Timoteo, November 1, 1965, Auckland District, Methodist Church of New Zealand.

¹⁹³ Interview with lawyer, August 18, 2010. This lawyer was active in assisting the Church for about thirty years but has not had much contact with lately. He was most involved in the purchasing of the new land and houses for the Grey Lynn Methodist Church of Samoa. He was approached by Tupe and Maude in regard to the letter, and he kindly assisted Tupe with his application for the use of the name and its registration.

¹⁹⁴ Department of Justice New Zealand, “Certificate Re Change of Name,” (Department of Justice New Zealand, 10th April, 1992)

alterations were made in order to distinguish the separate developments from those of the New Zealand Conference.

4.3.8 Application for membership

In July 1965, Tuagalu Iu and Tupe Timoteo applied to the Samoan Conference for acknowledgement and endorsement, requesting oversight of the newly established Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand. The Samoan Conference, in its early years of independence from the Australian conference, was under the presidency of the Reverend Russel J. Maddox (the first President of the Samoan Conference) and his officials, the Reverend Tupu Folasa (General Secretary) and Asi Faleao (Treasurer). The appointment of Maddox as first President of the Samoan Conference was supported by the Samoan Methodist Church because of his great service and impact upon the establishment of a Conference that was independent from the Australian Conference.

It was on the recommendation of the Samoan Conference that a survey was taken regarding the situation of the new church. The recommendation was made possible as Tupu Folasa, General Secretary of the Samoan Conference and Fainuulelei Utu, represented the Samoan Conference at the Australian Methodist Conference on the same year. At the meeting the Conference required the Secretary to make a survey of the newly formed Samoan church in Auckland. In preparation for the arrival of the survey, after nine months of fund-raising (February 13-October 27, 1965), the new church bought its site at 33-35 Dean Street Grey Lynn at the cost of £6500. The site consisted of three pieces of commercial land; leased from the Factory Ltd owned by Mr. Ramsey. After the purchase, the site was named “Faleu ma Utuagiagi” which connotes the significance of the arrival of Methodism in Samoa, when missionary Peter Turner arrived on the island of Manono in 1835. Faleu and Utuagiagi are the known *malaefono* (meeting places/ sacred meeting lands) of Manono.¹⁹⁵

Upon his arrival, the Reverend Tupu Folasa remained in quiet observation and was grateful for the hospitality offered. Nonetheless, the application for the newly formed church’s membership was declined following the survey of the site and the church’s membership. As stated in the report, there was no land for the church and membership was not sufficient to establish a church. The application would be reconsidered if there were changes.¹⁹⁶ In his

¹⁹⁵ Ekalesia Metotisi Grey Lynn, Api o le Galuega, 1964.

¹⁹⁶ Faaniniva, *Foafoa-i-Vao-Ese*, 32.

report on the forty years celebration of the Samoan Methodist Church in Grey Lynn, the Reverend Ioane Tupu, the Grey Lynn parish minister from 2003 to 2010, cited the words of Reverend Tupu Folasa himself, as follows:

Le Ekalesia, talofa e, i le aufaigaluega, o fea o le a o iai e fia aai ai ma nai tamaiti. E maimau le taimi o le aufaigaluega, ua na o tamaiti ele iloa pe faapefea ona latou faia se lotu.¹⁹⁷

To the Church (Samoan Conference), woe to its servants (church ministers); where (in New Zealand) do they go to starve with their children? It is a waste of time for its servants. They are but mere children who do not know how to organise a church.

The newly formed Samoan Methodist Church had bought a three plot site with houses for the minister and a place of worship (December 1965), but the report had turned down the application. The words of the Secretary, despite their hospitality in honour of his visit, brought humiliation and embarrassment, belittling the integrity of the Samoan Methodists. The Samoan Conference had rejected their attempt to keep their families, culture and language. However, such challenges did not hindered people's willingness to keep their church, which the Samoan Conference was not ready to support.

In addition, the Reverend Maddox had earlier advised Tupe to return to the established New Zealand Methodist Church, but he (Tupe) rationally withdrew. In response to the application for recognition and membership, the Reverend Maddox during the discussion of the motion, declined on the following grounds:

...our (SMC) constitution gives us no authority to establish work in any place other than in Western Samoa and American Samoa. It was resolved that no action be taken.¹⁹⁸

The connection with the Reverend Maddox, as the first appointed President of the Samoan Methodist Conference to the New Zealand Methodist Church may have been another reason for declining of the application. The Reverend Maddox may have feared being blamed by the New Zealand Methodist Church if such a case was approved under his presidency. Another factor considered likely to have resulted in the decline of the application was that, at the time,

¹⁹⁷ Ioane Tupu, "Amataina o le lotu Samoa Metotisi, Grey Lynn," Report presented at the 40th Birthday Celebration, Grey Lynn, 2004, 4.

¹⁹⁸ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, "Minute" 1966, O Lona III o Koneferenisi, 25 Iulai, Apia, 1966.

the Samoan Conference had just celebrated its first Conference since becoming independent from the Australian Conference and needed time to resolve and organise its new constitution.

Nevertheless, the rebuff by the Samoan Conference did not hinder the spirit of the new church, and in January 1966, the persistent Samoan minority group once again delegated Tupe Timoteo and Tuagalu Iu Saena to approach the Samoan Conference. This time, they felt prepared and confident that they would not be turned away like foreigners.

4.3.9 The Changing of Presidents: the ‘*Savali o le Filemu*’, Message of Peace

At the expiry of Maddox’s presidency, the Reverend Kamu Tagaolo was, by a majority vote, elected the first Samoan President of the Samoan Methodist Conference in 1966. It was at his first conference in 1967 that the case of a newly formed Samoan Methodist congregation in New Zealand was raised once more. Following the consultation, the Samoan Conference, approved the motion, but on the condition that negotiations with the New Zealand Conference should first be made in regard to investigating the division between the newly formed Samoan Methodist congregation and the New Zealand Conference. The Samoan Conference in this regard, decided that there should be consultation between the New Zealand Methodist Conference and Samoan Methodist Conference. A Commission of Enquiry, the ‘SAVALI O LE FILEMU, MESSAGE OF PEACE’, led by President Kamu Tagaolo (Samoan Methodist Conference) and his team was sent to Auckland to hold consultative meetings.

This meeting was held on 10 February, 1967 in the Pitt Street Methodist parish.¹⁹⁹ The New Zealand Methodist Conference expected that the Samoan Conference would officially declare in favour of reconciling all Samoan Methodists under the governance of the New Zealand Conference. As recorded in Tupe’s Samoan translation, the Reverend Clement (New Zealand Conference) declared in the meeting that:

¹⁹⁹ Participants of the Meeting from the New Zealand Conference; President the Rev. Donald Clement, Secretary the Rev. Gristle, former Caucasian teacher from Fiji; The Samoan Conference; President Kamu Tagaolo Wright, General Secretary the Rev. Asi Faleatua, Asiata Lagolago (lay preacher), the Rev. Sili Leuo, Afoa Wilson, Fonoti, Sina Tagaolo and Faagutu Atoa.

Oute lagona e mafai ona faamalumuina e Niu Sila le lotu Samoa, ae oute tautino atu, oute matuai tetee lava i le upu lea. E pule mai Samoa. Afai o le a faia pea lotu Samoa, e ao lava ona tuuina atu e pulea e Niu Sila ma e tatau ona i ai ni o latou komiti.²⁰⁰

I feel the New Zealand Conference should be the umbrella under which the Samoan Methodist Church should belong, as I strongly oppose the saying, “governed by Samoa”. If the Samoan Church continues in New Zealand then I think it should be under the authority of the New Zealand Conference who, by the way, should have committees.

The Samoan Conference acknowledged the basis for the decision made by the New Zealand Conference and the desirability of the New Zealand Conference holding governance. The Samoan Conference, however, noted that such a solution was not practically viable. In reply, President Kamu Tagaolo of the Samoan conference announced the decision as follows:

...ua faaali e i latou (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa) e le toe fia foi mai lava i lalo o le Koneferenisi Niu Sila.²⁰¹

...The truth is, we were told that they (the Samoan Methodist Church) did not want to return under the New Zealand Conference.

... O lea ua tatau ona tatou faia se mea e lelei ai. Aua afai o le a tofia mai so latou taitai, o le a sili atu ona lelei. O lea oute faaali atu ai i le taimi nei, ua matou le loto atu i lo outou finagalo, aua o le mea e tatau e maua ai pea lo tatou nofo lelei. Ae afai o le a tatou tuulafoai, ele ose mea lelei lea mea.

So we need to come up with a better solution. To select a leader for them from Samoa is the best option. I’m sorry to say this, but we (MCS) disagree with your (NZMC) solution because we think it will not bring about any harmony and peace. Abandoning a group is not good.

An open decision was recorded in order to partly satisfy both parties. Samoan Methodists would, without constraint, declare their allegiance to a Conference of their choice: the New

²⁰⁰The Reverend Clement, speech delivered in a Fono: New Zealand Methodist Conference and Samoa Conference, minutes of the Meeting held at Pitt Street, Auckland, 10th February, 1967. (Timoteo, “Amataina Lotu Metotisi,” 6).

²⁰¹ The Reverend Kamu Tagaolo, speech delivered in a Fono, Minutes of the Samoan and New Zealand Conference, held at Pitt Street Methodist Church, 10th of February, 1967, 6.

Zealand Conference or the Samoan Conference. After this visit, the new Samoan Methodist congregation in New Zealand was constituted as a parish of the 'home' Conference. This was followed by the appointment of the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve by the Samoan Conference of 1967 as parish minister for the congregation. The pastoral care of Samoans, by Samoans, commenced.

4.3.10 The Agreement

The Samoan Conference grew rapidly with the establishment of six congregations of in New Zealand within seven years (1964-1971) of its founding when it had first been brought to the attention of the Samoan Policy Committee of the New Zealand Conference. These congregations were formed around cities where significant numbers of Samoan migrants had settled: three in Auckland and three around the rest of the country.²⁰² In 1971, the Samoan Policy Committee, constituted by the New Zealand Conference to take the place of the Samoan Committee, on observing the growing Samoan migrant Methodist congregations, noted that the new movement seemed to be attracting some of its Samoan members. The Committee, formed to advise the New Zealand Conference on matters relating to future developments of the Samoan ministry, appealed to the New Zealand Conference of 1972, to ask the Samoan Conference to appoint a Samoan minister to serve in the New Zealand Conference.²⁰³ The appeal was channelled through Section 9, Clause 136, of the New Zealand Methodist Church's constitution as follows:

Clause 136.

Any minister or Probationer may at any time apply for an absolute transfer to another Conference and in that event the transfer may be effected by agreement with the Conference concerned.²⁰⁴

In 1971, the Reverend Amani Amituanai succeeded as President of the Samoan Conference, the third Samoan Methodist minister to be appointed following the appointment of the

²⁰² The six Samoan Methodist congregations formed around that time were; Grey Lynn Samoan Methodist church, in 1964; Hataitai Samoan Methodist church in Wellington in 1966; Te Atatu North in 1968; and Palmerston North and Christchurch in 1969. The historical establishment of the Samoan Methodist congregations, with the exception Grey Lynn, is discussed in a later chapter.

²⁰³ The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Samoan Policy Committee Report to Conference 1971, Minutes of the Annual Conference, Wellington, 1971.206.

²⁰⁴ Methodist Church of New Zealand, Laws and Regulations, Revised by the Law Revision Committee, 1969, (Christchurch: Wyatt and Wilson Ltd, 1969), 18.

second, Samoan Methodist President, Taea Tauanuu (1968-1971). President Amani seemed supportive of the New Zealand Conference's proposal for amalgamation to encourage the development of an ecumenical spirit amongst all Samoan Methodists in New Zealand. This was revealed when the President of the New Zealand Conference, the Reverend Selwyn Dawson and his wife attended the Annual Samoan Conference, held in Matafele, Apia, 1973. This visit was arranged at the request of the New Zealand Conference on the recommendation of the Samoan Policy Committee to request that the Samoan Conference appoint a Samoan minister to work for the Samoan ministry. In honour of his presence, Reverend Dawson was invited to preach at the opening service of the Conference and took part in the ordination service of the eleven ministers. He was also invited to be a guest speaker at the Piula Theological College Prize-giving, and went on tours to the land development project at Faleula High School and to the Methodist Bookshop in Apia.²⁰⁵

Later, in the final session of the Conference, he tabled for discussion the request by the New Zealand Methodist Conference. The Samoan Conference agreed to lend the Reverend Siauala Amituanai²⁰⁶ to the New Zealand Conference for an initial term of three years in an agreement signed on 20 July 1973 by the Reverend Amani Amituanai, President of the Samoan Conference, and the Reverend Selwyn Dawson, President of the New Zealand Conference:

Matafele Apia

Western Samoa

20 July, 1973

²⁰⁵ The following developments were initiated by missionaries. In 1864 George Brown planned to establish an Institution for the training of pastors and teachers in the event that the gospel was to be preached and understood in village parishes. This institution was later shifted to Lufilufi, Upolu in 1868 and became, Piula Theological College. Whilst stationed to serve the Apia circuit, Norman Mapperson began building the Wesley Bookshop in 1947. See Harold A. Wood, "New Zealand Administration and the Missions" in *Overseas Mission of the Australian Methodist Church* Vol.1 (Tonga and Samoa), (Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1975), 324-325.

²⁰⁶ The Reverend Siauala Amituanai arrived in New Zealand on October, 1973. He was 42 at the time of his appointment to the New Zealand Conference, married with four children, two girls aged 13, 11 and two boys aged 8 and 2 years. He was ordained, had studied at the Pacific Theological College, Suva and gained a B.D.; he had lived in New Zealand for six months and spoke good English. (Methodist Church of New Zealand, Samoan Policy Committee Annual Report, Minutes of the Annual Conference, Christchurch, 1973, 210).

“The Samoan Methodist Conference, responding to a request from the New Zealand Methodist Conference, agrees to lend a Samoan Methodist Minister, Siauala Amituanai, to the New Zealand Methodist Conference for an initial period of three years.

His task will be, together with Apelu Tuimaseve, to care for and draw together all Samoan Methodists in New Zealand, so that at a later stage there will be one New Zealand Methodist Church in close relations with the Methodist Church in Samoa.

The New Zealand Methodist church, through its president, welcomes the appointment, undertakes the full financial support of this minister and pledge itself to care for all Samoan Methodist people who come under its care.”

Signed: Amani Amituanai

President Samoan Methodist Conference

Signed: Selwyn W. Dawson

President of the New Zealand Methodist
Church.²⁰⁷

The Annual report of the Samoan Policy Committee held on 18 August 1973 resolved that Siauala be appointed to the Development Division in order to strengthen the work of Circuit ministers among Samoan people by deepening their understanding of Samoan culture, of family life, leadership styles, and worship.²⁰⁸

As part of this appointment, if it were accepted by the Samoan Conference, the Samoan minister appointed from the Samoan Conference would work cooperatively with the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve of the Samoan Methodist Conference to unite all Samoan Methodists under the New Zealand Methodist Conference. For this reason, at a later stage,

²⁰⁷ The Methodist Church of New Zealand, “Samoan Policy Committee, Annual Report 1973” Minutes of the Annual Conference, Christchurch, 1973, 210.

²⁰⁸ Some of the objectives outlined by the Samoan Policy Committee in relation to the work of Siauala include: To harmonise the existing Samoan Methodist groups within New Zealand; To provide a supportive pastoral ministry to circuit ministers who have Samoan families within their congregation; To co-operate with circuit ministers to strengthen their work among Samoans by deepening their understanding of Samoan culture, family life, leadership styles and worship; To exercise leadership in the field of Christian education-leading Bible study groups- training lay folk for leadership- preparing folk for lay preacher’s examinations; To facilitate communication between Samoans and Europeans by means of translation of appropriate orders of service, curriculum materials etc.; To relate to individuals, agencies, actions groups active in promoting the welfare of minority racial groups in New Zealand; To liaise with other Pacific Island Christian Churches and groups in New Zealand. (“Samoan Policy Committee Report on Samoan Ministry,” in The Methodist Church of New Zealand: Minutes of the Annual Conference, Auckland, 1974, 193).

the joint work of Apelu and Siauala would be to form one New Zealand Methodist Church in relation to the Samoan Conference.

However, Siauala Amituanai's attempts to realise the goals of the agreement were largely unsuccessful, as the work of the Samoan Methodist Church had a firm hold on the faith, commitment and support of its members and ministers. This made it difficult for Siauala to negotiate with the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve on how to achieve the objectives of the agreement.²⁰⁹ In 1974, the establishment of the two Samoan congregations of the Samoan Conference in Porirua and Hamilton was seen as a breach of the agreement which had been signed in 1973. This had angered the Reverend Dawson, now the ex-President of the New Zealand Conference, and Siauala Amituanai. In accordance with the terms of the agreement, they voiced strong objections for lack of communication against the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve and the New Zealand Conference.

This event led to the second visit by the Reverend Dawson and Siauala Amituanai to the Samoan Conference in 1974, on the recommendation of the Samoan Policy Committee, to present greetings to the Samoan Conference and to represent their work to that Conference on behalf of the New Zealand Conference. The New Zealand Conference representatives expressed regret at the lack of consultation between the Samoan Conference group leader (Apelu Tuimaseve) in New Zealand and their leaders in the period before the two new Samoan Conference congregations (Hamilton and Porirua) were established.²¹⁰

Following his attendance at the 1974 Samoan Conference, Dawson presented his report to the New Zealand Conference outlining reasons why he believed the Samoan Conference was reluctant to surrender control of congregations in New Zealand to the New Zealand Conference. The report states three reasons:

- i. Many Samoans coming to New Zealand need to belong to a Samoan speaking congregation for reason of language, culture and psychological security. They need to feel a strong link with the homeland and the Samoan Conference and its ministry offers this life line.

²⁰⁹ Interview with church member, October 28, 2010.

²¹⁰ The Methodist Church of New Zealand, "Samoan Policy Committee," 210.

- ii. The Samoan Conference does not understand Church Union and fears that any congregations which join a United Church will be swallowed up and lost...we tried to interpret the facts of union to them and attempted to show that congregations left out of union will be lonely and deprived, and that they have nothing to fear from the Union, but they are only just beginning to understand.
- iii. The fear of the pastors that they might lose their present independence (Which includes financial arrangements, carried on in Samoan style, rather than according to our normal New Zealand standards).²¹¹

It appears that the two conferences were talking past each other. For the NZMC, unity and church policy were the major concerns, while the MCS's major concerns were self-determination in worship and its cultural expression. The Samoan Policy Committee's annual report of 1975, following Reverend Selwyn Dawson and Reverend Siauala Amituanai's visit in 1974, noted the reluctance of the Samoan Conference congregations to amalgamate in favour of separate developments.

The Samoan Conference in reply stated that:

...it has no intention of forcing people to do what they do not want to do. Worship is a personal matter and each individual has to decide to which church he will attach himself.²¹²

One early Samoan migrant family who arrived in 1955 and who, in 1957, attended the Pitt Street church, when asked to share their experience of being in a multi-cultural church, in terms of cultural preservation and family connection, (which was the MCS's major concern), stated that in 1957, they had attended Pitt Street church, since at that time their relationship with Pacific peoples and New Zealanders was very close. This did not mean that their involvement in the New Zealand Methodist Church disconnected them from the *Faa-Samoa* and culture or, from their extended families. They still kept their extended families through family networks of reunions and through family obligations. They believed that the church to

²¹¹ Methodist Church of New Zealand, "Report of Selwyn Dawson," Samoan Ministry; Samoan Policy Committee, Minutes of the Annual Conference, Auckland, 1974, 202.

²¹² The Methodist Church of New Zealand, "Samoan Policy Committee, Annual Report 1975" Minutes of the Annual Conference, Turangawaewae Marae Ngaruawahia, 1975, 165.

attend in New Zealand is one of personal choice, and depends on where one's spirituality is fitting and relevant.²¹³

4.4 THE FIRST SAMOAN METHODIST CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

4.4.1 The New Church's Official Appointment

In July 1967, the Samoan Conference, following its meeting with the New Zealand Conference, named the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve as its first official appointee to the newly formed migrant Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand. When the Reverend Apelu and his family arrived on 24 December 1967, they were welcomed by members of the church in his residence. After the welcoming service, the *aufaipese* (church choir) began their customary Christmas carol service.²¹⁴

From its inauguration, and until an official appointment by the Samoan Conference was made, the membership of the church rose from twenty nine members in March 1964, to thirty six active members,²¹⁵ exclusive of children, in 1968. Amongst the membership were thirteen lay preachers who had earlier been orally examined and endorsed by President Kamu Tagaolo during a visit in 1967.²¹⁶

In order to locate the work of the church in the context of the constitution of the Samoan Methodist Conference, the new church was constituted under the supervision of the Matafele parish in Upolu West Methodist Synod. As required by the constitution, the Reverend Apelu appointed the office bearers at the first parish meeting on 27 June 1968. Apelu expressed gratitude for, and recognition of, the great effort and competence of the office bearers who had earlier struggled to establish a Samoan ministry that catered for the spiritual needs of

²¹³ Interview with church member, June 20, 2010. This family arrived in 1955, and have attended Pitt Street church in 1957 ever since.

²¹⁴ The Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve graduated from Piula Theological College in 1950, he married Sera in 1953. He served as teacher in George Brown Primary School in 1956 and as a lecturer at Piula Theological College in 1964. He was reappointed to George Brown Primary School as Principal in 1966, and then reappointed by the Conference of 1967 to New Zealand as the first parish minister of the Samoan Conference congregation, Grey Lynn, Auckland. In 1975, he was appointed as first Superintendent of the Samoan Methodist Synod of New Zealand North. He Died in 1990. (Church member, interview).

²¹⁵ Registered church members when Apelu arrived were: T. Saega, F. Nonu, M. Nonu, Fou Tuagalu, Faamamafa Oloi, Iakopo Tausa, Saumalu, Mamere, Taai, Pesaleli, Esau Tuisalega, Siaosi Tanuvasa, Toloa Tuagalu, Sera Tuimaseve, Uesele Timoteo, Leota Lu, Tuluvaio Onosai, Liliu Ah Chong, Malae Mareko, Onosai Futi, Tupe Faamataui, Maude Faamataui, Iakopo Sola, Malo Sola, T. Tuiavii, Maraea Tuagalu, P. Tuagalu, Siaki, Emma, Apiner, P and Leota, V. (Ekalesia Metotisi Grey Lynn, Api o le Galuega, 1964).

²¹⁶ Interview with church member, March 15, 2010.

Samoan migrants. He acknowledged that their determination and courage had made it a reality.

When the Reverend Apelu began his pastoral ministry, new church officers were appointed. Tupe Timoteo, who had earlier been appointed as leader of the church, was by a majority vote elected as Secretary of the congregation, and Tuagalu Iu, who was in the charge of acting superintendent, was chosen as treasurer. A short induction service was led by Apelu Tuimaseve after the vote and new office bearers were officially inducted to their work as appointed.²¹⁷

4.4.2 The church's Development

As the Samoan Methodist Church had financially supported its own development, since the early 1900s, so overseas churches of the home Conference had had to continue to be self-supporting, relying much on their members for survival and development. The idea of self-supporting overseas congregations was a critical issue for some members, but, as most adherents were migrants who had experience of, and close affiliation to, the system of the development practiced in Samoa, most adherents were able to commit and tolerate the system of development in this country, enabling the church in New Zealand to survive and develop financially.

Sunday donations became a primary source of income for the church. At the first meeting it was agreed that a donation should be collected at church on every Sunday. Initially, male and female church members who were employed were assigned a *lafoga sauoo*, a fixed donation of \$8:00 which could be almost a quarter of their average weekly income. Although it was a fixed donation, the figure was a minimum figure; those who wished to contribute more were free to do so.²¹⁸ This *lafoga sauoo* was later increased to \$20.00 and \$10:00. This time all male members, whether or not they were in employment were required to give \$20:00 and all female members, \$10:00. The increasing rate of donations was unanimously decided by members, as more finance was needed in order for them to commence their church building project.

²¹⁷ Ekalesia Metotisi Aukilani, "Minute o le Fono", 27 Iuni, 1968, 20.

²¹⁸ Ekalesia Metotisi Aukilani, "Ripoti Faale-Kuata, Me 8, 1968," Api o le Galuega 1964-1989, 24.

The proposal for a church building was discussed at a meeting held on 28 January 1970, and the meeting required the church bodies to collect the following monthly amounts; *Autalavou* (Youth Group): \$200.00, *Auuso Fealofani* (Women's Fellowship): \$100.00, *Aoga Aso Sa* (Sunday School): \$100.00, *Aufaipese* (church choir): \$100.00.

As the church membership grew, the church leaders recognised the need for further financial resources. Therefore, it was agreed that they were to seek alternative financial means rather than depending on Sunday donations alone. A *siva* (dance) and *tusigaigoa* (registration of names) would be held on separate occasions at times decided by the church, and, in order to spread the financial burden more widely, these events were opened to non-Methodist families. As it transpired, the *siva* became the fastest and most efficient way of making money.²¹⁹

The construction of the new church building in Grey Lynn began in 1972, when President Amani Amituanai laid the corner-stone of the building. It was started by church carpenters of the Samoan Methodist Conference, but the work was left unfinished when another Samoan Conference project needed urgent construction. The church approached a Samoan carpenter (he was not a church member but known to some members of the church) to complete the work, but his contract was later terminated amidst allegations of fraud in making purchase orders for the church. Members, despite these frustrations, continued to work toward completion of the church building. Another qualified Samoan carpenter was called and he completed the construction of the building.²²⁰

The construction took three years and the completion of the work reflected the hard work and effort put in by the thirty nine member units. In October 1975, Labour Weekend, the dedication of the new church was marked by a service led by President Lene Milo of the Samoan Conference.²²¹ Following the opening of the new building, another sixteen member units (*matafale*) had joined the church, bringing the total to fifty-five *matafale*. Since then, the Samoan Methodist Church in Grey Lynn has become, in effect, the headquarters and 'mother church' for the Samoan Methodist church in New Zealand. The exact cost of the work was unable to be ascertained. One of the reasons for the uncertainty in regard to the exact cost was the allegation of fraud against the first builders.

²¹⁹ Ekalesia Metotisi Aukilani, "Ripoti Faale-Kuata," 30.

²²⁰ Interview with church member, March 20, 2010.

²²¹ Ekalesia Metotisi Aukilani, "Ripoti Faale-Kuata," 32.

Following the completion of the church building, the church continued with further developments. In July 1979, the congregation bought a house for \$15,500; this was situated close by the church, at 22 Dean Street. The church also bought land to build two storey accommodation for the pastor and his family which, when completed, had cost \$306,154.31. The old house at 26 Dean Street, Grey Lynn was sold to the Samoan Conference for \$50,000 and was renovated and extended to accommodate Conference guests and ministers from Samoa. At present this property is rented by the Samoan Methodist Auckland Synod missionary who is also the leader of the Synod's Youth group.²²²

The church's development and the completion of such costly projects showed great commitment by the minister, the church's leaders and its members, despite some resistance on the part of the membership to the pace and scale of development. In 1965 the church bought a house that cost £6,500/0/0. In 1975, a church building costing over \$100,000 was completed. In 1979, the church bought a new house for \$15,000.00, and in 1988, a two storey house that cost \$306,154.00 was built for the pastor's family.²²³

The Samoan cultural spirit of *va fealoaloai*, as discussed in the previous chapter, became a guiding principle for development. *Va fealoaloai* connotes a spirit of cooperative labour and shared roles and responsibilities. The Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve in retrospect, commended the greatness of the work of the Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand in his report at the 1972 Conference held at Tutuila, saying:

It was a moving experience to see churches in New Zealand filled with worshippers. Samoan whose faith migrated with them, whose faith continues to strengthen and encourage them as they make a new life for their children in a new land.²²⁴

4.5 CONCLUSION

The reason why, some Samoans, after a period of shared ecumenical relationship with New Zealand church congregations, were so determined to establish their own Samoan congregations rather than remaining in the New Zealand churches, is a sensitive one to some Samoan migrant church-goers. In fact, the withdrawal of some members could be argued to

²²² Ekalesia Metotisi Aukilani, 32.

²²³ Ekalesia Metotisi Aukilani, 33.

²²⁴ Apelu Tuimaseve, 'Report of the Samoan Methodist Church New Zealand' Presented to the 1972 Samoan Methodist Conference, Tutuila, American Samoa, in R.W.Allardice, *The Methodist Story in Samoa:1828-1928*, (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1984), 47.

have broken the unity of their church. Questions may arise in regard to the issue of withdrawal, such as : Is this the way in which the church of Jesus Christ was intended to be spread?

The early Samoan migrants arrived in the 1950s and attended the existing New Zealand churches, but after a period of shared worship, some migrants felt the need to form their own church. There were issues which were more pertinent to some Samoans which became the basis for their decision which lead to the split. There was dissatisfaction over decisions coming from church priorities that lead some Samoan Methodists in the NZMC to react against the NZMC through the split. The exclusion of Samoans' questions in the 1960s-1970s was reflected in the NZMC making the Tongan Methodist Church and its political and financial problems as its first priority. Given this, the NZMC seemed to be uncooperative in taking other Pacific minorities' issues and concerns more seriously and this is possibly one of the reasons why the Pacific Committee would not be able to move forward in activating its role. In this respect, the Pacific Committee had a strong Tongan voice which had distressed the Samoans and other Pacific minorities.

For such reasons, some Samoan Methodists, who felt dissatisfied with the way the NZMC catered for other ethnic groups in the church, may have perceived their church life (NZMC) as marginalised, and so, they decided to leave and form their own church. This decision to withdraw may have lead to the split. For the Samoan community who left and formed their own independent churches, the spirit of Samoan independence was one of the key mechanisms that moved the pioneers to the making of autonomous Samoan's churches in New Zealand. They did not want to come under New Zealand dominance again, in church.

But this was not the case for other Samoans who remained in the New Zealand church. They had their own reasons which were the basis of their decision to stay. They may not have taken the matter of church priorities as seriously as the part of the fellowship (the Samoans) that left. They were more concerned with integration with the host culture and very much interested in creating ecumenical fellowship with other ethnic groups in the church. Their decisions were not influenced by matters of cultural, economic or political issues, but, were a matter of personal choice. Migrants were free to make their own decisions, despite family reliance on the authority of the *matai* to decide on a family religion, as is practiced in Samoa. Their participation in a multi-cultural church, however, did not affect the connection to their culture and links with their families. As revealed in participants' stories, their relationship to

their extended families and culture remained intact, as is evidenced by their hosting and participating in family reunions, weddings and birthdays celebrations as well as in family obligations such as funerals and consultations for *matai* titles.

Even if the establishment in the same geographical area of separate congregations on the basis of culture and language can be interpreted as a rupture in the church's unity, one can argue that the freedom initiated by schism was necessary to reveal the special gifts and insights that God gave to people of different language and culture to express their faith and nationality. This recalls John Wesley's relationship with the Church of England: he never renounced his ties with the Church of England, but he provided for the incorporation and legal continuation of the new movement. Hence, the intention behind the formation of the Samoan Conference congregations in New Zealand was not to destroy the unity of the Methodist tradition, but rather to continue a Samoan Methodist identity for migrant Samoan Methodists.

It was not until the 1970s, that the NZMC began making consultations with the Samoan Conference on creating pastoral ministry appropriate to accommodate the needs of Samoan Methodists in New Zealand. This was evident in the founding of a Samoan Policy Committee in 1971 as an advisory committee to advise the New Zealand Conference on matters relating to the pastoral ministry for the Samoans. This committee's advice may have raised the NZMC's awareness of the Samoan needs, and in good faith began holding consultations between the two Conferences on what way was best to accommodate the needs of the Samoan community in New Zealand.

The establishment of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, and in reference to the work of Tupe Timoteo, Tuagalu Iu, the Reverend Apelu and those pioneers who struggled to establish the Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand, reflects the Samoans' determination to keep their Methodist identity as expressed in Samoan cultural values. Their achievements laid the foundation for later servants of God in the continuing mission of the Methodist tradition to the people of Samoa in the new land they had settled in. The faith and commitment of these people is evident in the growth of the Samoan Methodism in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5 THE SPREAD OF SAMOAN METHODIST CHURCHES IN NEW ZEALAND

Planting churches in migrant communities, for example, the planting of MCS churches in New Zealand, is more than sharing faith in Christ and building that faith in the form of a church; it is also a sharing of Samoan identity. Planting MCS churches in places where Samoan migrants live is a representation of a ‘village’ and ‘home’ where Samoan migrants, especially those from the second and third generations of the Samoan population in New Zealand, discover and explore the language, cultural values, and practices that have been incorporated into the church’s traditional activities. Hence, planting congregations is a tool with which Samoan Methodist tradition and Samoan identity can be sustained and maintained in Samoan migrant communities in New Zealand. Depending heavily on the personal narratives of those involved in the spread of Samoan Methodist congregations in Auckland and Wellington, this chapter sets the stage for discussion of church formation and affiliation, worship services and financial arrangements, that follows in later chapters of this thesis.

