

**MIGRATION, MISSION AND THE CONGREGATION CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH SAMOA IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND**

By

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

In 2012 the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of its establishment in New Zealand. This was seen as a great accomplishment as the CCCS had grown from its beginnings as the first Samoan migrant church to be established in New Zealand in 1962, to being arguably one of the largest Samoan churches in New Zealand by the 1990s and 2000s (MacPherson and MacPherson 2002: 74-75)<sup>1</sup>.

As a New Zealand born Samoan member of the CCCS and a student at the Malua Theological College (MTC)<sup>2</sup> in Samoa at the time of the Jubilee celebrations, I was well placed to view the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee from different angles. I am a New Zealand citizen through birth and upbringing, fluent in English and also the son of Samoan migrants, who arrived in New Zealand in the early 1970's seeking future opportunities in *Aotearoa*<sup>3</sup>. My father was an ordained minister<sup>4</sup> of the CCCS in Auckland for 33 years. My experiences as a member of the CCCS, the son of migrants, the son of a Reverend Minister, a minister in training myself, as well as a New Zealand citizen all integrate to give me a unique insight into the CCCS in Auckland.

Upon attending the Jubilee celebrations and discussion with other CCCS members, both those born in New Zealand and Samoa, I noticed conflicting views as to what the mission of the CCCS is. For many Reverend Ministers, the mission of the CCCS was to act as a religious and cultural centre where New Zealand born Samoan members as well as those from Samoa could maintain their religious and cultural identities as Samoan Christians (Duncan 1994: 40).

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<sup>1</sup> According to the New Zealand Parliament website (<https://www.parliament.nz/resource/0000251973> accessed 10 June 2016) there are a total of 25,337 members of the CCCS in New Zealand. In Auckland there are 18,439 members. Therefore Auckland makes up 73% of the total population of the CCCS in New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup> The MTC is located in the spiritual home of the CCCS – *Maluapapa*. It was land gifted to the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries in 1844 and where they established the MTC. The MTC began as a mission school and base but quickly expanded to being the physical home of the CCCS and the mission school became the Theological College where future ministers of the CCCS have been trained and educated in preparation to spread the gospel in Samoa and later the world since 1844.

<sup>3</sup> *Aotearoa* is the indigenous Maori name for New Zealand. It is translated as meaning “Land of the Long White Cloud”.

<sup>4</sup> In the CCCS ordained ministers are referred to as either Reverend Ministers or ministers. Both will be used in this thesis to refer to the clergy of the CCCS unless otherwise stated.

Amongst New Zealand born Samoans members of the CCCS, I noticed some were reluctant to immerse themselves in the Jubilee celebrations as they felt that the mission of the CCCS emphasised the cultural identity over the Christian; whilst others were proud to identify with the CCCS, and saw membership of the CCCS as part of their identity. It was clear there was confusion as to the understandings of mission and how these understandings correlated with the mission of the CCCS. This led to much reflection on my part as to the issues surrounding mission, migration and the establishment of the CCCS in New Zealand.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present thesis seeks to explore what are the understandings of mission within the CCCS in Auckland, New Zealand. Auckland has been the beacon for Samoan migration to New Zealand with the largest numbers of Samoan migrants having settled in Auckland since Samoan migration began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 2013 New Zealand residents who recognised themselves as ethnically Samoan numbered 144,000 with 62.3 % living in Auckland alone<sup>5</sup>. It is also where the CCCS was first established in 1962<sup>6</sup>, and has the largest number of CCCS congregations numbering 50 in Auckland alone, with 73 nationwide.

The lead question of the thesis is: **What are the understandings of mission amongst the members of the CCCS in Auckland, New Zealand?** In relation to this lead question there are also the following sub questions: How has the experience of Samoan migrants affected their understanding of mission? What are the issues that face members of the CCCS in Auckland regarding mission?

This thesis will focus on CCCS congregations in the greater Auckland area. Until the 1990s there was one Synod or *matagaluega* in Auckland of which all CCCS congregations were members. The Auckland *matagaluega* was further divided into two sub districts or *pulega* – Auckland and South Auckland. In the early 1990s the South Auckland *pulega* sought to create a new *matagaluega* for itself, which was partly in reply to the issues of administration and to reflect the growth of the CCCS in the Manukau area. In 1992 a motion was passed and accepted at the General Assembly recognising a new *matagaluega* under the name Manukau.

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<sup>5</sup> Information found at the official website for the New Zealand Government Department of Statistics <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx> accessed 10 June 2016

<sup>6</sup> Although the first CCCS congregation was formally ratified by the CCCS in 1963, the group that broke away from the PICC in Auckland had their first service as an autonomous body of Samoan Christians affiliated to the CCCS in December 1962. It is from this date that the CCCS in Auckland take as the year of its establishment in New Zealand and hence the 50 year Jubilee was celebrated using 1962 as a starting point.

In the research undertaken, the interview participants are members of CCCS congregations from the greater Auckland area which incorporates both the Auckland and Manukau *matagaluega*. Therefore this thesis will refer to both Auckland and Manukau *matagaluega* together as Auckland.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this thesis is to explore the understandings of mission in the context of the CCCS in Auckland. As such this thesis will discuss issues of migration, culture, identity and mission in relation to the lead question of this thesis.

### **1.4 METHODOLOGY**

This thesis will use an integrative approach which will combine the diachronic, the theological and the subjective. It will examine how the Samoan migrant's experience of God affects and informs his/her understanding of mission within the CCCS in Auckland. It is diachronic in that it will explore the theoretical and historical background of Samoan migration to New Zealand and how this affects the understanding of mission in the CCCS in Auckland. It is subjective as it will also explore through personal interviews and my own insight, how mission is understood in the CCCS in Auckland and whether there is a connection if any, between migration and understanding of mission in this context.

Before this exploration can begin it is pertinent to note the use of the term "mission" in this thesis. Mission is and has been a problematic term in both its understanding and usage. For the purposes of this thesis mission will be used to refer to the understanding of mission as God's presence or activity in creation and the universe (Bosch 1991: 390). As such the church and Christianity within this understanding are part of the wider scope of God's mission.

To act as the foundation upon which this thesis seeks to explore the issue of mission and migration, interviews will be conducted with members of the CCCS in Auckland. There was a sample of four participants who were interviewed. Of the four, three are New Zealand born Samoan members of the CCCS, whilst the remaining participant is a Samoan migrant. Two of the participants are ordained Reverend Ministers of whom one is retired and the other is currently serving a congregation in Auckland. The interviews of the New Zealand born Samoan participants were conducted in English as this is their first language; whilst the Samoan born participant's interview was conducted in the Samoan language. This qualitative

research seeks to put a human face to the issues at hand through a semi structured set of questions carried out in particular method seen as reflective of Pacific Island values known as the *talanoa* method.

The *talanoa* method has been described by Pacific academics such as Jione Havea and Timote Vaoleti as a “personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (Vaoleti 2006: 21). Traditional Western research assumed that Pacific knowledge had a similar framework, so any research by implication would be conducted using Western methods and understandings which do not correlate or easily synthesise with Pacific realities of knowledge (Vaoleti 2006: 22; Havea 2010: 180).

In the Samoan context the *talanoa* method emphasises Samoan values of mutual reciprocity and respect for fellow human beings heightened by the face to face structure of the method (Vaoleti 2006: 11). It uses the process of storytelling to create an environment of ease and trust between the parties. In this light the *talanoa* approach allows for a free flowing of communication and information in a setting which the experience is both socially and culturally mediated (Mila-Schaaf 2011: 12).

The obstacles of using the *talanoa* research method were due to the logistical problems of doing research which requires face to face interaction from the other side of the world. The issues arose from the coordination of times in which parties were available and reasonable in light of the realities of everyday life, and in particular the fact that New Zealand was 14 hours ahead of the Netherlands.

## **1.5 PROPHEPIC DIALOGUE**

Prophetic Dialogue is suggested as a framework against which the research may be viewed. As stated earlier the understanding of mission in the wider academic debate and discussion has been problematic due to issues of definition. Its meaning has ranged from the role of the church in spreading the Gospel to the save the heathen, colonisation through mission, and to effect social and political transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God (Bosch 1991:389).

A change in how mission was interpreted arose with the term *Missio Dei*, which has been interpreted as meaning God’s presence in the world. This saw a move away from the church as the centre of mission, but rather mission as being explicitly the activity of God (Douglas 2007: 274-275). *Missio Dei* refers to God’s work in creation and the world, in which



humanity and the church are participants (Bevans 2013: 160-162). As such *Missio Dei* or mission as it will be used throughout this thesis will refer to God's activity within creation, wherein the church is an inherent part of this mission. In this light, the church is part of the greater mission of God and is therefore at its very heart missionary (Bevans 2013: 160-162).

David Bosch suggested a contemporary understanding of mission could be appropriated through the study of diverse approaches to mission over the centuries from which "elements of an emerging missionary paradigm" could be ascertained to guide contemporary mission in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bosch 1991: 5). Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder expanded Bosch's approach by focusing on the interaction between certain universal constants and changing historical contexts. The constants are the universal questions the church grapples within the different contexts it works in (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 322). Mission is framed as a holistic entity which represents the Trinitarian God, given shape and concrete form through the ministry of Christ as sign of the Reign of God, which affirms Christ as the Universal Saviour. Mission as such is a synthesis of different strands brought together in a "single complex reality" (*Redemptoris Missio* 41).

Bevans and Schroeder posit an approach to mission through the use of Prophetic Dialogue as a relational interaction within and without Christianity, seeking to share with the world through Christian living as witness to the prophetic and communal nature of God's love. It is a witness which is both dialogical and a countercultural alternative in a secular world (Bevans 2013: 162). It is prophetic in that Christians must be willing to speak the truth to the Word of God with courage and humility to recognise the humanity of those whom they share this world. It is this speaking with "bold humility" which underlies Prophetic Dialogue (Bosch 1991: 489).

The criticisms of Prophetic Dialogue as being vague Bevans and Schroeder have addressed by clarifying Prophetic Dialogue as a two prong approach to mission, as mission by its very nature is dialogical and prophetic: in that God in the world is in dialogue; and prophetic as it speaks to God through the human experience "on a day to day basis, joy and sorrow, blessing and curse, life and death, good and evil" (Bevans and Schroeder 2011:73).

As mission is dialogical, a reflection of God's relationship in the Trinity and creation as a whole as present in the Spirit and the incarnation of Christ, Christians must also explore relationships within and without of their community They must create relationships with others, necessitating encounters, interaction, which means listening and understanding of

what others are saying. These relationships must be built in “bold humility” but also recognise the need for respect of position – as the other, a stranger a guest in a community. Mission in dialogue should be conducted so Christians are aware of their position as guests who need to work with others, to learn from others to uncover the hidden treasure of the Gospel. This illustrates a relationship between the Christian, the stranger, the missionary and others which can be seen as a “mission in reverse – letting the people who we work with be our teachers and evangelizers” (Barbour 1984: 303-309).

In its dual aspects Prophetic Dialogue illustrates an openness to vulnerability through dialogue and the unmasking of contradictions in people’s lives through speaking God’s truth (Kritzinger 2013: 40-41). The openness to vulnerability illustrates dialogue should be seen as reaching out and embracing others through mission. It is a praxis which is based on the power of love to heal and embrace each other through the self-kenotic love of Christ as revealed in openness and vulnerability. It is a quality which needs to be accepted and pervade all relationships through the ability to recognise this not only with others but within Christianity itself (Lockhead 1988: 78).

The unmasking of contradictions through the prophetic can be seen as the revelation of the truth to bring about healing and wholeness. It is the living of a truly Christian life so as to imbue hope of a world which accepts people as part of God’s creation and mission. This revelation brings with it the added prophetic aspect of living for the moment, as mission is not only being aware of others but also embracing others through opportunities to influence humanity for the better. In doing so it informs Prophetic Dialogue as being transformative in nature for all in God’s mission. This is the framework, the praxis through which this thesis will explore the understandings of mission.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This thesis will cover areas of migration, identity, culture and mission through a desk study of the literature available. The literature regarding the area of migration is wide and diverse. Bevans has written on how migrants view the church as a place of rest and stability “for weary travellers...an outpost of hope for exiles” (Bevans 2008: 91). As such the Church has an identity which implies movement with migrants as the body of Christ on pilgrimage. The church is transformed in this joint pilgrimage with migrants, as it learns to see itself as dynamic in movement towards God – being more than just a static definition unresponsive of the reality of its members as well as its migrant believers (Bevans 2008: 101). Despite the

nature of migration being both joyous and painful, it can through its interaction, communication and openness lead to “practices that are prophetic, communal, hope filled and based on *convivencia* and solidarity” (Groody 2008: 243).

This interaction between migration and theology within a set context is discussed by New Zealand theologians Andrew Butcher and George Wieland. They discuss how Christianity is expressed and interpreted by the Asian migrant community in New Zealand. This connects migration and theology as located in the context of the Asian migrant experience in New Zealand. This covers many issues which also cross over into the Samoan migrant experience in Auckland such as how Christianity and the church provides migrants with ways to deal with issues of displacement, identity confusion and intergenerational conflict within the migrant experience (Butcher and Wieland 2009: 6).

Migration as a metaphor for the pilgrimage from the periphery to the centre in search for meaning is also commented by Wieland as he emphasises the need to accept migrant populations as new avenues of understanding the church and Christianity (Wieland 2015: 73-81). Wieland takes a multidisciplinary approach to the interaction between the migrants and the church: where the migrants locate themselves as being in a liminal state of a “people in between” (Wieland 2015: 72). Wieland illustrates how this liminal state can be of benefit to how migrants and the church interact through the invitation to discuss their positions in the local context.

This search for identity amongst migrant populations is common also to the Samoan migrant experience. The literature on Samoan migration focuses on the migration and transition of Samoan migrants into urban areas in the works of Ramsey Shu (1980), Ilana Gershon (2007) and Karla Rolff (1978). In terms of New Zealand there are a plethora of literature through the writings of David Pitt and Cluny MacPherson (1974), Melani Anae (1988) and Jemima Tiatia (1998) which examine Samoan migration to New Zealand and the status of the New Zealand Samoan population in terms of culture, religion and social relationships. Sailemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor raises issues as to how a Samoan understanding of migration (*Malaga*) affects not only how Samoans view migration, but also the drive to migrate (2009: 1).