The discussion focuses on three main questions: How were the churches formed? How were their developments funded? How were their ministries structured and organised? This chapter will show how the autonomous church and the Samoan culture interacted with and supported each other, providing a sense of security and an ethnic migrant identity. This process, however, was contested by some Samoan migrants, and, as a result, the standard rules and procedures that governed religious affairs back in the islands had to be redefined to accommodate the needs of migrants in their host country.

The research will use archival material from the Methodist Head Office in Apia, Samoa, diaries of individual churches in New Zealand and personal narratives. The scope of the research is the founding of churches in Wellington, Palmerston North, and mostly of congregations in Auckland, due to the high concentration of Samoan migrants there. In this chapter, the term ‘Church’ refers to the church as the main body, the ‘Methodist Church of Samoa Conference’ (MCS) and ‘church’ to refer to any duly constituted local body of

Christian believers, a local congregation, who corporately attempt to worship, witness, and serve in accordance with the Word of God.²²⁵

5.1 THE DIASPORIC CHURCHES (1964-1995)

The term ‘diaspora’ has a classical origin: it originally referred to the exodus of the Jews and their dispersal throughout Palestine, commencing with the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations (722 and 597 B.C.).²²⁶ The Jewish Diaspora referred to the Jews living in foreign lands and subject to rules and regulations mandated by the host nations. The Jewish community living in diaspora during the time of the Roman Empire were given privileges which allowed them to exercise self-government but under protection of the Roman Empire. They obtained citizenship privileges, even to the extent of holding government offices, and were involved in much business and trade. In all periods of their existence, Jews were granted a right to practice their religion.²²⁷

The term ‘diaspora’, although it has this specific connotation, is also commonly used to refer to a more recent migration of people. Gabriel Sheffer defines modern diaspora as:

...ethnic minority groups who are scattered in smaller communities in host countries but still retaining strong connections and material links with their countries of origin, their home land.²²⁸

Ilana Gershon²²⁹ highlights how scattered migrants and families in the Pacific diaspora communicate in such a way as to maintain their connectedness. Gershon states that it is the circulation of knowledge and resources amongst scattered family members that confirms the impression of being connected. Matori Yamomoto adds that family obligations, such as funerals, family reunions, and matrimonial celebrations and others are obviously essential

²²⁵ I owe this definition to Charles Brock, *The Principles and Practice of Indigenous Church Planting* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1981), 23.

²²⁶ F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford University Press, 1997), 477.

²²⁷ Katharine Dob Sakenfeld et al., *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 120-121.

²²⁸ Gabriel Sheffer, “Modern Diaspora in International Politics”, quoted by Khalid, Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2007): 24-25.

²²⁹ Ilana Gershon, “Viewing Diaspora from the Pacific: What Pacific Ethnographies Offer Pacific Diaspora Studies”, *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 2, (2007): 474.

occasions, which Samoan migrants host to re-affirm and preserve close relationships with families and relatives across the ocean.²³⁰

The term “Samoan diaspora” is used with reference to any Samoan population living as a minority in a host country. Cluny Macpherson contends that Samoan diasporic communities have taken rather different forms in different places and circumstances. Macpherson argues that, while the establishment of Samoan diasporic communities in Auckland was developed out of a demand for labour and involved a process of chain migration controlled largely by Samoans themselves, other factors contributing to forming Samoan diasporic communities in other parts of the world have taken religious and military purposes into account. For example, the New Zealand diaspora is different from the diaspora that formed as a result of American Samoans joining the US military or going to Utah for religious instruction at the Brigham Young University.²³¹

The planting of Samoan Methodist congregations in New Zealand reflects the profile of other Samoan diaspora churches in other parts of the world, which are typically centred on their heritage and culture. Faafetai Lesa, in his thesis, discusses the process which contributed to the planting of Samoan churches in California in the United States of America. It started, he argues, from informal interconnectedness between family kin and friends. Migrants helped each other in practical ways and retained an interest in the *faa-Samoa*. Chain migration turned the scattered households of family relatives into a series of *aiga potopoto* (extended family) that developed concentration on family affairs. The *aiga* groups that had been formed, later turned into small communities where family kinship and friendship ties coalesced. These extended families then began to cooperate with each other in the establishment of migrant churches.²³²

Makerusa Porotesano, a former pastor of the only Samoan Congregational Church in Suva, Fiji, which was established in 1904, asserted that, from his pastoral experience while serving in the diasporic Samoan Congregational Church in Suva, the Samoans whilst living as part of

²³⁰ Matori, Yamamoto “Samoan Diaspora and Ceremonial Exchange” Paper Presented to JCAS Conference on “Population in Movement in the Modern World/Contemporary Migration in Oceania: Diaspora Network” Hosei University, 1994, 2.

²³¹ Cluny Macpherson, “The Polynesian Diaspora: New Communities and New Questions,” in Ken’ichi Sudo & Shuji Yoshida (eds), *Contemporary Migration in Oceania: Diaspora and Network*, JCAS Symposium 3, (Osaka: Japan, National Museum of Ethnology 1997), 78-79.

²³² Faafetai Lesa, “The Impact of Samoan Christian Churches on Samoan Language Competency and Cultural Identity”, (A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Division of the University of Hawaii in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, 2009), 12.

a minority within a pluralistic religious country, had shown strong, constant, commitment to the church in which they shared the same culture, freely socialising with one another, and, in fellowship, understood each other, were comfortable with being together, and all felt at home.

This church was first started in Levuka, Fiji, by a small group of Samoan migrants. They had held Samoan worship in their homes until, in 1904, a Samoan Congregational Church (EFKS) was officially opened in Suva, Fiji. This church, according to Porotesano, became the ‘church to attend’ and a ‘home’ where Samoan migrants worshipped in their own language and was also a ‘home away from home’ for all Samoan migrants working on contract employment in regional institutions: The University of the South Pacific; The Forum Secretariat; The South Pacific Commission; and also for those Samoan migrant students who were studying at the Pacific Theological College and the University of the South Pacific.

5.1.1 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Hataitai: 1966

In the 1950s, the Wesley Methodist Church in Taranaki St, Wellington, incorporated Methodist migrants from a number of island societies – Samoans, Fijians, and Tongans – into an existing congregation. These various migrant groups, being numerically low in membership, could barely sustain the formation of their own congregations. The Samoans, while being incorporated in the church, had a desire for Samoan language services, in which they could worship in their own language and exchange fellowship which centred around their own culture and rituals. This quest led the Samoan group to appeal to the Wesley Methodist Board for approval. The Wesley Board granted permission to hold Samoan language services once a month and, later, extended that to two services per month. Faleupolu Taulelei, a Samoan Methodist lay preacher, was endorsed by the Wesley Board to conduct their language services.

Although the Wesley Board had given its approval for Samoan language services, which reflected the Board’s support for the Samoan ministry, the appointment of a European pastor, to oversee the Samoan ministry, produced some misunderstanding amongst some members of the Samoan group. One church member, the convener of the Samoan group, thought that the appointment of an ordained European pastor to oversee the Samoan ministry might be a reflection of the Wesley Methodist Board’s distrust of the Samoan leadership’s ability to oversee the Samoan ministry. This, in the view of the church member, seems to have assumed that the size of the Samoan ethnic group, which was the largest of all ethnic groups incorporated in church, meant that it could reasonably have expected the appointment of a

Samoa leader to take oversight of its ministry. However, this was not the case. Traditionally, the religious work of lay preachers is supervised by an ordained minister, as was evident in the Wesley Methodist Church. Likewise, the church provided equality in its services to all of the incorporated ethnic groups in church, regardless of size or history. However, as a result of this perceived slight, some Samoans (who were dissatisfied with the appointment of an European pastor to oversee the Samoan ministry), explored the option of leaving the church by proposing a separate movement.²³³

In early 1966, the Samoan group from the Wesley Church met to discuss future work of the group and, for the first time, those Samoan members supporting the making of a separate movement raised the proposal for consultation. It was not a good meeting, as members who supported remaining in the church broke their silence. One church member related their comments in his own words;

.....E le oni Metotisi, ae o lena ua omai fai lea mea e malepe ai le nofo lelei o tagata Samoa i le lotu.²³⁴

They were not Methodists, but they came to do this to violate the unity of the Samoan group in church (the Wesley Church).

This opposition to the proposal reflects the high priority that some members placed on a connection with the existing denomination. This proposal was also seen as a political move, providing an opportunity for the proposers to become leaders of the new church.²³⁵

Those who favoured the proposal were disappointed by others' interpretation of the proposal, and were careful to disabuse them of the claim that it was a way of earning recognition and leadership for themselves. Rather, they (the Samoans supporting the proposal) were to establish a space for those migrants who were in need of a Samoan church that would be run by Samoans using the Samoan language. They also felt for former MCS ministers, who had earlier served in Samoa and had been recruited by New Zealand churches to serve as lay preachers. Even though the ministers had already been ordained, the NZMC required them to

²³³ Interview with church member, May 23, 2010. The interviewee arrived in New Zealand as a single man in 1953 and settled in Wellington. He first attended the PICC in Wellington, but after some contention with church leaders, he transferred his membership to the Wesley Methodist Church where he met with other Samoans and initiated the proposal to form an autonomous Samoan church out of the Wesley Methodist Church.

²³⁴ Church member, interview.

²³⁵ Interview with church member, May 24, 2010.

undertake further pastoral training and be accredited as English speaking ministers to lead NZMC parishes. With the establishment of autonomous Samoan Methodist churches, the former MCS ministers would, if they so desired, have an opportunity to reconsider serving the MCS without the further theological and pastoral training required to served in the NZMC.

To put an end to further contention and argument within the group, church members who supported the separate movement decided to leave the Samoan group and take some time to think what would be best for them. However, some Samoans, who had not given their opinions at the original meeting, later joined and formed a new church under the Samoan Methodist Conference.

5.1.1.1 *The Beginning*

On 6 November 1966, four families²³⁶ started the church at a church member's home at Hataitai. They invited one of their relatives, who was an accredited lay preacher of the New Zealand Conference at Pitt Street Church in Auckland, who had earlier opposed the plan for a separate development, to open the new church. Although the idea of a separate development seemed to be gaining popular support, the invited lay preacher declined the invitation because he opposed the formation of a separate church. They regretted the reply, as the he had not only declined the invitation, but had also advised them, contrary to the opinions of supporters, to find a place of service in the NZMC.

The newly formed church members contacted Tupe Timoteo, for the second time. He had been the founder of the first MCS congregation in Auckland and had opened that church officially. The news of the newly formed church was an encouragement to the MCS in Grey Lynn, as their hope was to extend the MCS ministry to places where its scattered peoples had settled. Tupe Timoteo, Tuagalu Iu and Onosai Futi of the Grey Lynn Methodist church attended the opening of the new church in Hataitai and, for the first time, Samoan Methodists in Wellington learned that a Samoan Methodist church had already been formed in Grey Lynn, Auckland, in 1964.²³⁷

²³⁶ The four founding families of the new church were; Silipa Mamea and Mina, Taulealeausumai and Peka, Tagiilima and Moira, Susana Taulelei and Falemai (Church member, interview).

²³⁷ Ekalesia Metotisi Hataitai, *Api o le Galuega: Diaries of the Church and Minutes of Church Meetings*, 1966; See Masele Tolai, "The History of the Samoan Methodist church Hataitai," (essay presented in fulfilment of probation year to the Samoan Methodist Church, Apia, 2003), 9.

After the service, Tupe Timoteo asked church members if there were any former MCS pastors whom they could contact to become the leader of the church. Tulimanu Taotua²³⁸ and Mose Samani²³⁹ were the first to be contacted. Tulimanu Taotua, a former MCS pastor, was serving as lay preacher for the Samoan ministry at the time in the PICC in Christchurch where the Reverend Kenape Faletose was the parish minister. One church member said that the Samoan group, whom Tulimanu Taotua served, supported his ministry, as it would be hard to find such a mature experienced pastor who could minister to them. On these grounds, Tulimanu turned down the request. They then approached Mose Samani, who served as a lay preacher in the PICC in Wellington, but he also rejected their invitation as he had left the Samoan Methodist Conference without formally resigning. After Tulimanu and Mose's rejection of the invitations, the newly formed church was under the care of the elders awaiting the presidential visit of President Kamu Tagaolo of the Samoa Conference in 1967.²⁴⁰

The rejection of the newly formed church's invitation by Tulimanu Taotua and Mose Samani may have reflected the founders' newness in the Methodist Church (as indeed did the earlier comments made by the Samoan group in Wesley Methodist church). They (founders) were neither ordained pastors, nor accredited lay preachers of the MCS, whom they knew and who could be trusted to lead such a movement within the Methodist church (the founders in contrast believed they had been gifted by the Spirit of God to lead the new development within the church). On the other hand, Tulimanu and Mose received privileged work within the Samoan group in the PICC, where they could build up faith and be effective in service.

In 1967, a crucial meeting between the New Zealand Conference and the Samoan Conference was held at Pitt Street Methodist Church, Auckland. After the meeting, President Kamu Tagaolo of the Samoan Conference was approached by church members about the case of Mose Samani as he (Samani) at the time was still willing to serve in the MCS. President Tagaolo accordingly authorised a temporary church for Mose Samani as pastor for Hataitai

²³⁸ Tulimanu Taotua, a former minister of the Conference, his service in the Methodist Conference was unable to be ascertained.

²³⁹ Mose Samani also served as a lay preacher for the PICC in Wellington; he was a former minister of the Samoan Conference whose ministry had been terminated due to family problems.

²⁴⁰ Church member, interview.

until the Conference of 1968, at which stage the Samoan Conference, officially approved and sanctioned his appointment and gave approval for the establishment of the new church.²⁴¹

The Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa in Hataitai was a mortgage-free church with its own facilities and resources. It was a *falesa*, an old church which had been procured from the NZMC at a reasonable cost and had been renovated to accommodate church services. The renovations to the hall and additions (which included accommodation for the *faifeau*) and the two storeyed building were funded through a financial loan. Eventually, once the church property had been purchased, the members of the church were able to utilize its facilities and resources free of charge for their church services, programs, and activities. All these developments were funded by church members through donations and fundraising which they held at various levels.

5.1.2 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Te Atatu 1969

In 1969, after five years of the Reverend Apelu's pastoral ministry, Grey Lynn church membership, as recorded in the church diary, grew steadily to over 300 people. The growth of the Grey Lynn church led Tupe Timoteo to become interested in working as a planter (founder) of churches, and hence to establish new congregations for the Samoan Conference. In Tupe Timoteo's plan, Te Atatu South was the first new place to be chosen, as Tupe and his family had settled there. The Reverend Apelu, when approached by Tupe with the proposal, raised the matter at a Grey Lynn church meeting on 26 of March, 1969²⁴². The plan for a new Samoan congregation, to be formed at Te Atatu South, was supported unanimously by members, and preparations for the establishment of a new church began.²⁴³

5.1.2.1 The Beginning

On the 20th of April 1969, two weeks after the meeting, six families²⁴⁴ collaborated in the formation of a new church. This was marked with an opening service, conducted by the

²⁴¹ Taulealeausumai Sione Taulauniu, "Brief History of Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Hataitai," Personal narrative, 1966, 6. Taulealeausumai was one of founding members of the church. He approached Silipa to start a church and Silipa agreed.

²⁴² Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Grey Lynn, Api o le Galuega: Church Diaries, Auckland, 1969, 87.

²⁴³ Wesley Taotua, "History of Te Atatu Methodist church," (essay presented to the Samoan Methodist Church in fulfilment of probational year, 2005, Samoan Methodist Church: Archive Office,) 5.

²⁴⁴ The founding members were originally migrants who had arrived in the 1950s and 1960s. Amongst them were: Sula Fuimaono and his two children Galu and Fialelei; Sa Apa, Vavatau and Susana Leota and their children, Kisa, Faamatau Mesepa, Feau, Ana and Pepe; Vili Tamalii and Apineru Peseta, Liuia and Nasareta Tuagalu and their children, Leu, Liuia Junior, and Ana, Siaosi Tanuvasa, Mele Uesele and, Tupe and Maude Timoteo and their children, Foloi, Peter, Joseph, Margaret, Ula, Phineas and Kolisi. All members had originally

Reverend Apelu, to commence the church's pastoral ministry, and, after the service, Tupe Timoteo was appointed as leader of the new church under the supervision of the Reverend Apelu, parish minister of Grey Lynn Methodist Church.²⁴⁵

In July, 1970, the new Te Atatu congregation tabled two motions to be presented to the Samoan Methodist Conference. The first requested the Conference to accept the newly formed church as a member of the Conference. The second requested the Conference to sanction Tupe Timoteo as a minister of the home conference. The Conference endorsed Tupe Timoteo as pastor of the Conference and approved membership of the newly formed church. This was followed by the decision of the Stationing Committee to appoint Tupe as the first pastor of Te Atatu church; he served there for ten years (1969-1979) before being re-appointed to another position.²⁴⁶ The appointment of Tupe Timoteo by Apelu was an expression of the Reverend Apelu's aspiration to extend the evangelical mission of Samoan Methodism in the places where migrant Samoans settled, and this was made possible since Tupe and his extended family had settled in close proximity to each other at Te Atatu South.

The way in which Tupe Timoteo accommodated his family within a close neighbourhood resembled the cultural image of a *matai* and his *aiga potopoto* (extended family). It encapsulated the idea of the *aiga*, living and working on communally owned land under the direction of the *matai* whom they had chosen and who represented them on the various councils which governed the *nuu* (village), the *itumalo* (district) and the *malo* (nation). It denoted the sense of identity, unity, and solidarity which each family member shared within this family group. Hence, as a result of the careful implementation of the practical roles of the *matai* in administering the social, economic and religious security of his *aiga*, his decision is respected and honoured to this day. Tupe was a *matai* to his extended family and, in relation to the proposal to form the church at Te Atatu, which was started by his extended family, Tupe indicated that it is part of the *matai*'s role to decide on a religion for his *aiga*.²⁴⁷

been migrants in the 1960s. (Tupe Timoteo, Brief Account of the History of the Samoan Methodist church Te Atatu South, Personal Narratives, 1969, 12).

²⁴⁵ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Te Atatu South, Api o le Galuega: Church Diaries, Auckland, 1969, 3.

²⁴⁶ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Minute Koneferenisi, O Lona VII o Koneferenisi Faa-Le Tausaga Talu ona Tutoatasi i le Tausaga 1964, 1970, 5.

²⁴⁷ Malama Meleisea, *Change and Adaptation in Western Samoa*, (New Zealand, University of Canterbury: The Macmillan-Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1992), 52.

5.1.2.2 *Funding the Development*

On the 10th of July, 1970, six *matafale* (twenty six adults and twenty four children of the church) bought a house at 8 Norcross Avenue, Te Atatu, at a cost of \$6,500.00. Church membership grew steadily to eleven *matafale*, seventy members, including adults and children, and, with the consent of its members, the property at 8 Norcross Avenue was renovated and extended into a two storey building. The first floor was built to accommodate the minister and his family and the basement was converted into a sanctuary to seat between fifty and eighty people. Within one year of construction, the church was officially opened and this was marked by its first service on 30 August, 1980.

On the 2nd of February, 1987, seven new *matafale* joined the eleven *matafale* already present, and in good spirit, with the support of the church members, they consented to build a *falesa*. While the construction was proceeding, fifteen new *matafale* joined. The construction of the building was completed in 1989, at a cost of \$231,509.00. On the 20th of May, 1997, a neighbouring family at 10 Norcross Avenue approached the church to ask whether they would be interested in purchasing their property at a cost of \$210,000. The church members met on the 25th May, 1997 to consider this opportunity to purchase the property. After a lengthy consultation, the meeting ended in a split decision. The *matais*, (chiefs) rejected the offer as being too costly, unless further negotiation could reduce the cost. Young parishioners, who had been interested in buying the property, supported the purchase. The disagreement over the purchase reflected the developing tensions within the congregation.

The rejection by the *matais* of the purchase of the property as too costly gives an indication of how the older people, particularly the *matais*, felt about their economic circumstances within the country and the church. They were either tired because of long hours at work, or else they stayed at home, unemployed, with only a little financial assistance from the government, and believed the cost was high in relation to their age and their lack of potential to earn more, especially when the financial demands from the church exceeded what they perceived they could afford. On the other hand, the younger parishioners who supported the purchase of the property were young and fit enough to work long hours and were capable of coping with the cost. When the *matais* were challenged by the younger members who had the commitment and potential to cope with the development of the church, the discussion continued on through the following day and, finally, the *matais* withdrew their objection and supported the purchase. The church, under the rules surrounding the mortgage from the Real

Estate Finance Co. Limited, funded the project at a cost of \$215,000.00; this amount included the legal costs of the contract.²⁴⁸

The church obtained the funds for its own development, mainly through member donations and offerings in terms of cash and materials. Apart from that, a variety of fundraising activities hosted by members at different levels within the church contributed to its development. Church members had managed the development systematically with an awareness of minimising the financial strain. The *Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa* in Te Atatu is now a mortgage free church, enjoying the fruits of its members' previous hard labour. Its assets are the two storey building, the property at 10 Norcross Avenue, the *falesā* that is fully fenced, and a car park to hold twenty to thirty cars.

5.1.3 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Otara, 1969

Pati Toso,²⁴⁹ a former minister of the Samoan Conference, who had left the Samoan Conference in the 1960s, migrated permanently to New Zealand and worshipped at the Auckland Methodist Central Mission (AMCM) where he was approached in 1964 by Tupe Timoteo to be leader of the newly first formed MCS church in Grey Lynn. He (the former minister) declined the first invitation, as he was uncertain of the future of the movement. It may have been that he feared that if he accepted a call to serve in the MCS in New Zealand, the Samoan Conference might in turn reappoint him to serve in Samoa, and it was not his intention to return to Samoa, he would rather serve in a New Zealand church. Hence, he remained in service in the New Zealand Methodist ministry until 1969, when Apelu approached him to start a new church in Otara, where he lived.²⁵⁰

Apelu was related to the former minister; their wives were sisters and, as a result of this relationship, Apelu invited him to conduct the Grey Lynn Easter service in his absence while he was at a meeting in Wellington. It was through this invitation that the Toso began to realise Apelu's purpose and why he had attempted to convince him to transfer to the Samoan

²⁴⁸ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Te Atatu, Api o le Galuega: Church Diary, 1969, 24

²⁴⁹ Pati Toso, a former ordained minister who left the Samoan Methodist Conference in early 1960s and worshipped at the Auckland Methodist Central Mission since arrival in the 1960s. Later, he transferred his membership to Saint Paul's Church in Otara, as it was nearby his residential home. (Interview with church member, March 24, 2011).

²⁵⁰ Interview with church member, March 23, 2011.

ministry and to start a new church in Otara.²⁵¹ However, after a dispute arose between church members and the parish minister of the Otahuhu church he attended, the former minister finally decided to end his service at Saint Paul's Church, Otara.²⁵²

5.1.3.1 *The Beginning*

On 4th May, 1969, four migrant families²⁵³ started a new MCS congregation in Otara. In 1972, the church bought some land at 2 Blair Place, Otara and it was on that property that the church prioritized the building of their own *falesa* where worship services could be conducted at times of their choosing, rather than renting other churches' facilities and having to accommodate their worship services at times that were available. One church parishioner, who had learned a great deal from Toso's struggle in the development of the church, quoted one of his challenging sayings: "to build a *falesa* would find people" or if you build the *falesa*, you will find the people. This challenging statement was proved correct when, after the construction of the *falesa* began in 1972 with six *matafale*, nine new *matafale* joined the church. In the view of the church members, they described their pastor as a man with a vision and a person who believed in himself, was able to lead the small group (six *matafale* in 1972) and to initiate the work, believing that migrant Christians who cherished the traditional message of the Samoan church would later join as the work proceeded.²⁵⁴

A church member and a surviving pioneer of the Otara parish, who came from the island of Manono, where the Wesleyan missionary Peter Turner had arrived and settled in 1855, when asked what had led her to support the formation of a Samoan church said:

Na ou ola mai i le Metotisi Samoa, i le nuu o Manono na uluai taunuu i ai misionare Metotisi, o Pita Tana. E le galo le lotu na ola mai ai. Ina ua malaga mai Samoa, e le uma le naunau i le lotu sa tautua ma auauna ai i aso e tele. ...Sa tagi lava i lima le atinaeina o le galuega e pei foi o le tautuaina o le galuega i Samoa. Sa tau saili tupe faatasi ma le

²⁵¹ Interview with church member, March 15, 2011. The interviewee, who arrived in New Zealand in 1970, was one of the founding members of the Otara Methodist church. She is related to Pati Toso and his wife and given this family kinship; she joined and started the Otara church.

²⁵² Church member, interview.

²⁵³ Members at the start of the church were, Faleavao and Kolisi Tea, Rosalina Leota, Nimese Matamua and Pati and Vaaiga Toso.

²⁵⁴ Interview with church member, March 16, 2011.

malosi o le aulotu e fesoasoani i le atinaeina o le galuega. ...ua fiafia le loto ina ua vaai ua mautu le lotu i ana meatotino, e faafetaia ai le alofa o le Atua.²⁵⁵

Translation.

I grew up in the Methodist Church in the village of Manono where the first Methodist missionary, Peter Turner, arrived. I shall always remember the church I grew up in. To date I still have an urge to serve in the Methodist church even after long departing Samoa... As I was accustomed back in Samoa, church people were usually self reliant / self dependent when it came time to find ways to develop the church. Together with the congregation, we fundraised to help build and support the church... and I am glad to see the stability the church now enjoys with its acquired assets which we can only attribute to God and his gracious love.²⁵⁶

As in the case of the Grey Lynn Methodist church, the church obtained its funds from members' contributions and from various fundraising events hosted by members on a variety of occasions. Social night entertainment, usually held at the weekends, became an efficient form of fundraising that quickly earned money. These social events appeared to mainly attract Samoan migrants and developed into a way of finding new church members.²⁵⁷

The new *falesā* was a historic mark of success: it was the first *falesā* to be built amongst the six Samoan Conference parishes formed in New Zealand since 1964. The church currently enjoys its acquired assets: a large complex built to accommodate both the *falesā* and a fully equipped multi-purpose hall, a two storey building for the pastor and a large car park, all of which are fully fenced.

5.1.4 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Palmerston North 1969

In 1962, a Samoan Christian Fellowship was formed in Palmerston North. This fellowship was not restricted to any particular family kinship, village, or denomination and was formed from the desire for fellowship with other Samoan residents through worship and cultural sharing. At times of worship, they would take turns to lead the worship as they had been

²⁵⁵ Church member, interview.

²⁵⁶ I owe this translation to Malae Aloalii, Lecturer in English at Aorere College.

²⁵⁷ Interview with church member, April 15, 2011. This church member arrived in New Zealand in the 1960s and stayed with his sister in Grey Lynn. They were founding members of the Grey Lynn church. Later, when the Grey Lynn congregation had started to grow, he was advised by Apelu to transfer his membership to the newly formed church in Otara.

accustomed to doing in Samoa during family evening services. The society was first named, *Sosaiete Tagata Samoa Kerisiano* (Samoan Christian Society) before it split into denominational entities. The unity within the fellowship was not to last long, as some members decided to leave and establish their own churches.

When this occurred, leaders of the group decided to reconsider rules and laws in order to allow members to form a church without violating the unity of the society. Any member in the society who wished to form a church of their own or join any denomination of their choice would be welcome to do so, and the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, or the *Ekalesia Faalapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS)*, was the first parish to form out of this fellowship. The rest of the society continued with their fellowship.

On 2 November, 1969, some members of the group led by Faatau Tufuga, who felt the need to form a Methodist congregation, met to negotiate the appeal and called upon those who were interested to come forward. On 28 December, 1969, nine *matafale*²⁵⁸ converted their fellowship into a new structure for the Samoan Methodist church. Its inauguration was marked by an opening service; this was led by the Reverend Apelu and held at Faatau's home at 40 Wills Crescent, Ashhurst, Palmerston North. After the service, Faatau Tufuga was appointed by Apelu as leader of the church.²⁵⁹ In 1970, Faatau Tufuga donated his house to the church as his contribution to the life and work of the church and as an expression of service rendered to God. This property was owned by the church for twenty six years and was designated for the accommodation of church ministers until 1995.

In 1981, Reverend Faaiu Sua, the parish minister of Palmerston North succeeding Faatau Tufuga, began holding church meetings concerning the purchase of the New Zealand Methodist Church's old wooden church building that had previously been hired from the Salvation Army at 81 Ferguson Street, West End, Palmerston North. The newly formed church at the time struggled to organise fundraising, not only because of the small number of members, but also because there were few Samoans in the area who could be contacted to

²⁵⁸ Founding *matafale* of the church: Rev. Faatau and Filo Tufuga, Fiaalii Nonoa and family, Matuivao Tupai and family, Viliamu and Lino and family, Leuluai and Tupe and family, Nuutele Suafoa, Tau Leota, Leio T. Semisi, Fesolai and Tagitasi Suafoa. (*Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Hamilitone, Api o le Galuega: Church Dairy*, 1974, 21).

²⁵⁹ *Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Palmerstone, Api o le Galuega, Palmerston North*, 1974, 3.

assist in their fundraising. Despite this, the small congregation bought the church on 5 July, 1988 and it was renovated and opened for use on the 17th of December, 1988.²⁶⁰

In 1992, the fifth appointee to the Palmerston church, convened several meetings to discuss the sale the house that Faatau had donated in order to finance a mortgage for a house closer to where the *falesa* was located. To the members of his congregation, the church minister emphasised the need to sell the old property to purchase a new house closer to the *falesa*. At these meetings, the case for selling the house revealed a diversity of opinions among the members concerning Faatau's gift. Some members rejected the selling of the property which they thought of as a historic tribute that should be retained. Fortunately, the matter was settled within the congregation and in good heart, they consented to sell the property.

When the church property was on the market, the house that was located next to the *falesa* was also on the market and this led the church to apply for a loan to purchase that property. When the loan agency asked for the deeds of their property as security of their loan, they finally realised the deeds of the properties were under the name of the Grey Lynn church. This had occurred when Apelu was leader of the synod, and he required all deeds of church properties to be under the name of Grey Lynn, because Grey Lynn was the centre of the MCS in New Zealand. However, one church member suggested that it had to do with the requirement of securities to fund the building of the Grey Lynn church. In 1992, the synod leader signed the release of Palmerston North church's properties to the care of the church at Palmerston North.²⁶¹

The MCS at Palmerston North is, at present, a mortgage free-church, with its own properties. These include the house of the pastor, the church building, and a small hall which is more than large enough to accommodate its members. When asked about the future of the church, a church member commented that, as far as he was concerned, there were hardly any more new Samoan members that could be added to the already incorporated adherents. At this point,

²⁶⁰ Interview with church minister, April 12, 2011. This church minister was by the appointment of the Samoan Conference, appointed as church minister for Palmerston North in 1992. He led the discussion on the appeal for selling the old house donated by the Reverend Faatau Tufuga in order to secure the buying of a new house closer to where the church was located.

²⁶¹ Church member, interview.

there are no social or economic attractions that are likely to attract new Samoan migrants to move to, or stay in the area.²⁶²

5.1.5 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Hamilton, 1974

Fiaalii Nonoa, a Samoan Methodist lay preacher, who, with the Reverend Faatau Tufuga, had started the Samoan Methodist Church in Palmerston North in 1969, visited his brother in Hamilton. Aleli Nonoa and his family, who were strong Methodists in Hamilton, and Fiaalii Nonoa, who came from the village of Lufilufi in Upolu, where the Samoan Methodist Church's Theological College at Piula is located, were challenged by the absence of a Samoan Methodist church. After arriving in Hamilton in the 1970s, the Nonoa family had wanted a Samoan Methodist church similar to that of other Samoan churches – for example, the *EFKS* that had already been established in the town.

On the 11th of May, 1974, Fiaalii Nonoa left the Palmerston North Methodist church and moved to Hamilton to establish a Samoan Methodist church there. One migrant family from the village of Satupaitea, which had, in 1835, become the centre for the Wesleyan missionaries in Samoa, and who were friends of the Nonoa family, joined in the formation of the church. Fiaalii Nonoa conducted the first service at Aleli's house where they used a television set as a pulpit and sitting room chairs as pews. One church member said that the environment of the service seemed strange, which led them to search for a church or hall in which to hold their services. Before the search, they first informed the Reverend Apelu, who was in charge of the Samoan Methodist mission at the time, of their quest and he approved of the proposal proceeding.²⁶³

When asked what had inspired him to form an autonomous Samoan church, the only surviving pioneer of the Hamilton church said:

²⁶² Church member, interview.

²⁶³ Interview with church member, April 28, 2011. This church member arrived in New Zealand in 1966 as a single man in and settled in Hamilton. Whilst living with his uncle who worshipped at the Mormon Church, he converted to Mormonism. In 1972, he transferred to the PICC for one year before he joined the Nonoa Family to form a Samoan Methodist church in Hamilton in 1974. In 1972, he was nominated as a Justice of the Peace by the Member of Parliament, Phillip Field. In 1974 he was appointed the first secretary of the church, and was elected as a member of the Pacific Advisory Council in Hamilton in 1984.

E le mafai lava ona aveesea le loto i le lotu, le mea na ola mai ai. Ina ua mafuta foi ma nai uso ma uo Metotisi mai Samoa, sa faapea loa ona faatu le lotu.... O le taimi nei, ua mautu le lotu i le fesoasoani mai o le Atua.²⁶⁴

Translation

How could one forget the church and its nurturing ways while growing up? It impacted greatly on us from Samoa, so it was not hard to start a church once we assembled together. The church we started is well established and we owe that to no one but God.

On the 8th of June, 1974, the three *matafale* started the church and it was officially opened in a service held at the Saint Paul Methodist Church in Hamilton led by the minister for the Grey Lynn parish, the Reverend Apelu. Following the service, Fiaalii Nonoa was temporarily appointed as leader of the church under the supervision of the Reverend Tulimanu Taotua, the parish minister of the Otara Samoan Methodist Church. The Conference of 1975 endorsed Fiaalii Nonoa as a probationary minister of the Conference and appointed him as the first minister of the new church.²⁶⁵

However, Pastor Fiaalii Nonoa's ministry ended suddenly when, on April 29th, 1978, Fiaalii and his brother Aleli, who were on a visit to Samoa to visit their critically ill father, died when the South Pacific Island Airways (SPIA) aeroplane in which they were travelling from Tutuila to Upolu, crashed landed on a mountain in Upolu. The loss of their leader was heartbreaking news for the church's adherents, especially since Fiaalii had just started to negotiate with a company of land agents to buy land for the church. Fortunately for the congregation, in July, 1978, the Reverend Vaiao Eteuati was appointed as church minister by the Samoan Conference Stationing Committee appointment and he undertook to finish the developments which Fiaalii Nonoa and the congregants had initiated.²⁶⁶

It is interesting that the NZMC in Hamilton was seen as supportive and helpful, and offered assistance at different levels, supporting the MCS in Hamilton in its development through sharing their resources and facilities and by their partnership. The MCS was glad to accept the offer of Pastor Peter Stead to use Saint Paul's Church to hold its services at his church

²⁶⁴ Church member, interview.

²⁶⁵ The Reverend Talavou Afualo, 'History of the Samoan Methodist Church, Hamilton', (paper presented at the 30th birthday celebration of the church, 8 June 1974-8 June 2004), (Hamilton, 2004).

²⁶⁶ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Hamiltone, Fono ma Iuga fono Matagaluega Metotisi Samoa Hamiltone, recorded by church secretary, 1974, 23.

from 2:00 pm until late in the evening, free of charge. However, the new church, in return, during church services on Sundays, collected a small monetary offering in return for the kindness of the members of Saint Paul's church.

In 1978, the church needed a larger space for its services and, for that reason, they left Saint Paul's, when the NZMC parish at Melville, which was closer to the land the MCS had purchased at Higgins Road, offered the MCS parish space to host its services at their church. The continuous support of the Melville church was practically demonstrated in a combined service held annually at times decided upon by both churches. At each combined service, the Melville church collected an offering for the MCS, and on the 19th of December, 1982, the Melville church hosted its annual combined service for the MCS and collected a \$300.00 donation for them. On the 21st of September, 1984, the Melville Methodist Church invited the members of MCS Hamilton to a camp to the Epworth Methodist Camp at Karapiro: it was a great experience for the MCS to share fellowship with the adherents of the Melville church. This relationship became a central indication of the ecumenical worship shared between the two peoples.²⁶⁷

As noted in the previous chapter, there was tension between the NZMC and the MCS in Auckland between 1963-1964. At that time, in an attempt to dissolve the separate development of the churches in favour of one church under NZMC jurisdiction, the NZMC banned the hiring of all its facilities, halls and church buildings to the MCS. However, as the brotherly relationship between Saint Paul's Church and the Melville Methodist Church and the Samoan Methodist Church in Hamilton revealed, no such tension occurred as they (the Saint Paul's and Melville churches), together with the smaller churches, had built up their faith in God and established an effective supportive church within the community. Today, the congregation of *Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa*, Hamilton, having built its church, enjoys the fruits of its labour, which are a two storey house to accommodate the pastor, his family, and church visitors, a *falesā*, and a hall; these have all been built within one complex with the addition of a car park enclosed by a fence.

5.1.6 Quest for a Synod

By 1975, the MCS in New Zealand had created eight congregations; six parishes and two congregations. With this behind them, the eight churches appealed to the Samoan Conference

²⁶⁷ Church member, interview.

to establish a synod of their own. The appeal for a synod was based on the argument that, while the MCSNZ was under the care and supervision of the Samoan Synod in Apia, Upolu, synod meetings required the personal participation of overseas members, regardless of distance and the expense of travelling. Overseas synod members argued that, instead of relying on the Samoan-based members to make decisions for their own New Zealand-based ministry, their understanding and experience as a migrant church best fitted them to make decisions about what would best serve the churches' needs and aspirations in the diasporic communities. Moreover, this would save time and travelling expenses that would be better used to develop the MCSNZ ministry. There was consultation concerning this appeal at a quarterly meeting held at the MCS Palmerston North in June, 1975. The meeting, after consultation, resolved to seek a structural change for the MCS mission which, in turn, led to the tabling of a motion, requesting the Samoan Conference to institute a synod for the MCSNZ.

In July, 1975, after consultation, the Samoan Conference approved the establishment of the MCSNZ as a synod, which added to the seven established synods of the home Conference.²⁶⁸ The Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve was officially appointed by the Samoan Conference as Superintendent of the new synod with the Reverend Pati Toso as its secretary. The MCSNZ expressed its gratitude to the Samoan Conference for its great support and enthusiasm revealed in the establishment of the new synod and which, to some extent, would encourage the commitment of worshippers to the life and work of the church in New Zealand.²⁶⁹

5.1.7 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Mangere, 1976

In 1975, Seu Rosa, who came from the village of Avao, Savaii²⁷⁰ was a member of the Otarā MCS despite having settled in Mangere. Although attending the Otarā parish, Seu Rosa longed to start a church in Mangere where she and her family had settled. At that time, the Otarā MCS church membership had grown steadily from twenty in 1973, to twenty four in 1975, when Seu Rosa, with her son-in-law, Vili Tamalii, who attended the Methodist church

²⁶⁸ Of the seven District synods of the Samoan Conference; four are in Upolu; Upolu Sasae (West), Upolu Sisifo (East), Upolu Saute (South) and Apia; two in Savaii; Salafai Sasae (East) and Salafai Sisifo (West); one in the Territory of American Samoa and the New Zealand Synod.

²⁶⁹ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Minutes 1975: O Lona XLVI o Koneferenisi Faa-Le-Tausaga Talu ona Tutoatasi i le Tausaga 1964, Fogaa, Faleula, Iulai 12-Iulai 19, 1975.

²⁷⁰ The village where the first Samoan Bible was translated in 1855 by missionaries of the London Mission Society and prominent, well-versed Samoan orators.

at Ferguson Road, Mangere, decided to form a Samoan church in Mangere, and they (Vili and Seu Rosa) agreed to proceed with the proposal for a Samoan church in Mangere.²⁷¹

When Afoa Pagia Wilson, a member of the Samoan Conference's Land and Property Committee (SMCLPC), visited New Zealand in 1975 to survey a piece of land that was to be purchased by the MCS in Auckland, he stayed in Mangere with his daughter, Ofa, and her husband, Eliu Samuelu; Ofa and Eliu were friends and neighbours of Vili Tamalii and also attended the NZMC in Ferguson Road, Mangere. Afoa Pagia Wilson, asked Eliu and Ofa to start a Samoan Methodist church in Mangere and it was agreed. When news of the agreement reached the Synod Secretary, Reverend Pati Toso, Vili Tamalii and Eliu Samuelu became the key members on whom Pati relied to locate potential members and to arrange evening meetings to discuss decisions relating to the formation of the new church.

Eliu Samuelu and Vili Tamalii, who had been requested by Pati Toso to find a hall in which to hold services, were delighted to receive an offer from the principal of Mangere East Primary School to hire the school hall for \$10.00 a day. The first service was a 'seeker service' held on the 4 January, 1976 and conducted by Pati Toso. It was attended by twelve families²⁷² who, at the end of the service, declared their allegiance to the new church and agreed to become members. The twelve families included some from Mangere who had earlier attended the Otara and Grey Lynn MCSs, and they agreed to support the church because it was closer to their homes. On that day, Apelu Tuimaseve, Superintendent of the MCS Synod appointed Setu Faaniniva as the church's temporary leader pending further action at the Conference of 1976. Setu Faaniniva who had been a theological student at the Piula Theological College from 1963-1967 and who had migrated to New Zealand before graduation and had continued his theological education in New Zealand.²⁷³

One month after the Mangere East Primary School hall had been hired, the worshippers decided to find another venue because of issues regarding security and care of the property. The school campus demanded high security and care, and it had to be strictly observed. The

²⁷¹ Interview with church member, April 21, 2011. This church member is a current member of the church, who arrived in NZ in 1969, was first treasurer of the church after its establishment in 1995. He was church treasurer when the *falesa*, the minister's residence, and the hall were built.

²⁷² At the first service held at Mangere East Primary School Hall in December 1975, twelve families joined Toomata Tamalii Vili and his family, Seu Rosa, Eliu and Ofa Samuelu, Lili and son Paul, Leti Ieremia and his two sisters, Eleni and Siniva, Faavale Tatupu and Initia and their family, Talima Faauma Tatupu and Pofitu and their family, Peni Asiata. On the second Sunday at Mangere East Hall, new members were Agelu Afoa Talaolevave and Taito and their family. (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Mangere, Api o le Galuega, 1976, 1).

²⁷³ Church member interview.

church members, in turn, paid respect to the care and security of the school property which their children had attended. The hall was proving too small also; hence, they decided to find another space for the church. To fill this need, Eliu Samuelu and Vili Tamalii approached the Baptist Church Board at Bader Drive for a second time, and their approach was kindly accepted by the Baptist Church Board which made the church available for them at 12.00 noon every Sunday.

On 1 February, 1976, the Reverend Apelu, Synod Superintendent, conducted the congregation's first service at the Baptist Church and one of the families attending was that of Fusia Leaula Danielson and his wife, a Methodist by denomination from Samoa. Apelu, after recognising his family connection to Leaula's wife, told Fusia Leaula Danielson, a church secretary and deacon of the first *EFKS* in Newton, to enter his name in the list of church's *matafale*. Although upset at being forced to join, from that day Fusia Leaula accepted the call from Apelu and began serving his dual responsibilities in the newly formed Methodist church and the *EFKS* for quite some time, until, in 1976, he finally decided to resign from the *EFKS* to join the Samoan Methodist church. His house, close to the Baptist Church, was used by the MCS congregation to hold its meetings and other church activities.²⁷⁴

The MCS in Mangere appreciated the Baptist church's support and generosity and the relationship they had developed with the Baptists while using the church's resources and facilities which they had offered to the Samoan Methodists in Mangere. Their hiring of the Baptist Church's facilities had allowed time for the new church to earn and accumulate funds to purchase a church property and resources of their own. In 1981, after four years in this relationship, the new church bought land at 28, Court Town Crescent, Mangere and there built the *falesa*. Later, the house for the pastor was built, and then, in the following year, the hall. All these developments were funded by member donations and fundraising organised by church members at different levels.²⁷⁵

5.1.8 Otahuhu, 1977

In 1976, one of the lay preachers of the Samoan Methodist church of Otara withdrew with some other members of the church to form a Samoan Methodist church in Otahuhu. The

²⁷⁴ Church member, interview.

²⁷⁵ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Mangere, Api ole Galuega: Church Diary, 34.

reasons for this withdrawal are still debated, though one member suggested that it had to do with disagreement over matters of discipline.²⁷⁶

Whatever the reason behind the withdrawal of this minority group, the departing party formed a new church in Otahuhu which was officially opened on 24 October, 1977 in a service led by Apelu held at the Polynesian Centre, Mangere. This lay preacher was, by Apelu's decision, appointed as leader of the church and was under the care and supervision of the Otara parish. In the Samoan Conference of 1978, he was, with the Conference's approval, accepted and endorsed as the probationary minister for the Samoa Conference and was officially appointed as church minister for the newly formed Otahuhu church.

The minister's pastoral ministry in Otahuhu congregation ended when the MCS conference terminated his service in 1979. The reasons for the termination remain a subject of debate, although it was suggested by some church members that it was the same disciplinary matter that had been reported earlier. A new minister was appointed by the conference to replace the terminated pastor in 1980.²⁷⁷

Despite the problems and challenges that occurred in the early years of the church, after years of hard labour, the church now owns assets, which consist of a complex two storey building built to accommodate the *falesa* on the first floor, a basement built and used as a hall, and a fenced car park to accommodate over fifty cars.

5.1.9 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Mesiana, 1978

After years of worshipping in the NZMC, one migrant family,²⁷⁸ who had earlier (1964) been approached by Tupe Timoteo with a proposal to form an autonomous Samoan church whilst attending the Samoan Methodist Church at Te Atatu South in 1970, were approached for the second time by the Synod Superintendent, the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve, concerning the need to form a church in Te Atatu North. On 21 May, 1978, another family with their children joined this family and started a new church which was marked by an opening

²⁷⁶ Interview with church member, August 18, 2011.

²⁷⁷ Laauli Tootoo Leiatua, 'Talaaga o le lotu Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Otahuhu; History of the MCS Otahuhu,' (paper presented in fulfilment of final Year Probation to the Samoan Methodist Church, April 21, 2007, 9).

²⁷⁸ Interview with church member, May 3, 2011. This migrant family arrived in 1962 and worshipped at Auckland Methodist Central Mission Church. The father graduated from Piula Theological College in 1959 and, in 1962, like his eldest brother, migrated to New Zealand through sponsorship from Reverend Orr of the Central Mission.

service, led by the Synod Superintendent, the Reverend Apelu Tuimaseve. The service was held at the Te Atatu North Community Hall where, after the service, Apelu appointed a leader of the church, pending the Samoan Conference's approval of the appointment. At the Conference of 1979, Apelu's appointment of the church leader was officially endorsed as a probationary pastor of the Samoan Conference and the new church was granted its membership to the Conference.

This founding family of the church, when asked why, after years of worshipping in the NZMC was so determined to transfer their allegiance to the MCS, explained that:

E ui lava ina lolotu i lotu palagi, peitai ele mafai ona aveesea le agaga e fia galulue pea i le lotu sa galulue ai o la matua. E le uma lava le agaga e fia galulue i le Metotisi Samoa.²⁷⁹

Translation.

Although they now attended the Methodist English service, they nevertheless had a deep passion to serve the Samoan Methodist Church under which their parents had also served. They too shared the same deep feelings towards the church.

As Methodists from birth, inheriting their parents' pride in service, they were committed to follow in their parents' footsteps by serving in the MCS, and this led them to transfer their allegiance to the MCS. According to Tupe's journal, some former MCS ministers who had earlier been approached to form Samoan Methodist congregations but had declined the offers had returned to the Samoan Conference. It seems that the reason for their earlier rejection of the proposals was their uncertainty about the future of the new church. However, when they realised that the MCS had grown to twelve churches since they had declined its earlier offer to them, they thought that the time had come to transfer their service to the MCS, as they could now see the growth of the evangelical mission of the MCS in New Zealand.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Evidence collected from oral histories and archival materials collected from church resources, people and church offices and the history of the formation of individual congregations of the Samoan Conference suggests that, although Samoans may have inherited one gospel and one

²⁷⁹ Church member, interview.

culture (Christ's gospel and the Samoan culture), the formation of individual congregations is not the same in every places. There are local factors everywhere that became key mechanisms that generate rapid growth of diasporic churches.

The role of churches as the centres for new communities is of great importance to the spread of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand. The growth of Samoan communities was not all in Auckland; re-location of Samoans due to occupational mobility had created new Samoan communities. Although these minority groups were small in number, their search for identity and a feeling that they could afford to get together and do things together, not just in their homes, but in church was significant. The cases of Palmerston North and Hataitai and elsewhere, reflect the willingness and the determination of a minority group, who first started with a fellowship that later turned into a church as a centre of their Samoan community, and a home for their children and grandchildren in those non-metropolitan areas. In Hamilton the immense support of the NZMC, financially and materially, was a significant factor, which not only strengthened the ecumenical spirit between the two churches, but also supported the Samoans' aspiration to form their own church without the kind of interference experienced in Auckland.

The continuous support of the Synod leaders and the already established congregations for the creation of new churches was also an essential factor in the growth of new congregations. The synod leader endorsed proposals for new churches and also appointed temporary leaders for each newly formed church pending the approval of the Samoan Conference for registration. This was done in the belief that, once a church had been founded, then a leader should be appointed and begin his pastoral ministry to maintain continuity in the church's spiritual life and worship. This would also maintain the loyalty of members whose ongoing participation was essential to the growth of the church.

Moreover, the cultural support and the generosity of the Samoan community were very much appreciated by the new churches, especially when fundraisings activities were held to earn funds for the development of the new church. Likewise, these social activities were helpful in attracting new members to the fellowship, and building up fellowship between them. An established church as a centre of community and worship continued to attract new members to that fellowship.

The availability of church buildings, halls and the sharing of facilities and resources, and the low rate of rent offered by the New Zealand Methodist churches, the Salvation Army, various

trust and organisations, New Zealand school boards and ethnic Pacific organisations, and their supportive social and professional relationships in services and communal activities contributed to the accumulation of church funds and the maintenance of Samoan spirituality and worship. One particular instance of this is the Mangere parish's rent of the Baptist Church for their worship free of charge. Many resource people also played significant roles in offering guidance on national policy and the laws and regulations which had to be negotiated before a church could be legally formed in New Zealand. Without the assistance and support of the wider community, Samoan Methodism would not have been able to grow rapidly in its migrant enclaves in New Zealand.

The strength of personal relationships or loyalty in kinship also has a role. A congregation started within a small family and was later joined by other family members and friends. These people were bound together by their culture, family relationships, and traditions which were nurtured and developed from within a traditional and cultural milieu within villages in which were central elements of social organisation. As a result of their deep attachment to the *faa-Samoa*, they greatly desired to maintain this in the lives of their churches.

It is also interesting to note the strength of historical connection to the village network and loyalty in keeping the church. Pioneers of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand who had a long village history of Methodist commitment saw themselves associated with the founding of Samoan migrant churches in New Zealand and maintaining the continuous history of the church, and a number of people who came to New Zealand and founded the migrant churches, became significant in planting diasporic churches. They (the pioneers) migrated with a pride born of being people from historic villages where Christian mission activities had originated.²⁸⁰

The sanctioning of those church 'planters' as church ministers by the Samoan Conference gave the chance for Samoan Methodist evangelism to grow quickly in New Zealand.

²⁸⁰ The pioneers, for example; the Otara parish in 1969, came from the island of Manono, where Peter Turner, the Wesleyan missionary from Tonga, on June 16, 1835 and taught Christianity for a considerable period of time before moving to Satupaitea. Those who founded the Hamilton church and the first official appointment of the Samoan Conference to oversee the Samoan ministry in Grey Lynn and the first superintendent of the Auckland District Synod (1995) were from the village of Satupaitea on the island of Savaii where Lilomaiva, one of the chiefs of Satupaitea who had earlier gone to Tonga, petitioned the King of Tonga to send a Wesleyan missionary to Samoa. In Mangere, the founding family was from Avao, Savaii the place where, in 1855, the first Samoan Bible was translated by LMS missionaries and Samoan orators. (See Chapter 2).

Although it was unconstitutional, in terms of church law, it ultimately contributed to the planting of more congregations of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand. However, the quality of ministers appointed in this type of process, in terms of theological expertise and pastoral experience, does not always produce clergy who are best able to accomplish the purpose of the church, to preach the good news of Christ's salvation and this matter needs to be addressed.

The social and cultural motivation that generated the growth of the autonomous bodies of the Samoan Methodist Mission during the 1960s, the social and economic dimension of the host country, New Zealand, when cheap international travel, television and a host of dazzling technological innovations were introduced, also played a contributing role. These economic benefits created semi-skilled employment that was available to Polynesian migrants. As a part of this, the growth of new centres of Samoan population (e.g. in Otara), is one that contributed to the planting of diasporic Samoan Methodist churches in Auckland.

Finally, some Methodist congregations encountered political problems which impacted on inter-personal questions. There were minority groups who either, did not get along with the pastor, or, with the mother church. There were also disagreements over the direction taken by a congregation, which led some families to break away and form separate congregations. These matters of political difference within congregations created disputes over membership and resulted in the departure of some members to form separate developments.

6 TRANSFERRAL AND MISSIONARY CHURCHES (1996-2009)

The most recent MCS congregation was founded in 1996, but congregations have continued to transfer into the Samoan Conference in New Zealand from the Methodist Church of New Zealand and other churches. This chapter explores the cultural, social and political reasons for their having done so.

Another source of growth for the MCS came through the establishment of missionary churches from 2007 on. This trend owed much to the determination of the leaders and people of the Auckland-based synod and the support of the MCS Conference after the mother church defined New Zealand as a mission field and sought to establish missionary churches. After a motion tabled by the Auckland-based synod in 2007, asking the Conference for missions in overseas synods, the Conference approved the establishment of New Zealand missions and appointments were made. The formation of missionary churches in the Auckland-based synod continues the planting of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, and although it has seen progress, these newly-formed missionary churches have also been confronted with difficulties.

6.1 TRANSFERRAL CHURCHES

6.1.1 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Papatoetoe, 1995

The Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa in Papatoetoe, one of the transferral congregations from the NZMC, was formed after political differences occurred over leadership roles between clergy and synod leaders. Reverend Salafai Mika, a candidate of the NZMC, was educated at Trinity College, Auckland and, when he graduated, was available and equipped to serve a bilingual congregation. His first choice was a multi-ethnic congregation in Epsom, Auckland, but he was unsuccessful in his application. In 1990, he was appointed to his third choice, a vacancy at an English speaking church in Dunedin.

In 1992, a review of ministers' profiles was made by the New Zealand Stationing Committee and it was noted that Mika's bilingual capability made him suitable for the overseeing of a multi-ethnic congregation. After this review, Mika was reappointed to the multi-ethnic church of Saint Paul's, Otara.

Mika told the writer how complicated his pastoral ministry at Saint Paul's Church had been. One of the complications was that, although there was a large majority of Samoan members

at the church, there was one *palagi* member and two Tongans, so that English was necessarily the language of services. Hence, he made transferrals: the *palagi* was to be transferred to the English-speaking Methodist congregation in Papatoetoe and the two Tongans to the Tongan Methodist Church at Preston Road, Otara. The transferral that he then made was to establish a Samoan congregation like the other ethnic congregations that were run by Samoans under the NZMC. According to Mika, the decision which he had made was seen by some Samoan members as an abuse of power, overruling the decision of the church (Saint Paul's church), and, following the transferrals, a public breach arose between the minister and the Samoan members.²⁸¹

Vigorous disagreements arising from this breach led Mika to resign from the church in 1995. Mika expressed gratitude to the NZMC for offering him such a generous opportunity to serve in the NZMC, and he notified the Connexion Office of his last days of service and of the decision which had been made to transfer himself and his family to the MCS.²⁸²

In making plans for the new church, Mika hosted a meeting at his house with a group who had decided to transfer to the MCS, and resolved, on the first Sunday of October, 1995, that a seeker service for the confirmation of members would be held at the PICC chapel at Wylie Road, Manukau. The service was attended by thirty one families who, at the end of the service, declared their membership of the MCS. Some members were from Saint Paul's Church and some were from Ponsonby Methodist Church. The official opening of the church was held at Mangere Recreational Centre and was marked by an opening service led by the Reverend Mila Maefau, Superintendent of the Tutuila MCS Synod.

For his superannuation and long service the Reverend Mika received a cheque for a total of NZ\$33,000.00 from the New Zealand Methodist Church. With that money Mika bought a house in Papatoetoe which was used by the new church to hold its weekly services and other activities. This relieved the newly formed church of the burden of financing a new home for the minister and his family. Until 2003, they rented the church hall of the Papatoetoe Anglican Church for their Sunday services.

From 1995, the new congregation began organising fundraising activities to build their own church. According to Mika, the church had a permanent contract with some Pukekohe farms

²⁸¹ Interview with church member, July 12, 2011.

²⁸² Church member, interview.

to pick strawberries and potatoes and cut and collect onions and pumpkins. They received a cheque for NZ\$53,000.00 for their farm work during their first term of contract. Collecting cans and paper for recycling and cleaning at national parks and stadiums after international games also contributed to their fundraising project. Besides farm work, they organized social nights and bingo for fundraising purposes. The new church bought land at Puhinui, Papatoetoe, and on that land in 2002, they built a three building project: the church, the hall, and the minister's house. In 2003, the new congregation completed its project and opened the new *falesa*, the hall, the minister's house and the car park at a cost of NZ\$ 2,397,853.12.²⁸³

At the commencement of the project, thirty one families, numbering about 200 members, were working on it. However, as the project proceeded, seventeen *matafale* withdrew from the church leaving fourteen *matafale* to complete the project. According to some church members, some *matafale* migrated to Australia and some *matafale* felt the pressure of the work, was too great. The cost was simply too high for such a small number of people.

6.1.2 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Kelston 1995

With the approval of his candidacy by the NZMC Conference held at New Plymouth in 1986, the Reverend Elisara Elisara, pioneer of the MCS in Kelston, Auckland, entered St John's Theological College, Auckland. Graduated and ordained as an accredited minister in 1989, Elisara's first appointment was to the Glen Eden English-speaking congregation where he worked with his co-pastor the Reverend Henry. In 1991, the incumbency of the Methodist church at New Lynn was vacant, as the pastor had left, and it was now, by the decision of the New Zealand Connexion office, to be brought under the supervision of the Reverend Elisara. The pastoral care needs of the Henderson and Kelston Samoan congregations, being without a pastor, were also served by the Reverend Elisara pending further action by the NZMC Connexion office.

The Reverend Elisara, while serving in the New Zealand Methodist church, still dreamt that one day he would serve the Samoan Methodist Conference. To quote Elisara's own words:

²⁸³ The cost of the projects was: Church: NZ\$596,194.87, furniture NZ\$82,500.00; Hall: NZ\$ 891,099.00, furniture NZ\$ 68,800.00; Minister's house: NZ\$365,721.75, furniture NZ\$80,000.00; Car Park: NZ\$544,837.50, facilities NZ\$231,300.00. Total cost NZ\$2629,153.12 (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Papatoetoe, Tala o le Galuega: The History of the Construction of the Project, Report Presented to the Official Dedication of the new Complex, April 12, 2003). 3.

...ua ou lagona ua ou toe fia foi e auauna i le mea na ou iloa ai le Tusi Paia, ma iloa ai le tala o le Faaolataga...sei fai sou aoga aua oute sau mai Samoa, oute lei galue i le Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa.²⁸⁴

Translation.

...I feel a need to return to where I first learnt of, and about the Bible, and especially the good news of Salvation... I need to contribute in the Samoan Church because I never did so while I was back in Samoa.

When the *Sinoti Samoa* was approved by the New Zealand Conference in 1995, and pending its official inauguration in 1996, an elected superintendent of the *Sinoti Samoa*, was elected to Glen Eden parish, where the Reverend Elisara was already the parish minister while Elisara was to be re-appointed to another congregation. The appointment of a new minister to Glen Eden was rejected by most members of Kelston, as they did not want their pastor, Reverend Elisara, to be re-appointed to another congregation, as their relationship was well-established. Elisara saw this change of appointment as a personal slight and, although dissatisfied, saw this as an opportunity to achieve his dream of transferring to the Samoan Conference. The NZMC requested him to reconsider his resignation and remain in service in the NZMC, but Elisara had already made a decision to serve the rest of his days in ministry in the Samoan Conference. Elisara's view was that the contention over leadership within the church provided the opportunity for him to accomplish his dream. Upon his resignation, after five years of service in the NZMC, the Reverend Elisara expressed his gratitude to the NZMC for the opportunity to serve in the Samoan ministry under the NZMC.²⁸⁵

In 1995, when Elisara left the New Zealand Methodist Church, he was later joined by thirteen families of the Glen Eden parish (those who felt the need to transfer their membership to the Samoan Conference) and started a new church under the Samoan Conference. In the same year, 1995, the new church was officially endorsed by the Samoan Conference, which also appointed Elisara to minister to the new church. The Kelston Intermediate School Hall was hired for the holding of services at \$40.00 per Sunday. When the new church required collateral to secure a loan to purchase a property, Reverend Elisara decided to sell one of his own properties as a contribution to the mortgage to purchase a new house for the church.

²⁸⁴ Interview with church member, May 22, 2011.

²⁸⁵ Church member, interview.

The newly formed church now has its own property, comprising of a two storey building, a *falesa*, a hall and a car park. The early progress of the parish was, sadly, not to continue and at the time of writing, the legal status of the church's property is under investigation. In early 2011 the Bank of New Zealand gave notice of the sale of the church's properties to recover an outstanding balance of over \$260,000.00, which had to be paid urgently to avert further legal action. The bank's notice alerted the members to matters of which they had no knowledge and led to an internal investigation of the events which led to this financial crisis.²⁸⁶

The alleged mishandling of funds that gave rise to this crisis was investigated by the *Komiti o Faifeau* meeting in September 13, 2010, in Samoa. Once the investigation was launched, the congregation was informed of the matter.²⁸⁷ Fortunately, the parent church, which was committed to the support of its member churches, took responsibility for settling the debt and ensuring that the parish retained its property. The ministers involved in the case were, instead of being charged with crimes in court, reappointed to another ministerial post within the Samoan Conference.

There is a common saying amongst church people, when a minister is accused of crimes, '*...aua tatou te faamasinoina auauna a le Atua, e faamasino lava ele Atua ana auauna*' ...let us not judge God's servants, God Himself judges His own servants'. This creates fear and submission and, as a result, constrains one's desire to speak the truth. Hence, people's silence, without interference, will allow a leader to persist in the exercise of autocratic power.

Feiloaiga Taulealeausumai makes a similar observation when she argues that this arise;

...as a consequent effect of the Samoans been taught Christianity in a fundamentalist and literal way, stating that 'any answers to life's doubts and questions lie within the Bible' and this is where Samoans entrap themselves in biblical rhetoric that serves to

²⁸⁶ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, *Minutes of the Ministerial Committee (Fono Komiti o Faifeau)* (Matafele: Apia, September 13, 2011, 230).

²⁸⁷ The outstanding balance was resolved by the *Komiti o Faifeau* in a meeting on November 13, 2011 through compensation by the parent church, while the congregation repays it to the church at a low rate. The minister involved was relocated to another ministerial post of the Samoan Conference. (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, *Minutes of the Ministerial Committee (Fono Komiti o Faifeau)* (Matafele: Apia, September 13, 2011, 230).

challenge an individual's own potential and ability to determine an authentic expression of spirituality, philosophy and theology of life and purposes.²⁸⁸

The Kelston church is currently managing its debt to the Samoan Conference, and its properties are now under the care of the church.

6.1.3 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Flatbush 2007

6.1.3.1 *The Beginning*

In 1990, the incorporated Samoan group of the New Zealand Baptist Church at Dawson Road, Otara, won approval from the Baptist Board to host its own Samoan ministry at the church. Given this opportunity, the Samoan group organised its ministry in a similar way to that of the *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS)* or Congregation Christian Church of Samoa. When the group considered calling their own Samoan pastor to exercise the Samoan ministry, the *EFKS* system of appointment, a congregational call, was used. This involved a ballot of the members of the new church for their pastor. Malaefatu Seumanu²⁸⁹ won the election and was appointed pastor of the Samoan group in 2001. This was followed by the induction service, led by the *Palagi* minister of the Baptist church to inaugurate Seumanu's pastoral ministry to the Samoan group. However, as a result of disagreements over his qualifications, and thus eligibility, Pastor Seumanu eventually decided to return to the Samoan Methodist church where he had earlier served as lay preacher.

In early 2006, Seumanu and six families withdrew from the Baptist church and founded the Independent *Manumalo Kerisiano Samoa (MKS)*, or the *Victorious Samoan Christian Church (VSC)*, which ministered in accordance with the *EFKS* pattern of ministry. Seumanu became minister of the *MKS*, and in the same year, was approached by the Reverend Ioane Tupo, secretary of the MCS Auckland-based Synod, who persuaded him to transfer to the MCS. Seumanu was known to Ioane Tupo as a former lay Methodist preacher from the

²⁸⁸ Feiloaiga J. Taulealeausumai, "The Samoan Face of God", (master's thesis, University of Victoria Wellington, 1994), 80.

²⁸⁹ Malaefatu Seumanu, was a former Samoan Methodist lay preacher at the SMC Grey Lynn. He then transferred to the Baptist church, where he had been minister of the church since 1990. He was invited by the Samoan group into the *Manumalo* church to be minister for the Samoan ministry in 2006 and in 2007, he converted the Samoan group to the SMC. (Interview with church member, May 12, 2011).

records of Grey Lynn Methodist Church before he had transferred first to the Baptist church and later to the *MKS*.²⁹⁰

Ioane's request to Seumanu to convert the *MKS* congregation to the MCS created conflict within the *MKS*, which led to a split in early 2007. The split resulted in four families, who refused to transfer to the MCS, remaining in the *MKS*, while the other families supported Seumanu's proposal and converted to the MCS in 2007. The reason for the refusal of the four families to transfer their allegiance to the MCS was unclear.