The issues of migration and identity have been further discussed by authors such as Clive Pearson (2004) , Upolu Vaai (2006) and Terry Pouono (2013). Pearson examines migration and theology through a sociological lens in regard to the identity of New Zealand born Samoan Christians. For New Zealand born Samoans, Christianity and culture are intertwined

in their social and cultural realities. In order to understand these realities, one must locate their identity within an existence in which culture and Christianity are in tension as in the identity of the New Zealand born Samoan. Attendance and membership of a Samoan migrants' church such as the CCCS, is seen as an indication of allegiance to a shared Samoan identity amongst the Samoan community, whereas attendance of a non-Samoan church is seen as "a betrayal of the Samoan church and the roots where you came from" (Pouono 2013: 176). This tension can lead to a "fractured cultural existence" between how culture is understood and the reality by which "a sense of identity must be negotiated" (Pearson 2004: 8).

This tension as to how culture and Christianity is understood by New Zealand born Samoans is further remarked upon by Pouono (2013). Pouono recognises there is a tension that exists surrounding the understanding of Christianity between Samoan migrants and New Zealand born Samoan members of the CCCS. This tension can be seen in the approach of Samoan migrants who seek to uphold the structures and practices of the CCCS as practiced in Samoa, and New Zealand born Samoans who recognise the importance of tradition and culture but do not have the same adherence to it as their parents or Samoan migrants. More often than not this seems to be a clash as to what is recognised and accepted as Samoan and what falls outside of traditional definitions of what is Samoan.

The debate as to the importance to culture to identity is one which has been discussed extensively. Pouono and Pearson both situate the issue of culture as being both a boon and a benefit to Christian identity in terms of the New Zealand Samoan experience. In terms of the general discussion Smith (2006) makes pertinent points as to how culture can act as a device by which communities can respond positively to the challenge of the gospel (Smith 2006: 346). Contrary to past discussions of culture and faith the debate seems to be moving to an understanding of the relationship between the two which highlights the entry points by which culture can play an important part in how Samoans migrants to New Zealand and their children understand their relationship with God.

This tension as to the understandings of the identity of the New Zealand born Samoan Christian is also reflected in the meaning of mission. Mission has been defined as "the witness and proclamation of God's love and action revealed in the concrete history of Jesus of Nazareth, and is an invitation to relationship and partnership with God through relationship with him, in the power of his Holy Spirit" (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 29). This definition

whilst reflecting the breadth of mission also highlights how mission at its heart is about relationship between God, creation and humanity.

The complexities in defining and understanding mission permeate the CCCS experience in New Zealand. It is interesting to note that for much of the literature as to the identity of New Zealand born Samoans, the various approaches seem to reflect a position in which identity is negotiated through a cultural and Christian lens. There is little if any discussion amongst existing literature as to the understanding of mission within the Samoan migrant experience of God. This thesis seeks to explore how mission is understood linked to the changes inherent in migration and the issues of identity that arise in light of the CCCS experience in Auckland.

## **1.7 CHAPTER DESIGN**

This thesis will be divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 is the introduction outlining the background, the objectives, methodology and include the literature review.

Chapter 2 will examine the connection between migration and theology in light of the Samoan migrant experience in New Zealand. It will outline an overview of migration in terms of definition of migration, the historical background of Samoan migration to New Zealand, the establishment of the CCCS in New Zealand, the intergenerational conflict that has arisen with the growing New Zealand population and the search for an identity of members of the CCCS.

Chapter 3 will discuss mission and how it is defined in the wider CCCS context in New Zealand. It will define mission in the wider academic literature before narrowing to a focus on mission as interpreted by the CCCS. This will be done through an examination of the Constitution of the CCCS and what it can explain in terms of a mission of the CCCS.

Chapter 4 will further expand on the research method of *talanoa* which will be used to conduct the interviews and then will expand on the results and make observations based on the data gathered from the interviews.

Chapter 5 will firstly explore the results obtained from the *talanoa* process through the lens of Prophetic Dialogue. It will explore how Prophetic Dialogue can help to provide ways to deal with the understandings of mission as discussed in the previous chapter.

Chapter 6 will be the concluding chapter in which suggestions will be made as to how to approach the issues as raised in this thesis.

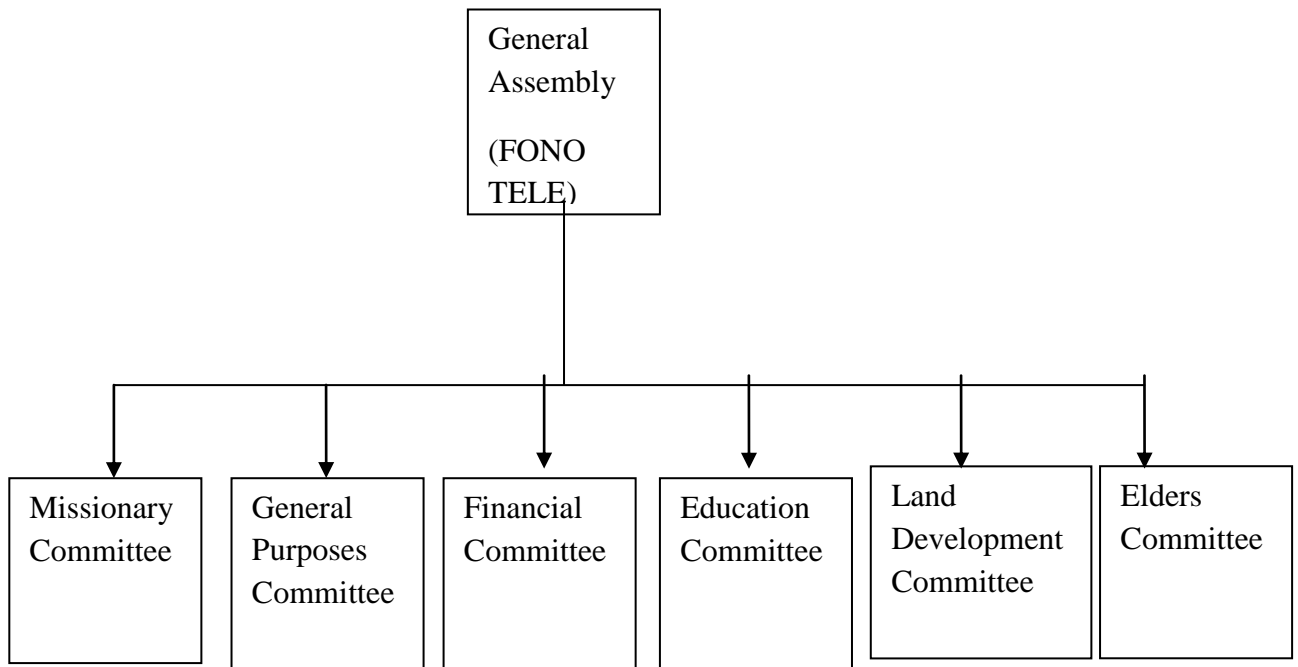


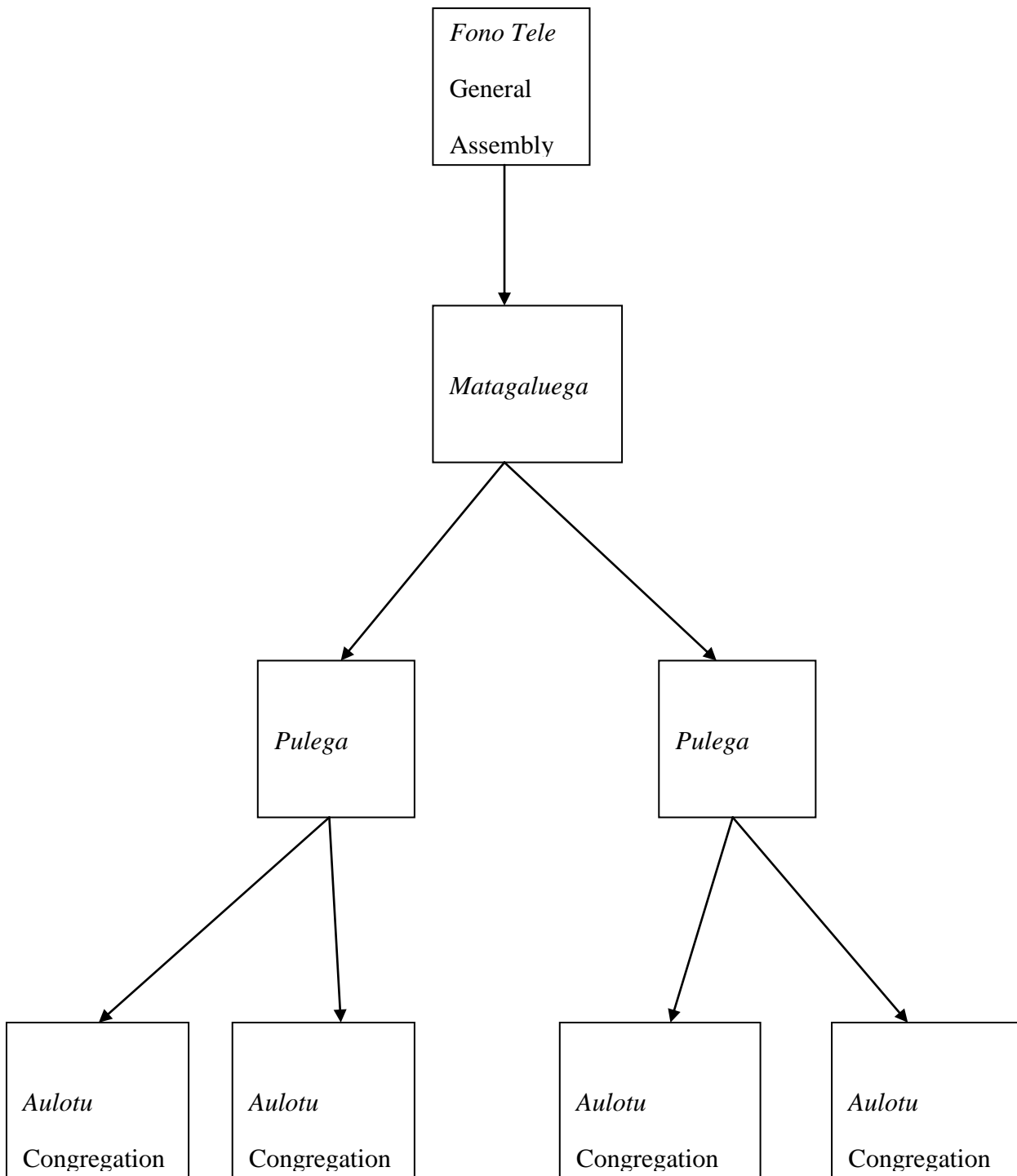
Figure 1: Organisation of the CCCS<sup>7</sup>




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<sup>7</sup> As can be seen in the diagram in figure 1, the Supreme decision making body is the General Assembly or the *Fono Tele* (Samoan translation is Great Meeting). The *Fono Tele* is held annually for two weeks in May. It is the worldwide assembly of the CCCS and hence has delegates from all CCCS congregations worldwide attend. From the *Fono Tele* there are 6 committees, which are in charge of different aspects of the CCCS: the Missionary Committee, General Purposes Committee, Financial Committee, Land Development Committee, the Elders Committee and the Education Committee. At the *Fono Tele* in May, each committee tables a report of its annual activities, budget, outgoings and incomings. The *Fono Tele* will either accept the tabled reports or ask the respective committee to redo their reports to answer any questions which may arise in the *Fono Tele*.

Figure 2: *Matagaluega* Structure<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> This figure outlines the Synod *Matagaluega* structure within the CCCS. The *Fono Tele* is the supreme body under the Constitution to which each *matagaluega* is answerable. But within each *matagaluega* the structure highlights the top down structure in which the *matagaluega* is made of. Under each *matagaluega* there are sub districts or *pulega* and each *pulega* is made up of a number of *Aulotu* or CCCS congregations. For each *pulega* there is a Reverend Elder or *Faifeau Toeaina*. He is the senior ordained minister in each *pulega* and has a position akin to a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church or Bishop in the Anglican Church. It is the responsibility of the Reverend Elder to ensure his *pulega* is led according to the principles and teachings of the CCCS, as well as ensuring his fellow brother ordained ministers are fulfilling their roles and duties in regards to their respective congregations.



## CHAPTER 2: HISTORIES OF MIGRATION

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Migration is said to be one way in which God makes himself known to humanity through a history of culturally conditioned experiences (Hanciles 2008). This chapter will explore the history of migration from the experience of the Samoan migrant to New Zealand. Firstly it will explore migration as a worldwide phenomenon then place it within the context of Oceania and Samoan experience of migration. This will require an exploration of the Samoan understandings of migration as it fits in to the wider Samoan world view.

This chapter will begin by defining culture and in particular Samoan culture or *Fa'a Samoa*. I will then move to outlining the Samoan migration experience to New Zealand from the early 1960s to 2015. It was during this period that the CCCS was established in New Zealand and so the chapter will explore the establishment of the CCCS. I will also examine the changes that have occurred amongst the Samoan migrant community as it has transitioned from a migrant church to being a well-established landmark in New Zealand society.

### 2.2 SAMOAN CULTURE OR *FA'A SAMOA*

#### 2.2.1 What is culture?

The understanding of culture ranges from patterns of explicit and implicit behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols distinctive of human groups (Carson 2008: 1); or as a dynamically constructed system of meaning which provides a network of ideas, values and beliefs which influence how we know and behave (Mila-Schaaf 2010: 94). Culture is a fluid concept which reflects the complex reality of a people's self identity which includes a holistic approach based on language, traditions, customs, beliefs and institutions that make up a community (Aram I 1999: 30).