In September 2007, the new church was officially opened at Grey Lynn Methodist Church with three *matafale*. In 2008, the Auckland based synod tabled a motion to be presented at the Samoan Conference of 2008 for Seumanu to be appointed a minister of the conference and for the new church to be registered as a congregation of the home conference. The conference approved the new church memberships as well as Seumanu's ministerial status and the conference appointed the Reverend Taele Tolai to Flat Bush, while Seumanu was appointed to the MCS Head office.²⁹¹

One of those involved in founding the congregation formed by Seumanu in the MCS described the concerns that led to the decision:

E leai se lumanai o fanau i le lotu, e le pei ole EFKS e iai Malua, ma le Metotisi e iai latou aoga faa-faifeau, e aooga ai. O matou, e fai lava ele faifeau faaiuga ma polokalame, e aunoa ma se taiala e lima taitaiina ai le lotu mo le lumanai.²⁹²

Translation.

I feel for the future generations and can see the advantage of further study offered by the Congregational Christian Church and the Methodist Church through their theological colleges. As it is, we pastors make church decisions and plan out programs without guidance or manuals to help us along the way.

²⁹⁰ Interview with church member, May 12, 2011. This church member was an Assembly of God member but when he returned to New Zealand from Australia in 1990, stayed away from church for quite some time until, in 2000, he attended the Baptist church his wife's uncle attended. In 2006, he was one of the departing members who had formed the *Independent Manumalo Kerisiano church*. In 2007, he again supported the transferral of the church to the MCS, and for the first time became a MCS convert and is now an active member of the MCS in Flatbush. This piece of oral history is not recorded in a church diary.

²⁹¹ Ekalesia Metotisi Flatbush, Api o le Galuega, Church Dairy, 2007,1.

²⁹² Church member, interview.

This member, after being involved in a series of church transitions, a founder of the MCS church saw no future for the church (*MKS*), due to the lack of theological training institutions at which to train its pastors in the structure, doctrines, theology and ministerial formation upon which the church's successful long-term evangelical mission would depend.

However, in 2012, four years after its establishment (2008-2012), the church is economically unsustainable. The church currently functions with only five *matafale*, and is renting properties and facilities for the minister's accommodation and its services and, if past experience can be applied, the congregation will be unsustainable in the long term.

6.2 MISSIONARY CHURCHES

The missionary churches are those referred to in this study as newly formed churches which were established under the auspices of the Auckland Synod. It was in 2006 that the Auckland District Synod appealed to the Samoan Methodist Conference for a missionary enterprise, to extend planting of the Samoan Methodist mission in Auckland.

The reason for the appeal was that almost ten years had elapsed since the planting of the initial congregations and growth had come to a standstill. The Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, Superintendent of the Auckland Synod wanted Samoan Methodism to be established in parts of Auckland in which the Samoan population had become concentrated in recent years. To accomplish that mission, the Synod sought the appointment of a local Samoan missionary. Moreover, the appeal, if approved by the Samoan Conference, would create new posts to which Conference ministers could be recruited to expose them to new contexts of ministry abroad.

In 2006, the Reverend Laauli Leiaataua, responded to the appeal of the Auckland District Synod to the Samoan Conference of 2006 for a missionary minister, and was appointed as local missionary for the Auckland Synod.²⁹³

6.2.1 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa Panmure 2007

The Reverend Laauli Leiaataua started his missionary work with one extended family in Panmure. This family was closely related to Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, Superintendent of the Auckland Synod, whom Vaiao had earlier approached to work with the missionary to start a

²⁹³ Interview with church member, June 15, 2010.

new church in Panmure. In this extended family, there were five founding *matafale* of the church and later, in early 2007, two new *matafale* joined.

It took a year for the missionary minister to establish a good relationship with people prior to the official opening of the church. The agreement of the seven *matafale* to start the church was officially marked by the opening service held at the MCS Otahuhu Parish on the 4th of March, 2007. Monetary gifts of \$13,497.90 were collected after the service from synod ministers and people attending the opening service as their contribution to the development of the church. By the decision of the Samoan Conference of 2007, the membership of the new church was endorsed and its first pastor, Reverend Ierome Pio, was appointed, while the Reverend Laauli was appointed parish minister of the Mount Roskill church.²⁹⁴

The church's missionary book records that divisions within the congregation led five of the original *matafale* to leave. On hearing this, the Otahuhu parish minister, who supervised the congregation, approached the Superintendent of the Synod and asked for advice. The Synod leader advised the parish minister to meet with the remaining *matafale*. The two remaining *matafale* were all Methodist by denomination in Samoa. When asked whether they favoured closing the church or continuing, they expressed their commitment to sustain the church. This commitment to sustain the church, despite its size, was to some extent motivated by their perception that to close a church would be a humiliation and disgrace to them. The people involved felt that they were not responsible for the situation and, as a result of this sense of pride which is commonly felt by Samoans, they insisted on retaining the church. Their decision to sustain the church also revealed the strong commitment of Samoans to sustain the church as a central part of their life.

After four years of pastoral ministry (2007-2011) the church currently has ten active *matafale* with five assistant *matafale*,²⁹⁵ a total congregation of one hundred people. This number appears to be a good indication of the possible future size of this new congregation. It appears that finding new people for the church is very difficult. Some people had joined for a while but had left when the congregation's demand for money for the church exceeded their ability

²⁹⁴ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Sinoti Niu Sila Matu, Api Galuega Faamisionare, 2005-2008.

²⁹⁵ Assistant *matafale* were those *matafale* that were only contributing to church offerings when they could afford to do so.

to pay. People, to some extent see participation in the church as expensive and beyond their means; hence, they would rather stay at home without attending church.²⁹⁶

6.2.2 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, Middlemore 2009

6.2.2.1 *The Beginning*

In 2007, Reverend Saomalie Samoa succeeded missionary Laauli Leiataua, when Laauli was appointed to a parish in 2007. The missionary Saomalie with Michael Collin, a semi-retired MCS minister who was retired temporarily by the conference without an appointment because of his wife's illness, started a church under the name, 'Samoa Methodist Church, Middlemore' with three *matafale* on March 16, 2008 at 141 Robertson Road, Mangere. It was not until June 1, 2008 that the official opening of the newly formed church, with its six *matafale*, was marked by the service held in Papatoetoe Methodist parish where the new church was under supervision. The Reverend Collin was made temporary leader of the new church by the Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, Superintendent of the Auckland Synod, pending the conference in the following year for further notice of Collin's ministry.²⁹⁷

In early January, 2009, five new *matafale* joined the church, but not very long after, two of the five new *matafale* left the church for unknown reasons. Nine *matafale*, comprising forty-five people, including parents and children, requested the Auckland District Synod meeting to approve Collin's re-appointment to ministry. The Samoan Conference of 2009 endorsed the new church, but rejected the re-instatement of Collins' appointment as his wife had not fully recovered from her illness. Accordingly, a new minister, Reverend Popole Mapoilesua, was appointed the first minister of the newly formed church.²⁹⁸

After the arrival of Reverend Mapoilesua and his family in September, 2009, church services were held at the Mangere Community House at Robertson Road, Mangere which was rented on a casual basis for \$10.00 an hour. As there was no house for the pastor and his family, the minister stayed temporarily with his parents until, on September 16, 2010, a house at 158 Favona Road, Mangere was rented for him at \$420.00 a week.

²⁹⁶ Interview with church member, May 21, 2011.

²⁹⁷ Interview with church member, April 10, 2011.

²⁹⁸ Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, "Aulotu Fou: Middlemore" Minute 2009, O Lona XLVI o Koneferenisi Faa-Le-Tausaga Talu ona Tutoatasi i le Tausaga 1964, Usuia Foga'a, Faleula, 12 Iulai-19 Iulai 2009.

The newly appointed minister started with seven *matafale*, as the two families withdrew due to personal differences with other members. Initially, Mapoilesua encountered some leadership challenges, as the congregation still supported Collin's leadership rather than the appointed minister of the church; however, this problem was slowly resolved.²⁹⁹

At the close of 2010, four new *matafale* had joined. These new members, from the village of Gataivai, on the island of Savaii, had earlier attended the Onehunga Samoan Methodist Church but disputes with other church members had led them to withdraw their membership. When looking for another church to attend, they realised that the minister of the newly formed church at Middlemore was the son of a chief of their village and a relative, although born and raised in New Zealand. This newly discovered kinship relationship led them to join and support the work of the Middlemore Church. However, it also posed a longer term threat to the congregation's stability: the family relationship meant that they might as easily leave the Middlemore church if the church pastor, to whom they were related, was to be reappointed to another parish after his term at Middlemore.

After four years of pastoral care, the new church, incorporated thirteen *matafale*, and they renovated the minister's garage to house their church services and other activities, instead of renting property belonging to other organisations.

6.2.3 Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa North Shore 2008

6.2.3.1 *The Beginning*

The MCS congregation on the North Shore was formed by three *matafale* who had earlier attended the Onehunga MCS congregation, but had left due to political differences between the clergy and parishioners. In 2008, these three *matafale* appealed to the Synod leader, Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, for a church and their appeal was accepted. The newly formed congregation was officially opened in a service led by the Reverend Ioane Tupo, the Synod secretary at 3:00 p.m on May 25, 2008.

This was followed by a motion tabled by the Auckland-based Synod in 2008, when the new church had five *matafale*, requesting the Conference approve the parish's membership. The Conference approved and accepted the appeal, appointing Reverend Tagiilima Lavilavi, as

²⁹⁹ Church member, interview

first pastor for the new North Shore Methodist Church. When the minister arrived at the North Shore church, one of the *matafale* left. The reasons for this departure are unknown.

The loss of membership posed a problem for the new minister. Finding members for contemporary churches is, as one of the ministers interviewed remarked, far more of a struggle than it has been over the past forty years. This minister commented on the difficulty that faces contemporary migrants in relation to the formation a new church:

...e le toe mafaia ona toe faatupe se lotu fou, ua taugata le soifuaga, ua pau foi le tamaoaiga. E sili ona lolotu i lotu ua mautu a latou meatotino.³⁰⁰

Translation.

...we can't afford to fund a new church, because of the recession and the high cost of living that both affect people's economic situation. It is best to go to churches that have their own facilities and resources.

This is a clear indication of the way in which some people saw the formation of Samoan congregations as being expensive; such projects typically became involved in large-scale fund-raising for buildings and facilities, especially when the burden fell on a small number of member families. This situation is still a reality and for this reason Samoan Methodist church-goers may increasingly opt to attend the already established churches; the established diasporic churches which have their own resources and facilities, the New Zealand Methodist churches and the PICC which Samoan migrants had first attended, and which are financially supported by the resources of the 'mother churches.' The missionary churches, including the North Shore congregation, are struggling for survival in terms of membership and economic viability.

However, the success of the MCS in the Auckland District Synod New Zealand has been replicated all over Auckland, and in other urban centres, as Table 6.1 illustrates. It has followed the geographical settlement of the Samoan population, starting from the inner city and slowly developing into the West and South of Auckland to Te Atatu South, Massey, Otara, Mangere, Otahuhu, all of which have had at least one MCS church, and demand for the establishment of new congregations has grown steadily.

³⁰⁰ Interview with church minister, June 18, 2011.

Table 6.1.

SMC: AUCKLAND DISTRICT SYNOD 1964-2011

YEAR	CONGREGATIONS ESTABLISHED	LOCATIONS
1964-1969	3	Grey Lynn/Te Atatu South/Otara
1970-1975	1	Hamilton
1976-1981	4	Mangere/Otahuhu/Massey/Manukau
1982-1987	0	
1988-1993	2	Mount Roskill/Manurewa
1994-1999	3	Kelston/Papatoe/Henderson/
2000-2005	2	Onehunga/Avondale
2006-2011	8	Papakura/Panmure/Botany/Flatbush/North Shore/Blockhouse Bay/Middlemore/Weymouth
Total 1964-2011	23	

(Source: Sample Survey of Congregations of the MCS Auckland District Synod, 1964-2011)

6.3 CONCLUSION

The historical formation of migrant Samoan Methodist congregations in New Zealand is a dual process that has involved both fusion (i.e. joining together) and fission (i.e. splitting apart). Congregations are formed to meet the specific cultural and spiritual needs of Samoan migrants, then split up for a range of reasons to form new separate units, which remain under the jurisdiction of the larger church organisation. In the previous chapter, the key drivers that generated church growth and survival were cultural preservation, a strong kinship connection and generous support. These key variables moved with the people to new residential areas. However, the formation of missionary churches encountered more factional strife, usually connected to the following issues:

There are political rivalries within the congregation and also disputes between the congregation and the mother church. Some families have differences with other families and

have simply walked out of the church when disagreement over leadership occurred within the church.

Some congregants joined the church because of their relationship with the church minister. The risk that lies in such adherence is that if the pastor to whom they are attached is reappointed to another parish and a new pastor is elected, their loyalty to the new pastor may be in doubt. Such groups may also prevail on related clergy to make decisions that favour relatives rather than the consensus of the whole parish.

The viability of churches that started with a very small number of people, and involved them in huge financial sacrifices, is often threatened when they can no longer attract any more members to defray the costs. As it becomes clear to current members that the financial load is becoming increasingly impossible to bear, more people are impelled to leave the church which further exacerbates the situation for these small, indebted parishes.

The domination of congregations by powerful groups and personalities also puts pressure on adherents in terms of giving to the church, and places undue burdens on people who can not afford to contribute at levels expected by some clergy and wealthier parishioners. The low income adherents who may have been unable to meet financial demands of the church may not be made welcome by the clergy and elite members. Consequently, the poor are often overlooked, leaving the elite to dominate the social and economic decisions of the church which increasingly reflect their expectations and interests.

There were also clergy who betrayed their congregations. They have used church funds for personal ends without telling their congregations, and, when this dishonesty has been revealed, the clergy's pastoral ministry has either simply been terminated or they have been transferred to another post within the MCS. Parishioners may well feel betrayed when they have seen that such dishonesty and theft goes unpunished by the church while they alone face the costs of repayment of the debts left by these criminal acts.

Each of these challenges substantially affects church growth as disillusioned parishioners, who may feel unable to voice their concerns within the church, vote with their feet which diminishes church affiliation and support in migrant churches.

7 THE MCS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHURCH PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As noted at the outset of this study, the second and third sub-groups in the MCS tend to hold differing views in regard to the original purpose of the church in linking gospel mission to the maintenance of the Samoan language and culture. They tend to perceive their cultural and religious identity in a way that is different from that of their parents and grandparents (the first group) who migrated from Samoa. These diverse reactions are shaped by the different experiences of the sub-groups and their distinctive expectations of the ministry and the organisation of the church.

In terms of the historical development in the MCS in New Zealand, and in relation to the current diversity of interpretations and arguments, the question facing the MCS in New Zealand is: Can the MCS survive and hold its adherents without instigating major changes? In other words, can the MCS survive and hold on to its existing current forms, without major changes in doctrine, church organisation, structure and mission formation, while meeting the needs of the new demographic realities in New Zealand? It seems that particular forms of change may be needed, and some may be needed more urgently than others.

This chapter will address the problem outlined above in a range of church practices: in its governance and leadership, and in its liturgy and forms of worship. It will identify the characteristics of those withdrawing from the church activities and those remaining in church. Understanding the characteristics of each of these issues provides the context for the analysis of the compromises necessary to best accommodate the aspirations of the three distinct sub-groups within the church so as to ensure the church's survival.

7.2 CHURCH AFFILIATION

There is a general problem affecting church congregations; the level of support and of church membership in the MCS, and indeed other Samoan mainline churches, is declining at all levels. The rate of congregational decline may accelerate over time, as some young people, who are currently required by their parents to attend church as family members, achieve their majority and are free to make their own choices, which may include withdrawing from or transferring membership to other churches.

Researchers such as Feiloaiga Taulealeausumai, Melani Anae, Jemaima Tiatia and Rosarina Vai, argue that the cultural foundation of the Samoan churches, including the MCS in New Zealand, has, to some extent, become the cause of the falling support and the declining rate of church affiliation in mainline churches, including the MCS.

According to these researchers, some of the blame for this lies with the paternalistic authoritarian attitude of those men, mainly elders and pastors: this has become an influential factor in the performance of ministerial roles of many clergy. The Reverend Siatua Leuluaialii, former President of the Samoan Methodist Conference, in a paper presented to the South Pacific Regional Conference of the World Methodist Historical Society, Paerata, in New Zealand in 1987, reflected on how the paternalistic authoritarian attitude of the first wave of European missionaries impacted upon the ministry of the MCS. Siatua argued that the missionaries embraced the role of the *matai* on the basis that it not only provided assistance in the process of converting natives to Christianity, but also as a way of bolstering their already paternalistic authoritarian attitudes.³⁰¹

Jemaima Tiatia's study argues for a structural change within church communities, which may provide a balance for the voice of youth in church governance: "One is automatically placed in a position of oppression. Those who have an authoritative right, namely parents and elders, give youth a sense of powerlessness particularly within the church".³⁰² The parents' demand for money to give to the church to meet 'family obligations' may lead to poverty, and the need to forge a Samoan identity places some Samoan migrant people in a state of crisis. Melani Anae argues that the absence of youth in the social and community networks is a factor in a gradual moral transition among Samoan youth and that this would affect the church's future growth.³⁰³ In this case, some young people resort to living away from their parents and finding their own lifestyle.

The appointment of MCS pastors to any place, demographic or congregation, regardless of size and economic profile, was made so that ministers could acquire knowledge of, and experience in different contexts of a mission. These goals may contradict the way in which

³⁰¹ Reverend Siatua Leuluaialii, "The Samoan Response to the Gospel." (paper presented to the presented to the South Pacific Regional Conference of the World Methodist historical Society, Paerata, Auckland New Zealand, 1987), 4.

³⁰² Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 9.

³⁰³ Melani Anae, "The Identity Journeys of New Zealand Born Samoans" (paper presented to the Pacific Vision Conference, Auckland, July 1999), 12

overseas missions are administered, where members of the clergy remain attached to one congregation and may hold a conservative view of the current form of the church mission. As a result, this has limited the prospect of the Samoan church becoming intercultural in advocating New Zealand cultural values and aspects of the ministry, because the minister has been conservative in his own way.

Rosarina Vai argues that a church mission in the midst of social change could be effective when the Samoan pastor becomes ‘an intercultural person’. Vai’s recommendation is based on the theory that a pastor’s familiarity with the realities of New Zealand life would make communication easier, aid understanding of cultural conflict, and that the pastor would function with acceptable competence in creating an effective ministry among the Samoan population in New Zealand.³⁰⁴

Laumua Tunufai has researched the motives behind the departure of the younger generation from the Samoan Seventh Day Adventist Church in Auckland, suggesting that the departure of this group reflects the interplay of several factors such as lack of support, the judgemental attitude of the church, youth participation not being taken seriously as they search for a more fulfilling spirituality, and uncertainty about the justification behind church values.³⁰⁵

Reverend Levesi Afutiti, a former lecturer at Malua Theological College, has argued that preaching is a factor contributing to the alienation of worshippers from the church. Levesi has suggested that a biblical sermon should connect the preacher’s interpretation of the text to the indigenous experience of the audience. The result would be a sermon that is not only biblically oriented, but also incorporates the experiences and spiritual dimensions of the worshippers in ways that are meaningful to worship and to the Christian life. However, Levesi states that the problematic methodologies employed by some preachers are narrowly biblical: that is, the preachers’ interpretation is shaped by the confines of the biblical text, without reference to the audience’s interpretation. Consequently, the sermon is alien to the audience.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Rosarina Vai, “Crossing Boundaries to Care: A Study of Pastoral Care in the CCCS for Samoan New Zealand Youth” (master’s thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1990) ;20.

³⁰⁵ Laumua Tunufai, “The Price of Spirituality and Social Survival: Investigating the Reasons for the Departure of Young New Zealand-born Samoans from a South Auckland Seventh-day Adventist Church”, (master’s thesis, University of Auckland, 2005), 133.

³⁰⁶ Levesi Afutiti, “The Fusion of Two Horizons: The Biblical and the Samoan Text”, (master’s thesis, Pacific Theological College, Suva Fiji, 2000), vii.

Contextualization is an exegetical approach employed in theological and biblical hermeneutics which connects biblical interpretations with the indigenous wisdom of the hearers in a more meaningful way in worship, and in Christian life. In this respect, while Afutiti has dealt with the application of preaching in the Samoan context, this general principle can be applied more broadly to a New Zealand context. There is a risk that a sermon will be alien to an audience in Samoa, hence, Samoan preachers in New Zealand need to ensure that their preaching is not alien to an audience of second and third generation Samoans in New Zealand who may have a hybrid cultural identity.

The church under study here, which has been used to provide the focus group for this research, where most of the interviews with members have been conducted, is the MCS congregation in Mangere. This church, where the researcher has been a member since 1987 and prior to entering the ministry is, I believe, representative of other MCS churches in New Zealand. Since commencing the study in March 2009, the researcher has become a watchful member, a silent observer at church meetings and an attentive listener in informal conversations and formal interviews. The participant's involvement in Synod (MCS Auckland District Synod) meetings, Youth and Sunday school camps, retreats, social and cultural gatherings along with the observer role has allowed the researcher to collect in-depth data relating to the aspirations of the three distinctive sub-groups. It was made clear to interviewees from the outset that the researcher's participation in church and synod would be transient and that he had no intention of becoming a leader or power-player in the church.

The role of minister seems to have been affected by the current social and economic changes, which has led to a drift from the purpose of the calling. Questions about the church's evangelical mission, where some contentious issues have arisen about the mission's operation by its ministers, clergy and elders, need to be addressed. If these matters are not addressed, conflicts of interest may be created and that, in turn, will affect the church's survival.

7.3 THE PARTICIPANTS

From a range of ten to fifteen households, ten participants from each of the three sub-groups were interviewed about the ways in which they perceive the relationship between the Christian Gospel and the Samoan culture in church. The results outline the varying aspirations of the three sub-groups and the issues that must be addressed if these aspirations are to be accommodated, and the survival of the Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand is to be guaranteed.

The participants of the first sub-group are mainly original migrants aged between 50 and 70 years old, who arrived in New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s migration waves. Some of these parents are church members who, although they attend church with their children, assume that their children's loyalty to the church cannot be guaranteed for the future. Some parents, whose commitment to the church is not followed by their children, attend church without their children, who either attend churches of their own choosing, or remain unchurched. These grandparents are sometimes accompanied to church by their grandchildren.

The second group, ten participants aged between 20-40 years, is comprised of five participants who had previously left the Samoan Methodist church and five participants who remain in the church. Each group was interviewed both separately and individually. The third group consists of ten participants aged between 15-30 years and each was individually interviewed to retain confidentiality and also to enable the researcher to acquire more in-depth data.

7.4 CHURCH AFFILIATION: OVERSEAS AND NEW ZEALAND-BORN SAMOANS

Statistics for the Samoan population show that, while the Samoan population has increased markedly in the last five years (2001:115103/2006:131,103, a 14% rise), the affiliation of the Samoan population to the church is declining. However, statistics also show that both the overseas and the New Zealand-born Samoans have experienced a gradual loss in church affiliation. In 2001, 98% of Samoans born overseas reported an affiliation with a Christian religion while the New Zealand-born Samoans reported an 86% affiliation. In comparison to 2006, overseas-born Samoans reported a 95% affiliation, indicating a 4% loss (2001:98%-2006:94%). The New Zealand-born Samoans reported a loss of 8%, (2001: 86%-2006:78%).³⁰⁷

This suggests that the commitment of the Samoan population to the church is declining. Arresting this gradual loss of the Samoan population in its churches is a crucial issue for the

³⁰⁷ Statistics New Zealand, 'Religious Affiliation in the Samoan Ethnic Group', 2006, <http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external> (accessed July 28, 2011).

maintenance of the existing mission of the Samoan churches, their structure, their practices, theology, and ministry formation in New Zealand.

7.4.1 MCS Church Membership in Auckland District Synod

Table 1: Auckland MCS Membership 2007-2011

AUCKLAND DISTRICT SYNOD MEMBERSHIP 2007-2011					
2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Gain/loss
3530	3688	3535	3373	3309	
	2007-2008: +158 (+4%)	2008-2009: -153 (-4%)	2009-2010: -162 (-5%)	2010-2011: -64 (-2%)	2007-2011: -221 (-6%).

(Source: Minutes of MCS Conferences, 2007-2011).

The statistics show an increase in membership in 2007 to 2008; however, from 2008 to 2011 there has been a gradual loss. In contrast to other MCS District synods, the Auckland District Synod lost the most members (221) within the five year period, 2007-2011 (refer to appendix E). While, as is indicated in the data for the past four years (2008-2011), this is a small percentage of loss, it still raises concerns as to how to monitor and stem the momentum.

This is not unique to the migrant church. MCS membership records reveal that in Samoa over the last five years 2007-2011(refer to appendix E), there are synods that show a numerical decline in membership. As indicated, two Samoan-based synods in Savaii (Salafai East and Salafai West), lost 638 members. The Apia, Upolu synod, gained the most members (324) within that time frame. While the overseas-based synods lost the most members, the Niu Sila Matu (Auckland-based synod) (lost 221 members) and the Tutuila American Samoa (218); this is a total loss of 439 members (refer to appendix E).

The loss of membership in Savaii can be explained as a result of demographic shift. Urban drift, a process which mostly involves people moving from rural areas to urban areas for a number of reasons such as for education and employment purposes, can result in church members from Savaii moving to Apia. People relocating to urban areas and wishing to retain church membership may join churches that are closer to their new homes, which includes the Methodist churches in Apia. This may have caused a rise in the MCS membership of the Apia Synod (324).

The membership of the Tutuila Synod also experienced a loss of members (218). This is most likely due to the the shrinking national population of American Samoa, which is a

consequence of emigration to Hawaii and to the West Coast of the United States of America. There has always been a heavy recruitment of troops from American Samoa. Moreover, there has been an especial increase in military recruitment over the last few years to support the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Under these circumstances, the MCS membership in the Tutuila Synod may have been affected by movements from Tutuila to the US.

The case of the Auckland Synod is quite different. The Samoan population in New Zealand is not shrinking, it is growing, and yet the population's affiliation to the church is declining (refer to data above). Hence, in relation to the falling support and declining rate of affiliation to the church, the Auckland-based synod is one that is contributing to that loss. Yet, the loss of Auckland Synod membership has occurred at the same time as the three MCS district synods in Australia (Sydney, Queensland, Victoria) has gained in membership. This could to some extent, be a reflection of the trans-Tasman relocation of Samoans to more prosperous areas such as, for instance, Australia. Although data for the past five years (2007-2011) indicates a slowing rate of decline, it raises concern as to how to monitor and stem the momentum of the loss.

7.4.2 Contributing Factors

The factors that may have contributed to this decline will be discussed in this section. The issues to be covered in this section relating to the way in which the church organises its practices, which can be altered if the church so chooses, include: organisational structure, leadership and governance, ministry of worship and the liturgy, religious messages, music, and the recruitment of ministers. Research participants were asked to reflect on how they see the Samoan Methodist church in New Zealand and to identify key elements on which they base their views.

7.4.3 Significance of the Samoan Church

Up until the recent past, the socialisation of Samoan children occurred in households organized around Samoan values, in which the Samoan culture was embedded in relationships with elders; this reflected and defined both young people's social roles and their church commitments. The Samoan language was mainly spoken and thus connected the Samoan culture to Christianity.

For me, first I was told to go to church, because my mum is a pastor's daughter, so in that way, it brings that tradition to our family for us to go to church on Sundays, attend

church services during the week, to respect my parents and elders. So when I get hold of that tradition, I started to understand the church and supported the church. That is some sort of tradition that my parents taught and passed onto us so it never dies, that makes me love the church.³⁰⁸

In this respect, the Samoan and Christian values that relate to many spheres of life, such as respect for elders and parents, actually overlap. Church involvement was emphasized as an opportunity to experience spiritual and cultural belonging. It is clear that, to the person interviewed, the church was the place for instruction for cultural practice.

I grew up in church where my parents took me to Sunday School and church services. My parents taught me to speak Samoan and to be involved in most of the cultural activities of the church. This is where I started to gain interest in church and I love to be involved in any cultural activities. Another thing is as I grew up and thought to myself that knowing God helped me with my studies and that is another important angle to why the church is important to me.³⁰⁹

Because of how I was raised and brought up with, on Sundays, we go to church and we have to do evening family devotions. Also a Samoan church is the church where Samoan children come to learn the Samoan language and be involved in cultural activities. They will learn from there the Samoan way of life.³¹⁰

Similarly, a first-group South Auckland-based registered nurse, the daughter of a retired SMC clergyman, believes her service is rendered to the work of the church of God.

I believe in God's blessings upon my family through serving the church. My offering every Sunday is to prepare the *toonai*, food for the minister, together with my *matafale* in church.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Milo, interview by author, July 26, 2011. Milo is New Zealand-born Samoan who teaches Sunday School and is active in the youth group of an Auckland Samoan Methodist congregation.

³⁰⁹ Tua, interview by author, July 26, 2011. Tua is a third-group member who graduated in Law and currently works in the civil service. He teaches Sunday School and is active in the youth group and choir of an Auckland Samoan Methodist congregation.

³¹⁰ Tua, interview.

³¹¹ Teuila, interview by author, October 23, 2011. Teuila is a Samoan-born New Zealand-registered nurse, who was once an inactive church member. She is now a parish nurse in the South Auckland area, and conducts seminars and youth programs in selected parishes in South Auckland.

Maria Goretti Fatialofa, a Wellington resident from the third group, added that apart from their children being good in school, a framework for teaching and learning and the value of being a Christian had been the primary concerns of her parents when they lived in New Zealand. The aim of these parents is to retain a connection to their language and culture, and also to the people and their homeland, the island from whence they originated.³¹²

In contrast to those who hold traditional beliefs are those who feel dissatisfied with the strong cultural foundation of the church and have opted for alternatives. Unmarried people in Samoa typically remain within the family orbit for longer than do single people in New Zealand. This is because of their economic dependence on kinship in Samoa, whereas unmarried people with an income are free to choose to live on their own in New Zealand. Consequently, members of the second and third groups have decided to live away from their extended families. Nuclear family units, for instance, have fewer opportunities to explore the significance of the integration of culture in the church's evangelical mission. These comments from the second and third groups reflect the expressions of resistance to the traditional Samoan Church pastoral mission:

When I got married and raised my own family and when my parents, who had forced me to attend a Samoan church, moved to Samoa, I thought to myself that this is the opportunity to leave and decide upon a church that will meet my spiritual life. There are many church obligations that involve so many of the cultural things which I hate to be involved with.³¹³

Evaluations of the uneasy relationship between church and the Samoan culture have been observed by some children.

My interest in church stopped. There are too many church functions that involve the church (funerals, birthdays, invitations etc). All these need money. The church always meets to discuss how much to give for each function. They sometimes come into conflict, either between the pastor and members or between members themselves. My

³¹² Maria Goretti Fatialofa, "Mother of Wesley Aretaseta Sialavaa" in Peggy Fairburn-Dunlop and Gabrielle Sisifo Makisi (eds), *Making our Place: Growing up PI in New Zealand*, (Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press, 2003), 139.

³¹³ Sina, interview by author, August 18, 2011. Sina was an active member of the MCS, but left when her parents returned to stay in Samoa. She then married and raised her own family. Currently, with her husband, she belongs to a self-established 'All Nation Church', run by Pastor Warren Retzlaff, son of a former Deputy Prime Minister of the Samoan Parliament in 2010, the Honourable Misa Telefoni Retzlaff. This new church is a product of a worldwide Rhema Bible School, established in Samoa in 1990.

father is one of the chiefs of the church and when he is involved in a conflict, that conflict always comes down to our family.³¹⁴

This participant's view reflects the expectation that the church should be a place of worship rather than a place of cultural activities, such as birthdays and funerals. One participant argued that the pressure she had from her parents, who forced her to go to church, led her to a decision to leave church.

My parents forced me to go to church at the beginning... Now I feel better not going to church, I haven't lost my faith, but I got sick of the church, because of the people. Now I don't feel like going to church anymore.³¹⁵

The participant's decision not to follow her parents' instructions to attend church is indicative of the fact that the choosing of one's religion is no longer a parents' decision but that of the individual. As Feiloaiga Taulealeausumai has noted, it is part of the family pride that parents desire for their children to be true Samoans by attending church and becoming active in the church choir, the Sunday School, the youth group, and also as ushers and liturgists in church services.³¹⁶ Yet, as Laumua Tunufai has argued, church support has been lacking in terms of implementing activities that interest young people, and that young people's talents and abilities, which have been ignored by the older people, ought to be acknowledged.³¹⁷

7.5 IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL DECISION-MAKING IN CHURCH

Traditional Samoan decision-making involves a process of communal sharing, *soalaupule*, which connotes inclusive decision-making. The *matai* of each family represents his/her family in the village meeting and speaks for his/her family. In the village meeting, decisions are made through the consensus of these representatives. This body consults and considers the voice of every family representative in village decisions. Through this consultation process, the decisions can be, and usually are, made without a majority vote.