Culture and religion are intimately interrelated and in many communities find expression in each other in an ongoing dialogue (Shorter 1999: 55). This intimate relationship can be seen in the understanding of *Fa'a Samoa* or "the Samoan way of living." This term incorporates a wide scope of meaning encompassing how a Samoan speaks, acts, behaves and exists in the world. In order to understand *Fa'a Samoa*, we must examine the historical and cultural context of the arrival of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Samoa, and in particular the effects of LMS missionaries on how *Fa'a Samoa* is currently understood.

### 2.2.2 Pre-Christian Samoan culture

Prior to the arrival of the LMS, Samoans lived a lifestyle which was a mixture of indigenous religion and culture where the two were “integrated parts of one reality which gave mutual support to each other” (Kamu 2003: 1). Samoans had an understanding of the world which was based on the supernatural, incorporating their worship of deities and religious beliefs into all aspects of their everyday lives. This promoted a worldview which emphasised respect for and kinship between humanity and the natural world (Meleisea 1987: 35).

The arrival of the LMS brought changes to the relational nature of *Fa'a Samoa*. The most obvious being the introduction of the Word of God through the gospel into Samoan society. No longer was the Samoan worldview based on a narrow lens focused on relationships with nature, but with the acceptance of Christianity introduced a new centre based on the Christian God who was centralised, omnipotent, omniscient, transcendent and the only true God (Tuisuga 2011: 111).

The introduction of Christianity brought with it changes to the *Fa'a Samoa*, mainly the imposition by missionaries of practices which they thought would be for the good of Samoan society (Tuisuga 2011: 112). An important change to the culture was the power associated with the chiefs: chiefs held a position of divinely attributed power which they used to exert control in the villages and districts; but with the coming of the Christian missionaries, this power was not only now attributed to the Christian God, but in doing so the almost divine status of the chiefs was transferred in large part to Reverend Ministers of each village congregation. These new “chiefs” of villages, the Reverend Ministers become recognised by the Samoan people as the new physical embodiment of the covenant between the Samoan people and their new Christian God<sup>9</sup> (Meleisea 1987: 61).

The arrival of the LMS changed the relational aspects of Samoan practices such as the respect which chiefs once had, as well as the relationship between a brother and his sister which was a sacred covenant, both emphasising the importance of relationships within Samoan society. These practices were altered by replacing the chiefs, the relationships between brother and sister with the Christian Minister as the new symbol of the sacred and covenantal within Samoan society. These and other practices emphasised the holistic nature of Samoan culture which incorporated respect, space, duty, obligation, honour, acknowledgment of communal

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<sup>9</sup> Ordained ministers in the CCCS are called *Susuga le Faafeagaiga* which translated means “holder of the covenant”. As such within the CCCS the title indicates the covenant between God, his people members of the CCCS through his servant the ordained minister.

responsibility amongst other things centred on a religio-cultural world view which stressed the sacred relational nature of humanity, creation and God.

### **2.2.3 A modern understanding of *Fa'a Samoa***

Indeed although *Fa'a Samoa* has endured other contemporary challenges such as globalisation, much of *Fa'a Samoa* is prevalent in the Samoan migrant population in New Zealand. Samoan migrant communities in New Zealand still base social interaction on the *Fa'a Samoa* which stresses interaction/relationship between humanity, creation and God. This stresses the importance of the relational in how *Fa'a Samoa* is understood – not only between Samoan people and creation, but more importantly Samoan people and the Christian God.

*Fa'a Samoa* can be distilled into three overlapping concepts – *ava* (respect), *fa'a'aloalo* (reverence/humility) and *alofa* (love). *Ava* or respect refers to the respect all Samoans are expected to have been taught to their elders, their family and the people in their village and Samoa as a whole. *Fa'a'aloalo* or reverence/humility is the act of showing respect to others, which in turn reflects an awareness of the space (*va*) and relationships within the family and greater community as a whole. The final aspect is *alofa* or love. *Alofa* in the Samoan context is not only love but also incorporates duty and obligation to one's family and the wider community. This implies a sense of loyalty and service to the family as well as the wider Samoan community founded on serving others (Anae 1998: 20). All three components highlight how *Fa'a Samoa* is about respect, space, duty and obligation of the individual to the whole and to God.

## **2.3 MIGRATION FROM SAMOA TO NEW ZEALAND**

### **2.3.1 Samoan ideas of Migration:**

Migration is a global and historical phenomenon as humanity has constantly been in migration for reasons ranging from war, pestilence and seeking a better life. It is an intrinsic theme in the Bible which is “steeped in images of migration” (Groody 2009: 644) ranging from Abraham migrating/searching for the “promised land” (Gen 13) in the Old Testament to the very shaping of Jesus Christ's self understanding as to his journey on earth “Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God and that he was going back to God” (John13:3).

Samoans have navigated Oceania for thousands of years and thus migration has been described as an inherently Samoan characteristic. The ability of Samoan navigators to traverse Oceania throughout history is evident in the close relationships of the paramount chiefs of Samoa with the royal families of Tonga and Fiji, despite the vast distance between nations, in which “alliances for trade and marriage were made [...]expanding social networks for greater flow of wealth to quench their thirst for adventure” (Hau’ofa 2008: 149). For Samoans migration is understood as “a means of connecting people and places...fundamental to the Samoan way of life” (Salesa 2003: 172). It is this sense of travelling/migration as a way to connect people and places which is still inherent in how Samoans experience migration.

### **2.3.2 Migration as *Malaga***

The Samoan word for migration is *malaga* which refers to the Samoan practice in which people travelled for opportunities, maintain social connections and fulfil familial obligations (Gough 2009: 48). It is still practiced amongst the contemporary Samoan population and gives a journey a sense of cultural and social importance. It is also used to describe the spiritual journey of being on earth, and in particular the death of a person as a journey home to God (Lilomaiva-Doktor 2009: 1).

The cultural aspects of *malaga* are very important for it allows Samoan customs and traditions to migrate with Samoans. It was a way to maintain Samoan identity whilst migrating and can be seen in a Samoan proverb “*O Samoa o le maota tauave*” – which is translated as meaning “Samoan identity is the house all Samoans carry with them wherever they may travel” (Anae 1998: 9). Thus emphasising the broad notions of migration and how they are embedded within the mindset of the Samoan migrant (Ioka 1996: 158).

### **2.3.3 Samoan Migration to New Zealand:**

Samoan migration to New Zealand began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century mostly through individual travels of Samoans who sought to explore the world, mostly as sailors (Gough 2009). In the 1950s and 1960s New Zealand moved towards an industrialised economy away from its traditional agricultural economy (MacPherson and MacPherson 2002: 136). This change required a reliable source of unskilled labour, much of which came from Oceania. It was during this period, especially from the 1960s to the 1970s that Samoan migration to New Zealand reached its apex.

Samoa migration came in waves: the first wave was often individuals, mostly male who came first to establish themselves in New Zealand, to be later followed by family members (Pitt and MacPherson 1974). This led to a snow-balling affect as the first wave of Samoan migrants would organise for more family members to migrate, followed by another wave and another (Pitt and MacPherson 1974). By the end of the 1970s most Samoans in New Zealand lived together in large extended groups based on kinship links.

This migration in large numbers to New Zealand saw the establishment of Samoan communities, usually concentrated in urban areas such as Auckland. These migrant communities reflected Samoan society with their hierarchical focus, in which the leaders of the Samoan society often determined the patterns of social activity not only within their respective familial groups, but also the larger Samoan community. An important aspect of this social interaction was an active religious life which was seen as central to maintain *Fa'a Samoa* and a Samoan Christian identity (Macpherson and MacPherson 2002: 84). An integral part of the social life of Samoan migrants was church attendance as it was seen as a way to maintain the *Fa'a Samoa* but also to create an environment in which Samoan migrants could practice their faith, speak Samoan and be Samoan in New Zealand. This evolution of migration as the formation of a Samoan migrant community reflects the creation of an organic holistic entity incorporating the identity, traditions and beliefs of a particular group (Nagy 2009: 61).

It is interesting to note such a large migration has had on the population of Samoa: according to figures as supplied by the Samoan Bureau of Statistics at the last Samoan Census of 2011, the population of Samoa was listed as 187, 820<sup>10</sup>. This is compared with the figures for New Zealand at 144,000; America at 180,000 (Gershon 2012); and Australia 55,000 (Va'a 2004). There are twice the number of Samoans or those who identify as Samoans living outside of Samoa than in the country itself. This highlights how important to Samoan identity is this need to migrate and to connect to other places, as well as the scope of Samoan migration to New Zealand.

### **2.3.4 Establishment of the CCCS in Auckland New Zealand**

As the numbers of Samoan migrants began to increase in the 1950s so too did a movement to establish a church which was reflective of their identity as Samoans. At this time Samoan migrants attended the Pacific Island Congregational Church (PICC) which was established by

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<sup>10</sup> (<http://www.sbs.gov.ws/index.php/population-demography-and-vital-statistics> accessed 20 July 2016)

the Congregational Union of New Zealand (CUNZ) as a place of worship for the increasing number of Oceania migrants from Tonga, Cook Islands, Rarotonga as well as Samoa (Nokise 1978: 3).

The PICC was a place of worship within a pan Pacific identity, but for some Samoan members it did not represent who they were as Samoan Christians. The services conducted in English with a mixture of different Pacific languages left some Samoan migrants feeling it was not an authentic witness of their experience as Samoan Christians. The leader of the group of Samoan migrants who established the CCCS in Auckland, Fuimaono Taala, stated his group left the PICC because the style of worship did not fit with his groups understanding of meaningful worship:

There was no reverence and holiness in such kinds of worship. Sometimes there is laughing during worship [...] When it is over one cannot feel anything that might to oneself give a sense of meaningful worship. You will understand and feel the whole of worship when you worship in your own native language, read the Bible and sing the hymns you were nurtured with your whole life in the Church and since birth (Ioka 1996: 179).

The importance of the Samoan language to the Samoan migrant identity can be seen in that it is stated as one of the main reasons for the establishment of the CCCS in Auckland. Samoan language is an indicator of a person's identity as a Samoan (Tiatia 1998: 5). In other words a Samoan is defined by his or her command of the Samoan language and understanding of ensuing customs. This understanding is often used to judge how "Samoan" a person may be: the better the command of the language the more accepted by Samoan community as a member. This is true in the Samoan migrant community, where attendance of a Samoan language church is a sign of allegiance to being Samoan. If someone attends a non Samoan speaking church, this is seen by some as a betrayal of his/her Samoan roots and the Samoan church (Pouono 2013: 176). Samoan language is the medium for communication within the CCCS which associated the Gospel with a sense of authentic witness for Samoan migrants (Pouono 2013: 175).

For migrant populations and communities religion has become a force of transformation, redefinition and reshaping of identity as they seek to negotiate life in a new landscape (Cruz 2010: 121). In the example of Samoan migrants, the establishment of the CCCS was to create a church which Samoan migrants could call their own, one which was run by and for Samoans, and was an extension of the church environment they grew up in Samoa (Ioka

1996: 158-159). In doing so it was also felt this could protect Samoan identity for Samoan migrants and their children from the influence of “uncouth cultures” in New Zealand as “there is a need to protect the sons and daughters of the church from bad customs and cultures, and our treasured customs which seem to be fading in these countries of the white people” (Ioka 1996: 234).

By the 1960s many Samoans realised power lay in independence from the PICC and its attempts at a pan Pacific Christian church. The need for a separate Samoan church as envisioned by Fuimaono Taala was therefore part of the growing concern for a holistic identity which reflected all that was considered important to the predominantly Christian Samoan migrant population – God, language and *Fa’a Samoa*. The establishment of the CCCS in New Zealand was seen as the beginnings of ways to preserve a Samoan way of life which is a “functional symbiosis of Samoan culture and Christianity [...] which would be life giving to Samoans outside Samoa and for their homeland – Samoa” (Ioka 1996: 214). It was seen as “life giving” as it would allow Samoan migrants a sense of belonging and fellowship through a communal identity which spoke not only of their past in Samoa but also their future as a people in a strange new land.

This feeling of being Samoan illustrated an inability of Samoan migrants to unwrap themselves from the connection to their homeland and how they viewed their Christian identity – it is a symbiotic relationship in which one is inexplicably intertwined with the other:

The connectedness of Samoan migrants to their homeland is a bond that cannot be disconnected: the Samoan church is to the Samoan people what water is to fish. The persistence of Samoan migrants to replicate the “church” of the village, which portrayed the holy and sacred place of God to foreign soil, suggests a fundamental religious character entrenched in faith and faithfulness to their spiritual and cultural roots.” (Pouono 2013: 172).

For many Samoan migrants the drive to establish Samoan churches and in particular the CCCS in New Zealand, Australia and America reflected the same liberating spirit underlying the global phenomenon of migration. Reverend Nove Vaila’au suggests migration is illustrative of a compassionate God who migrates with humanity, and thus migration is seen as a movement with God which frees/liberates migrants from where they were to a place where they could be with God: “Migration begins with God’s order and under God’s direction. This faith in the migrating God ought to help to expand the frontiers of our

historical experience. God is the power that moves people and nations. We encounter here a dynamic God” (Vaila’au 1988: 4).

This fundamental religious character stresses migration is “by its nature a witness to the biblical God who comes and goes[...]who is always present in the plight of all immigrants” (Ulises 1980: 9-12). This repeats a reoccurring theme that God is with us and indeed the church is part of God’s mission. This gave a sense of legitimacy to the Samoan migrant experience which fuelled the need to transplant Samoan churches in foreign soil.

The establishment of the CCCS was not without its problems. Early CCCS congregations faced acrimony from the PICC and the clergy of the PICC. The clergy took umbrage as they saw the establishment of the CCCS as a threat to the PICC status as the centre of Pacific Island Christianity in New Zealand. This acrimony with the PICC overshadowed the early years of the CCCS in Auckland. Despite this the CCCS grew as more Samoans migrated to a church they deemed to be faithful to their identity as Samoan Christians and in doing so can be said to have legitimised the establishment of the CCCS in Auckland.

## **2.4 THE CCCS IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

New Zealand was not the only destination of choice for Samoan migration. Many Samoan migrants travelled to the United States of America (USA) for reasons similar to those which drove the Samoan migration to New Zealand, which was to seek a better way of life for themselves and their children (Gershon 2012: 9).

This idea of migrating for a better future is often represented in the popular literature of Samoan writers. Samoan author Sia Fiegal writes of how Samoans migrating to countries such as New Zealand and the USA, see their *malaga* to these new lands as akin to travelling to paradise: describing these lands in the experience of one of her characters, a young ten year old Samoan girl preparing to *malaga* to these foreign shores seen as “a land of milk and honey. Everyone’s rich and has no problems [...] And we dream about ways of going there. Where we’ll live. Like Cinderella. Happily ever after” (Fiegal 1996:6). This reflected a belief the future of the Samoan people lay outside of Samoa (Anae 1998). This belief has been questioned and critiqued especially by New Zealand born Samoans in particular, who feel this reflects the view of Samoan migrants and not so much the New Zealand born Samoan experience of migration (Tiatia 1998: 3).



Similar to Samoan migration to New Zealand, migration to the USA occurred in waves with the first wave being in the 1950s largely through enlistment in the USA Armed Forces (Alofatuli 2011: 64). This reflects a common theme amongst Samoan migration of seeking a new beginning and place to connect outside of Samoa. These waves of migration also mirrored the New Zealand experience, with the largest wave of Samoan migration to USA was during the 1970s which led to the development of relatively large Samoan migrant communities in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oceanside and Utah. These communities established Samoan language churches as a hub of identity around which Samoan communities could maintain their identities as Samoans in the USA (Alofatuli 2011: 69).

Another country which has seen large numbers of Samoan migration especially in the last thirty years is Australia. In the 1980s when migration to New Zealand started to decline as economic recession hit New Zealand, many Samoans were looking to other shores for prosperity. Australia beckoned to Samoan migrants with its growing economy, better wages and subsidised housing which were attractive to Samoan migrants (Va'a 2004: 7). These factors and the chance to start anew led to change of mass migration from New Zealand to Australia. As in America and New Zealand, Samoan migrant communities quickly established themselves in urban centres such as Sydney and Brisbane (Va'a 2004). The CCCS experience in the USA and Australia has not seen the growth of members as seen in New Zealand (Va'a 2004: 7-8). This has been explained as being the result of the wide spread of Samoan migrants throughout both countries, which led to the lack of contact with other Samoans and networking which allowed the CCCS in New Zealand to grow exponentially as it did.

## **2.5 TRANSNATIONALISM**

Samoan migration is not only about seeking a place and future to connect to, but also about maintaining connections to the past and the mother land – Samoa. This fluidity of movement in migration has been the point of much debate and discussion in the last thirty years as examples of transnationalism. In this thesis transnationalism will be defined as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Glick Schiller *et al* 1992: 48-63). Within the context of the Samoan understanding of migration and world view this is expanded to include the economic,

political as well as the socio-cultural factors so as to represent a holistic view of migration and transnationalism (Nagy 2009: 52).

Transnationalism brings with it new issues which affect the relationship between migrants and their country of origin, or in this case Samoan migrants, their children and their relationships with Samoa. Transnationalism within the Samoan migrant community is about maintaining the connections both familial and cultural with the homeland of Samoa. An example is that Samoan migrants in New Zealand send money to their families in Samoa by way of remittances to assist in the renovation of family properties, and buying goods and services amongst others. The amount of money sent is substantial, with the average amount of remittances from New Zealand to Samoa during the period of 1995-2005 estimated at approximately \$61 million Dollars annually (US)<sup>11</sup>.

Transnationalism when viewed through a Samoan lens still emphasises a Samoan holistic identity as represented in the *Fa'a Samoa*. It includes a sense of obligation of the migrants to their country of origin, which is sometimes imposed on the New Zealand born generation by their parents. For many of the New Zealand born Samoan generation, they are sending money to Samoa in respect and deference to their parents. Once their parents have passed, then the same sense of obligation for New Zealand born Samoans to continue sending remittances and connection to Samoa weakens and for some does not remain at all (Taule'aleausumai 2001).

The sense of holistic identity where the *Fa'a Samoa* is a way to understand their environment is also reflected in how New Zealand born Samoans view the church in New Zealand. For many the church is a place of stability and identity, but as they grow and develop this image has changed. The CCCS in particular with its strict structure and practices is seen as being conservative and restricting. This is seen by many New Zealand born Samoans as static and not relevant to the world in which they live, a world which does not reflect who they are as individuals and as a group (Pouono 2013: 181). This tension continues a theme of identity construction inherent in migration as migrants and their children explore who they are in light of their context.

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<sup>11</sup> *Remittances in the Pacific Region: International Monetary Fund Working Paper WP/07/35 February 2007.*

## 2.6 THE GROWTH OF THE SAMOAN MIGRANT POPULATION

### 2.6.1 The change in demographics – make up of Samoan migrant communities

Since the establishment of the CCCS in 1962, the membership of the CCCS has gradually increased from its initial membership of twenty people, to its current number of approximately 26,000 members<sup>12</sup>. The number of CCCS congregations over the last fifty years has grown from only six congregations in the 1960s (Ioka 1996: 160) to its current number of seventy three churches in total in New Zealand, with fifty churches in Auckland alone<sup>13</sup>. In the New Zealand Census 2013, the total population who identified ethnic Samoans numbered 141,000 with 90,000 identifying themselves as New Zealand born<sup>14</sup>. Of the 141,000 identified Samoans in the Census, 83% identified themselves as being Christians: of these 83% Samoan Christians, 22% identified as Roman Catholic and 18% identified themselves as members of the CCCS<sup>15</sup>. Of these 141,000 Samoans, over 60% lived in Auckland.

In the information released during the 2012 Jubilee celebrations of the CCCS, of the 26,000 members in New Zealand, 19,000 lived in Auckland and 7000 in the rest of New Zealand<sup>16</sup>. These results highlight that Auckland is the centre of the Samoan migrant population in New Zealand, the majority of CCCS members live in Auckland, and that the initial Samoan migrants of the 1970s and 1980s are ageing and will soon either withdraw from active life due to age or die (Anae 1998: 79). This leaves the CCCS in Auckland relying on the next generation or New Zealand born Samoans to step up to fill the ensuing gap.

This gap referred to is said to reflect the divide between Samoan migrants and the ensuing generations of New Zealand born Samoans including their children and grandchildren (MacPherson and MacPherson 2002). New Zealand born Samoans have developed their own views through their interaction not only within the Samoan migrant communities including the CCCS, but also in the wider New Zealand society. As mentioned by Pouono this has led

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/pacific-peoples.aspx> accessed 10 June 2016

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cccs.org.ws> the official website of the CCCS accessed 11 June 2016

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/pacific-peoples.aspx> accessed 10 June 2016

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/pacific-peoples.aspx> accessed 10 June 2016

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-nz/50SCES\\_EVI\\_00DBHOH\\_BILL11822](https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-nz/50SCES_EVI_00DBHOH_BILL11822) accessed 14 June 2016

to a differing of views as to the structures and practices of the CCCS in New Zealand (2013: 175).

Many New Zealand born Samoan members of the CCCS are openly questioning the traditions, cultural practices and structures of the CCCS in Auckland. They ask questions such as: Why are the church services conducted in such a formal and difficult to understand form of Samoan? Why won't the CCCS ordain women as ministers? Why do parents and predominantly Samoan migrant population in the CCCS give so much money when most families are struggling financially? (Pouono 2013; Anae 1998; Tiatia 1998). This has led to a large number of New Zealand born Samoan members of the CCCS disagreeing with their parents and the leadership of the CCCS. This has led to many leaving the CCCS due to differences in understanding and views as to the practices and spirituality of the CCCS.

The failure of the CCCS to act in real terms to combat this ensuing gap which seems to be growing, has been stated as highlighting neglect on the part of the CCCS to recognise the needs of this generation of New Zealand born Samoan members (Pouono 2013: 176). I agree with this statement though must state that the CCCS has and is trying to resolve this issue of age gap and differences in understandings. There are programs in place but more often than not the need to move forward is impeded by a refusal often to address these issues in any concrete sense. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the identity of Samoan migrants and Christianity is embedded into their being in an almost symbiotic relationship, and this often includes a reluctance to accept questioning from New Zealand born Samoans.

The use of the label "New Zealand born" has been discussed by many New Zealand academics Jemima Tiatia (1998), Melani Anae (2001), Risati Ete (2004) and Karlo Mila-Schaaf (2010), who focus on the rise in numbers amongst the Samoan community in New Zealand especially in regards to those who were born in New Zealand, and how this has effected Samoan communities and their once irrefutable cultural and spiritual links to Samoa and in the context of the CCCS the mother church in Samoa. The social factors that led to a singular migrant community in the 1970s and 1980s, through the use of kinship links and the church as the cultural and social hub to congregate, have been substantially affected from within and without.

As can be seen from the figures outlined the largest visible factor is the change in numbers of the expatriate Samoan migrant population. This generation were once the leaders of Samoan migrant communities and Samoan churches, including the CCCS. As a consequence of the

economic recession of the late 1970s and 1980s the formerly steady stream of Samoan migrants looking for work in New Zealand became a trickle. Contemporary Samoan migration to New Zealand utilises legislation which allows older family members to join their children who migrated previously and have established themselves in New Zealand (MacPherson and MacPherson 2002: 85). This group of Samoan migrants tend to share similar worldviews and beliefs with the aging first generation of Samoan migrants. It is this group which is slowly replacing the ageing leadership within the CCCS in Auckland.

In contrast to the decline in migration from Samoa, is the rise of New Zealand born Samoans who are coming into their own which began in the 1990s and continues today. New Zealand born Samoans are starting to flex their increasing social “muscle” or influence within the community (Cook 2001: 20). This younger generation is said to bring an in depth understanding of New Zealand society through their socialisation, education and intermarriage within the greater New Zealand society (MacPherson and MacPherson 2002: 87). Subsequently New Zealand born Samoans tend to be better positioned in the wider community through their higher education, incomes and numbers in more secure employment in an ever changing economy (Anae 1999: 12). It is said this allows New Zealand born Samoans to have a range of independence from compliance with parental and community obligations.

### **2.6.2 Who is a New Zealand born Samoan?**

An important issue to discuss is the definition as to who is a New Zealand born Samoan? “New Zealand born” is an elusive term as issues have arisen as to whom does this refer to and why? Migrant communities cross into the issue of identity as they seek to find their place in the new world they have settled in. Identity therefore was a construct to emphasise an ethnic identity, an identity which allowed definition outside of the previous racial focus of phenotype and biology whilst allowing for groups to opt in and identify with certain aspects (Hiebert 2009: 74).

The problem in the context of the issue of “New Zealand born” mirrors how identity and understanding of identity is dynamic, constantly shifting from one space to another. It is the same with Samoan identity amongst the migrant population in New Zealand. Contrary to mainstream attitudes, Samoans are not homogenous in their understanding of identity in New Zealand but diverse, as Samoan communities in New Zealand are like a “sea of islands” in that they are fluid and in motion –“ people who align themselves variously...at different

times, along ethnic, geographic, church, family, school, age/gender based, youth/elders, island born/NZ born, occupational lines or a mix of these” (Aanae 2001: 7).

I prefer the term “New Zealand born” though it is a loaded term as being New Zealand born is seen as less than full Samoan by some members of the Samoan migrant community especially those who were born and raised in Samoa, and at times not totally accepted in New Zealand by the wider community (Tiatia 1998: 2). But it is the identity that I and many of my generation have always identified with. It highlights our struggles and our triumphs as being people who are caught in between: “This betwixt and between predicament...can be an incentive and resource for a creative re-thinking of the two cultural traditions, the native and the foreign. Being in-between is, paradoxically, being *neither* this *nor* that but also being *both* this *and* that” (Phan 2013: 184).

### **2.6.3 Different Strokes for Different Folks?**

New Zealand born Samoans growing up in New Zealand have not been raised in the same communal structure which defines Samoan identity: an identity reliant upon relationships within the family (*aiga*), extended family (*aiga potopoto*), the village (*nuu*) and the church (*lotu*) all intertwined in overlapping circles. This socialised communal existence ensured that everyone was committed to a village based secular and religious socialisation through a set of recognised and enforced social values – *Fa’a Samoa*. This is not mirrored in New Zealand, where the environment and structure, fosters a more open environment in which the children of Samoan migrants have less exposure to Samoan values and practices (MacPherson and Macpherson 2002: 86). This has led to a lack of language proficiency which has created a sense of distance from Samoan values and practices: whilst 90 per cent of Samoan born Samoans in New Zealand speak Samoan, only 46 per cent of New Zealand born Samoans do (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga 2001: 5).

This does not mean New Zealand born Samoans do not identify with being Samoan, it is that their definition of being Samoan and that of their parents are different. This change in understanding is the result of the existence of different pathways available for New Zealand born Samoans, growing up in a Western system with a political, economic and social environment often at odds with the traditional Samoan customs and practices. This illustrates a wide range of possibilities and identities that are now available to New Zealand born Samoans, - as can be seen in the embrace of terms such as “New Zealand born”, “P.Is”

(Pacific Islanders), “Polys” and also “part-Samoan” which is the consequence of intermarriage, to define themselves (Anae 2001: 137).

This does not mean New Zealand born Samoans have discarded their cultural and spiritual connections to the land of their parents or grandparents, but rather their emphasis and foundation of understanding of who they are is different. Though New Zealand born Samoans grew up in different environments from their parents and the early Samoan migrants, this did not mean they were homogenous in their reaction to the emphasis of their parents and Samoan migrants on the importance of Christianity and *Fa'a Samoa*.

As they came of age in New Zealand, these New Zealand born Samoans have had varying levels of connection with their parents and grandparents villages as well as the *Fa'a Samoa*. The varying degrees of identification with being Samoan in New Zealand also depended in large part upon their ability to speak Samoan. Those who were able to speak Samoan and English as well as being familiar with *Fa'a Samoa* were often held up as being examples of being “real Samoans” by their family and social circles, admired for the ability to exist in both worlds; whilst those whose language skills and understanding of *Fa'a Samoa* were sadly lacking were seen as being less “real” in terms of a Samoan identity (Tiatia 1998: 11).