³¹⁴ Moli, interview by author, July 1st 2011. Moli is a New Zealand-born Samoan, in her late forties, currently working in the civil service. She has been an active churchgoer since her youth. Her interest in the church changed because her father always brought the conflicts that he had faced in church to their family. This had made her spiritual life confusing, leading her to leave the church.

³¹⁵ Tina, interview by author, 21 December, 2011. Tina is a second-group member who was previously active in church but who has since left the Samoan Methodist congregation in Auckland.

³¹⁶ Taulealeausumai, "The Samoan Face of God," 82; See also Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 8.

³¹⁷ Tunufai, "The Price of Spirituality and Social Survival," 38.

Some adolescents and young adults are becoming increasingly impatient with the MCS's organisational structure. Their impatience focuses on the adherence to the traditional forms and styles of worship and a gerontocratic principle of leadership that denies them a voice in the church's decision-making process. In contrast to those who value the traditional decision-making process, those opposing it have identified this cultural practice as a form of oppression that perpetuates the powerlessness and passive participation of young people in the life of the church.

Participants were asked how they see themselves in church governance and decision-making of the church. Two participants in this study had conflicting views regarding how they saw themselves in church decision-making:

... it is the way I was brought up that parents make decisions for the family. There is a time after parents, when we will become parents and do the same things as parents have told us. I guess we have to understand and accept that it is part of the status quo. To me personally, I agree that the voice of the youth should be heard and I will be happy for that to eventuate.³¹⁸

Another argued that it is their cultural immaturity that contributes to their exclusion from the meetings:

We need a voice because we are part of the church, but if we had a chance to speak, the Elders would not listen, as they think we are too young to voice a thought.

Every contributing member should have the right to sit in the church meeting to have a saying in church decision making.³¹⁹

7.6 YOUTH MINISTRY

The adult domination over almost every aspect of the church's programmes can be seen as a way in which adults can impose their knowledge on younger people in a range of activities such as bible studies, social events and decision making:

We just need a voice, like we are still part of the church, not just the church for lay

³¹⁸ Tua, interview.

³¹⁹ Milo, interview.

preachers, Women's fellowship, but children are there as well.³²⁰

On the other hand, some participants revealed that they regarded their involvement with the older generation in church programs and activities as a privilege and as advocating a social and cultural relationship with older people of the community.

Being part of the youth, church choir creates a close warm fellowship not only with my own generation but also feel confident to relate to older people. This develops my feelings of being part of the church. Within the bigger youth (adults and youth), I learned about the community, the Samoan culture and relationship with older people.³²¹

The Reverend Fineaso Faalafi argues that the incorporation of young people with adults is advantageous, as young people learn from their elders. In fact, some old people have never previously participated in youth fellowship, and the fellowship would be a great opportunity for them to participate and to learn the Methodist doctrines and beliefs. It was seen also as an opportunity to acquire some biblical and religious knowledge through bible studies, prayer meetings and by other evangelical means.

However, some young people identified the fact that practices such as incorporating adults into the SMC Youth fellowship restricts the young people from leading their own activities or making decisions in a way that involves their own intellect and creativity. Consequently, it creates and broadens the generational gaps between the three Samoan sub-populations and leads to a diminution of commitment to religious, social and communal relationships. This may lead to young people deserting the Methodist fellowship for more attractive alternatives.

The involvement of older people with the young is one of the problems that oppress the young people. Older people in the youth fellowship should be mentors but not decision makers for the young. It appears that the young people in the youth fellowship are those who enact idiomatically the decisions made by the older people.³²²

One of the second-group participants described why she felt reluctant to be part of the youth fellowship:

³²⁰ Tino, interview by author, March 5, 2010. Tino is a second-group participant. He left the Samoan Methodist Church due to his dissatisfaction with the church governance and its ministry.

³²¹ Tina, interview by author, April 26, 2011. Tina is a second-group participant, and a current church member of the Samoan Methodist church.

³²² Tino, interview.

In bible studies, when I wanted to go deeply into the subject, they (older people) just joke around, like they don't want to discuss it properly. When they don't know the answer, they joke, and that kind of thing. You just can't learn anything from it.³²³

In this respect, Jemaima Tiatia, a psychologist who has studied the causes of youth suicide in Auckland Samoan youth has argued for structural change within the church in order to give a balance to the adult-youth voices in the decision making of the church. She asserts:

One is automatically placed in a position of oppression. Those who have an authoritative right, namely the parents and elders, give youth a sense of powerlessness particularly within the church.³²⁴

In contrast, Melani Anae, an anthropologist who has written extensively on the identity journeys of young people in the Newton congregation of the PIC, took exception to Tiatia's attacks on the elders of the church and on traditional leadership and its doctrines that some had cherished. Anae argued that, through the Samoan culture, Tiatia had focused on the negative aspects of the cultural concerns of the church and its doctrine, thus ignoring all the other aspects which are part of culture.³²⁵

I find Tiatia's claim questionable when reflecting on the fifth commandment: "...honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you..." (Exodus 20:12). Teaching God's divine concern and authority regarding the parent-child relationship forms a close familial bond between children and their parents. Throughout their lives, every person remains the child of their parents. The youth in the church are mostly the children of parents in the church, and the young people support their parents in church and in various church programs. Parents teach their children *Faa-Samoa* and have a significant role in the search for a true Samoan identity.

However, one could cite Colossians 3:21; "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged", in order to argue that, whatever obedience is owed to parents, parents have a countervailing duty not to exercise authority in a way that frustrates young

³²³ Pele, interview by author, April 26, 2011. Pele is second group participant who left church in 2008 due of dissatisfaction with youth governance and ministry in church.

³²⁴ Tiatia, *Caught between Cultures*, 9.

³²⁵ Melani Anae, "To be or not to be Samoan: New Zealand Born Samoan Identity Journey Experiences" in *Measina a Samoa 2000*, (paper presented to the Measina a Samoa 2000 and Beyond Conference, December 11-14, National University of Samoa, Apia Samoa, Vol. 1 Institute of Samoan Studies, 2001), 2.

people. This is seen when older people abuse their power by closing down discussion before young people have any opportunity to make their case. The statement, ‘Do as I say, and don’t ask questions...’ comes close to an abuse of power, and it is an abuse of power when it is used to cover up the transgressions of those in church leadership.

Moreover, it is more likely that the declining respect for parents may be a consequence of other factors, such as *Palagi* peers’ lack of respect for parents, or television representations of other models of the parent-child relationship. The declining respect for these relationships may be the consequence of the behaviour of the elders towards their young people, which is seen and understood to be, in some cases, contrary to what they preach and teach.

Some parents argue that it is a pity for critical young Samoans to engage too soon in a process of rationalisation if it deprives them of opportunities for the exploration of the integrity and significance of their God-given culture of *faa-Samoa*, which is embedded and reflected in its stories, songs, traditions, dances, symbols and language. Customarily, Samoans, in honour of their Samoan identity, have embraced the way of *usitai* (obedience), *faaaloalo* (respect), *va fealoaloai* (honouring relationship traditionally rendered to parents, elders and pastors). Such a relationship expresses the love, esteem, concern, appreciation, affection and consideration which is ideally embedded in the relationship between parents and elders and their children. For such critical young Samoans, who desire to learn about and value their cultural identity, it would be useful for them to first develop their sense of belonging and thus lessen the prospect of conflict. However, the values and practices which are being relinquished by young expatriate Samoans are perhaps inevitable consequences of the decision by their parents to migrate to a place where alternative ways of understanding the world are readily available.

In the wider New Zealand-European culture, the perception is that authority has to be earned; for instance, by presenting the best argument. If increasing numbers of young Samoan people accept this *Palagi* view of authority as part of a hybrid NZ/Samoan identity (as Tiatia seems to do), then it seems that the MCS will shrink rapidly. However, as the interviews conducted below suggest, not all young people in the second and third groups wish to embrace the kind of hybrid identity that Tiatia describes. While they are New Zealanders, these young people also wish to remain more closely connected to the Methodist faith and the cultural expectations of their parents and grandparents.

7.7 WORSHIP AND THE LITURGY

7.7.1 Styles of Worship

Worship expresses the work of the people rendered to honour God, where, through God's gracious action, people can receive the means of grace. Worship services in the MCS have been primarily liturgical, characterized by prayers and singing, with the sermon rooted in Biblical texts and the sharing of Holy Communion. Introduced by the missionaries, this type of worship follows an ordered, scripted liturgy, which resembles a revised version of John Wesley's Sunday service,³²⁶ in which Methodist worshippers participate in communal worship in order to be taught the Word of God (the Bible) and observe the sacraments. These service formats appear so divine and taboo to conservative church leaders that any attempt to change them is regarded as heretical.³²⁷ On the other hand, while the Methodist Church follows John Wesley's liturgy as a guide, some flexibility in shaping and formulating services of worship is tolerable.

Services of worship in the MCS follow the order dictated by the MCS's constitution.³²⁸ Services are often planned and conducted in the Samoan language, where only ordained and probationary ministers and accredited lay preachers are permitted to be leaders of services. Services of Baptism and Holy Communion, which the MCS celebrates on the first Sunday of the month, are usually either incorporated into the main service or into a separate service where it is only appropriate for ordained clergy to officiate. Probationary ministers may participate in the service but are not allowed to lead the service until fully ordained.

The Methodists strongly believe in entering the sanctuary to worship in a quiet and reverent manner, with an awareness of the Methodist traditions of worship. When worshippers come into a session of prayer, they should kneel. During the hymn singing and praising they should stand. Methodist hymns from the Methodist Hymnal are the only hymns used in services; the singing is accompanied by an organ.

³²⁶ When the Methodists in America were separated from the Church of England, John Wesley himself provided a revised version of *The Book of Common Prayer* called the *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*. Wesley's *Sunday Service* has shaped the official liturgies of the Methodists ever since. (Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3:219).

³²⁷ Tunufai, *The Price of Spirituality and Social Survival*, 39.

³²⁸ Three services on Sunday: Sunrise Service: 7.00/8.00 a.m; Morning Service: 8.30/9.30 a.m; Evening Service: 3.00/4.00 pm. Weekly services, Monday and Wednesday and Prayer meetings on Fridays. The times allocated would not be changed, unless the Conference consents. (Ekalesia Metotisi Samoa, *O le Faavae*, Afiamalu, 2008, 31).

In the Mangere parish for instance, during the Sunday morning service, a segment of the service, which is usually after the offering and prior to the sermon session, is reserved for church announcements by the parish secretary, and that is followed by a Sunday school performance. Following the service, the leader of the service greets the congregation at the exit door. White clothing, although not compulsory, is generally deemed to be appropriate for church services.

7.7.2 Reflections on the Current Liturgy of Worship Service

Meanwhile, in the MCS, some adolescents and young adults are becoming increasingly impatient with the routine order of service. Their impatience focuses on the adherence to the traditional form and style of worship that places them as passive worshippers who follow the order dictated by the leader, without being permitted any time in which to testify with their own stories and testimonies.

7.7.2.1 Language of Worship

The monotonous intoning in the Samoan language such as is used in services, which only benefits those members for whom Samoan is the first language, has become a point of contention to worshippers for whom Samoan is a second language. Such difficulties have hindered these participants' understanding of God's message as preached in the service:

Lots of things are said in formal Samoan words, which I don't understand. I tend to get puzzled and lose interest in the true meaning of the service.³²⁹

The usage of oratorical language³³⁰ by some clergy and lay preachers creates an obstacle for some who wish to connect themselves to the spirit of the service. This is something that really matters:

The use of the oratory language (*gagana failauga*), confuses me and when the preacher does not define those big Samoan words in simple Samoan language, my understanding of the sermon was lost. The language they use does not make me interested. During the sermon they don't draw your attention or use examples that you can relate to everyday

³²⁹ Mele, interview by author, July 20, 2010. Mele is a third-group participant and a current member of the church youth and Sunday school.

³³⁰ The oratorical language (*gagana failauga*) incorporates formal traditional words that are typically used in ceremonial speeches during cultural celebrations and which are only valued, and understood, by elders and *matai*s, but not by the third group.

life...that is the way I can't understand and follow the majority of the sermon. Unless they use simple Samoan words, then I can understand.³³¹

Moreover, the MCS follows a lectionary, hence, the sermon often focuses on the scripture and the lectionary assigned to that day. One second group participant commented:

When I finish my class 10 (Sunday school), I have knowledge of the Bible, then I started to listen and compare. When the bible reads the story, I try to interpret in this life, but the preacher talks just the Bible. Some preachers, they just go like just a Sunday school lesson without much challenge. They [are] too scared to challenge it, so that people might think that is not from the Bible, that is from outside. The sermon is strictly just the Bible. For me the *faifeau* needs to be more open-minded. Don't just focussing on those who understand Samoan language...Find new ways to get to the kids, for kids to come to church.³³²

Sometimes sermons incorporate proverbial sayings, myths and traditional rituals that are difficult for some worshippers to understand. Often, those Samoan preachers who are well-versed in Samoan traditional stories choose to preach on themes which showcase their traditional knowledge without meditating on the given text for the day. They may be trying to impress certain sections of the congregation who they believe are the most important, whilst ignoring other sections of the congregation who are struggling to understand.

One MCS minister reported an incident during the first sermon of his appointment in 2004:

During the first sermon when I was appointed to Otara parish (MCS) in August 2004, I delivered in Samoa language. I saw young people in church started to leave and go outside. I saw them standing outside talking to each other and smoking. And I ask myself why? The next Sunday, I still preached in Samoan, the same thing happened to some young people. Then my next sermon I addressed the problem that I saw. From that time I preached bilingually in church, and I saw them remain in the service till the finish.³³³

Bernard Spolsky, a linguist, noted that the problem is intensified as some parents encourage English speaking in their children, in the hope of their children's educational and

³³¹ Pola, interview by author, July 20, 2010.

³³² Mina, interview by author, July 20, 2011.

³³³ Interview with church minister, June 23, 2011.

employment success, but do not foresee all of its effects. Young people without well-developed Samoan language skills struggle to define their own identity within their social environment and church.³³⁴ According to Faafetai Lesa, a similar dilemma is confronting young Samoans in Hawaii. In his thesis, Lesa states that most generations in Hawaii have grown up dependent on English language and American culture, which in fact has had a marked impact on the participation of youth in church and on the traditional activities of the Samoan community and church in Hawaii.³³⁵

Scripture readings are predominantly given in Samoan. For instance, in some services, some preachers only announce the text once, and then proceed to read while the congregants, especially those in the third group, as well as the slower readers, are busy finding the texts. By the time they have found the text, the reading is finished. Some parishioners are slow readers in the Samoan language and the fast pace of reading means they cannot catch up. As a result, the slower readers, and even those who do not understand the language, go to church without Bibles or even hymn books. Kneeling during long prayers may be uncomfortable for some adherents, especially for older people who may have knee problems and who indeed may also have to stand up and sit down a lot during the service.

The ministry of music and singing is scarcely followed by the congregation because the church choir keeps singing new hymns and modifying the old hymns with which the congregation is familiar, by adding new refrains. An older member argued that;

The choir keeps modifying old tunes which only choir knows. When we stand to sing, we cannot participate in singing because we don't know the new tunes. It is best to sit down rather than stand but not sing.

Consequently, most adherents are incapable of participating in the singing unless they become choir members, which simply reflects the fact that their worship becomes passive and possibly opens up a social divide between those who are choir members and those who are not.

³³⁴ Bernard Spolsky, "The Samoan Language in the New Zealand Educational Context," (report presented to the Department of Education, New Zealand, 2001), 16.

³³⁵ Faafetai Lesa, "The Impact of Samoan Christian Churches on Samoan Language Competency and Cultural Identity", 70.

Under these circumstances, the existing styles of worship have placed some people in a state of suspicion and uncertainty in their attempts to be part of the service. They perceive that such worship does not allow the freedom to express the feelings of the parishioners, and for that reason, these (mostly) young people may be seen as silent worshippers

On the other hand, in the opinion of this same group, contemporary worship can offer opportunities to express the emotions in which the worshippers personally feel the flow of the ‘Spirit’ during the service. Allowance is made for active participation from the congregation and there is also an invitation to worshippers who feel the ‘Spirit’ to give their testimonies. Ironically, the original worship of the Methodists was criticised by Anglicans because of the way in which it allowed people to express their emotions and to offer their testimonies. For those who feel this shortfall, charismatic worship has become an option. One church member transferring to one of the new churches argued:

The church that I am attending now fits me socially and spiritually. I feel moved when the message touches my heart, and is most useful to advise us young couples with spiritual guidance.

The message is so inspiring and I understand the sermon as it preached in English. The service is short and effective in a way that interests me.³³⁶

This was in comparison to the traditional church, about which this participant argued:

The service is very much in the Samoan language, and sermons are too long. The music and singing is ok, but I find it hard to understand the sermon as it is presented in Samoan language, and the church has started to include some Samoan cultural activities which I am not interested in.³³⁷

In the face of these concerns, if the MCS persists in its current form, it risks losing the two groups who have problems with the churches’ current form of worship and leadership.

³³⁶ Ben, interview by author, August 14, 2011. Ben is a New Zealand-born Samoan, who left the Samoan Evangelism church in 2010, and subsequently joined a multi-ethnic English-speaking church situated close to Auckland Airport.

³³⁷ Ben, interview.

7.8 SUNDAY SCHOOL

The ministry of Sunday School aims to equip children with knowledge of the Bible and with skills that will help them to understand Christian values. Such a learning experience offers some young learners the competence and skills necessary to enter into theological education. The Sunday schools in overseas synods face problems with the low attendance of older children in Sunday schools, and this raises concern about the reasons for these difficulties. For example, Sunday school attendance in the Auckland-based synod of the MCS shows an alarming numerical decline.

Figure 2. MCS Sunday School Attendance: Auckland District Synod 2008-2011.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AUCKLAND DISTRICT SYNODS					
2008-2011					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	
	1123	1190	1124	935	-188

(Source: MCS Department of Christian Education and Youth, 2008-2011)

Statistics show that in the last four years, 2008-2011, the Auckland District Synod Sunday school lost the membership of 188 children and this is a matter of concern.

7.8.1 Contributing Factors

7.8.1.1 Curriculum and Language

The MCS Sunday School curriculum tests and rewards learners according to their skills of interpretation and their expression of Christian values as taught in Sunday schools. However, the curriculum brings both advantages and disadvantages to the learners. Frequently, the curriculum poses difficulties for some Samoan learners who eventually fall victim to the demands of the curriculum and face problems of Samoan language comprehension.

The curriculum is conducted in Samoan, the language employed for communication and learning in all Sunday schools, which is an advantage for some children, and a disadvantage for others. The advantage lies in providing all students with the appropriate opportunities to learn the language and to understand Christian values expressed in Samoan. There are other factors that favour the use of Samoan in Sunday schools. Some teachers, for whom English is a second language, find it a challenge to teach bilingually. Sunday school examinations are in Samoan. Pastors also encourage the use of Samoan. Children who do not understand Samoan

well may simply get bored and lose interest in Sunday school and their loss of interest may result in their withdrawal.

Yet some students have difficulty expressing their ideas and knowledge in Samoan because it is their second language, and consequently these students feel reluctant to express their views. Where Samoan is a person's second language, the student's chance of learning new knowledge about the Bible is affected, as is adopting the skills of interpretation and application of the biblical teaching to their spiritual life. The failure to acquire these skills will have an impact on children, discouraging them from studying and learning the Bible and so they may be tempted to leave Sunday school. A Sunday school teacher teaching class five (age 12 years), described the problem in her class:

Children do not understand the Samoan language when I teach in Samoan. I use simple Samoan words when I teach, and some children understand but they cannot answer back in Samoan, unless they were told to answer in English. If they do not understand the lesson presented in Samoan, they can easily get bored and begin to move around.³³⁸

7.8.1.2 Language and Cultural Identity

The problem of language usage is common in most immigrant churches, as Helen R. Ebaugh, and Janet Saltzman Chafetz have revealed in a comparative study of language usage between three generations in American immigrant churches: the '...first generation believes that native language use in immigrant congregations may give meaning and understanding to their worship, while the second and the third generation request the use of English language as inclusive to avoid isolation of them from the church'.³³⁹ When this occurs, tension and conflict can arise in immigrant congregations.

A study by Mullins shows that a widening gap separates the second and third generation from the first generation as congregations experience a shift in language and introduce English language services and bilingual ministers. Moreover, the second and third generations become more structurally assimilated and incorporate the values and culture of the host society.³⁴⁰ A similar tension in the immigrant religious communities in the United States is described by David Stevens. Yet, Stevens argues that 'one of the transformations integrated

³³⁸ Interview with Sunday school teacher, May 23, 2011.

³³⁹ Ebaugh, Helen R F., and Saltzman Chafetz, Janet "Dilemmas of Language in Immigrant Congregations: the Tie that Binds or the Tower of Babel?" *Review of Religious Research* 41, no. 4 (June 2000): 432-452

³⁴⁰ Mullins, "Christianity Transplanted," 23.

in immigrant religious communities in the United States was the growing inclusiveness of their membership. This was accomplished by the use of English language in services across ethnic groups and across generations within immigrant communities.³⁴¹

New Zealand-born Samoans are at risk of losing their identity due to the effect of language loss. Jemaima Tiatia contends that most traditional Pacific churches conduct their services in the language dear to the hearts of the Island-born.³⁴² For New Zealand-born Samoans, this creates a problem of comprehension, as Samoan is their second language. For this reason she recommends that bilingual preaching and intercultural ministers using both the English and Samoan languages should be considered in church ministry.

The study of Pacific languages and Pasefika Identities by Galumalemana Hunkin reveals that the Samoan language is fundamental and important to the maintenance of the Samoan culture in New Zealand. However, Hunkin's research notes that a shift and consequent loss of Pacific languages becomes more important as steadily increasing numbers of Pacific people make Aotearoa their home. Hence, the loss of Pacific languages in New Zealand is a crucial issue in the maintenance of Pacific identities in New Zealand.³⁴³ Bernard Spolsky observed that this problem was intensified due to parental influence in enforcing English language practice as important to education and employment, but without paying attention to its possible effect on loss of identity.³⁴⁴

Hunkin concludes by stating that efforts to retain and maintain Pacific languages are dependent, in part, on each community and its desire to retain its languages. To assist in this process, the study by the two New Zealand-born Samoans, Faamatuainu Mailia and Viliamu Leauga, on 'shaping identity', presented at the Pacific Vision International Conference, November 30, 2003, argued that understanding Samoan language would benefit their learning and exploring significant roles of the church in association with their struggle to define their

³⁴¹ David W. Stevens, "Spreading the Word: Religious Beliefs and the Evolution of immigrant Congregations," *Sociology of Religion* 65, July 1, no.2 (Summer 2004), 121.

³⁴² Tiatia, *Caught Between Cultures*, 32.

³⁴³ Galumalemana Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, "Pasefika Languages and Pasefika Identities: Contemporary and Future Challenges," in Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley, and Melani Anae (eds), *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 211), 197-198.

³⁴⁴ Bernard Spolsky, "The Samoan Language in the New Zealand Educational Context" (report presented to the Department of Education, New Zealand, 2001), 16.

identities and express their Christian faith in a multicultural society³⁴⁵. Likewise, Samoan Language Week in New Zealand supports the cultural significance of language preservation as the key to understanding Samoan faith and culture.³⁴⁶

If English is included in church services, it may run counter to the church's original purpose of connecting gospel mission to language and culture, because Samoan ethnic churches will risk being transformed into multi-ethnic churches. Part of the MCS ministerial role in Samoan migrant parishes is concerned with promoting the preservation of traditional knowledge among the younger generation in the use of language and involvement in cultural activities. This can be supported by running Samoan culture and language classes which could exist alongside the worship activities, as a vehicle for preparing them for Samoan language worship. This may also assist in defining a sense of belonging and acceptance within Samoan communities and Samoan churches.

7.8.1.3 Commitment

Lack of commitment and punctuality, the need for resources, the consumption of time and lack of appropriate training programs for teachers also play a part in the falling numbers of children at Sunday school. Sunday School teachers are not appointed in accordance with national policies of appointment to services which require an applicant to have the relevant qualifications and experience. A Sunday school teacher's appointment depends on a voluntary offer to accept the call made by the minister to those who wish to serve in the ministry of the Sunday school.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Faamatuainu Donald Mailia, Viliamu Leauga, "Shaping Identity" (paper presented at the Pacific Vision International Conference, November 30, 2003).

³⁴⁶ Georgina Te Heuheu, "Samoan Language" (paper presented on Samoan Language Week New Zealand, May 2009. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws>, (accessed May 26, 2009). Georgina Te Heuheu, who is Minister for Pacific Island Affairs, and Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, Labour's spokesperson for Pacific Island Affairs, spoke at the Wellington Secondary Schools' opening of Samoan Language Week at St Patrick's College in Wellington. Similarly, the Samoan language was also the key issue discussed in the Fagasa' 18th annual conference FAGASA, known as Faalapotopotoga mo le Aoaina o le Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa; is an incorporated organization that promotes the Samoan language and culture in New Zealand. The conference was held at Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill. The theme of the conference was; "*E pala le maa ae le pala le tala-Rocks do erode but not language*". Fepuleai Lasei John Mayer, the Associate Professor of Samoan language and chairperson of the department of Indo-Pacific languages and literatures at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, was the keynote speaker.

³⁴⁷ In February every year there is a Sunday known as *Aso Sa o Tupulaga*, Youth Sunday, when young people lead the worship and give evangelical performances through singing, drama and also cultural activities after the church service. On this Sunday, youth leaders and Sunday school teachers are inducted to their new posts during the service.

Some volunteer teachers lack the necessary teaching and preparation skills for the planning of lessons and activities. The methodology generally employed by Sunday school teachers is one where the teacher reads a portion from the Bible while children listen without any interpretive or reinforcing activities. Teachers work part-time in Sunday school since they are already in full-time employment and are generally only available at the weekend.

Providing appropriate training for these teachers presents challenges for churches which might seek to upskill them. Most teachers have family and work commitments other than Sunday School. These commitments overlap with Sunday school commitments and may mean that they cannot attend Sunday school classes most of the time.

7.9 ECONOMY AND THE CHURCH

7.9.1 Church Offerings

The MCS collects routine offerings, which involve a fortnightly *peleti* (pastor's pledge), the monthly offerings such as *Atinae* (church development offerings), *Auuso Fealofani* (Womens Fellowship), *Aufaipese* (church choir), *Autalavou* (Youth), and *Aoga Aso Sa* (Sunday school). There is also an annual *Me* offering, usually held in November. The three categories of church offerings – the fortnightly *peleti*, the monthly *atinae* and the annual *Me* offerings – are the main offerings which are collected through *matafale*. From a typical congregation of thirtynine *matafale*, each *matafale* collects for the pastor's *peleti* amounts ranging from NZ\$5000.00 to NZ\$6000.00 a month. For the *atinae* offering, there is a fixed amount of NZ\$100.00 for each *matafale*, but not all *matafale* give that amount, and the total amount of the *atinae* offerings for each *matafale* range from NZ\$2500.00 to NZ\$3500.00. On top of that is the annual November offering where the contribution to each *matafale* may range between NZ\$100.00 and NZ\$20,000.00. The MCS *Me* offering of 2011 (SAT\$11,727,784.64) increased by SAT\$397746.00, up from the 2010 offering of (SAT\$11,330,038.38).³⁴⁸

Besides that, there are also offerings from the church bodies such as the *Autalavou*, the *Aufaipese*, *Aoga Aso Sa* and *Auuso Fealofani*, that are collected through membership (though only from those who are members of the various groups). Accordingly, for one *matafale* where the parents and children are members of each church body, the family is responsible for all offerings made to each of these church bodies, hence a financial burden becomes an

³⁴⁸ Typically offerings are collected from a congregation through the church secretary and church treasurer.

issue. These offerings, it was argued by Reverend Faletui Mulitalo in his paper presented to the MCS Superintendents' Retreat held in Apia, have become push factors in the declining membership of the church.³⁴⁹

The context in which the church gives priority and in which such levels of giving seem rational, expresses a theology of giving that says, *E sili le manuia o le foai nai lo le na te talia*, or 'the giver is more blessed than the receiver.' Faithful givers see it as offering their best for the church. Yet, despite the cultural significance of giving, the financial pressure on families to meet that expectation causes some of them to desert the church.

In addition, some parishioners have noted that, even though they have managed their own giving for the church, they have been affected by the related occasions of other churches.³⁵⁰ On these occasions, adherents also give money. For instance, there are times when local ministers visit their families in New Zealand, and the church minister invites them to preach at Sunday services. Individual *matafale*'s contributions may range from NZ\$10.00 to ND\$50.00 for a visiting minister's pledge. Through invitations received by the church from other congregations, or from *mafutaga a nuu*, village fellowships, the church also asks for donations of money. These donations vary depending on decisions made by the church; the donations are mainly collected from the pockets of church members, and are solicited in addition to the regular church offerings.³⁵¹

The contracting labour market and increasing unemployment in the New Zealand industrial workforce has constricted the income of many families. Some working parishioner's claim that their five working days have been cut down to four and that they have lost the opportunity for overtime work. This declining income impacts on an already tight budget. A lot of families face difficulties in securing credit because they have borrowed large amounts of money but have a reduced ability to repay their loans. For instance, if a person borrows money from within the family, but is unable to repay, he/she cannot keep going to the family to borrow money, and thus they may opt to take loans from instant finance companies. The

³⁴⁹ Faletui Mulitalo, "Faafitauli ma Luitau o le Galuega Talai: Emerging Challenges in Church Ministry," (paper presented to the SMC Superintendent Retreat held in Apia, October 13-17, 2011), 3.

³⁵⁰ Cluny Macpherson and Laavasa Macpherson, "Churches and the Economy of Samoa", *The Contemporary Pacific* 23, no. 2 (2011): 306

³⁵¹ The normal SMC offerings are: the major annual offering usually held in November (*Faiga Taulaga*); the retired ministers (*taulaga faifeau malolo*), Pacific National Council of Churches (*taulaga o le PCC*), Bible fund (*taulaga o le Tusi Paia*), a fund for Sunday School and Youth (*taulaga Aoga Aso Sa ma Autalavou*), a fund for church missionary work (*taulaga o nuu ese*), and the SMC newspaper (*taulaga o le Fetuao*).

inability to repay loans because of a tight budget may impact on families who are confronted with difficulty in securing credit. This may perhaps result in some church families' decisions to leave church temporarily because they have to increase their mortgages. They intend to re-join the church later if and when their finances improve.³⁵²

This point raises a few questions as to why people choose to leave church when they cannot meet the expected levels of contribution. Why do they not instead feel able to reduce their contributions and continue to attend? The reasons may come from different sources. There is no regulation to enforce any giving to the church. Failure to donate will not cause any church members to be imprisoned. Adherents have the right to give whatever they can afford as provided by the constitution, but the pressure confronting giving comes from their sense that they will be embarrassed to go to church if they cannot meet expectations. Sometimes the pressure comes from other adherents saying that if they are not contributing to the church, they are an embarrassment to it. Apart from that, pressure comes from the clergy who encourage giving at suggested levels in order to raise the economic profile of the congregation. This is contrary to the theology of giving to the church, which states that giving is a free-will gesture and that it does not matter how much each parishioner gives. As the combination of these pressures becomes a burden to some families, they finally opt to leave the church.

7.9.2 Public Display of Member's Donations

In the MCS and indeed in other churches, every Sunday service (usually during the morning service) there is a section set aside for church announcements made by the church secretary. At this time, the congregation is informed of all the weekly plans, and the last of the announcements concerns each *matafale's* donations, made as church offerings assigned for each Sunday. The church secretary, after collecting family donations at the door of the church as people enter to worship, reads out each family's donation and the final total.

Certain denominations of the church, however, treat giving as a matter of personal conscience and do not publicly announce member's donations. These include the tithing churches: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This raises the question that if the donation made to glorify God is not announced does that mean

³⁵² Macpherson, Cluny and Laavasa, "Churches and the Economy of Samoa", 318.

that God does not appreciate the offering? Some adherents of the Samoan Methodist Church argue that the practice of announcing the amount of each donation favours the wealthy members and social elite of the church who donate substantial amounts to the church, but is embarrassing and a source of annoyance to low-income givers who are only able to give a small amount as a contribution:

My dad loves to hear his name to be called out, because he gives a large amount of money. To me, his giving is not for the blessing but for glorification.³⁵³

The practice is ok with me but at some stage, the one who reads out donations reads those who put in and those not. Reading out the names that are not putting in money is a disgrace to that family.³⁵⁴

This was not the case to one third-group participant, as he believed that giving to the church is something that is done to glorify God. He accepted the public display of member's donations:

God sees how much each gives for the church. I don't really mind reading out, as long as my parents know I'm contributing. I accept the way as it is.³⁵⁵

An elderly orator when asked to reflect on the issue of reading out donations in church stated succinctly:

I don't want to drop any of my offering made for the church. It is of no use of talking, but my service should follow my words. Words do not go by themselves, but your service speaks louder than words. This is why I try to do the best for my offering to the church.³⁵⁶

The status of the title also determines the size of the offering made to the church, regardless of a family's financial standing. In general, the service that some *matais* have rendered to the church and to society has seemed to focus on the philosophy of, "...actions speak louder than words". The people do not want to disgrace the dignity and pride of the family title by offering a contemptible service. This means, for instance, that in the chief's donation is

³⁵³ Moli, interview.