The lack of Samoan language skills highlights the importance of language in the shaping of identity. This sense of disconnect through language is also repeated in how many New Zealand born Samoans feel alienated from the CCCS forms of worship due to the formality of the language and language skills needed to understand Samoan oratory. Ironically this reflects how Fuimaono Taala and his group felt attending the PICC services in the 1950s and 1960s, in which the language barriers emphasised a distance from what they believed was an authentic witness to a Samoan Christian identity.

Also prevalent amongst New Zealand born Samoans has been the questioning of the *Fa'a Samoa* and its relevance to life in contemporary New Zealand. New Zealand born Samoans have begun to challenge and deconstruct the traditionally orthodoxies of their parents and the Samoan migrant community (MacPherson and MacPherson 2001: 151). It is important to note that though there is tension, the differing points of views are more nuanced and complicated than just a binary “them” versus “us” situation.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the issues of migration as discussed in this chapter migration is an important part of the human and Samoan experience of reality. Migration by its very nature precipitates change which is both beneficial and painful. This fluid understanding of migration for Samoan migrant community is reflected in a tension between the traditional outlook of Samoan migrants, and their children who challenge the orthodox views of their parents with the emphasis on the CCCS and *Fa'a Samoa* as part of overlapping structures of maintaining identity in New Zealand. This tension highlights not only how Samoan migrants and their New Zealand born children approach how they define their place in New Zealand society, but also how they approach religion and their respective understanding of Christianity.



## **CHAPTER 3: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The title of this chapter refers to a television show of the 1960s and 1970s which was popular in Samoa and New Zealand. The show focused on a group of operatives working for an international espionage agency tasked each week with a changing mission to save the world from a nefarious criminal organisation. This chapter may not be as melodramatic, but it does relate to how “mission” can change and has changed in understanding and practice over the years. Mission like migration, is not static and has moved from one meaning to another over the last century in Samoa and amongst Samoans themselves.

This chapter will seek to understand “mission” within the context of the CCCS. This chapter will examine a possible contextualisation of “mission”, one which may prove to be reflective of the Samoan migration experience. This necessitates an examination and analysis of the Constitution of the CCCS from which an understanding of mission can be extracted.

### **3.2 MISSION IN THE CCCS**

#### **3.2.1 The historical background of the mission of the London Missionary Society**

Mission as brought to Samoa by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was based on a model of planting the gospel and the conversion of the Samoan people (Bevans 1991: 38; Smith 2004: 3), with the assumption to free the people of Samoa from their gods, and seek to manifest the will of God on earth as it was supposed to in heaven (Havea 2008: 21). This highlights a sense of superiority which came with the missionaries and that for many recipients of Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century mission was not an innocent word. Mission is associated with colonisation, violence against indigenous peoples, destruction of cultures and disregard of religious traditions based on a supposed sense of cultural superiority (Bevans 2013: 159).

Samoan acceptance and conversion to Christianity is said to have happened relatively quickly. This was the result of a reciprocal relationship between the missionaries and the ruling elites of Samoan society, who used the introduction of Christianity and in particular the resources available from the missionaries to strengthen their own political and social status within Samoan society. The most famous example was of Malietoa Vainupo, a

paramount chief<sup>17</sup> who was the first to accept the LMS missionaries into Samoa. He quickly became a convert and was able to gain access to the resources of these new intruders into his lands, whilst at the same time the LMS missionaries used Malietoa's political and social influence to quickly expand their mission to convert Samoa to Christianity (Ioka 1996: 23). With Malietoa's assistance, the LMS quickly established mission settlements throughout Samoa; in particular they established a mission school in 1844, which would later become the Malua Theological College – the training ground for future ministers of the CCCS and its spiritual home (Davidson 1967: 36).

### **3.3 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CCCS**

#### **3.3.1 The foundations of the CCCS**

By its very title, the CCCS is presumed to follow a congregational structure, in which all members are equal to one another and each congregation is an autonomous body with no set hierarchical structure by which to govern its affairs and consign doctrine (Tuisuga 2011: 14). Although the CCCS defines itself as Congregationalist, it is Presbyterian in practice and structure. Its Presbyterian nature is highlighted by the hierarchical structure within each church with the minister as leader, then the deacons and the rest of the congregation in that order. This makes sense in the context of the LMS missionaries, who practiced a mixture of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism (Setefano 2008: 53; Garrett: 1984). The Presbyterian structure mirrored the hierarchical structure within the Samoan villages, with a clear hierarchy of authority which the LMS missionaries adopted to spread the gospel:

The special local responsibility of church members was emphasised, but the nature of Samoan village life made it impossible to give reality to the separated church meeting in the Congregational sense. This fact, together with the prevailing influence of the chiefs in village life, led in 1907 to a constitutional development in the Church of some importance. A number of responsibilities were transferred from the local congregation to a meeting composed of representatives (pastors and deacons) from several adjacent villages. This District Meeting or Presbytery was henceforth an acknowledged centre of ecclesiastical authority (Goddall 1954:367).

In turn the LMS Samoan converts to Christianity adopted those practices of the LMS missionaries which suited them. The communal nature of Congregationalism and the

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<sup>17</sup> In Samoa there are 4 paramount chieftain titles of which the Malietoa is one. Paramount chiefs were akin to princes with control and power over whole districts and as such large swathes of the Samoan population. Their status was said to be a gift from the divine. With the introduction of Christianity their power and status was largely diluted by ordained ministers who became the new symbols of the sacred covenant between Samoans and the divine (Meleisea 1987).

hierarchical structures of Presbyterianism allowed for the creation of a Samoan church which mirrored Samoan beliefs and customs as well as their understanding of Christianity.

### **3.3.2 A respite into the historical background of the Constitution**

In order to effectively examine the Constitution in light of this thesis, an intensive critical approach must be undertaken. This requires intensive dialogue between the reader and the text through a holistic view of the various factors which may influence the readers' understanding (Schreiter 2004: 40). All texts are historically bound and socially viewed so a holistic approach is a necessity, as it is not enough to know the words of the text but also to understand the background of the text so as to ensure a reading which is as realistic as can be in light of the context (Sergovia 2004: 42).

The Constitution was written in 1928 during a time of great social, political and historical change in Samoan history. The Great War had finished and Samoa had moved from German colonisation to administration by the New Zealand government. The Samoan LMS church<sup>18</sup> at the time was led by a committee of representatives of the LMS in England and a committee of Samoan Reverend Elders<sup>19</sup>, the *Au Toeaina*. During this period, Samoan nationalism took hold of the local population as they protested against the yoke of a New Zealand Administration which they felt failed to respect *Fa'a Samoa*. The rise of nationalism threatened the CCCS and its position as the leading social and religious institution, as many Samoans were leaving to join the Samoan nationalism movement led by respected High Chiefs of Samoa, which also had its own church (Liuaana 2004).

It was against this background the committee of the Reverend Elders or *Au Toeaina* requested the LMS send a delegation to Samoa as they realised the only way to maintain their position in light of the social and political environment was to press for independence from the LMS. It was here that the problems began as the LMS delegation refused to accept the demands of the *Au Toeaina* for independence (Garrett 1984:124). This impasse was somewhat alleviated when the delegation from the LMS ratified a Constitution which positioned the General Meeting or *Fono Tele* as the "supreme head and final authority of the Samoan (LMS) church"

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<sup>18</sup> The Samoan LMS Church was the title of the CCCS at this time in history and would not formally change its title to the CCCS until it became fully autonomous and independent from the LMS in 1962 (Liuaana 2004: 190-203).

<sup>19</sup> In the CCCS the highest ranking or position a person can attain is that of Reverend Elders who lead each *pulega* and are akin to a Roman Catholic Cardinal or a Methodist Moderator. This committee is often referred to as "fathers of the Church".

(Liuaana 2004: 193)<sup>20</sup>. The *Au Toeaina* they saw the newly ratified Constitution as an expansion of their authority. For the LMS the new Constitution allowed them to control the CCCS through the *Fono Tele*, for those who controlled the *Fono Tele* controlled the CCCS. The LMS were able to control the *Fono Tele* for the next twenty years through its use of intermediaries, therefore any motions to be passed through the *Fono Tele* had to be passed through the LMS and its supporters (Liuaana 2004: 195).

The Constitution was not so much a document for independence, but a subtle way the LMS could maintain control over the CCCS and the *Au Toeaina* in particular. The Constitution was formally ratified in English with the Samoan translation secondary in both importance and understanding at the time. As stated by other Samoan commentators the original English Constitution is filled with complicated nuanced language which was difficult to translate into Samoan (Liuaana: 1995; Setefano: 2008). It is against this background, this chapter will attempt a reading and understanding of both the English and Samoan texts of the Constitution to discern a “mission” of the CCCS.

### **3.4 THE TEXT ITSELF**

#### **3.4.1 The Preamble of the Constitution<sup>21</sup>**

The Preamble of the Constitution gives the first clue as to its direction in that it states the Constitution is to act as a “*guide*” for the entire church: “*This Constitution has been prepared in the hope that it will guide the whole Church in villages, Sub-Districts, and Districts. There is belief and faith in the truth and integrity of offering for the work of God as led by Jesus Christ the Head of the Church.*” The word “*guide*” in this context is a verb which can mean to lead, indicate, show a way, influence or to direct, thus highlighting an open meaning and usage of the word. In comparison the Samoan translation uses the word “*taitaiina*” which is more closed in its meaning referring more to “*leadership*” or “*to being led*”, hence having a more authoritative sound and implication (Setefano 2008: 47). Another Samoan word which could be used to indicate or give a sense akin to the word “*guide*” is “*faasino*” which means to direct or to show the way, but without the imperative meaning associated with “*taitaiina*”. This is a more open translation which is contrary to the sense and meaning associated with the word “*taitaiina*.” The Samoan translation more than the English translation hints at the

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<sup>20</sup> Also see Figure 1 in Chapter 1 which illustrates the organisational structure of the CCCS in regards to the General Assembly or *Fono Tele*.

<sup>21</sup> All references and quotes referred to in this section unless otherwise indicated will be from the Constitution of the CCCS which can be found at the official CCCS website [www.cccs.org.ws](http://www.cccs.org.ws) accessed 21 May 2016.

Constitution being the ultimate arbitrator of church matters, thus mirroring the desire of the LMS delegation to constrain any movement to independence by the Samoan LMS church. This in itself fits in with the understanding of the mission by the LMS and the *Au Toeaina* as being the church, in this case the clergy, leading the people.

The second sentence of the Preamble states “*There is belief and faith in the truth and integrity of offering for the work of God as led by Christ the Head of the Church*” thus placing the relationship of Jesus Christ together with the Constitution and the Church. Once again in the Samoan translation of this sentence, the emphasis is on an authoritative role of the Constitution, as it uses the word “*taitaiina*” with its imperative meaning. In this light the Constitution is placed in a position to “lead” the church as Christ does. This can cause confusion as this interpretation of the Constitution as having a similar role to Christ can lead to an understanding or misunderstanding that the Constitution is imbued with the power parallel to Christ. This has led to the Constitution as being accepted blindly as the will of Christ and any critique therefore can be seen as critique of Christ.

### **3.4.2 Part II of the Constitution**

There is a clear Christological focus on Christ which can be seen in Part II of the Constitution: which defines the church as “*the name given to those who are gathered together in Jesus, who believe in Jesus and who celebrate the sacraments ordained by Jesus for His Church*” (Matt 18:19-20). This is further stressed with the reference to the “*true Church consists of Jesus meeting together with His people*” as Christ is with the Church for they are part of His Body (1 Cor12:27). It stresses that in this Body “*Christ is the Head and the Church is His Body which includes many different members. The Church is also described as the ‘Household of God’ (Eph 2: 19) all people of various villages are members of this great Household which embraces the Faithful both in heaven and on earth.*”

The Constitution combines the biblical images of the church as Christ’s body and household in terms which can be related to the Samoan context and understanding. The body in Samoan society was seen as the physical representation of the relationship between humanity and its creator both pre-Christian and after Samoa converted to Christianity (Maliko 2012: 12); the household or *fale* was the base of family and village meetings as well as place where worship took place in pre-Christian times in regards to the Samoan deities of old (Maliko 2012). Thus the use of Samoan imagery to indicate Christ reaches out to all who believe including Samoan people. In the Samoan translation the Samoan cultural imagery is stressed

particularly with the equating of Christ as the Head as “*Keriso o le Matai*” as “*Matai*” means chief who in Samoan society are the leaders of the family, the village and the wider Samoan society.

The roles and duties of the members of the CCCS are outlined further in the same section: in particular in clauses 3 and 4 of Part II it states all members must know and understand of “*one’s obligations for salvation includes dedication to prayer, reading the Holy Bible, partaking in the Holy Communion, work wholeheartedly in accordance with the guidance of God for the welfare of others, bear witness to others and encourage them so they may be redeemed by Jesus Christ.*” This also includes charitable work to the “*downcast, the weak, the sick and the deserted.*” All of which are commonly associated with mission as it is today but it must be noted that within the context of the CCCS, this is dependent on the leadership of the minister so whilst this may seem like a mission statement of sorts, it requires the will of the leadership to be enacted.

### **3.4.3 Part III of the Constitution**

Part III outlines authority in the CCCS and its manifestation in the Constitution. The nature of the authority of the church is seen in that Jesus is “*the Lord who rules over His people and the Shepherd who cares for them.*” The “*rule*” of Christ in the context of the Constitution is qualified by the very next sentence which states the “*oversight of the Church by its officers is an endeavour to manifest that rule and care.*” The first sentence of this part emphasises the “*rule*” of Christ, but this “*rule*” is qualified by the fact it is to be overseen by “*its officers*”, so who are these “*officers*” and who chooses these “*officers*”?

In the Samoan translation it seems clear the authority “*the rule*” or “*pule*” as it is translated, follows a hierarchical structure from Christ to the church to its officers. Within the Samoan context and that of the Samoan translation “*its officers*” refers to the ministers and by extension the Reverend Elders - the *Au Toeaina*. Indeed the Committee of the *Au Toeaina* is referred to as “*Tama o le Ekalesia*” or “The Fathers of the Church”. This model of mission is a reflection of the model that was first transplanted by the LMS missionaries when they first arrived in Samoa. It emphasises the focus on leadership by the clergy who are answerable to no one, for to question their authority is to question the Constitution as the will of God.