³⁵⁴ Milo, interview.

³⁵⁵ Tua, interview.

³⁵⁶ Interview with church elder and orator, July 5, 2011.

expected to exceed the amount required. Where church obligations require fine mats and food, the chiefs are expected to bring large fine mats and generous contributions of food. It is a disgrace if a *matai* who talks a great deal about making decisions that require money and material offerings is then unable to meet either of these obligations.

However, this practice can cause a social divide between the high and low income sections of the church membership. The financially secure members may dominate the making of economic decisions somewhat, by declaring how much they themselves can afford, while the economically disadvantaged members bear the consequences of unrealistic economic decisions.

The significance of the practice of reading out the amounts of parishioners' donations is derived from the Samoan cultural context of the *sii faaaloalo*.³⁵⁷ The public announcement of these *faaaloaloga* is a symbol of the appreciation and respect attributed to the host family for the presents they have offered to the *matai*. The practice of reading out donations in church services is a connection to this Samoan cultural context, where the donation made by every member, offered as an expression of love and service to glorify God, is acknowledged and respected.

7.9.3 The Cultural and Economic Significance of Giving to the Church

Fepai Kolia, a former secretary of the Samoa National Christian Churches (NCC), addressed the objection raised by members of the community that the financial and other material demands of the church contribute to poverty in Samoa, by arguing that for many Samoans great spirituality equates with abundant prosperity.³⁵⁸ This is evident in the case of one of the MCS congregations in Safotu Savaii.

In the year 2001, a former minister of the church in the village of Safotu, Savaii, declared at a church meeting that it would be better to abort the presentation of material and cash gifts to ministers and church authorities, *faaaloaloga*, when hosting special church occasions. An

³⁵⁷ When a family hosts occasions such as the *saofai* (conferral of chief titles), *faaipoipoga* (weddings), or *maliu* (funeral), friends and relatives give a *sii*. A *sii* connotes what the friends and relatives give in support to the host family in the form of cash gifts, fine mats, food and other items. When a *matai* or a family has presented their *sii* to the host family, the host family, in honour of the support, presents the *matai* with the *faaaloaloga* (a presentation of fine mats and food and also cash gifts). These *faaaloaloga* are usually announced publicly by the family outside the house by one of the receivers of the gifts.

³⁵⁸ Fepai Kolia, "The Church and Development," (paper presented in the Samoan National Human Development: Sustainable Livelihoods in a changing Samoa, National University of Samoa, 2006), 137.

example of that is the *Faigataulaga*, an ‘annual church offering’ usually held in November each year, in which, after each church offering has been taken, individual congregations present food, cash and material gifts to the *aufaigaluega* or *aufaime*, the selected ministers of the synod who go with the superintendent to collect each church’s offerings. The former minister’s initiative outlined a means of alleviating the financial constraints confronting some of the church’s adherents. However, a high chief of the village stood up and spoke, saying:

Your honour, you come here to preach the gospel, and the gospel you have preached speaks of the blessing received by those who give for the church and that is why we give for the church. If we stop that, we will not receive any of the blessings from God. Another thing to let you know, your responsibility is at the pulpit to preach the Word of God, but to stop the *faaaloaloga* is not your duty; it is our responsibility, because we believe in what we are doing for the church.³⁵⁹

This exchange clearly reflects the dominance of the *matai* system in the making of social and economic decisions within the MCS. In this respect, parish ministers may have limited power to influence the congregations in which they are resident, because of the secular power of the village elite in Samoa. The views expressed by *matai* may prevail in Samoa because of the relationship between church and village; these may have less force in New Zealand where greater religious freedom is available.

As discussed in the second chapter, the ethos of giving was central to the development of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand in the 1960s. As an expression of their support and faith in the life and work of the church, Samoans have always given generously to their church. However, the value of this practice in the context of modernisation, where new values and materials attract peoples’ interest, and, in addition the global recession, seems to have become an issue in respect of gift giving to the Samoan church.

It has been argued by some that giving for the church in the form of money and materials, that can accumulate to a large monetary value, is contradictory to a sound theology of Christian giving; that giving to the church should be a free-will gifting, and that people should only have to give whatever they can afford. Giving a fixed amount, usually set high by the church authorities, has become a challenging issue as it places excessive social and

³⁵⁹ This case was only heard from an interview with a church minister, and the date of the meeting was unable to be ascertained.

economic pressures and burdens on families. Parents and elders, who may be beneficiaries of the state, are also committed church goers and they may feel discouraged from going to church when the money demanded exceeds the amount earned. Taulealeausumai argued that young people leave the church to escape from financial pressure. As a result of the public display of family offerings, people have become very competitive about the amount of money they donate to the church. Some families frequently feel the pressure to give the highest amount, even though it may mean a shortfall in the household budget for the week in question and this may impact in terms of a conflict of interest of one kind or another with the party who missed out on giving the highest offering for the week.³⁶⁰

Macpherson adds that, even though some families have managed their own giving to the church, they can be affected by the contributions of others. ‘This can occur when, for instance, the church contributions of relatives’ and friends’ results in financial over-commitment; they may seek to borrow from those around them to meet their basic expenses. This borrowing, in turn, affects the ability of the lender to meet their own expenses’. Cluny and La’avasa Macpherson also argue that if people prioritise the church in family giving, they have less available for other things such as agricultural development projects, small businesses and other family commitments.³⁶¹

Cluny and Laavasa are interested only in the economic consequences of their actions, but there are some families, who value and cherish giving to the church for the glorification of God, believe that this is repaid in blessings from God for their families. They express this by giving the best they can afford, usually in large amounts of cash and material offerings, offered in the name of God and for the development of the church’s mission in the world. Moreover, parishioners invest their money in churches through the building of church properties and facilities which are available for community use. Church buildings and halls are available for community weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations and other social activities such as bingo/housie sessions, during which the church can earn revenue. Hence giving also becomes a material investment which can be used on such occasions to relieve the financial burden confronting some families.

³⁶⁰ Taulealeausumai, “The Samoan Face of God,” 87-88.

³⁶¹ Macpherson, Cluny and Laavasa, “Churches and the Economy of Samoa”, 307.

7.10 CONCLUSION

From the interviews, the participants' viewpoints in fact seem to indicate that some members of the second and third groups remain very committed to the traditional ways of doing things and also to the ministry of the church. Others, however, argue for the accommodation of New Zealand cultural values and attitudes into the ministry of the Samoan church.

There are some church members who cherish the cultural foundations of the church; this simply reflects the influence of having been brought up in households which have a strong cultural foundation and in which, generally speaking, Samoan is the first language. In addition, such church members are, or have been, closely attached to the first migrant group of parents and elders, from whom they learned to respect the process of learning and to conduct themselves according to Samoan principles. Incorporation in such a socio-cultural household network constructs a Samoan spirituality that is mediated through cultural values and practically enacted through the personal rendering of service to church ministers and elders and also by serving the church through the *matafale*. These close kinship networks contribute to the building of trust in connecting the Samoan culture and the gospel of Christ in a way that expresses Samoan spirituality mediated through cultural values.

However, there are those who oppose the traditional ministry of the Samoan church and, instead, wish to incorporate new patterns of ministry which can be made to fit appropriately into the context of contemporary New Zealand. Culturally conditioned practices and church decision-making processes are seen, by those who are opposed to the traditional ministry, to be adult-dominated, which in the view of these proponents, seem to be guided by traditional knowledge and the status of older people. For such reasons, older people have sometimes thought that the seeming immaturity of the younger church members, in terms of their wisdom and knowledge, would not make them good decision-makers for the church. In accordance with such views, young people have to be observers and to learn from their elders' directions, so that when they become adult and mature they will feel obliged to follow the same direction of leadership. This cultural leadership approach has been seen by some young people as the opportunity, on the part of the elders, for the imposing of traditional knowledge on their younger counterparts; this has resulted in the limitation of opportunities for young people to voice their concerns, without consideration of the consequences that this might bring.

For those members of the clergy who continue to remain conservative in their views and resistant to change, in terms of creating activities and programs for young people with which to attract them to church, such conservatism will only result in keeping those who like this approach, while those who are dissatisfied will leave the church to pursue other alternatives.

Giving to the church is a personal decision: to some adherents, the 'giving' seems to be influenced by social and political factors and this, to some extent, has resulted in problems. To some church members, the giving of donations appears to be determined by the status of someone's title and that of his/her family. A high chief, because of the status of his title, might believe that their giving should exceed that of the giving by other members of the congregation. Others, while holding high titles, may have inadequate income for such giving but feel the pressure to give as much as the other high chiefs do. Some families have also felt pressure in their attempts to meet the level of giving of their matai. Others have left the church as their income could not meet the expectations of the level of giving for congregational offerings, while other congregants who only give what they can afford, have felt pressure from other church members when their level of giving does not meet the expected levels. In the past, congregants who have felt the pressure of giving to the church have left. In the writer's opinion, the only hope of retaining the membership of the church is to lower its financial demands on those who attend, as argued by Macpherson and others.

Low attendance at church services is one of the products of hierarchical leadership and of the traditional ministry of the church. Some young people, who are not interested in this hierarchical approach, have decided to leave the church, as they view the church leadership as lacking in support for them in terms of equality of opportunity and recognition in church governance. Given that people are leaving the church because of these practices, the second and third sub-groups, who have felt the pressure of the church's traditional ministry and its cultural practices, have argued as to whether the church can continue in its present form if the numbers decline at the rates outlined. If the MCS insists on maintaining the traditional Samoan way of conducting a ministry in contemporary society, then the church will surely continue to shrink; this is especially likely in consideration of the fact that migration on a large scale from Samoa to New Zealand, is unlikely to resume. The only hope for the survival of the Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand is to secure the commitment of younger church members and to retain their support throughout their lifetimes.

8 CHURCH MINISTRY IN A CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways in which the work and life of the church, its educational programmes, leadership and governance, liturgy and forms of worship all impact on, and contribute to, the falling support and declining rate of the affiliation of Samoan Methodist expatriates to their church in contemporary New Zealand. In saying this, it would be extremely unfair to judge the church for this declining trend without considering how the historical traditional ministry and development of the church has been influenced by the new values, cultures and possibilities introduced by social changes, all of which are also contributory factors in the church's decline.

Social change is an important alteration to the social structure and organisation that occurs through variations in laws or institutions; that is, social change may modify regulations or the ethos governing family life and also policies relating to employment, or even education.³⁶² Social change is an inescapable part of human existence. It tends to have an impact on the ongoing development of people's lives at both the individual and communal level. Evidence of this can be seen in the way that Samoan churches, families and communities have responded to the dominant Anglo-Pakeha culture of New Zealand society. The Samoan author, Albert Wendt, compares the changes in Samoan families, their work, education, and even the church, to a growing tree that changes from season to season. Wendt comments:

Like a tree, a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage and roots...no culture is perfect or sacred, even today.³⁶³

Each branch adds new changes or new qualities of life to the growth of the tree. Naturally, the Samoan migrant community in New Zealand experiences social change and its effect upon the ministry of the Samoan church and the Samoan expatriate lifestyle.

New Zealand historians, Alan Davidson and Peter Lineham, have witnessed the diminishing support for the New Zealand mainline churches, especially in the youth sector. They highlight some of the primary social factors contributing to this decline such as family

³⁶² Clifford T. Morgan and Richard King, *Introduction to Psychology* (Koya Kusha: McGraw Hill, 1975), 395.

³⁶³ Albert Wendt, "Towards a New Oceania," *Mana Review: South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature* (January 1976): 3-4.

structure, class structure, mobility and leisure. Under these circumstances, the MCS in New Zealand is one organisation that has been influenced and impacted by social changes, as is discussed in the following section.³⁶⁴

These new developments have both advantages and disadvantages. Though the desire for new technologies and ways of thinking has improved the lifestyles of the Samoan migrant population, they have also become victims of the failures and weaknesses associated with these new developments. The survival of the Samoan church mission in contemporary society is also affected by these innovations.

This chapter discusses those factors which are beyond the church's control but which contribute to the declining support for it, especially in the areas of secular education, greater religious freedom, a disillusionment with gerontocracy, growing expectations for church participation among youth and the material aspirations of their parents, which have resulted in an increased demand for money from their own children. The self-enrichment of some clergy and the need to forge identity also place the second and third sub-groups, both the parents and their children, in a situation of crisis.

8.2 TRANSITION IN THE AIGA SYSTEM

8.2.1 From Extended to Nuclear Family

The extended family entity, which is a common family type in Samoa, is a unique corporate body comprising of related independent members. Because the family members are all related, their relationship is mediated by virtue of respect (*faaaloalo*), love (*alofa*) and obedience (*usiusitai*). It is in the appropriate implementation of these virtues that the decisions and the authority of the *matai* are accepted and honoured. It is the duty of the *matai* to maintain the family's security by administering family affairs, providing for the equitable allocation of family resources, settling family disputes and choosing the family's religion. The authority held by the *matai* carries a cultural significance which is, ideally at least, shared by all family members. It has significance in valuing and upholding kinship, identity,

³⁶⁴ Alan Davidson and Peter Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity* 3rd edition, (Palmerston North, Massey University, Dept of History, 1997). 102; Peter Lineham, 'The Condition of the Church' in Bruce Patrick et.al. eds., *New Vision New Zealand: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole Nation*, (Auckland New Zealand: Vision New Zealand, 1993), 116.

culture and language in the extended family unit; it apparently supports Samoan people in retaining their 'Samoan-ness.' Individuality has little place in this family body.³⁶⁵

A decline in this extended family type emerged in the 2006 census in the statistics on families and households: the census showed that the most common family type in the Samoan population was the nuclear family (67%), that is, a couple with children; the second most common family type being the one parent family type (26%). The emerging nuclear family unit is indicative of the fact that the extended family type is less convenient for Samoan migrant families than it was when they lived in Samoa. It has been argued by Samoan migrants that a nuclear family structure is more convenient and more viable within the limits imposed by conventional housing in New Zealand. Likewise, there is less dependence on the *matai* and the parents to make decisions for young people. Due to freer access to money and other resources, the nuclear family type is also more manageable for parents to sustain in providing for their children and the family's welfare and security. One of the problems for an extended family living in migrant communities is congested living. Families with a large number of members living together in New Zealand have had to create additional accommodation by building extra garages for sleeping accommodation. On the other hand, it is possible for nuclear families to cooperate in events like funerals, birthday celebrations and other family obligations, even when they do not live together in the same dwelling. So even when people do not live together, extended kinships can, and do, still cooperate. In a sense, the phone and cars make it possible to have an active extended kinship group even when the component households are spread all over the city.

The transition from the *aiga* system in contemporary pluralistic societies simply reflects the existence of new possibilities for Samoan migrants, and economic circumstances that now give them more control over their family situation than they might previously have had. There is also frequently less social and interpersonal tension in smaller households, and this may be the reason for this preference. As these changes occur however, Samoan migrants can have fewer opportunities to connect to their extended family networks, where Samoan identity is mediated through the cultural values, language and traditions that are nurtured and developed.

³⁶⁵ Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 16-17.

This situation is also influenced by the fact that in Samoa kin also tend to be co-residents living on family land within villages, whereas in New Zealand, kin tend to be more widely distributed throughout cities because of the way the housing market operates: this poses greater demands on family members, both in terms of time and cost, to meet and cooperate with one another than is the case in Samoa. As an emphasis on individualism begins to dominate, it may seem to challenge Samoan cultural values and traditions and lead to members of the church community challenging the authority of the *matai* and the traditional ministry of the Samoan church.

8.2.2 The Aiga as an Economic Unit

Samoan migrant families prioritise their employment commitments. As the 2006 statistics show, 59% of the Samoan adult population was employed in either full-time or part-time paid work at that time. These statistics record a 3% increase since the previous census in 2001. The highest labour force participation rate for Samoans (78%) was in the 40-44 year age group. The percentage of youth in the workforce is quite noticeable. New Zealand-born Samoans aged of 15 and over (61%) reported a higher employment rate than those born overseas (58%).³⁶⁶

The number of young people in the Samoan population in the workforce in New Zealand is quite evident. A study by Melani Anae, Helen Anderson, John Bensemen and Eve Coxon on Pacific peoples and tertiary education reveals that one of the contributing factors to the increasing number of young people in the workforce is rising parental aspirations for their children to achieve a higher level of formal education than was previously the case. The research reports that parents increasingly desire their children to succeed in white collar professions such as law and medicine. To achieve this parental goal, parents sometimes force their children to study school subjects that they themselves were indifferent to, in the hope that the children may succeed in professional careers. As a result, some children fail to achieve the higher qualifications required to enter professional occupation and, in some cases, become unemployed.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ New Zealand, Department of Statistics, "Census of Samoan Labour Force Participation" 2006. <http://www.stats.govt.nz>, (accessed March 20th, 2012).

³⁶⁷ Melani Anae, Helen Anderson, John Bensemen and Eve Coxon, "Pacific Peoples and Tertiary Education: Issues of Participation," (final report prepared for Ministry of Education, Auckland University, February 25, 2002), 101.

These young and often unqualified employees are only entitled to the low starting salary rate accorded to their age and skills, and are often in occupations in which employment is not secure; this is particularly so in a contracting labour market. Samoan youth going into early employment may limit their opportunities for further education and, in addition, their lack of academic qualifications provides an obstacle to success in the professional areas of employment. This lies behind government programmes to minimise failure in school and to provide training for those who have left school without qualifications or with only minimal qualifications. There has been a discussion of this in recent public policy, where people are to be paid training allowances rather than unemployment benefits to ensure that the young receive training and become more employable.

8.2.3 Family Obligations

Samoan family obligations require huge material and monetary contributions, which may put pressure on some family members, especially when such demands exceed the amount of income that the family earns. There are great demands on parents and elders for money, which results in parents putting pressure on children who are in the workforce to earn sufficient money to meet church and family obligations. This also diminishes affiliation to the church on the part of the young people concerned. Families who face intense financial demands when meeting church and family obligations, who have committed most of their time to the workforce, also push their children to earn more money.

These pressures mean that children lose both access to their income and access to their discretionary time as they are required to work more to meet these demands. The parental demand for money from their children to meet family obligations has an impact on children who have become increasingly familiar with a more individualistic lifestyle in which personal desires determine how much people work and how they spend their income. As the parental demand intensifies, young people may desert their family and resort to living away from their parents in separate accommodation, in order to gain relief from this pressure. This is evident in the growing number of Samoans living in two parent (67%) and one parent (26%) family units.³⁶⁸

Fuafiva Faalau has argued that the growing occupational mobility and pressure to work longer hours amongst Samoan families has resulted in a departure from the traditional

³⁶⁸ Statistics New Zealand, "Samoan Families and Household."

familial relationships of parents and their children. Parents and working children leave home for work in the early morning hours and return at night. In some cases, the nature of family members' work also requires them to work at night and at irregular hours on rotating shifts; this limits the amount and quality of their time with younger family members. Parents scarcely have time for fellowship with their children, assigning their roles as parental care givers to the older children, who are left to care for their younger siblings. Faalau argues that these new familial patterns are among the contributing factors leading to the dysfunctional relationships between parents and their children, which in turn affects the wellbeing of Samoan youth in Samoan families and society.³⁶⁹

Part of the parental role in the Samoan family is for them to act as religious educators of their children. This role is nurtured through evening worship, where the young ones learn to read the Bible, to pray and to become familiar with orders of service and hymns and so forth. The benefit for the younger generation of these social relationships and parental roles lies in the acquisition of shared knowledge of the cultural values and language embodied in these social relationships. Melani Anae has argued that 'the cost of people's upward mobility is a sense of alienation from the community'. The absence of youth in these social and community networks which, due to the intense influence of material values and aspirations and increasing pressures of work life, would be a consequence of the on-going development of a moral shift among Samoan youths, will also affect the church's future growth.³⁷⁰

Jack and Judith Balswick have viewed this circumstance from a religious education perspective. They suggest that, as people have become more money-conscious, individualism and competitiveness are promoted before collective responsibility and recognition of responsibility to others. Consequently, the function, power and authority of families have all been diminished, and people have become less willing to invest time, money, and energy in family life, turning instead to investment in themselves. This seems to be borne out among

³⁶⁹ Fuafiva Faalau, "Organisation and Dynamics of Family Relations and Implications for the Wellbeing of Samoan Youth in Aotearoa, New Zealand", (PhD thesis, Massey University, New Zealand, 2011), 164.

³⁷⁰ Melani Anae, "The Identity Journeys of New Zealand-Born Samoans" (paper presented to the Pacific Vision Conference, Auckland: July 1999), 12.

Samoa New Zealanders, where church and family institutions require huge material and monetary contributions.³⁷¹

8.2.4 Youth Exposure to New Values

In pre-European times, Samoan young people had an identity that was culturally and community based. Their roles and status were determined by the values and norms of the community. The significance of youth service has been coined as “the strength of the village”. Given this, the value of Samoan youth was in their lifelong commitment to serving the society in which they lived. Because of their service in the community which generated its income collectively and then redistributed it among those who had contributed to its creation, no poverty was encountered. Because of their roles and values there was hardly any crisis involving youth.

The value, place and role played by Samoan youth symbolized service. This is contained in a Samoan proverb, “*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*”, meaning, the way to authority is through service. Hence, Samoans understand the concept of youth in ideal terms of actual service rendered to the community. That is precisely why young people are looked upon as “*le malosi o le nuu*,” the powerhouse of the Samoan village as a whole; they are also considered to be the future of Samoa, “*o le lumanai o Samoa*”. Traditionally, Samoa required its younger generation to remain faithful to their service, but also took pride in them because of it.³⁷²

However, this very traditional image of a Samoan young person is a product of Samoan cultural values and norms, which were fitting and highly valuable for a given time and context that cannot be assumed to exist in exactly the same way today. The role which youth played in a village-based agricultural economy in which there was little waged employment, and that which young people play in an urban, wage-based, economy are necessarily very different and shape a young person’s participation in, and sense of responsibility to their family and to society.

³⁷¹ Jack Balswick and Judith Balswick, “The Future of Religious Education of the Family” in Blake J. Neff & Donald Ratcliff (eds), *Handbook of Family Religious Education*, (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1995), 259.

³⁷² Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, “The Samoan Culture and Government” in *Culture Democracy*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1992), 118-119. See also Elise Huffer and Asofou, *Governance in Samoa (Pulega i Samoa)*, (Sydney: Asian Pacific Press, 2000), 72.

8.2.5 Psychological Understanding of Youth

The changes in adolescent psychological development have also contributed to the declining affiliation of the New Zealand-born Samoans to the church (2001: 86%-2006:78%).³⁷³ Knowledge of this may shed light on the transitional stages of life and how these changes influence people's decisions over time.

According to Musen, adolescence, a word that is derived from the 'Latin verb *adolescere*, to grow into adulthood', is a transitional period between childhood and adult, which begins at about twelve and ends in the late twenties.³⁷⁴

In terms of intellectual development, "adolescents begin to develop the ability to think abstractly, to consider various solutions to a problem without actually trying each of them, and to compare real against possible".³⁷⁵ Erickson regards this stage as critical in terms of identity formation, stating that "an adolescent must become an individual in his own right, independent of his parents and aware of his societal roles".³⁷⁶

Morgan supports the view that an adolescent widens his or her social world and finds himself or herself "able to deal logically with the possible as well as the actual".³⁷⁷ Here we find adolescents struggling to identify themselves with what they want to accomplish and how they can achieve it. In attempting to do so, adolescents no longer depend upon the actions of parents and elders, but rather upon their powers of understanding and reasoning.

Adolescents can analyse a specific situation and draw conclusions on which to base a decision. Their world of new concepts is expanding, and they not only become aware of the world around them, but are also more critical of it. As a result, they will no longer accept the teaching of authority without criticism.³⁷⁸

³⁷³ Statistics New Zealand, 'Religious Affiliation in the Samoan Ethnic Group', 2006, <http://www.stats.govt.nz>, (accessed July 28, 2011).

³⁷⁴ Musen, 'Adolescence' quoted by Joseph Veramu, *Developing the Personal and Socio-Economic Potential of young People*, (Suva, FACETT, 1995), 2.

³⁷⁵ S.F. Shoemaker, adolescence in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, Rodney J., Hunter (ed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 8.

³⁷⁶ Erickson, 'Adolescence', in Anne Smith, *Understanding Children's Development 2nd ed.* (Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 30.

³⁷⁷ Morgan and King, *Introduction to Psychology*, (5th ed), (McRaw-hill, Koya Kusha Ltd, Japan, 1975), 384.

³⁷⁸ Shoemaker, "adolescents," 9.

8.2.6 Social Processes

Social processes also have an influential impact on a young person's attitudes and behaviour. Morgan emphasized three dominant agents in the socializing of youth, which influence young people's attitudes: peer influences, the media of mass communication and education. Peers are those of the same general age and educational level who form the individual's personal social network. They (peers) are exposed to the world and may feel less restricted by parental controls, and thus able to test out adult behaviours. Hence, they will try to think, speak and act out in ways that were not available to them in childhood. Through this group support and interaction, a peer group becomes centred on its own concerns and interests. Such interests may inspire young people to explore other ways of enjoying their social lives together.³⁷⁹

In this respect, this may be truer for those whose peer groups are non-Samoans and those who are not members of a church community. For others, whose peer group continues to value family and church, peer groups may not be such an issue.

In today's global economy the mass media means that the adolescent has a greater opportunity than previously to learn about the cultures of a variety of different people and geographical areas. Global televised communication has brought documentaries, movies, news and other aspects of communication to the masses, informing people, including the young, of new global developments. In fact, the media plays an influential role in exposing young Samoan people to the patterns and influences of worldwide social change. It also provides alternative models of social organisation, which youth can and do actively compare to their parents' Samoan models.

8.2.7 Secular Education

The school environment also socializes young people, specifically through cognitive skills and social values. Participation in the life of their school also lessens children's dependence on the family and creates new links to society.³⁸⁰ Exposure to advanced knowledge in the education system may reduce young people's dependency on parental guidance as they begin to decide for themselves on a range of issues. As Manfred Ernst feared, the effect of advanced education on young people may be that:

³⁷⁹ Morgan and King, *Introduction to Psychology*, 385.

³⁸⁰ Ian Robertson, *Sociology* 3rd ed. (New York: Worth Publisher, 1987), 130.

...with their advanced education, they feel no longer at home in the villages. An increasing number refuse to submit themselves to the authority of their parents or village elders.³⁸¹

In the view of Manfred Ernst, young people who acquire an advanced education may thus undermine traditional, societal, and family values and the traditional church. They may assume that their classroom knowledge can provide answers to the challenges and problems of life. As a result, they may also opt to avoid parental guidance and to depend on their own potential. Such young people may or may not return to their cultural background, because they now view society through the eyes of advanced knowledge and social change. In the context of the church, this process may be expressed in a rejection of the authority of the pastors and elders.

However, educated young people are not always simply neglecting old views but, rather, are putting them into a different context. Samoan youth assimilates the new experiences, new values and new structures of a recent and more pluralistic society in which there is no longer a single source of authority or truth. These experiences may have been acquired via education, employment environment, culturally diverse personal social networks, or intermarriage. The transformation of the traditional Samoan worldview and lifestyle has resulted through the assimilation of, and integration with, this new environment. Young Samoan migrants have the means to have begun to consider and compare traditional and newer worldviews and lifestyles and to choose between them. These comparisons extend to a young person's experience in both traditional and modern church ministry; the organisation and forms of worship in each type of ministry may lead them to consider the former to be oppressive and intolerant, and thus they may opt for what they see as a more tolerant and egalitarian church community.

8.3 PRIVATISATION OF CHURCH COMMITMENTS

With the vast range of activities and possibilities that occupy the Samoan migrant, people have seen avenues for religiosity other than continued attendance at organised religious services. In this way, some Samoan migrants may have privatised their religion. One second-group participant, who was once an active church goer but is now unchurched, commented;

³⁸¹ Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Changes* (Suva: Pacific Council of Churches, 1994), 242.

I feel I have my own personal relationship with Jesus. If I need something, I just talk to Jesus. I just pray on my own. At the moment, I don't feel like getting together with everyone in church.³⁸²

Despite not participating in any organised religion, such people may still be religiously committed; they have just organised their religiosity in a different way. For example, rather than attending church in order to worship, some believers organise times for family devotion within their own homes. Through prayer, bible readings and hymn singing, they commence the day with morning devotions and close the day with evening devotions. This can be a relief from the pressures of dressing up, giving and travelling; these people may spend a more meaningful time in worship and may even feel that their relationship with God is a more direct and personal one.

In some cases, people who no longer attend church still serve the church indirectly. This is another new way of expressing religiosity in contemporary society. A young lady belonging to the third group, who no longer attends church every Sunday, prepares the *toonai*; food for the clergy, and assists the family *matafale* by giving a financial contribution. This participant believes that, in her service to the clergy, despite her non-attendance at communal services and church activities, her actions are an indirect expression of her faith in the life and work of the church of God. However, what is missing is the communal fellowship and sharing in the Word of God that is usually thought to be essential for the sustaining of faith in the long term.³⁸³

8.3.1 The Impact of Employment on Church Commitment

Employment contracts that are organised on a shift basis that often includes Sundays can affect church commitments. For instance, church members such as doctors, nurses and hospital domestic workers, members of the police force, hotel employees and workers in the manufacturing industries and so forth, are strictly tied to employment contracts which include Sunday as a working day. Hence, parishioners employed in shift work can usually only change their work shifts for Sunday worship with difficulty, and, if they do, this will sometimes affect income and their reputation as a reliable employee. Some congregants involved in shift work have argued that where employment is essential as a source of income

³⁸² Mina, interview.

³⁸³ Alofa, interview by author, December 21, 2011

to serve the family and fulfill their church commitments, Sunday employment must be accepted as a necessity. One parish minister, during an interview, said that where there was no other alternative for relieving the parishioners from their work rosters, he would consent to Sunday employment for the congregants thus affected with the advice that they attend church when they have time off from work. Sometimes, congregants who work on Sundays attend church services but they leave service early in order to go to work.³⁸⁴

8.3.2 Leisure Patterns

Likewise, there are also Samoan parents in New Zealand who find themselves faced with many more demands from their children to attend and support their weekend sporting events and cultural and musical activities, which are all planned around the assumption that weekends are “free” time in a secular society. These are things which do not impact as heavily on parents in Samoa where there is less of this activity and where such activity is scheduled around the church programme. This indicates the difference between a society in which the societies’ activities are planned around the church (Samoa) and one (New Zealand) in which activities are planned around the needs of formal wage employment and the declining amount of discretionary time. Once again, because of the variety of these demands, people may decide to privatise their church commitment.³⁸⁵

8.3.3 Leadership Crisis

Customarily, Samoan ministers are honoured as servants of God and bestowed with honorific titles, such as *Ao o faalupega* (the head in which all other titles are drawn together), *Tama o le galuega*, (Father of the Mission), *Auauna ale Atua*, (servant of God), and others. These entitlements were awarded to missionaries, and later to men of God, distinguishing them as people of paramount authority and as spiritual village leaders or men of God in whom was expressed the sense of “authority, respect, obedience, fear and submission”.³⁸⁶

These honorific titles however, can be contested and indeed removed, if a minister chooses to promote autocratic leadership as a means to achieve power and undue personal authority over the congregation. If a member of the clergy chooses to employ such an autocratic form of leadership in the service of his ministry, the church structures, roles and governance seem to

³⁸⁴ Interview with church minister, May 13, 2011.

³⁸⁵ These views are based on the research observation at MCS Mangere and extensive interviews.

³⁸⁶ . Leuluaialii, “Samoan Response to gospel,” 4; Faalafi, “Century in the Making,” 34

be determined by the power of that autocratic leader. This may result in an individualistic partiality and the exploitation of power over the congregation.