### 3.4.4 Relationship with other churches

The relationship between churches in villages and churches in different countries is briefly mentioned in clause 4 of Part III. It explicitly states all village churches must serve together in a covenant<sup>22</sup>, to expand the church through the transplanting/building of new churches within the country and through foreign missions. The church fulfils its mission in other countries by establishing itself and ensuring its involvement in “*the general social life of the country and the world and endeavour to join other denominations in the work of the World Church towards the fulfilment of the Will of our Lord that His church be one.*” This seems to indicate an ecumenical push by the CCCS to interact with other churches and in particular the global church, to participate in God’s mission.

This is expanded in Part VII in regards to relationships with churches of different denominations. Here the focus is on how the CCCS interacts with other denominations, as it states the church is part of the “BODY OF CHRIST” emphasising the unity of the various members as stated in the sentence “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism”. In the Constitution all people are called to share in His blessings and though there may be differences with other churches the common factor of “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism” should be unifying in light of the different understandings of God. This sense of outreach and engagement indicates a willingness to interact with other churches. This mission programme of the CCCS is carried by a specific body - the Mission Committee or *Komiti Misionare*<sup>23</sup>.

### 3.4.5 The Mission Committee

Within the Constitution of the CCCS, the *Fono Tele* is the supreme decision making body, under which there are six sub committees which fulfil different roles, one of which is the Mission Committee<sup>24</sup>. This committee deals specifically with the mission outreach programme of the CCCS, to continue the “*Great Mission by the LMS bringing the Good News to Samoa in its missionaries*”. It used to be common practice for the CCCS to send graduates from MTC to Papua New Guinea to establish Christian missions and seek to convert what was at the time a largely tribal and pagan highland indigenous people. It was in large part a continuation of the LMS plant and convert model of mission but stopped upon the establishment of autonomous local churches (Fauolo 2005). The CCCS continues its

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<sup>22</sup> The theme or understanding of covenant as sacred relationship is very important in Samoan culture as seen in the position of chiefs, brothers and sisters and subsequently ministers who became the symbol of the new covenant with the Christian God.

<sup>23</sup> *Komiti Misionare* is a transliteration of “The Mission Committee”

<sup>24</sup> Refer to figure 1 in Chapter 1

missionary work through its Mission Committee which interacts with different organisations such as the Council of World Mission (CWM), World Council of Churches (WCC), and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) amongst others.

This strong missionary “planting” element is evident in how the Samoan migrant population, pushed for the nurturing of Samoan migrants as part of the mission of the CCCS. In continuing the mission migrants were inspired by historical reminiscence about their upbringing in Samoa, expressing a loyalty to shared Christian understanding of mission as began by the LMS and continued by the CCCS. It is this missionary zeal which inspired and personalised the image of Samoan migrants as continuing the mission of the CCCS and the LMS in spreading/planting the Gospel in Oceania. This Samoan Christian tradition was an important factor in the migration/mission to countries outside of Samoa, giving Samoan migrant communities the strength to “sing their song in a strange land” (Ioka 1996: 155).

Recent efforts of the CCCS to continue its missionary work outside Samoa still follow the model of “*transplanting mission*”. In the most recent report of the Mission Committee – *Missionary Report 2016 /O le Lipoti Misionare 2016*<sup>25</sup>– the following figures reflect this focus on mission: of the fourteen missionaries sponsored by the CCCS, one is based in Jamaica with the United Church of Jamaica, another two are in the USA, six in Australia, three in New Zealand and one in Samoa. The missionaries in America, Australia and New Zealand are attempts by the CCCS to plant churches in areas far removed the main city centres in each of these countries, but which have a number of Samoan migrant residents who have indicated a need for a Samoan church. The missionary in Samoa is based in a remote village with a very small population and little access to water, power and other necessities. By being listed as missions, these missionaries are eligible for financial support from the CCCS in the form of a stipend and living costs to assist in day to day living (Tuisuga 2011: 198).

### **3.5 A SAMOAN CCCS APPROACH TO MISSION**

#### **3.5.1 *Fa’a Samoa* and Identity**

From the study into the Constitution of the CCCS, the idea of mission as such was based on a model of conversion and proclamation as “planted” by the LMS missionaries. This mission was assimilated by the CCCS to fit their own context as reflective of the hierarchical

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<sup>25</sup> [www.cccs.org.ws](http://www.cccs.org.ws) accessed 18 July 2016



structure and importance of *Fa'a Samoa* to the holistic identity of being a member of the CCCS. This illustrates the context for the understanding of mission, where people migrate/move to and with God. It is this context that the local church experiences find meaning in terms of the Gospel.

In this context culture or *Fa'a Samoa* plays a very important part in how mission is understood and experienced. Mission is understood within the Samoan context through the relationships between the church, the people and God. As such the focus is not so much on the planting of churches, but rather on how the church and its people relate to God's presence in the world. *Fa'a Samoa* is intertwined with the CCCS understanding of Christianity in a complicated relationship, one that mixes how God accepts humanity and how humanity itself is conditioned by cultural practices which shape its understanding of itself in the greater plan of God's mission (Walls: 1996).

The CCCS attempts to understand mission is recognition of God speaking to its community and its context, thus similar to Walls comments that any quest to understand mission, the Christian must first remember who he/she is" (Walls: 1996). This recognition of identity has already been touched upon in the previous chapter regarding migration but highlights that for both mission and migration – both movement towards God and identity – there is a need for the missionary/the church to locate themselves within the context in which they exist, for only by doing so can interaction and engagement with those within the context or reality can begin. It also illustrates that there is an inherent tension which needs to be resolved or at the least discussed.

New Zealand born Samoans find themselves in a world in which they are both neither fully accepted nor fully distanced from. For New Zealand born Samoans this creates a sense of "in between and in betwixt" (Phan 2013: 183; Tiatia 1999: 21) as they often seek to prove themselves as being true "Samoans" in the eyes of the older migrant generation, who are not only the leaders of the Samoan community but also leaders of the church (Ioka 1998:200). For the older Samoan migrant generation, this comes out of a sense of maintaining cultural identity, which was one of the factors in establishing the CCCS in New Zealand. This tension can cause in some cases "issues of identity for those who (find) themselves in disagreement with parts of the *Fa'a Samoa* which they 'know' to be the basis of Samoan identity. Were you still a Samoan when you doubted central premises of what you knew to be Samoan culture?" (MacPherson 1999: 55).

### 3.5.2 Contextualisation of Mission in the CCCS in Auckland

The issues of culture and identity reflect aspects of how mission is seen regarding the CCCS experience in Auckland. It is an experience which needs to fit the environment in which mission is conducted – in other words it needs to be a contextualised understanding of mission. As can be seen in the tension between how Samoans understand their identity as both Christians and as a people, context is an integral part of understanding mission. Context is the medium in which communication occurs in regards to relationships within communities and how mission is understood. If the church is to be part of God’s redemption for humanity, it must do so by relating to people in light of their culture and world views (Kraft 2000: 388).

In New Zealand the structure and tradition of the CCCS is almost a direct reflection of the CCCS in Samoa. There are differences which have arisen in the New Zealand context in that the church in New Zealand, the ministers and the laity, tend to be more open to new ideas as to how mission should be enacted in the context of New Zealand (MacPherson 1999: 133). But in saying that, though each church and its minister run their mission in different ways, all congregations in the CCCS in Auckland still follow the guidelines as set out in the Constitution<sup>26</sup>.

### 3.5.3 Relationship between the CCCS in Samoa and CCCS in Auckland New Zealand

The relationship between the “mother church” in Samoa and the CCCS in Auckland has developed and grown. In 2015 the CCCS in New Zealand established the EFKSNZ<sup>27</sup> Trust as a legal platform from which it could interact with different governmental bodies in issues of social, political and economic importance to its members<sup>28</sup>. This was part of an attempt of the CCCS in New Zealand to become more involved in the lives of their members and utilise their growing voice in New Zealand society to benefit not only its members but also Samoan

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<sup>26</sup> The current Constitution was ratified at the *Fono Tele* in 2016. Every 5 years the CCCS holds a Constitution Amendment Meeting in which representatives of the CCCS meet for a week in March to discuss any issues which different *matagaluega* have brought in regards to the Constitution. These are discussed and those recommended for inclusion or amendments to the Constitution are either accepted or not. If they are accepted these amendments are tabled for ratification at the *Fono Tele* of the same year in May. The most recent Amendment meeting was in March of 2016 and thus ratified in May 2016 at the *Fono Tele*.

<sup>27</sup> The Abbreviation EFKS refers to the Samoan translation of the CCCS which is *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*

<sup>28</sup> <http://pacificguardians.org/blog/2015/01/28/efks-launches-national-trust-a-social-services-platform-for-pasifika-in-nz/.html> accessed 2 August 2016

society within New Zealand as a whole. The headquarters of this new trust is in Auckland and reflects how the push for its inception was led by the CCCS in Auckland<sup>29</sup>.

This move by the CCCS in Auckland and New Zealand was seen by many as a positive move, in Samoa this move was seen with suspicion. Prior to the CCCS Jubilee as there had been for some years of talk of creating a national body which represented the CCCS in New Zealand, spearheaded from Auckland with the largest number of CCCS members<sup>30</sup>. The idea being to create a platform from which the members of the CCCS in New Zealand could discuss issues relevant to living in New Zealand. This led to unease from Samoa as they were unsure as to where such a national body would lead to and similar to the clergy of the PICC when Fuimaono established the first CCCS congregation, the leaders of the CCCS in Samoa felt they catered sufficiently for the needs of its members in New Zealand.

The connection to the CCCS in Samoa is maintained within the CCCS in Auckland and New Zealand largely through the leadership of the clergy and the Samoan migrants who fill the leadership roles within the CCCS in Auckland. With the advent and rise of the New Zealand Samoan generation this once strong connection is changing, but as to how this relationship is changing is unknown for now. The majority of CCCS members in Auckland still have a strong connection to Samoa and identify with the CCCS in Samoa as the mother church, but this is changing (Pouono 2013). That is a question for another time and another thesis.

## CONCLUSION

From the examination of the Constitution of the CCCCS, it is apparent the model of mission emphasised is one which follows the LMS model of transplant the Gospel and convert. The actual practice and direction of mission is led from the Committee of the Reverend Elders *Komiti o le Au Toeaina*. This also illustrates how the CCCS is led in seemingly contradiction of the Constitution, which states the *Fono Tele* is the supreme decision making body. But in the last thirty to forty years the leadership of the CCCS and its direction has been led by the *Komiti o le Au Toeaina*: this is due to a reading of the Constitution which highlights leadership by ministers in conjunction with the *Fa'a Samoa* which supports the practice of

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<sup>29</sup> <http://pacificguardians.org/blog/2015/01/28/efks-launches-national-trust-a-social-services-platform-for-pasifika-in-nz/.html> accessed 2 August 2016

<sup>30</sup> This is largely anecdotal at this stage as there has not been much research or discussion on this issue with the CCCS. I admit that this is a personal perspective but one in which I am familiar with as the son of a Reverend Elder, a person who was often in the forefront of discussions amongst the CCCS in Auckland as to the benefits and understanding of a move to a national body of the CCCS in New Zealand.

respect for the Elders/leaders in Samoan society, which by extension has been passed onto the *Komiti o le Au Toeaina* (Setefano 2008: 60).

This reflects an understanding of mission as highlighted by the analysis of the Constitution, as indicating a link between mission and leadership. This raises questions as to the connection between leadership and the mission of the CCCS in Auckland. As mission is practically determined at sub district and congregation level, how does the leadership affect how the laity understands the mission of the CCCS in Auckland? If the laity rely on the church leadership especially the clergy as to definition of mission, does this mean the definition of mission is one sided and inherently biased? As such does this mean mission within the context of the CCCS in Auckland is “trickle down” theology?

This also raises questions of a sense of disconnect between the clergy and the laity, the wider church membership in Auckland, who have different understandings of mission from their experiences in a world different from the context of the CCCS in Samoa. This is most evident with New Zealand born Samoans who question the administration and practices of the CCCS in Auckland, often to the ire of the CCCS leadership. Any such questioning should not be feared but should be embraced as it allows all members of the CCCS and God’s mission to find ways to contextualise their experiences of God in ways relevant to their identity as Christians and as a people. These are issues lay at the heart of any understanding of mission in the context of the CCCS in Auckland and which may or may not be illuminated by the research conducted which will be outlined in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: SPEAKING/TALANOA OF MISSION...

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined a foundation to understand mission in the wider CCCS context through exploration of the Constitution of the CCCS. This chapter will analyse the interviews conducted with members of the CCCS in Auckland. Due to the communal nature and structure of Samoan society as reflected in the Samoan migrant communities in New Zealand, the interviews were conducted through a research method considered to best reflect Samoan values known as *talanoa*<sup>31</sup>. This chapter will introduce the *talanoa* method and its connection to Samoan values. I will then discuss the results of the interviews to attempt to create models of understanding as to mission.

### 4.2 TALANOA

#### 4.2.1 *Talanoa* – Speak to Me!!!

*Talanoa* was first proposed as a method of research which was reflective of the fluid holistic nature of how people of Oceania speak to their reality. Instead of using traditional research perspectives which are largely conscripts of Western paradigms of learning and understanding, *talanoa* came about as a way to use a method which was inherently Oceania.

*Talanoa* is a shared concept and word amongst peoples of Oceania including Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Niue, the Cook Islands and Solomon Islands (Vaioleti 2006: 20). The word has been broken down into two words, *tala* meaning to talk/speak/communicate and *noa* which means zero or nothing in particular. It has been interpreted as meaning “talking about nothing in particular” or as a “personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and the aspirations” (Vaioleti 2006: 21).

The focus on open dialogue and personal encounters reflects its complex nature as it is not just an ethnographic method of informal interviews. Rather it is reflective of the complex cultural issues which underlie contact and engagement in many Oceania cultures, and highlights *talanoa* as culturally and emotionally influenced mutually interdependent exchanges between the interviewer and interview participants. It necessitates a deep interpersonal emotive sharing between parties (Fareilly and Nabobo-Baba 2012: 3).

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<sup>31</sup> *Talanoa* is Samoan word for “talk”, “communicate” “converse”. It has a wide range of meaning mostly associated with a sense of communication.

Within the Samoan context *talanoa* illustrates how Samoans engage with their culture and language, but also give a perspective by to view their experiences in relation to their present cultural context (Aiono 2005). Samoan theologian Vaai posits *talanoa* highlights Samoan values of respect, humility and sharing within Samoan traditions (2006: 12-13). This element of sharing as highlighted through *talanoa* reflects the sharing of knowledge, history and oral culture between families, chiefs of the village and Samoan society as a whole (Vaai 2006: 13). *Talanoa* acts as a metaphor of how Samoans share, interact and communicate through sharing one's experiences with another.

Critique of this method lies with its description as metaphors and rhetoric which can place it as a catch all for research amongst people of Oceania (Suaalii-Sauni 2012). This can lead to a dangerous and misleading representation of peoples of Oceania as being homogenous. This takes away from a focus for *talanoa* to delve deep into the lived realities and experiences of participants from an epistemological and ontological perspective. In doing so it must realise there are differences as well as similarities between people of Oceania as to how they view themselves and others in their respective realities. As such *talanoa* must be conducted with a sense of intentional openness to the different realities and perspectives of people (Fareilly and Nabobo-Baba 2012:4).

#### **4.2.2 *Talanoa* as Intersection**

Recently an alternative reading of *talanoa* has been proposed by Rev Dr Val Ogden<sup>32</sup>. Ogden refers to Havea's definition of *talanoa* as being the intersection of interconnected events – the story, act of telling (including memories, stories and longings) and conversation (teasingly, critically and informally): “*Talanoa* is a point of intersection, like a passage in a reef, through which currents and waves whirl with the rising and receding tides” (Havea 2011: 11).

Ogden suggests this “intersection” can be interpreted through *Fa'a Samoa* especially in regards to the concept of space or *va* (Ogden 2016: 3). Ogden suggests this intersectional nature of *talanoa*, coupled with a Samoan understanding of space *va*<sup>33</sup> that focuses more on relationships and interaction, allows for an approach to *talanoa* which highlights the *va* between parties as “breathing space and transformational exchange” (Ogden 2016: 5). It is

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<sup>32</sup> Ogden has a history in Oceania through her years of teaching at the Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Fiji, the main Protestant Theological College to which many of the Reformed Churches in Oceania such as the CCCS send their students to complete Post-Graduate studies.

<sup>33</sup> *Va* as used here refers to the concept of space that permeates *Fa'a Samoa*. It is the space between, the space that relates beings to each other and holds the same beings together. It is the *va* that gives context, meaning and reflects the relational aspect of the Samoan worldview (Wendt 1996).

this sense of intersection and *va* where interaction can occur, *talanoa* seeks to encourage a sharing of knowledge in an embodied, holistic and critically reflexive process where both the interviewer and participants engage and contribute to each other's understanding (Fareilly and Nabobo-Baba 2012: 8).

## **4.3 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS**

### **4.3.1 Sampling and Participants**

The qualitative research was conducted through interviewing a small sample of members of the CCCS in Auckland. Individual semi structured interviews were held with four individuals all of whom are currently members of the CCCS in Auckland, three of whom were male and one was female. Of the four, two were members of the clergy and two were members of the laity. Of the two clergy, one was born and raised in Samoa but had spent the last twenty five years leading a CCCS congregation in Auckland, whilst the other had just begun as minister to a congregation in Auckland. The two lay members were professionals<sup>34</sup> and had grown up in the CCCS. The sole female interview participant is a Deacon in her CCCS congregation and has been an active member in her congregation, holding a range of positions within her church from Sunday School teacher, to Choir leader to currently a Deacon. The four shall be identified as follows: of the two clergy members the younger shall be called FS, whilst the elder shall be referred to as RN; whilst of the two lay members the female Deacon shall be referred to as AF and the other as OL.

The average duration of each interview was approximately forty minutes. The qualitative research of this thesis is not a representative survey but rather an exploration of the understanding of mission and individual experiences of migration within the CCCS. As such the questions asked were aimed at how each understood mission in light of the CCCS, in terms of their own understanding of mission and migration.

The interviews were facilitated through the use of Skype. This allowed the interviews to be carried out in a face to face manner: albeit the parties were separated by time and distance this allowed for a degree of empathetic understanding, which was apparent as there is a level of familiarity between participants and the researcher. The interview participants were chosen for their wide range of roles within the church and to reflect the migrant and children of migrants divide: three of whom were the children of migrants whilst one was a migrant.

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<sup>34</sup> Professionals as in the sense both worked in white collar office jobs.

Due to the time constraints and limitations of conducting research about mission from a country on the other side of the world, the participants were chosen to capture as broad a range as possible but also for the fact they are all lifelong members of the CCCS. All participants come from different areas of Auckland and attend different CCCS congregations in Auckland, with two from the Auckland *matagaluega* and the other two from the Manukau *matagaluega*. They all grew up in the CCCS and are familiar with the issues surrounding the CCCS in Auckland.

## **4.4 INTERVIEWS**

### **4.4.1 Questions**

The questions asked were phrased so as to elicit open ended responses about the issues discussed. The issues are separated into the following: migration, culture/identity and mission. This section will divide the results into three subsections, with focus being on migration, culture/identity and mission<sup>35</sup>.

### **4.4.2 Migration**

The first questions asked were to introduce the participants to the interview process and to ease them into the process as comfortably and smoothly as possible. After a short introduction and verbal confirmation of participants consent to the interview, each participant was asked to give a short biography as to their background. Each would give their names and then their family background in terms of parents and the villages in Samoa their parents were from. This identification of their parents and by extension their own village associations, is very important to the Samoan identity as Samoans identify themselves by the communal groups they associate with and other than their family and church, the village is often the next most important identity factor.

This identification with each individual's village highlights how important culture is despite living in New Zealand. Despite living in concrete jungles in urbanised areas, New Zealand born Samoans still carry with them the stories of identity which they were taught by their parents and extended family. These stories highlight their "origins" in that they refer to legends and stories associated with the villages of their ancestors, creating a bond and sense of belonging to a particular village. This illustrates how Samoan migrant communities through the local churches, have become "urban villages" (Alofatuli 2011: 57-58). This sense

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix as to the questions asked.



of belonging that is associated with their villages, is often associated with their local congregations, maybe more so in the case of Samoan migrants in New Zealand, as it is in the churches that New Zealand born Samoans learn not only how to be Christians but also Samoans (MacPherson and Macpherson 2001).

The following question enquired how they viewed themselves in terms of being migrants or not. For the three New Zealand born Samoans, they identified themselves as the children of migrants. Participant OL was actually born in Samoa but raised in both New Zealand and Australia. He considered himself the child of a migrant and as a New Zealand Samoan because a large part of his youth and adult life was spent in New Zealand. AF referred to herself as both a migrant and the child of migrants: the child of migrants in that her parents were born and raised in Samoa and settled in New Zealand; and a migrant in terms of her identification in relation to not being a member of the indigenous people of New Zealand – New Zealand Maori or *Tangata Te Whenua* (“people of the land”).

RN identified himself as a migrant but has lived in New Zealand for over twenty years and well versed in issues surrounding the Samoan community in Auckland. He also reflected on the differences between how the older generation and younger generation of mostly New Zealand born Samoans view the CCCS and *Fa’a Samoa*. It is clear that identity plays a large part in the lives of Samoan migrants and their children, one which should not be underestimated.

#### **4.4.3 Culture and Identity**

I have placed culture and identity together as in the interviews it became apparent these two issues were seen as being intertwined. When asked as to how they see culture, the New Zealand Samoans almost automatically responded culture and identity are intertwined. For these three, culture is *Fa’a Samoa*. It is the guiding and underlying principle behind how Samoans in New Zealand interact with each other.

Each defined culture as being a set of beliefs and values which dictate or guide how to interact within Samoan society and the CCCS in Auckland. In this light, culture is seen as a social construct, dependant on society for shape and definition. The problem with such a view is that it can be taken for granted and find itself locked into a static position, unable to change or adapt to changes within society (Hiebert 2009: 92-93).

An issue which arose regarding the New Zealand born Samoans was the constant reference to culture as not only a set of practices and beliefs but also an ethnic identifier. It seemed culture was not only intertwined with ethnicity but also central to how they saw themselves both in the local Samoan community and the wider New Zealand community. The New Zealand born Samoans saw themselves as not only New Zealanders but also as ethnic Samoans in which the *Fa'a Samoa* was central to this identity (Anae 1998: 43). Each described themselves as being in different states of cultural and ethnic identification, in that they viewed the strength of their cultural identity as an ethnic Samoan born in New Zealand largely based on their Samoan language skills and understanding of the *Fa'a Samoa*. Indeed for FS the quest to improve his language and cultural skills was seen as a never ending “chase”, in which he equated his search for cultural understanding to that of “chasing” the dream of cultural competence which seemed to fill a need to attain a Samoan identity in the world outside Samoa.

In other words culture in the Samoan understanding is the Samoan way of life or *Fa'a Samoa* – there is no other meaning attributed to culture in this context and it is one which is readily accepted and believed by the New Zealand born participants. This notion of *Fa'a Samoa* as being essential to identity is also coupled with a view that it exists as a static entity which can be and is used as a way to measure how “Samoan” a person is: this can be seen in the way Samoans born in Samoa often judge the children of Samoan migrants to New Zealand by the strength of their understanding and knowledge of *Fa'a Samoa*. An interesting aspect of this measuring process and how *Fa'a Samoa* is seen by different groups is that amongst the same New Zealand born participants, *Fa'a Samoa* is not one single stable reality but also a mix of the fragmented, the contested and the strategic in terms of how it is understood (Pouono 2013: 177).

RN stated the importance of *Fa'a Samoa* as being integral to the identity of the Samoan migrant communities and the establishment of the CCCS in Auckland, but also reflected that it is a dynamic entity which changes according to the society and the context it finds itself. RN used a common Samoan proverb *Ua sui le faiga a'o e le'i sui le faavae* – “the practices of *Fa'a Samoa* may change but the underlying foundations/reasons remain the same<sup>36</sup>.” This

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<sup>36</sup> Author's own translation. The *alagupu* means that whilst the way of enacting the cultural practices associated with *Fa'a Samoa* have changed to reflect its context the underlying meaning and reasons remain the same. An example of this is that in the *Fa'a Samoa*, when a family hosts a wedding or function, it was custom in the past to give the distinguished guests (the minister, High Chief or Member of Parliament etc) gifts of roast pigs and other gifts as sign of thanks for their attendance. In New Zealand due to the fact that it is not practical to prepare

is often quoted by Samoan speakers to illustrate that despite there being changes as to how *Fa'a Samoa* is conducted the fundamental reasons for the culture remain the same. Despite its popularity and usage many who use it fail to acknowledge that it is also vague and unspecific, whilst its constant usage has been said by some to hide a sense of unease with the inevitability of change<sup>37</sup>.

From the interviews it is clear for the New Zealand born Samoans there is a clear connection between *Fa'a Samoa* and their faith/ understanding of Christianity. So much so that for two of the participants, there is a distinct CCCS culture as practiced within the CCCS in Auckland. This is a culture which is an appropriation of *Fa'a Samoa* by the CCCS creating a hybrid construction of *Fa'a Samoa*, one which is described by AF as “a distinct EFKS CCCS culture in terms of what is determined by our sets of religious beliefs...it is how we enact our values of what our cultural beliefs as Samoans as well as CCCS people.” This hybrid understanding not only explains the often confusing amalgamation or combination of culture, ethnicity and religious identity as held by some of the interview participants, but also illustrates the fluid nature of how culture, identity and religion are understood in CCCS community in Auckland.

#### **4.4.4 Mission**

Participants were asked what did each understand in regards to the term mission. From the answers it is evident there is no formal understanding as to what the mission of the CCCS was or is. Indeed AF stated that she had never heard any reference to mission and questioned if the CCCS actually had a clearly defined mission. She is a deacon at the congregation she attends and has had many discussions with ministers of the CCCS, but has never heard any mention of what mission is or even what the mission of the CCCS was. It became clear that mission in the context of the New Zealand born Samoans was attributed to being about the role or goals of the CCCS, although this may be a result of the lack of education as to what mission is and the understanding of mission in terms of its everyday usage.

OL raised the issue that a major problem for the CCCS and its mission was to do with the leadership – in other words the ministers themselves. As he stated there is a disconnect between the CCCS and its members especially the New Zealand born members, due to the

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such roasts or other traditional Samoan gifts, instead the hosts will give envelopes with money equal to the cost of the roast pig and the gifts normally given. Though the practice has changed in practical real terms the reasoning and meaning behind the gifting remains the same.

<sup>37</sup> Found on the University of Samoa website <http://samoanstudies.ws/7th-measina-conference-2016> accessed on 15 July 2016.

inability of ministers to act as a “conduit” or bridge between the CCCS and the New Zealand born generations. The CCCS is a Samoan language church in which all services are conducted in Samoan: the clergy in particular, use a very formal language based on traditions of Samoan oratory. This language is heavy with metaphors and allegorical devices. For New Zealand born Samoans this is difficult to understand unless they have been immersed in the *Fa’a Samoa*: in the CCCS context, this means the sermons and liturgy are often not understood by New Zealand born Samoans. This is somewhat ironic as it this is issue as to language which facilitated the establishment of the CCCS in Auckland. Indeed it was commented by OL that many New Zealand born members have a tendency to attend church to please their families: and due to the difficulty in understanding the services, many New Zealand born members are in a state of disinterest, of “clocking in and clocking out” when attending CCCS services.

OL stated that Reverend Ministers in his view are not actively trying to bridge this gap, this sense of distance that many New Zealand born Samoans felt when attending CCCS services. He further stated this is one of the reasons the New Zealand born Samoan generation are leaving the church in droves (Tiatia 1998: 10;Anae 1999: 69). He also stated that this failure of Reverend Ministers to reach out and engage meaningfully with their congregation also highlights that the theological training of the CCCS clergy is in need of reassessment. OL did acknowledge the work done by the CCCS for the Samoan migrant community in New Zealand, as the CCCS acted as the social glue for Samoan migrants to New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s.