A letter to the editor in the Auckland-based Samoan newspaper, *The Samoan Observer*, dated April 26, 2011, “E le pule se faifeau i se Ekalesia,” stated, ‘The minister has no authority over the church’. The letter represented the voice of some people who felt they were being exploited by the power of the minister. The church minister had exercised his power as leader to overrule the church’s decisions in favour of what satisfied him alone. Those church members, who felt tired of the autocratic attitude of the minister, broke their silence, asking for consultation in the decisions-making for the church. The founding members of the church felt inferior because they were being ignored by the minister, despite their potential for good leadership. In these circumstances however, the minister chose to support the new members who supported his autocratic leadership and established a coalition party to stand against the established members of the church.³⁸⁷

8.3.4 Constraints on Renting Premises

Churches, and, in particular, the newly established founding congregations who rent the resources and facilities of other churches to accommodate their church services and social activities, face high market rental rates. According to a paper presented by the Reverend Masunu Utumapu, (a current Superintendent of the Auckland-based Synod of the Home Conference) given in Samoa in October, 2011 stated that of the 23 SMC churches in the Auckland District Synod, 11 churches had rented community halls and other church’s buildings and facilities for their church services and social activities. Their pastors were also living in rented houses with their parishioners being held responsible for payment of their rent.³⁸⁸

Because of the high rental rates, the churches used the rental properties solely for Sunday worship, with the weekly services, and Monday, Wednesday and Friday prayer meetings, being held in the garages of the ministers’ homes. In such circumstances, some parishioners have been discouraged from worshipping in rented properties which are perceived to be expensive, and worshippers seem to be doubtful about the future of the church since the

³⁸⁷ Samoa Observer, “E le pule se faifeau i se Ekalesia”, Letter to the Editor dated 26 April, 2011, (accessed on 28 April, 2011).

³⁸⁸ Masunu Utumapu, “Faafitauli ma Luitau o le Galuega Talai: Emerging Challenges in Church Ministry,” (paper presented to the MCS Superintendent Retreat, Apia, October 13-17, 2011), 2.

money they themselves donate usually provides the rent. On the other hand, some congregants may think that this rental arrangement makes more economic sense than a larger and longer commitment to owning a building which has high ongoing overheads and maintenance costs, which stands empty for much of the time.

8.3.5 The Extraordinary Cost of Construction

Occasionally congregations build or re-build church buildings, pastors' homes, and ancillary buildings. The construction of church projects, therefore, requires huge contributions to church finances over a long period of time. These church building projects, despite their significance to the work and life of the church and the fact that they are regarded as icons by which church growth is measured, may result in some form of pressure. This was evident in the construction of the large MCS church at Faleula, Samoa. This project, according to the report of the Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, the MCS General Secretary, was under construction for almost three years (2009-2012) with an estimated cost of around \$NZ5 million (SAT9.7 million).³⁸⁹

The MCS General Secretary the Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, in an article in the Auckland-based Samoan Observer newspaper, defended the church against claims made by the public that church donations are a leading cause of the criminal charge of '...theft as a servant'. Congregants had been financially burdened by the accumulating costs of the project. Hence, to meet that accumulating cost, adherents were responsible for raising large amounts of finance to fund construction. Eteuati stated that, '...giving for the church is a personal choice, and people feel obligated to give because they see it as a responsibility, but this responsibility should be based on what they can afford. However, the cost is too high for some families who have a limited budget and it may have driven some of them into bankruptcy as the increasing amount of money required for the construction has exceeded the amount they earn...'³⁹⁰. In reply, Feiloakitau Taho Tevi, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches in Suva, Fiji, took issue with Vaiao, contending that the church is, like any other organization,

³⁸⁹ Vaiao Eteuati, "Methodist Secretary Defends Church" The Samoa Observer, 16 July, 2011. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws> (accessed on 18 July, 2011).

³⁹⁰ Reverend Vaiao Eteuati, "Church Rejects Pressure to Give", The Samoa Observer, 26 January, 2012. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws> (accessed on 27 January, 2012).

answerable to its members; hence the church has the obligation to open its books to the members.³⁹¹

People, when confronted with such leadership and governance, can easily be discouraged in their faith and their trust in the work of the church and in the judgment of its leaders. Where their spiritual and leadership aspirations are not met by the church, and where they cannot meet the financial obligations imposed by the Samoan church, they may simply choose to join one of the many alternative faith communities which are available in New Zealand society. People may reach the decision to leave their church because of perceived pressure from other members, especially those of the elite group and the ministers, who enforce giving at what, for many congregants, are unsustainable levels. The competitive ethos and strategies, which are used by ambitious clergy and lay leaders to raise the congregation's, and their own, profile within the church, may have the unanticipated consequence of driving some families from the church.

8.4 ECONOMY AND PEOPLE

8.4.1 Gambling

Gambling also has an impact on adherents' moral and spiritual lives and on their financial standing. In a report on Samoan people, the Mapu Maia service for the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand stated that people gamble because they are under stress when unemployed and need money to fulfil traditional obligations.³⁹² Gambling has been an issue for Methodists since the nineteenth century. The Declaration on Gambling at the 1936 Methodist Conference stated that:

Belief in luck cannot be reconciled with faith in God. Furthermore gambling undermines the binding ties of human fellowship. Gambling is seen as the desire for gain at another's loss, in opposition to the Christian life of self-sacrifice.

This view has informed the decision of the Methodist Church to ban gambling. This includes housie, bingo, lotteries, social nights and so forth. However, these activities have been approved by the New Zealand Government and are registered as activities for fundraising that

³⁹¹ Feiloakitau Kaho Tevi, "Church not Perfect", The Samoa Observer, 25 July, 2011. <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws> (accessed on 29 July, 2011).

³⁹² Mapu Maia: Providing Help, Enriching Lives, "Pasifika and Problem Gambling", Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand, www.pgfnz.org.nz. February 09, 2012. (accessed on June 15, 2012).

will effectively contribute to the development of the welfare of a society, organization or institution. Although the MCS has witnessed how effectively these activities contribute to the development of the church, the prohibition on gambling is still observed in the MCS. However, the ban on gambling within the MCS does not extend to the congregants' life beyond the church and some occasionally gamble as part of their normal social activity, while others who gamble more heavily seem to exhibit declining church commitment.³⁹³

Along with gambling, alcohol and smoking also play their part in parishioners' inability to meet church demands for financial contributions. During an interview, one parish pastor observed that congregants who are addicted to gambling seem to disrespect church when, after spending on such activities, they still come to church but are unable to make a donation, simply claiming that the church's request for money causes family poverty. The same parish pastor claimed that:

People become poor because they gamble, they drink and smoke... Do not take the church as an excuse for the cause of poverty. This is why people look down at the church when they do such thing.³⁹⁴

People are free to make their own decisions and also free to utilize their resources in their own way, but the claim that the church's demands for money are always the cause of poverty and bankruptcy may not always be a fair one. Where it is suspected that members are unfairly evading a degree of responsibility for their own poor financial situation, there will be tension among the church adherents who see themselves as having committed their service to the life and work of the church for the purpose of glorifying God.

8.4.2 The Spread of Materialistic Values to the Church

The struggle for economic success has greatly affected the ministry of the church. As a former SMC pastor noted, "...many people chose to enter the ministry on the basis of economic and materialistic aspirations".³⁹⁵ They are attracted by the large amounts of money and material goods, food, fine mats, clothes, and even cars which can be received by the minister from the congregation.

³⁹³ Savaii Loto, "Faafitauli ma Luitau o le Galuega Talai: Emerging Challenges in Church Ministry" (paper presented to the SMC Superintendent Retreat held in Apia, October 13-17, 2011), 3.

³⁹⁴ Interview with church minister, May 23, 2011.

³⁹⁵ Taulafo Avei, "New Vision of Roles for Methodist Ministers in Contemporary Samoan Society", (master's thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1993), 52.

The consideration of potential material and economic privilege may determine a minister's decision to accept a vocational calling. One interviewee recalled the case of a CCCS minister who worked in a department of the Samoan church after graduating from a local theological college. He was then called to serve a small congregation, but expressed his sadness at having to decline on the grounds that he had other commitments to complete in the department. However, not very long after this, another church which was larger than the previous one and with a higher economic status, called him to serve and he finally accepted the post.³⁹⁶

Furthermore, the congregation's decision in appointing ministers may equally be determined by considerations of social and economic status. First, congregations may recruit ministers according to their academic expertise. They may think that a minister with an academic degree will be able to preach more effectively, or even to be better at pastoral care. Secondly, they may recruit ministers by way of family relationships.

As in the CCCS, some MCS ministers have declined their appointments for personal or family considerations. In 1992, one minister, after serving his seven years of pastoral ministry in one of the MCS churches in Auckland, was reappointed by the Conference to a church in Samoa. He declined this appointment. The reason he gave to the Conference was that his children refused to move to Samoa as they needed to continue their education in New Zealand. After consultation, the Conference terminated his pastoral ministry on the basis of his failure to take the Conference appointment. The discharged minister, having been one of the pioneers of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, left and established a new 'Independent Samoan Methodist Church' in Auckland. In this respect, the decision made by the Conference seems to be weak in the sense that it did not prevent people from forming a reformed Methodist fellowship, and it failed to give recognition to the context of a pluralistic society where there is room to exercise freedom of religion.³⁹⁷

The rejection of the call from a Samoan parish can also be interpreted as the minister's aspiration to remain serving in Samoan churches in New Zealand, where he would be able to earn a substantial stipend from larger, richer congregations. Whatever the reason behind the refusal of the calling in this case, Taulealeausumai argued, "...that the size of the

³⁹⁶ Interview with church minister, May 3, 2011.

³⁹⁷ Faaniniva, *Foa-foa-I-Vao-Ese*, 20-21.

congregation determines the size of the offering made to its pastors”.³⁹⁸ This, in some ways, has encouraged the presence of ministers who are principally interested in self-enrichment, but surely, this does not apply to all ministers who serve in large churches. Indeed, in some cases, a good minister may start with a small congregation, and with inspired teaching and leadership, build it into a large and generous one.

Taulealeausumai’s argument may be a little too simplistic. There are motives other than monetary and material aspirations. Some may desire to serve large congregations because of the opportunities to develop their skills for leadership, or because they genuinely perceive a pastoral and spiritual need that they desire to meet. Such ministers are inspirational shepherds to their flock and they are spiritual care-givers who have committed themselves to the spiritual wellbeing of parishioners.

Material and economic factors also feature when wealthy parishioners attempt to silence clergy and make them act in certain ways. This can however, result in the ignoring of the needs and views of poorer and less privileged members of a congregation. The contrary argument advanced by some congregants is that several members of the clergy have supported their more prosperous congregants, rather than the rest of the members of their own congregation, because they are aware of the economic contributions which the elites make to their income. Members of the clergy have also often expected that the contribution of members of economic eminence would uplift their congregation’s profile within the synod.

Such a situation can be the outcome in cases where members of the clergy only support wealthy members of the congregation while ignoring the low-income members. In addition, there is also the embarrassment for low-income members of being rarely recognised by the pastor, and in turn they feel disheartened about making any further gifts to the church. In regard to this situation, Manfred Ernst observed that:

There is a failure of church leaders to see the social systems, the culture, and the church structures that are repressing and oppressing their people. The result of this failure is

³⁹⁸ Feiloaiga Taulealeausumai, “New Religions, New Identities: The Changing Contours of Religious Commitment” in Cluny Macpherson, Paul Spoonley and Melani Anae, eds., *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2001), 184.

anaesthesia, immobility and passivity. These ministers are silenced by the hospitality of the people, the chiefs, and the requirements of the culture.³⁹⁹

Some members of the clergy have fallen into the temptation of exploiting church funds for personal use without church consent. An article in *The Samoan Observer* newspaper, dated 15 July, 2010, reading: "...church accused of blackmail", reflects the strong criticism of an Auckland-based Samoan lawyer, Leuluaialii Olinda Woodroffe, regarding the lack of accountability of church ministers and the need for transparency in what they do, especially in the context of widespread poverty. Woodroffe also accused the clergy in some churches of emotionally blackmailing parishioners, saying:

...church ministers encourage people to hand over envelopes full of cash at funerals. They control the funeral service they read, you can get up to ten minutes just reading bits of the Bible, making half prayer. Then they all line up at the wake, after the burial and each receive an envelope full of money.⁴⁰⁰

Woodroffe's observations do not mention other possible concerns. These have to do primarily with the economic circumstances of those families who feel under pressure and the way in which these money-raising practices bring about that pressure. It is the cultural perceptions and values of Samoan society that lead people to act in certain ways. Casual gifts are received by ministers when officiating at religious services such as wedding ceremonies, funeral services, baptisms, regular visitations to the sick and other pastoral activities. However, these duties are all included in the minister's pastoral care and, as such do not require additional payment or reward.

In the Samoan context of *va-fealoaloai*, the family who hosts a celebration held in honour of the minister's service also generously present gifts or money to the officiating ministers as a signal of appreciation. However there are, in some cases, some uninvited and unrelated ministers who attend such celebrations, and their uninvited participation in the celebration can be easily viewed as material aspiration and cash greed. Traditionally, the host families have respected such ministers because they are perceived to be men of God, and have presented them with material gifts and cash envelopes.

³⁹⁹ Manfred Ernst, "We need prophets" (lecture, Ecumenism 430, Pacific Theological College, Suva, May 13, 2003).

⁴⁰⁰ Leuluaialii Olinda Woodroffe, "Church accused of Blackmail" *The Samoan Observer*, 15 July, 2010, <http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php> (accessed 16 July, 2010).

Ministers officiating at services accept the gifts and hardly ever return the gifts to the family. When the receiving minister returns the gifts, this is relatively offensive to the host family and there will be no blessings on the family if the gifts are not accepted and taken. Accepting the gift is a mark of acknowledgement, respect and blessings from the receiver to the host family. This is how the Samoan context of *va-fealoaloai* is expressed; as a way in which to show people's appreciation and honour when one has offered support in various forms and in return has been presented with some form of gifts.

In the same vein, another case was publicized in an article in The New Zealand Herald, dated July 18, 2011, "...elders allege abuse of power by Samoan church ministers", raised public awareness.

...the minister was "aggressive and stubborn," borrowed \$35,000 from the wider church without telling the elders, and later borrowed a further \$65,000 from the wider church to buy a Toyota Prado Land Cruiser.⁴⁰¹

This failure in a role of leadership is seen as the failure of the church and its leaders, as it does not reveal the love and consensus necessary for good economic decisions for the people of the church. The consequence of such a situation can be the failure of the church elders to acknowledge the realities of their flock, neglecting the reality of a culture which has been founded on the values of love and care and the interconnection of families and community.

John Wesley, in his sermon on the issue of the 'use of money' (based on Luke 19:6), argued that money itself is not the root of evil, but the 'love of money' is the root of evil. The fault does not lie in the money, but in those who use it. Those who set their hearts on money, as Wesley argued, had become 'money lovers', which caused them to be unable to give to the poor. However, eventually their desire for money led them to fall into temptation. John Wesley's sermon pertaining to the use of money should be a timely reminder to members of the clergy to avoid mishandling the congregation's money to fulfil personal desires.⁴⁰²

How do these factors impact on younger members of the church, particularly those in the second and third sub-groups? The two sub-groups may be unwilling or unable to see these

⁴⁰¹ "Elders Allege Abuse of Power by Samoan Church Ministers" The New Zealand Herald, 18 July, 2011, <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm>, (accessed September 5, 2011).

⁴⁰² John Wesley, Fifty Sermons (text from the 1872 edition), <http://Wesley/Sermons/serm.stm050.stm> (accessed on 21 April, 2011).

“men of God” in the same way as their parents do, and may not feel willing to accept their greed and dishonesty in the same ways that their parents do. Many are educated in schools and universities to accept high levels of scrutiny of their behaviour, and later work in organisations in which they are accountable for both their decisions and their conduct.

They may see no reason why the church and the conduct of the clergy and laity should not be subject to similar standards of accountability and scrutiny. It is, after all their money which is being misused. It would be particularly problematic if these highly educated people, who are trained to accept high levels of personal responsibility and accountability in their private and work lives, see the ministry and laity failing in these measures, and their parents failing to take action against a minister’s actions, choose instead to leave the church: they are its future.

8.5 WHAT HAS CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY TO OFFER TO THE MCS TODAY?

Contextual theology is a theology that realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression. Stephen Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams are amongst the theologians who have dedicated much of their work to highlighting the centrality of experience in this project. It is the honouring or critiquing of experience that makes theology contextual.⁴⁰³

As we have seen in the historical overview of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand, the MCS is now attempting to address the “contexts” of the three distinctive generational groups, who frequently seem to respond differently to the church’s original purpose. While the first sub-group believes that the survival of the MCS is dependent upon maintaining a religious identity that is both ‘Christian’ and ‘Samoan (‘gospel’ and ‘culture’), the second and third sub-groups’ response to this quest are more influenced by the emerging cultural values. They perceive their cultural and religious identity in a way that is different from that of parents and grandparents who migrated from Samoa. Consequently, the original purpose of the church appears to be disputed across the three overlapping contexts of the three distinctive sub-populations in the twentieth century. Of these cultural shifts that have been experienced by

⁴⁰³⁴⁰³ Stephen B. Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, eds., *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 11.

the three distinctive sub-groups, Angie Pears comments that the impact of these cultural shifts produces a profound impact on the place of the Christian Church in the world today.⁴⁰⁴

Given that the mission of the church is to preach the Gospel to all nations, the question is, how far can the establishment of a specifically national and cultural church be reconciled with this? Even if the formation of the MCS provided the first generation of migrants with the freedom to express their faith in a familiar form, does it continue to be an expression of freedom if the preservation of culture (rather than the spread of the Gospel) becomes the ultimate priority of the church?

The social and cultural pressure from *faa-Samoa* in the MCS migrant communities, the hierarchical structure of *matai* and elders in making decisions for the church, the predominance of an adult-centred ministry, the monolingual MCS traditional ministry, the inappropriateness of youth programs, all have a marked impact on the second and third sub-groups, who struggle to define their place in the church and to establish a true family of God in it. The material aspirations of parents and church ministers, which may result in their children taking early employment and in the misuse of church funds, the new *aiga* patterns, and the need to forge a Samoan identity, may all have resulted in the marginalisation of some members of the second and third group in the church.⁴⁰⁵

In this way the Samoan church, like a plant on a journey, may not be providing adequate shelter for all the generations on the journey. The church may have provided shelter for the first generation but not for the second and third generation on the journey. Likewise, there is a need to integrate New Zealand cultural values in the organization of the church while on the other hand, some of the cultural elements may be regarded as irrelevant, hence need omission.⁴⁰⁶

However, not all in the second and third groups have experienced such marginalisation. Some have seen their Samoan Christian identity in New Zealand in terms of remaining faithful to the traditional ministry of the church. Keeping their *Faa-Samoa*, their culture and their heart-

⁴⁰⁴ Angie Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*, (London:New York, Routledge, 2010), 1.

⁴⁰⁵ Bevans and Williams note these as problems faced by diaspora churches throughout the world. (Bevans and Williams, *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 5).

⁴⁰⁶ Risati, Ete, *A Bridge in my Father's House: New Zealand-Born Samoan Talk Theology*, Research Essay in Systematic Theology, University of Otago, 1996, 1.; S. Wesley Ariarajaah, *Gospel and Culture: An Ongoing Discussion within the Ecumenical Movement*, (Geneva: W.C.C, 1994), 11f.

language to worship God is a way of connecting to their land, their extended families and kinships back home. But in 1 Corinthians 14:14 Paul writes, “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive (I Corinthians 14:14).” Words without a meaning convey neither notion nor instruction to the mind, and words not understood have no meaning for those who do not understand them. To preach in a language which has no meaning to fellow Christians who hear them is to leave them ignorant of what is preached. For this reason, a language that is most evidently and easily understood is the most appropriate one for public devotion and other religious activities. This observation applies both to those whose primary language is Samoan, as well as those whose primary language is English. In 1964 as well as in 2013 a monolingual church can have a marked impact in alienating those whose heart language is not the dominant language of the church, whether that is Samoan or English.

For the MCS to survive, and in relation to the three generation’s arguments, there is a need for the MCS to enter into a new phase of history and theology in addressing its ministries to the contexts of the three generational groups in church. If the church chooses to remain loyal to its current form, without integration of global elements (for instance some New Zealand cultural values), the future of the church will probably be one of decline. Bevans comments that the consequence of the church being conservative in its pastoral care, without being open to possible changes, is a diminished church.⁴⁰⁷

Accordingly, the MCS should address the issues confronting its people by establishing a dialogue between the first group and the second and third groups. The purpose of this dialogue would be to deepen their understanding and insights into how God’s gifts are manifest in their culture, and in the circumstances of their shared daily lives. This would allow the MCS to extend its vision beyond the traditional church and explore new ways of providing ministry in the context of multicultural Christianity. This will form the basis of a ‘bridge ministry’ with which to connect the three generations in a way that allows acknowledgement of other groups’ perceptions and the potential integration of elements from each to cater for the needs of all its members today. This will almost inevitably result in the blending in of some New Zealand cultural values, and language with local cultural elements.

⁴⁰⁷ Bevans and Tahaafe-Williams, 13-14

With recognition of the New Zealand cultural values and aspects, the three sub-populations may need new ways of thinking about and reacting to this new phenomenon in their new milieu. Moreover, the foreign environment in which the MCS has been re-established and accommodation of elements of that new cultural milieu, means the Samoan churches in New Zealand will change as the relationship between gospel and Samoan culture varies from one sub-group to another. These variations may occur as church becomes a matter of individual choice and people become increasingly selective in making that choice.

Even so, the fear which lies in this approach is that if the cultural expression of the Samoan population's identity and faith continues to be undermined by the values, structures and processes of a predominantly Western culture, it will result in language loss and diminish social and communal relationships and thus widen the generational gap in Samoan populations. As a result, the succeeding generations will find it difficult to uphold values such as respect and communal accountability.

8.6 CONCLUSION

Cultures develop and change over time and the MCS in New Zealand has witnessed the influence of modernisation, which has gradually exposed MCS congregants to new worldviews and alternative lifestyles. Samoan migrants' lives have become oriented to the new values and social orders and they feel increasingly free to exercise their human rights and their freedom of choice in ways they feel are best for them and their children in the new social and economic context in which they have settled.

Adolescence has been identified as a time of psychological, physical, intellectual and social development. Experimentation and social processes influence a young person's physical and mental growth. As these developments occur, the adolescent moves from being dependent to being independent, and during this stage, a youth may exercise his/her acquired knowledge in a way that at times may contradict the wisdom of an elder.

Samoan youth are affected by these new developments, and new behaviour and cultural patterns that are alien in the Samoan social context are being created and followed. These patterns also affect the aiga and church unity and cause young people to live their own lives away from the original norms and regulations of faa-Samoa. The struggle for economic success has reshaped family structures and existence. In contemporary society, the majority

of Samoan expatriates live in nuclear family units because it is affordable and manageable; this may reflect the declining significance of the extended family entity in New Zealand.

Overall, people's exploration of new ways of thinking and acting in the world, which are transmitted through education, psycho-social development, relationships, and involvement in new forms of economic organisation in New Zealand society, has opened new doors to people, who are able to live more individualistic, self-centred lifestyles than would have been possible in Samoa. From a traditional Samoan perspective, the disadvantages which these new developments bring are that, to some extent, some Samoan expatriates are confronted by a Samoan cultural identity crisis, in which new developments create less opportunity for the Samoan people to connect and integrate with their culture and language from within their familiar extended family networks.

Financial obligation to give to the church at levels that exceed the amount a family earns and the perceived pressure from other congregants or from the clergy, has placed some parishioners in a situation of financial constraint, which in turn has led them to desert their church. This is because of the competitive ethos that is employed by some clergy and lay leaders to raise their congregation's, and their own, profiles within the greater church. It seems strange that a church would force or allow its members to withdraw from the religious community because they could not meet expected levels of contribution, rather than exempting them from these obligations in order to encourage them to continue to worship and remain part of the community of faith. However, if churches were to exempt one family from such requirements, other cases of financial need might follow, and the existing levels of debt and church activity would become unsustainable. Ironically, if the church hierarchy were to force people to withdraw or to encourage them to transfer their membership to churches with lower financial demands, then the original church may itself become unviable in the longer term.

These new developments are most evident in the declining trend of church affiliation amongst Samoans. Thus, for the MCS to survive in contemporary society by retaining its members in church there is hope that it will lower its financial expectations in order to make the church sustainable for the future. However, this will require a reality check on the part of both religious and lay leaders, who may need to prioritise the spiritual needs of the congregants so that they feel at home in the church, or continue to prioritise social status in

ways which alienate them and lead them to leave the church to find more congenial forms of worship where these financial pressures do not distract from their desire to grow spiritually.

9 ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This history of the MCS in New Zealand is intended to inform discussion of the action that needs to be taken in order for the church to survive here. This concluding chapter will be presented in two sections. In the first section, an attempt is made to summarize some of the key issues that surround church survival. The second section offers some recommendations as to how the MCS could address these issues to encourage parishioners, especially those of the second and third generations, to remain in church.

The history of Samoan Methodism is a history that concerns God and His people. God has blessed the Samoan people with their own culture, language, and uniqueness. In the course of their history, Samoans have attempted to keep their Samoan identity. Samoa's search for independence involved the Samoan people in a series of confrontations with European civilisation and colonial administration to protect their culture and language. Out of the struggles, pain, anger, and frustration, the Samoans have been blessed by the gaining of their independence from colonial rule.

The introduction of the Wesleyan faith to Samoa involved the contributions of many people. Despite the sufferings they endured during the early Tongan rule, Samoans came to enjoy a relationship of friendship with the King of Tonga and his people. The relationship between the two peoples became the channel through which the Samoan Methodists negotiated with the Methodist Missionary Society in London for a mission in Samoa. Prior to the arrival of the European missionaries, through family relationships and intermarriage, some Samoans had visited and stayed in Tonga. While in Tonga they learned about, and studied Christianity and thus, on their return to Samoa, they brought Christianity with them. Their attempt to understand Christian teaching in their own Samoan language and culture was made possible by the work of native Samoan missionaries. This occurred despite claims by European historians that the Samoan mission was an unofficial mission and was not directed from the London Missionary Office. To a large extent, the work of the native missionaries made a contribution to the European missionaries' success in the establishment of the Wesleyan faith in Samoa.

The denominational tensions that emerged between the LMS and the Wesleyan Mission resulted in the withdrawal of the Wesleyan Mission from Samoa. This had a marked impact on the lives of Samoans, especially those who were Methodist converts. It created social,

political and religious divisions amongst the Samoan people. In support of their missionaries, the LMS converts made war against the Methodists in an attempt to close down the Wesleyan church. This was evidenced in a series of village disputes and the burning down of Methodist chapels by the LMS (in Tutuila). Fortunately, the power of the *matai* system had an impact on settling the denominational contentions between the LMS and Wesleyan missions.

The retention of Methodist identity amongst the surviving Methodists was affirmed when the King of Tonga and the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Tonga sent Tongan teachers to resume their mission in Samoa. Although the members of the LMS were dissatisfied with the resumption of the Wesleyan mission in Samoa, and although the Wesleyan Missionary Society in London delayed the sending of rulings on the case, the mission of the Wesleyan faith in Samoa continued owing credit to the King of Tonga and the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga.

The establishment of Christianity in Samoa was problematic, and its success relied upon the missionaries and the native Samoans consenting to consult one another as to the ways in which Christianity should be understood from a Samoan perspective. Through the process of consultation, the missionaries came to understand the significance of the Samoan culture to its people, and the Samoan people came to understand the message of the gospel. Eventually, some of the cultural practices and rituals were abandoned as being irrelevant and some were used to promote the understanding of the gospel to the Samoan people. In this respect, consultation was a way of understanding the gospel through diversity (the missionaries understanding of the gospel and the natives attempting to understand the gospel in the context of their own culture). In the writer's opinion, in relation to this particular context, the gospel ought to be understood through the culture of a particular people.

To some extent, this spirit of consultation was seen to be lacking in both the German and the New Zealand colonial administrations; this resulted in turn in a series of tensions between the Samoans and the colonial administrations. The two powers appeared to be ignorant of the Samoans as a people who possessed their own framework for living as a nation. However, the determination of the Samoan people to retain their own identity and freedom survived throughout the series of confrontations between the Mau Movement and the two foreign powers and was finally achieved by a peaceful negotiated transition to independence under the auspices of the United Nations. After Samoa gained its independence from colonial rule,

that national spirit of independence was reflected in the making of an independent Samoan Methodist Conference.

This spirit of independence contributed to the formation of Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand. The MCS in New Zealand was originally founded to answer the need for Samoan migrants to form their own institution in which to keep their 'Samoanness', by retaining their church, their families and their extended kinships, their culture and language through sharing services and ideas within the Samoan church. This original purpose was formed and developed around the context of nationalism and the pioneers of Samoan Methodism in New Zealand were amongst those who had earlier struggled for Samoan Independence and also for an independent Samoan Methodist Conference. In essence, the spirit of independence became central to the formation of Samoan Methodist Church in New Zealand.

The formation of diasporic churches reflects the pioneers' bond with their culture and traditions. The traditional social, economic, familial and spiritual milieu of the Samoan village could be nurtured and developed in a new environment which had the church as a central element of social organisation, enabling new migrants to link up with others. Moreover, conflicts over leadership and financial matters, and disagreements over church priorities have resulted in numerous group splits, which have led to the withdrawal of factions of congregations and the formation of new separate entities.

However, the formation of many small, and ultimately unsustainable, congregations which sprang up without any central coordination raises the question of whether some of these churches were sustainable in times when small numbers of *matafale* were unable to meet the costs of running the congregations. This is evident in the decision to form missionary churches.

The demographics of the population which the church aspired to serve have changed since the SMC's foundation in New Zealand. This is because the children and grandchildren of the founders, who were born and educated in New Zealand, have become an increasingly significant part of the church body. Consequently, they (the second and third sub-groups) perceive their cultural and religious identity in a way that is different from that of their parents and grandparents who founded the church. These diverse experiences are shaped by the distinctive and different experiences of the three sub-groups, their expectations of the ministry and the organisational structure of the church.

Accordingly, in some of the places where the “planting” occurred, the “trees” are now in danger. The “trees” may not be providing shelter for all of the members. The church is currently confronted with questions about some of the things that had “sheltered” the first generation and may not be providing the same degree of “shelter” for the second and third generation of the *sopoaga*. Now may be the time to ask what needs to be done to continue to provide “shelter” for the later *sopoaga*. What do the previous generation of *sopoaga* need to do with the “tree” so that it may provide “shelter” for the present generation of *sopoaga*?

9.1.1 Church Governance and Leadership

This study has found that the church governance and leadership, which is administered by a hierarchical structure of *matai* and elders with the clergy at the top, makes decisions for the church and this has become a point of confrontation between the three sub-groups. Despite the cultural significance which is valued by some congregants, this hierarchical structure has a marked impact on New Zealand-born congregants, who struggle to define their place in church governance. This growing part of the church (second and third groups) has often argued for equality of opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas in the making of a good ministry all members can have access to, rather than members relying on the authority of the elders to make decisions which only serve the purposes of those same elders.

In some churches, these same people (the church elders) have sought to make economic decisions for the church in which they expect to retain their power in church governance. They have made large monetary and material offerings to the church in order to earn personal recognition and this marked service gives the impression of informing more recent members of the church of the elders’ political standing as leaders of the church. Accordingly, some of the church members who have joined more recently feel the pressure to be subservient to the authority of the older members who make decisions for them, while disregarding the views of newer members on church governance. When a minister is appointed to such a church, these same people can exercise power over the minister in making decisions for the church, regardless of their duty to abide by MCS protocol. In the past, such behaviour has caused internal political differences within the church that were produced by the disagreement over the direction taken by such dominant people; this, in turn, has led to the dissatisfaction of small groups of members and led them to leave the church and form one of their own. If dissatisfied members continue to leave the church for alternative faith communities, the chances of the church’s survival diminishes.

9.1.2 Worship and Liturgy

The study reveals a low of attendance at the MCS church services, and one of the contributing factors to that decline is the dissatisfaction of some of the congregants who represent church members from the second and third groups; they no longer wish to be part of the services of worship as they have problems with issues relating to the language and forms of worship used. This group, for whom Samoan is their second language, struggle to understand the message preached in services. While the language in worship is predominantly Samoan, it also incorporates proverbial and oratorical language which is only understood by some people; this presents difficulties for those who have problems with the language and inhibits them from feeling the flow of the spirit of worshipping God through praying, singing, reading the Bible and listening to the preaching of the Word of God.

Services of worship follow a formalised liturgy with only ministers and lay preachers permitted to lead services. Such formality, according to participants' narratives, gives little room for flexibility for others, apart from ministers and lay preachers, to share their testimonies and prayers in service. Some of the worshippers interviewed felt the preacher's interpretation of the Bible in their sermons was one-sided, as it was only constructed within the confines of biblical interpretation without contextual relevance. As a result, the preacher's sermon was alien to the hearers.

The first group's frequent lack of support for activities appropriate for young people can result in a lack of opportunities for the young to share their own testimonies and stories. This is indicative of the fact that the first group desires that the younger generation of church members follows their direction in the leadership and governance of the church. Some members of the second and third groups see this approach as self-centred and in contrast to the equality of opportunity that is required for other members in order to be part of the church.

The domination of village and family membership in church can easily cause a church decision to be made that favours them as they have the majority vote, thus disregarding the minority who are not related to them. As a result, the non-related members may opt to leave the church for another church or to remain at home, unchurched.

Within the MCS, the declining rate of church affiliation among the second and third groups of church members seems indicative of the fact that the members of these second and third

sub-groups have had the opportunity for exposure to, and the exploration of, new values, activities and leisure time in the context of the culture of the host nation. This culture surrounds them and competes with church commitments for their time, energy and resources. These factors (demographic, economical and political) have, together with the cultural foundation of the church mission, influenced people's attitudes, especially the attitudes of the second and third groups, towards church life.

It has been observed that young people are attracted to new values and new forms of worship, for instance, the worship forms of the Pentacostal churches. This trend implies that these new forms of worship operate using the fresh ideologies and ideals that accompany social change. Again, this type of world is one in which young people long to live and in which they are able to socialize and interact with their peers. In fact, these new options for life and church worship introduce new methods into the old religious traditions of worship.

The basic factors influencing the movement of young people to contemporary forms of worship are the need to be heard, and the opportunity to adopt a modern style of worship. Further to this, young people argue that their faith has developed so far that it cannot be contained within parental control, but rather, within the guidance of Jesus. That is to say, when Jesus takes control of someone's life, that person matures in body, mind and soul.

9.1.3 Financial Practice within the Church

The MCS has been financially self-supporting since the early 1900s, and continues to be so, relying largely on its members for its survival and development. Generosity of giving has been central to the development of the church. This type of offering is inspired by the belief that worshippers would receive the blessing of prosperity when they gave offerings for the glorification of God.

However, some church families have observed the social consequences of such generous giving to the church, and have concluded that the financial demands of the church have become problematic. This is because such a high level of giving creates excessive pressure and is a burden on families. Families on low incomes who cannot afford to give to the church at the expected levels are discouraged from going to church when the money demanded exceeds the amount earned.

The growth of economic values and material aspirations has created an atmosphere of competitiveness among congregants. Some churches, despite being committed to the life and

development of the church, have made economic decisions that cost more than members of the congregation can afford. These church developments have become the models by which church growth is measured. However, in reality, unrealistic financial expectations may result in some form of pressure. Such financial expectation can mean that low-income church members are excluded from the plans for their church, leaving wealthier members to proceed on with the development and, in so doing, further enhance their own status and prestige. This brings personal disgrace upon those members who, though committed to the church, because of their inability to meet the high demands of economic decisions made by those who consider themselves to be the elite, may become submissive to the authority of the wealthier members of the church.

It is understood that education transmits advanced knowledge. It has also been established that advanced knowledge raises barriers that never existed before in Samoan society in regard to young people. The desire for a good education draws young people to live away from their traditional roots. One of the contributing factors to failure in education is the involvement of parents in choosing their children's study subjects; these may be subjects which, either the children may not be suited to, or, which the children are not interested in. It appears that parents make the choices for their children's education in the hope that they will achieve a high level education and get a good job, but this parental subject selection has become a cause of failure amongst children as the subjects parents choose may not be in their children's field of interest.

Those who do not attain an advanced education may find other forms of employment. For instance, the employment opportunities provided by some industries fall into the category of employment in which unskilled labourers are required. Generally, the monetary reward offered for this unskilled type of employment is minimal and may be insufficient to support a family. Eventually, when the parents' desire for money is not satisfied, they may urge their children to work long hours to earn enough money to support the family. Some young people who feel pressured in this way have opted to go flatting with other young people and live away from their parents.

Some, or all, of the above-mentioned situations may be issues for the second and third church membership groups. Nonetheless, their continuing church membership is essential for the survival of the church. In order to ensure its survival, the MCS must address these fundamental church issues. As in Wendt's analogy of a growing tree, the transition

experienced in this stage of human development cannot be avoided. Given this fact, it is safe to say that the image of a Samoan church cannot remain the same. It is exposed to developments and both positive and negative additions to life patterns. That very image is tested over and over again in the variety of social processes a young person continuously encounters. There is no guarantee that the Samoan way of life and the traditions of the past can retain their original shape and significance.

Social change influences people's decision-making around the church, which is part of the continuing process of change and development evolving around us. Change has been, and will continue to be, a determining factor in the process of evolution. The Pacific Island immigrant churches are changing, undergoing development and growth, and will continue to do so over time. Church development as such is neither good nor evil. However, development in a church can be a source of conflict: one person's concept of development, might be, for another, the desertion of a valued worldview and lifestyle. This has been identified in societies and within churches, particularly in regard to conflict between people and social structures, between people and leaders, and between people and culture.

The cultural foundation of the Samoan churches' ministry in New Zealand, as suggested by Tiatia and others, has had a negative impact on some young people. However, this conclusion seems not to include all New Zealand-born Samoans. In reference to the young people's narratives that have been collected, members of the third group, are young people who are very committed to the traditional ways of doing things and also to the ministry of the church. A similar conclusion is found in Helen Morton's study of New Zealand-born Tongans in the Tongan diaspora church. Morton concluded that some Tongans were completely assimilated into New Zealand culture, while some were "born-again" Tongans. In my opinion, although the data collected suggests a sometimes negative impact of the existing ministry of the MCS on its younger members, the ministry of the church as it has been culturally and traditionally expressed, need not be viewed as universally irrelevant or oppressive. It provides opportunities for some of the younger generation of Samoans in New Zealand to be exposed to, and learn about, Samoan values through language, culture and social fellowship. In such a fellowship, children and parents share stories, dances and songs; parents and older children give testimonies of their lives that can help the younger children to develop an understanding of being a "Samoan" in a Samoan church.

As Samoan migrants settle, explore, and become exposed to the social, economic and political realities of their new life, their history suggests that they would do well to remain loyal to their Samoan identity. Retaining their *Faa-Samoan* will allow them to relate to, and communicate with, their extended families and kinships, both at home and in their host country. There are also some aspects of life in which Samoan migrants need to negotiate for change in order to progress so that these Samoan expatriates can survive sustainably in their new context of living. Unless Samoans, and particularly the members of the MCS, can resolve some of the issues arising from this new context, the church will be unable to move forward as a united entity.

Some parents have aspirations for developing the Samoanness of their children by teaching them the Samoan principles of serving the church, their parents and their community. However, some of those born and educated in New Zealand may have interpreted their parents' approach to parenting as being one of greed and authoritarian control over them. The worldviews and values which parents seek to transmit to their children should embody the values of respect, love, care and support. If they do this, Samoan parents' desire for their children to be aware of the principles of identity for which they stand, is important and one that children would benefit from carrying with them as they serve in the wider European world.

On the other hand, the second and third group's criticism of the strong cultural foundation of the MCS mission should not be regarded as being in implacable opposition to the first group. In their differing views and concerns, they may offer alternative ways of performing ministry in today's society so that it becomes relevant to this increasingly significant section of the Samoan population. The third-generation group of Samoan migrants have had greater exposure to, and familiarity with, new structures of governance, new leadership styles and new theologies stemming from a variety of learning institutions. In my opinion these innovations are, to some extent, to be commended for the implementation and founding of an effective church mission to suit the changed circumstances of today's more socially and culturally diverse Samoan society.

In this respect, the three sub-groups should have the opportunity to cross over from one group to another, befriending each other through sharing skills, thoughts and ideas. The first group, by acknowledging the second and third groups' aspirations could learn to appreciate the voices of the second and third groups. Likewise, the second and third group might

acknowledge the voice of the first group. The idea is to create a mutual understanding for both parties in the making of meaningful changes that will serve to retain the young people as members of the church, so that the survival of the church in New Zealand may be assured. Hence, the necessary changes would be made with the consensus of all parties in church.

9.2 SECTION TWO: NEW STRUCTURES/ STRATEGIES

The survival of the MCS in New Zealand is understood in its own terms as the Samoan way. Although, in the traditional ministry of the church, there are some congregants who are very conservative and others who long for a contemporary church that is open to new alternatives while acknowledging the questions that arise concerning the usefulness and relevance of the status quo; neither in itself can guarantee the survival of the church in New Zealand. The issues discussed in the previous chapters suggest declining support for the church and that the second and third sub-groups are mainly influenced by the current form of the church. Given this information, there is a need for a contemporary ministry that can cope with the changes facing the young people in church today. To ensure the survival of the MCS in New Zealand, the church needs to address the issues that are identified in this thesis.

In doing this, it is necessary to review the the church's evangelical mission of saving souls, and also, to identify the key elements of the saving of souls that John Wesley identified for the Methodist mission to the world.

9.2.1 Ministry of Outreach

The pastoral leadership and the commitment of the MCS clergy to their calling of saving souls for Christ appears to have been influenced by social, political and economic factors. Some members of the clergy have ceased to go out to visit the sick and the poor, and there are those who have left the church for a variety of reasons in order to minister independently. Some ministers have insisted on keeping Sunday worship as the time when they meet their congregations, in preference to going out to visit at other times.

John Wesley was known in his preaching career as an itinerant preacher, considering himself as not being tied to a particular parish; he went from place to place to preach the Word of God to all. Wesley realized that there was no other way to reach the poor other than to challenge them on their own ground. Wesley's message of preaching is timely and effective for today's ministry, and this must be a reminder to members of the Methodist clergy of their duty to perform an outreach ministry.

Organization and preparation is vital in ministry. Ministers should set goals and priorities for each task to be achieved and allocate times of action wisely and accordingly. One of the higher priorities should be pastoral care and the visiting of those who are unable to, or have difficulty in, attending church. In this respect, ministers need to build trust and relationships with the poor, the sick, and, in addition, with the underprivileged and those who have been alienated by, or who have withdrawn from, church membership. This is necessary in order to bring such people spiritual comfort and also to find out why they may have become disenchanted with the church. This can be accomplished by regular visiting, the taking of Holy Communion and the bread and wine into the homes of people who are unable to come to church. It could also be done in order to avoid the generally erroneous assumption of some ministers that it is sufficient to only see members of their congregation when they come to church for Sunday worship.

9.2.2 The Concept of *Matafale* (Church Family Unit)

The concept of *matafale*, as recognised in Samoa, conveys a similar significance to that of the *aiga* or household in the village. The *matai*, as head of the *aiga*, is also head of the *matafale* in the church. Hence, the making of decisions for the church and the *aiga* is determined by the chiefs. Church members, despite being proactive, contributing church members, or committed Christians involved in church worship and activities, are not entitled to participate in the decision-making of the church unless they are *matai*.

As an alternative, the role of the *matafale*, usually referred to as the *matai*, could be opened up for either a *matai* or a *taulealea* (untitled man or young person) to register as a *matafale* in the church, as is the case in Samoa. The idea is to provide the opportunity for all active members, *matai* (titled members) or *taulealea* (untitled members), young or old, to claim the same rights as titled elders in church consultations. However, the intention of the idea, and the way in which it was interpreted by members, differed. Some may have thought that being registered as a *matafale* gives them the right to have a say in church governance, while others may have viewed this as being a way of gaining a role in the church's governance and affairs, as long as the financial contribution required by the church could be met by the people who registered their *matafale*.

According to the dictates of the Church, worshippers should integrate their various inspirational worship activities and effective programs, in order to further interest in experiencing the integrity of fellowship in the presence of God in worship; this could be done

by, for instance, assigning worshippers to liturgical duties, as ushers, prayer leaders, Bible readers and Bible study leaders in group fellowships. The greeting of the congregation after the service by the leader through shaking hands or acknowledging others in a way that is appropriate would also create a mutual relationship and awareness between church members and the minister and also with newcomers to the church.

9.2.3 Alternatives in Church Services

As revealed in this study, church attendance in New Zealand congregations differs from that in Samoa. In Samoa, church attendance is greatly supported by the family and the *matai* council. Yet, in New Zealand, church attendance no longer relies on the security and support of the village council but must always depend on the support of the congregation. Low attendance at church services has raised another concern as to what would be an appropriate compromise that best fits migrant churches.

At Sunday services, MCS congregations may care to consider a new structure in regard to the two formal services conducted in the morning and the evening. The poorly-attended evening service on Sundays needs to be replaced by a new evening service which would incorporate youth-led worship services and study activities such as Bible studies, church fellowship, singing practice, and prayer meetings. The idea is to encourage young people's support and attendance through their involvement in these religious activities in which they will come to further explore their relationship with God through the sharing of their stories and testimonies in religious fellowship. The parents of the young people would also be encouraged to attend evening services, where they could witness the performance of their children. Moreover, the involvement of both parents and their children in church is an opportunity to strengthen a close parent-children relationship in church.

For the MCS ministry to provide acceptance and understanding of its second and third generations, it needs to revitalize its religious practices by taking spiritual messages out to the people through visits, group meetings and church fellowship and engagement in pastoral work. This aims to strengthen Christian spiritual growth and faith through relatedness, understanding, communion and communication between the older and the young generations and between the ministers and parishioners. When people pray together and help one another, this may minimize the cultural and traditional isolation of young people from church and society. Such practices are regarded as essential spiritual incentives to attract the seekers and outcasts of Christian fellowship, as they come to pray and share their stories of life within a

brotherly, or sisterly, integration and assimilation. This becomes a vital background for the development of a sense of belonging and unity within the church. It will, on the other hand, counter the view held by some people about the relevance to modern society of the church structure, ministry and theology.

9.2.4 Bilingual Ministry

To teach the Christian education curriculum bilingually, in both English and Samoan, could be a convenient way of bringing some resolution to the issue of linguistic competence for some of the children attending migrant Samoan Sunday schools. While the Samoan language is a priority in Sunday schools and in church, the English language must also be used for clarification. As most of the Sunday school classes in New Zealand are held in the morning before the main service, it would be appropriate for Sunday school class Bible studies to follow the MCS lectionary texts for each Sunday. This suggestion would only apply to migrant Sunday schools; however, the risk that lies behind the enforcement of the use of the English language in Sunday schools could be the possible loss of the originality of the Samoan language amongst Samoan children.

The proposal is that, prior to the main service, children would have the opportunity to study and learn the texts before going into the main service. This would help with their understanding of the text when the preacher of that Sunday preached about the same text: children would easily be able to follow the sermon as they would already have prior knowledge of the text. This proposal would only help if the preacher at the Sunday services followed the texts in the MCS lectionary. Some preachers do not preach from the lectionary, they either preach their previous sermons or choose a text relevant to their own interests.

9.2.5 Youth Ministry

The MCS church youth needs to be restructured into two separate classes of constituents. They would be each under the youth banner, but with different age ranges and varying ranges of activities: The Junior Youth Group would incorporate people between the ages 12 and 25, and the Older Youth Group would range between 26 to 50 and over.

9.2.5.1 Junior Youth

The concept of a Junior Youth Group to be established within the congregation is worth consideration as a way of giving the younger generation a degree of autonomy that would allow them to manage their social and spiritual activities within the confines of their own

group. Young people could also be recognised within church as liturgists in the service of worship and also, in the reading of the Bible, the reciting of prayers, the collection of offerings and as ushers at times of service. They could also share the singing of hymns with the parish choir during services.

The Junior Youth Group would have access to older people with whom they could be invited to speak when they felt they were in need of the guidance, mentoring, assistance and direction of an older person. The key to this is to have the elders available as mentors rather than as controllers. This model can be perceived as a way forward for improving the level of youth participation in programs intended for their spiritual and social development. The suggestion would also provide the opportunity for younger people to organise and structure their own activities, thus implementing their own creativity and the attainment of their full potential.

9.2.5.2 *The Older Youth*

The Older Youth Group would have the opportunity to share in lay preaching and the interpretation of the bible; this might become useful in the formulation of sermons. The emphasis would be on developing the skills of the laity to make them better informed as lay preachers and in their roles in the pastoral ministry of the church.

9.2.6 Intercultural Ministry

, As suggested by Rosarina Vai, in an intercultural ministry as an effective pastoral ministry within the context of accelerated change, ministers can be trained to be intercultural and liberal in a way that would allow for improved discourse between the church and the wider community. Moreover, becoming acquainted with the realities of New Zealand life would make communication easier and allow for the understanding of cultural conflict and the ability to function with acceptable competence in the creation of an effective ministry in the context of New Zealand.

Being an intercultural person of God would allow God's servants to be open minded and would allow people to explore the richness of new thoughts and ways of ministering in new contexts. This could be achieved in a number of ways: first, sociology must be taught to ministerial candidates as part of the curriculum of the Theological Colleges. Second, members of the clergy in overseas congregations could hold synod meetings where both congregants and ministers would discuss strategies for church survival and clergy may then,

be kept informed of the needs of the contemporary church. Third, New Zealand-born ministers and those who have valid entry permits could be recruited to overseas congregations. However, the third recommendation contradicts church protocol with reference to the minister's appointment system. Ministers are appointed anywhere to any locality or congregation, regardless of the availability of entry permits to overseas countries. Appointments vary from time to time; if one is appointed to a local congregation, the next appointment is expected to be into an overseas congregation.

9.2.7 Practices of Giving for the Church

Generous giving to the church has been central to the development of its ministry, however, the practices that determine giving to the church cause some forms of pressure amongst congregants. Giving to the church has cultural and biblical connotations, and these values have shaped the 'giving' of some congregants. This cultural significance allows congregants to give their best in terms of monetary and material donations to the church. This is the expression of their love, and is service rendered for the glorification of God.

Those who advocate the public reading out of members' donations during church service should consider two alternatives:

1. Each member's donation must be put in an envelope and presented to the secretary or placed in a box provided for church donations without the reading out of the name of the member.
2. For each donation to the church, instead of the church secretary reading out the names of those who have donated, only the total offerings of the congregation should be read out.

The idea is to avoid people's dissatisfaction with and their embarrassment about the reading out of the amount of their offering, especially if their donation does not meet the expected level of church offering. If the church chooses to adopt one of the alternatives, the people who are usually affected by this practice may be able to come to church free from the fear of humiliation caused by this practice. This alternative may be contested by those supporting the practice, particularly those high-income givers who seek recognition of their 'generosity', but it would be beneficial to seek advice within the church membership, because the practice of reading out donations is one of the contributing factors to declining church attendance.

Generally speaking, during the course of the May Offerings (The MCS's annual offerings are in November), families take out loans to pay for their *taulaga* (offerings), but, inevitably, this becomes a pressure for some families in their attempt to meet loan repayments. Hence, an alternative might be to suggest that, in order to avoid being pressured at the last minute before the day of, for instance, the May Offering, individual congregations should appoint a committee in charge of the offering at the beginning of the year. This committee would record family offerings as to what they afford to put in for their contribution, and, thus, by the day of the offering, they would have saved enough for their offerings without the necessity for taking out loans to pay for their offerings.

Ministers should conduct a survey of *matafales*' income and earnings, and their weekly budget. The survey would identify the high and low-income earners and their contributions to the church. This idea would give priority to the aiga's welfare and security, rather than the church leaving the aiga in poverty. The success of this approach depends on the loyalty of each member in giving the correct information in regard to their income.

9.2.8 Inter-denominational Sharing

Inter-denominational sharing is one way to progress beyond church boundaries and befriend other existing churches. The idea is to bring together churches with identical issues and to share ideas and strategies as to how these issues are to be addressed for the younger generations in their church and to observe, from this sharing of ideas, the success, or otherwise, of the strategies adopted. Hence, these same groups from different churches that have similar issues may create a uniform strategy for addressing their problems and they may help each other in making contributions that are commendable to the ministry of the church today.

The awareness of the social, economic and spiritual reality for Samoan migrants in the wider context of New Zealand, determines the changes to be implemented to its existing pastoral ministry. Such changes will not take away the Samoan norms, culture or values, but will provide a new understanding of how the faith is expressed and lived in the wider context of New Zealand. The last thing to be considered is the question of how much flexibility the MCS should allow to implement changes to the ministry of the church, but the changes to be made must be aligned with church protocols as an appropriate expression of faith and belief in God.

John Wesley's mission was not radical but transformative. His mission was not to break away from the Church of England but rather to transform the church by creating an outreach ministry that had concerns for the poor and the marginalized. Similarly, Jesus was not revolutionary but transformative. He accepted the existing Jewish culture and law. He honoured the emperor and loved the poor. His earthly ministry was concerned not with destroying the law but with fulfilling it by transforming culture into a means of prioritising God above all human actions and by directing people to the Kingdom of God.

Likewise, the necessity of change in the MCS can be understood in terms of keeping the basic structure but making improvements to that structure. This change is understood in the Methodist Church by the Samoan words "*E sui faiga ae tumau faavae*", literally translated as "action changes, but constitution remains". The idea of implementing new changes and revisions anticipates new insights for the MCS ministry to be open to change, so as to encourage young people to remain in the church.

I wish to establish that the views of the past cannot be assumed to exist in exactly the same manner today. Inevitably, what composes the perception of today may be obsolete in the perception of the next generation. This sequence is a natural occurrence because the social processes affecting our church mission are also on-going processes. As human beings, we must appreciate that the world is evolving. Likewise our human image evolves with the world, for better or for worse. This does not mean that we have to ignore our past but that we must be proud of our past and of who we are. We should learn from our past so that we can continue to 'present and feel secure in our own identity'.

In conclusion, I would like to invite the three sub-groups of the Samoan Methodist population to take into account the changes to our respective worldviews and lifestyles, but let us manage these social changes for our gain so that change is not allowed to overwhelm either our common identity as Samoans, or, the protocols of the MCS.

10 GLOSSARY OF SAMOAN WORDS [A-V]

aiga	family
aiga potopoto	an extended family
Aoga aso Sa	Sunday School
Ao o faalupega	the honorific title given to the church minister as head of the church in which all other titles are drawn together
Auauna a le Atua	Servant of God
Auuso Fealofani	Samoa Methodist Church Women's Fellowship
Autalavou	Youth Group
aufaigaluega/aufaime	the selected ministers and lay people of individual synod (MCS) who go with the synod superintendant to collect each church's offerings during the <i>Me</i> offering.
aufaipese	church choir
ala sopo	mountain walkway, pass
alofa	love
api o le galuega	journal of an individual congregation
alii sili	paramount chief
atinae	monetary offering donated by parishioners to pay for church's bills and development
faa-Samoa	Samoa culture or Samoa way
faa-itumalo	district
faaaloalo	respect

faaaloaloga	esteem, hospitality, courtesy; cultural presentation of monetary and material gifts given in honour of a visiting party.
faa-matai	matai or chiefly system
faipule	Samoaan representatives in the New Zealand administration
Faifeau	Pastor
faigataulaga	the MCS annual offering
failautusi	church secretary
falesa	church building for worship
gagana failauga	the language of oratory
igoa ipu	cup title: pseudonym used at <i>ava</i> drink distribution
itumalo	district
Komiti faifeau	the MCS Ministerial Committee
Komiti Samoa Faa-Itumalo	District Samoan Committee
Laau o le Sopoaga	plant for a journey
lafoga sauoo	a fixed donation given to the church
lotu	religion, faith, or belief
mafutaga a nuu	village fellowship
malae	an open space in a village which has a view
malaefono	a village meeting place
malaga	customary visit or travelling party
malie toa	brave warrior

malo	nation
matai	chief, who could either be an <i>alii</i> or a <i>tulafale</i>
matafale	a registered church family unit.
Me	the annual offering for the MCS often held in November of each year
momoli/oo	cultural presentation (usually food and material) made by someone at her/his initiation ceremony on taking up a new post
Nafanua	Samoan goddess of war
nuu	village
palagi	white person; European
papa	high titles and dignities
peleti	monetary gifts donated by parishioners as pledges for the pastor and his family
saili malo	seeking victory or blessing
Sao tamaitai	honorific title pertaining to chieftainesses, and to particular female traits in families, villages or districts.
Sea o le Ekalesia	Church superintendant
sii faaaloalo	cultural presentation (usually of food and fine mats) on a social occasion
Sinoti Samoa	Samoan synod
siva	dance
soalaupule	communal sharing
sopoaga	travelling party

taamu	elephant taro
Taitai	elder or leader
Tama-a-aiga	sons of the family, the four titles of paramount ranked nationally: Malietoa, Tupua, Mataafa, and Tuimalealiifano
Tama o le galuega	Father of the church or its pastor
taulealea	untitled man
taulaga	offering
toonai	food prepare by parishioners every Sunday for the pastor
tuiga	headdress made of bleached human hair used by a <i>taupou</i> when dancing in a cultural celebration.
Tupu o Samoa	Kings of Samoa
tusiga-igoa	registration of names when donating money for a particular project
tulafale	orator
usitai	obedience
va-fealoaloi	mutual relationship between persons, honouring relationship

11 APPENDICES

11.1 APPENDIX A:

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Ethics and Biological Safety Administration

The University of
Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand
Level 3, 76 Symonds
Street
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Extension: 83711 / 87830
Facsimilie: 64 9 373 7432

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

03 December 2009

MEMORANDUM TO:

Dr Nicholas Thompson / Saunua Sila
School of Theology

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 2009 / 515)

The Committee met on 02-December-2009 and considered the application for ethics approval for your project titled "Gospel and culture from the perspective of three Generations within the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) in New Zealand".

Ethics approval was given for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 2/12/2012.

If the project changes significantly you are required to resubmit a new application to the Committee for further consideration.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, it would be appreciated if you could notify the Committee once your project is completed.

Please contact the Chairperson if you have any specific queries relating to your application. The Chair and the members of the Committee would be most happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics provisions if you wish to do so.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE UAHPEC REGARDING THIS APPLICATION SHOULD INDICATE OUR REFERENCE NUMBER.

Lana Lon
Executive Secretary
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

c.c. Head of Department / School, School of Theology

Saunaoa Sila
72 Gadsby Road
Favona
Manukau

1. Should you need to make any changes to the project, write to the Committee giving full details including revised documentation.
2. The approval is for three years. Should you require an extension write to the Committee before the expiry date giving full details along with revised documentation. Extension can be granted for up to three years, after which time you must make a new application.
3. At the end of three years, or if the project is completed before the expiry, you are requested to advise the Committee of its completion.
4. Do not forget to fill in the 'approval wording' on the Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms giving the dates of approval and the reference number before you send them out to your participants.
5. Please send a copy of this approval letter to the Manager - Funding Processes at Research Office if you have obtained any funding other than from UniServices. For UniServices contract, please send a copy to their Contract Manager.

11.2 APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET.

Project Title: *Gospel and Culture from the Perspective of Three Generations within the Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS) in New Zealand*

Researcher: Saunoa Sila, PhD Candidate, School of Theology, University of Auckland

My name is Saunoa Sila. I am a student at the University of Auckland, conducting research for my PhD thesis on the history and future pastoral strategy of the Methodist Church of Samoa in New Zealand. I want to use the oral histories of three generations of MCS Samoans in New Zealand to analyse the ways in which they see the relationship between the Christian Gospel and their culture. I hope that this research will point to ways in which the different aspirations of the generations can be accommodated, so that the church's survival in New Zealand is ensured.

Because of your involvement with the Methodist Church of Samoa in New Zealand, I would like to invite you to participate in an interview on this topic. You are under no obligation at all to accept this invitation. However, if you give your consent, the information you provide will help me to gain a better understanding of the history of the Methodist Church of Samoa in New Zealand and of its future direction.

Project procedure

The interview would take 1-2 hours and would be held at any place you felt most comfortable. The interview would be recorded with a digital audio-recorder, though this would only be with your consent, and, whenever you wished, the recorder would be turned off. After the interview I would make a transcript of the recording and give you a copy of it. At any time before 31 January 2012 you would be able to change or withdraw any information that you had provided. When the dissertation is completed, you would be contacted, and, if you were interested in reading the dissertation, I would give you an electronic copy.

Confidentiality

If the information you provided was reported in the dissertation or published, it would be done in a way that did not identify you as a source. This means that your name and any other identifying information would be removed from any published data.

Right to withdraw

You would have the right to withdraw from participation at any time, and, as I have already noted, at any time before 31 January 2012, you would have the right to change or withdraw any information you had provided.

Storage and destruction of the interview recordings and transcripts

The audio-files and the interview transcripts from this project will be kept in a locked cabinet at the School of Theology and they will be securely destroyed at the end of the project. The consent forms will also be kept in a locked cabinet at the School of Theology, but for six years, as required by the University. After this they will also be securely destroyed.

Contact information

If you have any queries please contact me by telephone at 09 275 3797/ mob. 0277148097 or at the following address:

School of Theology
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland

Ph. 09 373 7599 extn:86676

If you do wish to be interviewed, please let me know by filling out the attached consent form and send it to me at this address.

My supervisor is: **Dr. Nicholas Thompson**. He can be contacted at the following address:

School of Theology
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland.
Ph. (09) 373 7599 extn:81980

The Head of the School of Theology is **Professor Elaine Wainwright**, and she can be contacted at the same address.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair
The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
The University of Auckland
Research Office – Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 9201
Auckland

Ph. (09) 373 7599 extn: 83711

Your assistance and time in considering this invitation are greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Saunoa Sila

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 3 December 2009 for (3) years, Reference Number 2009 / 515

11.3 APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of six years.

Title: *Le Laau o le Sopoaga: A Plant of a Journey: Planting Samoan Methodism in New Zealand.*

Researcher: Saunoa Sila

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information traceable to me at any time up to **31 January 2012** without giving a reason

- I agree to take part in this research
- I agree to the interview being audio-taped
- I understand that, even if I agree to the interview being audio-taped, I may ask for the recorder to be switched off at any time
- I understand that I will receive a transcript of the interview, which I may change or withdraw at any time before **31 January 2012**
- I understand that, if material from my interview is published, it will be done confidentially, without my name or any other details that might identify me
- I wish/do not wish to receive a copy of the of project findings in electronic form
- I understand that recording and transcript of the interview will be securely destroyed on the completion of the project

Name: _____

(Print clearly).

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 3 December 2009 for (3) years, Reference Number 2009 / 515

11.4 APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW

Research Questions: (First Sub-Group)

1. What purpose of leaving your family, village and church and migrated to New Zealand?
2. How did you feel about leaving your home and church?
3. There were no Samoan churches at the time when you first arrived, only the New Zealand churches. Why did you decide to attend the New Zealand churches?
4. The Methodist church of New Zealand had welcomed the Samoans in worship. How did you feel worshipping in a mixed congregation?
5. Why did you request for Samoan services to be conducted for the Samoan members? What time of service and who conducted the Samoan worship?
6. What caused division among the Samoan group in church?
7. When contention formed among the Samoans, which group did you support? Those remained in church or the dissident group?
8. As you were in the remaining group, for what reasons that your decision to remain in church was based on?
9. As you were in the dissident group, for what reasons that your decision to withdraw was based on?
10. In fact, we can worship God either in the Samoan church or the European church, but why the dissident group were so determined to establish a Samoan church?
11. In fact, generations of the 2^{1st} century claims that the church of yesterday cannot be equated with the church of today. In what ways do you agree or disagree with this claim? (Explain).
12. Your opinion about my topic? Suggestions (open question). What do you think of a *matai* system in New Zealand?

Research Questions: (Second and Third Sub-Groups)

1. Which church do you attend?
2. Why the Samoan church is so significant to you?
3. What do you think, why the Samoans are so determined to attend Samoan churches? What significant impact of Samoan churches to its people?
4. The financial matters, the traditional ministry and adult domination in church administration and governance had been greatly criticised by people as major contributing factors to the withdrawal of church members. What do you think?
5. How do you see yourself in church in terms of church governance, involvement, recognition and ministry in church? What concerns you?
6. In what ways should our Samoan culture be practiced in New Zealand?
7. How do you explain/preserve your identity as a Samoan Christian in New Zealand?
8. For the future of the Samoan church in New Zealand; do you think is better to change or not to change?

11.5 APPENDIX E:

Fig 1: MCS Memberships 2007-2011.

OVERSEAS DISTRICT SYNODS						
2007-2011						
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Gain/loss
Niu Sila Matu (<i>Auckland</i>)	3530	3688	3535	3373	3309	-221
Niu Sila Saute (<i>Wellington</i>)	1137	1209	1181	1172	1250	+113
Kuiniselani (<i>Queensland Aust</i>)	637	638	666	722	818	+181
Sini (<i>Sydney Aust</i>)	1081	1161	1068	1176	1251	+170
Vitoria (<i>Victoria Aust</i>)	370	353	421	422	422	+52
Tutuila (<i>USA Territory</i>)	3491	3450	3499	3302	3273	-218
USA/Hawaii	1421	1323				-98
Amerika (<i>USA</i>)			847	865	959	+112
Hawaii			412	434	431	+19
Total Membership of Overseas District Synods 2007-2011						
	11667	11822	11629	11466	11713	+46

LOCAL DISTRICT SYNODS						
2007-2011						
Upolu Sasae (<i>Upolu East</i>)	2339	2325	2243	2246	2108	-67
Upolu Sisifo (<i>Upolu West</i>)	4210	4079	4175	4202	4419	+130
Upolu Saute (<i>Upolu South</i>)	1843	1873	1793	1770	1823	-20
Apia (<i>Town Area</i>)	5647	5659	5918	5784	5971	+324
Salafai Sisifo <i>Savaii West</i>)	5504	5476	5346	5110	5008	-496
Salafai Sasae (<i>Savaii East</i>)	5826	5830	5863	5327	5684	-142
Total Membership of local District Synods 2007-2011						
	25369	25242	25338	24439	25013	-356
Total MCS Conference Memberships 2007-2011						
	37036	37064	36967	35905	36726	-310

(Source: Data collected from Minutes of the SMC Conference 2007-2011).

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