RN shared a narrower view of mission, where the role of the CCCS in New Zealand was to act as an institution to maintain the religious and cultural practices of the CCCS. He explained the rise and establishment of the CCCS in Auckland as a way by which Samoan migrants could teach their children about being Samoan Christians. He referred to the pleasure and pride for Samoan migrant parents to hear their children speak and read in the Samoan language. Indeed this reflects the importance of culture as to how Samoan migrants viewed mission and the role of the CCCS in Auckland.

Another issue raised by AF and OL was the insular nature of the CCCS in Auckland. Both stated that in Samoa there are no other cultures, therefore each CCCS congregation focused on their members. As New Zealand being a multicultural society, there was a feeling that the CCCS in Auckland needed to reach out and engage with the wider community. Both agreed

the CCCS should follow other denominations which have social outreach programmes and in particular programmes serving charitable causes such as helping the homeless and disadvantaged in the wider New Zealand community rather than just focus on their church members.

The reason for this insular nature of the CCCS is suggested by some to have arisen in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the CCCS changed its missionary focus from nations in Oceania to the inward development of local Samoan churches, and the growth of the CCCS in countries outside Samoa (Tuisuga 2011: 197-198). This insular nature in regards to the CCCS in Auckland was also reflected in the lack of interaction with other denominations, even other Samoan churches. OL mentions the CCCS is not big on interaction with other churches and that may be a point of further discussion within the CCCS.

Despite these problems in the mission of the CCCS the New Zealand born Samoans were proud to call themselves members of the CCCS in Auckland. The issue for these members seems clarification of its mission and its future direction. The future of the CCCS in Auckland is in the next generation of migrant children, who as FS stated do not necessarily see themselves as migrants except for the colour of their skin. The older generation of Samoan migrants are ageing and withdrawing from active participation, the CCCS in Auckland needs the next generation who will be New Zealand born Samoans to step up and fill the void. As FS states the younger generation will need to learn how to fulfil the roles associated with being members of the CCCS, especially if they are to progress to positions of leadership within their local congregations. The problem is there is a disconnect between the old and the young, the leaders and the followers, as CCCS members are no longer blindly following the leadership as has been common practice.

This gap between the old and the new, especially in regards to the church leadership was mentioned by RN. He stated there was a discernable number of New Zealand born Samoans going onto theological training at the MTC, but was concerned as to the lack of New Zealand born deacons. Currently most deacon positions are being filled by Samoan migrants. He mentions during his time as a minister in the CCCS in Auckland, he never saw a New Zealand born Samoan formally invested with a deaconship. It is interesting to note one of the New Zealand born participants AF is a deacon, but she is admittedly one of very few New Zealand born Samoans who have been invested as a deacon in their local CCCS congregation.

RN also spoke as to the interaction of the CCCS with other denominations in Auckland. As mentioned by OL and FS, the CCCS is seen as being insular in that it focuses on itself, and does not make any attempts to reach out and embrace other people and denominations especially in a multicultural environment such as in Auckland. AF referred to how growing up in Auckland, allowed her to have exposure to other faiths and other forms of worship. This gave her a rounded perspective in terms of how she viewed the role of the CCCS in Auckland and was often in contrast to the advice of her parents, who would advise her to be careful of going to other denominations, as they held a common belief amongst the older Samoan members of the CCCS that by attending other denominations, she faced the risk of being converted and leaving the CCCS.

Another interesting aspect as mentioned by AF was in terms of the teachings of the CCCS and her own education in a Western system. She highlighted how she has often called into question the male dominated structure of the CCCS: a case in point is the CCCS does not accept women as theological students nor as ordained ministers. She has had to reconcile two opposing forces – her education and ability to question as an educated woman with the male orientated traditions of the CCCS. She does not outright state there is male bias in the CCCS in terms of its leadership but does imply the tension that exists in regards to the role of women within the CCCS. This is an issue that the CCCS will need to address in the future but outside the scope of this thesis.

RN gave an account of how in his ministry he pushed the mission of the CCCS as he saw it and focused on his own congregation, but was aware of the presence of other denominations. Contrary to more conservative members of the CCCS, he was open-minded in terms of interaction with other denominations. He explained how he has allowed his children to attend the churches they wish, with the important proviso for him being they worshipped at a Christian church. It did not matter that they attended another church, but rather they were still praying to God and practiced the Christian values he was taught and in turn taught them.

When all the participants were asked whether the CCCS was traditional and whether there needed to be changes in light of its context in Auckland, the answer from all was a resounding yes. All agreed change was needed, but how this change could be executed were varied reflecting the complex nature of the issues affecting the CCCS in Auckland. For OL the change was needed as the CCCS was too mired in traditions based on the context of Samoa. As he said New Zealand had its own issues and needed solutions contextual to New

Zealand in order to be relevant to the lives of CCCS members in Auckland. AF stated change could be enacted through better programmes to explain how the CCCS was run as knowledge leads to understanding and growth both for the church and its members. OL said it seemed to him that the CCCS was afraid of “reform”. OL further stated “reform” is not something to be afraid of but rather to embrace, for failure to embrace “reform” and change will continue the cycle of “clocking in and clocking out” that reflects how many New Zealand born Samoans view going to church.

RN saw any change had to be balanced against the aims and goals of the church to act not only as an institution to maintain the *Fa’a Samoa* in light of the New Zealand experience, but also for the spiritual fulfilment of the members of the CCCS, especially amongst the New Zealand born Samoan members. The CCCS in Auckland could only survive if the New Zealand born members were to take a more active role in the CCCS. This idea of the New Zealand born Samoan members “stepping up” and taking over the role of the ageing first generation of Samoan migrants was also mentioned by FS the New Zealand born Samoan minister, who is in the beginning of his mission leading his own congregation; for him the mission of the church is not to convert and maintain model as executed by the CCCS but rather to “salvage” and stop the decline in numbers of CCCS members, especially amongst the New Zealand born members.

#### **4.5 UNDERSTANDINGS OF MISSION**

From the interviews there are several issues surrounding the understanding of mission in the CCCS in Auckland, amongst which include culture, identity and the role of the church in the wider community. The following understandings of mission can be extracted from the interviews:

- 1) Mission as based on the traditional understanding of mission as embedded in the CCCS through its history with the LMS missionaries – that of plant and spread the Gospel through the establishment of CCCS churches. This model reflects the Samoan worldview of the *Fa’a Samoa* and fits in with how the leadership within the CCCS in Auckland view the mission of the CCCS. Mission depends on the leadership of the clergy/ministers for direction and momentum. As each congregation is basically autonomous, the emphasis of mission in each congregation comes from the minister: if he does not advocate for a wider understanding of mission then the mission is inherently limited by his own vision and understanding.

- 2) Another understanding is of mission as being relational. An important factor for the interview participants was the relationships inherent in their local church, as well as their local and wider communities. There is the constant reference to how their faith is understood in light of the Samoan community. Everyone in Samoan communities understands their place, their roles and indeed the *va* with others based on their relationships within the greater whole. The CCCS in Auckland understands the relationship between God and His people through this holistic perception. This understanding does have its problems, as the individual can be lost within the greater whole. Another problem is by focusing on the relationships within the church and its functions, the CCCS can lose sight of its relationship with God. Indeed this seems to be a major issue for New Zealand born members – a sense of disconnect with the CCCS as a whole based on loss of focus on God. Since it is based on community the CCCS has been perceived as focused on an insular reading of mission rather than understand how God works in the wider community and creation.
- 3) The CCCS also seems to have a model based on the Samoan concept of service or *tautua*. The word *tautua* loosely translated means service but also has in its meaning deeper connotations of service that is beneficial for the whole community and not just for the individual or a small group. One of the New Zealand born members mentions the importance of the concept of *tautua*, in that to serve is to serve for the greater good. As such the benefit from such *tautua* is never seen from an individual's perspective but rather from the benefits to the family, the village and the community as a whole. Thus highlighting how mission occurs in the intersection of the church, the community and the world at large. Its problem is that in focusing on the *tautua* aspect and the need to serve, it could place greater emphasis on action and not on how mission is understood as the interaction between God and creation . In this light people could lose their identity as Christians and their calling of mission within this focus on *tautua*.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the interview, it is clear that the views as to how mission is seen and understood are diverse and confusing. The most prevalent issue to arise was the lack of understanding as to what mission is or its definition within the CCCS in Auckland. This lack of understanding, illustrates a sense of disconnect between the leadership of the CCCS, the clergy, and the laity. A sense of disconnect which can be intimated from the structure and



emphasis in the Constitution on leadership from above, a focus on leadership by which the direction of the CCCS is defined by the clergy. This creates a sense that mission is to be understood as directed from on high and creates a gap of understanding which further highlights this sense of disconnect. As one interview participant stated, she has not heard or been told as to what the mission of the CCCS is, despite being a deacon in the CCCS. This sense of disconnect is reflected in how the relationships between the clergy and the laity are reflected in each congregation: the relationships follow the traditional hierarchy as practiced not only by the strange mix of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, but also the *Fa'a Samoa*.

## **CHAPTER 5: TOUCH, PAUSE AND ENGAGE!**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The above phrase is a common term in the sport of Rugby Football, one of the most popular sports in both New Zealand and Samoa. When the teams contest the rugby ball in certain conditions, the referee will call out to both teams “touch, pause and engage.” At which time the two teams first touch in a first encounter, after the first touch they are then to pause, allowing each team to prepare. Engage refers to the actual contact as each team now endeavours to find ways by which to interact with the other, albeit in a competitive nature.

This encapsulates the focus of this chapter, as in the previous chapters I have made first contact with the background of this thesis regarding migration, now I must pause and engage with the understandings of mission as uncovered in the research of this thesis. Therefore in this chapter I will engage with understandings of mission as highlighted through the lens of Prophetic Dialogue.

### **5.2 PROPHETIC DIALOGUE**

#### **5.2.1 Dialogue – Speak to me!**

Prophetic Dialogue consists of two important and equal aspects – the dialogical and the prophetic. It denotes action and words which are to be read/enacted together to give a sense of how the prophetic and the dialogical work together to inform an understanding of mission. Prophetic Dialogue seems to indicate interaction both literally and symbolically, within the church and between the church and others as well. This includes other Christian denominations and also other faiths. But in the context of the CCCS in Auckland and this thesis, the context is more local than it is global – focused internally more than externally. So the question becomes how does this sense of “speaking to” and “speaking with” as seen in Prophetic Dialogue act as a guide to approach the issues of mission as faced by the CCCS in Auckland?

#### **5.2.2 Notion of Spirituality or attitude?**

Prophetic Dialogue is said to be a notion of spirituality or attitude which acts as a guide as to how mission is to be understood (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 377). It is a way by which mission is to be approached, how people are to engage in mission. It is a description of the spirituality or underlying ethos by which any and all dimensions of mission are to be

conducted (Kritzinger 2013: 36). This ethos requires the courage to face the truth and the humility to accept it or as Bosch, Bevans and Schroeder chant – “bold humility” (Bosh 1991; Bevans and Schroeder 2004). This spirituality is to be conducted in the midst of the human experience which is about contact, encounter and engagement or as I have posited “touch, pause and engage.”

## **5.3 MISSION AS PROHETIC DIALOGUE**

### **5.3.1 The Context of the Dialogue in CCCS in Auckland**

The CCCS in Auckland takes an almost double sided approach to the context of being a member of the CCCS in Auckland and the effects upon its members. On the one hand the members of the CCCS in Auckland are Samoan migrants and their children, who have an identity located and grounded within the economic, social and political context of living in New Zealand. This grounding has strange effects on identity: for the Samoan migrants the establishment of the CCCS was to ensure the cultural and religious values Samoan migrants associate with being Samoan, are taught to their children and subsequent generations; for the New Zealand born Samoan members it is an identity which can be contested as they try to reconcile different aspects of identity – the Samoan, the New Zealand and the Christian. From this context of mission as being the cultural maintenance of a Samoan religious identity and personal call to plant a Samoan language church, the issue arises “How is this dialogue?”

### **5.3.2 Is this Dialogue?**

This question arises from the interaction and issues that come from this study of mission amongst the CCCS in Auckland. The template of the Trinity and its interconnectedness is something which is to be reflected in any Christian community for only through interconnection can dialogue begin or hope to be achieved. The manner of dialogue as introduced by the LMS missionaries into Samoa and the CCCS was a model in which mission focused on the neglect of a people’s freedom and dignity, based on a “self emptying” ideal of itself as culturally superior to the people amongst whom it works (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 394).

The mission of the CCCS is said to be an open one as highlighted in the text of the Constitution, but the reality of its practice is more complicated as a large part of mission is anchored in the LMS missionary past. This is a past which highlights the static and not the dynamic, a past which is limiting and not expansive, and a past which is inherently

oppressive whilst at the same time expressing liberation through Christ. This is an area of real contention amongst the members of the CCCS in Auckland as they seek to find ways to connect to each other through their experiences of God, but are nevertheless tied down by the tension that has arisen between different groups within the CCCS.

This tension is embedded in the CCCS through an intergenerational confrontation, or tension as the participant AF preferred. Samoan migrants tend to have a conservative view which supports the current status quo, whereas the subsequent New Zealand born Samoan generations, have a view which is more liberal that challenges the status quo and has led to the current tension. It is interesting to note that though there is this tension, there is still a sense of the communal which is highlighted by the *Fa'a Samoa* where everyone is part of the greater whole and all decisions are made in light of the greater whole. The *Fa'a Samoa* underpins the CCCS community but also lies at the heart of how the different generations interact. For the Samoan migrants the CCCS is a refuge and place of stability in a strange land, whereas for the New Zealand born Samoans the CCCS is both a place of safety but also a place which challenges who they are as people.

Whereas Bevans and Schroeder seem to apply Prophetic Dialogue to relationships between the church and others, I suggest that in the aspect of mission as understood in the CCCS in Auckland, it can be applied to how the older generation and Samoan migrants interact with the New Zealand born Samoans. Currently it seems that the interaction, any attempt at dialogue is impeded by the cultural practices and structure of the CCCS in which any voice other than from the elders and leadership of the community is deemed to be rebellious or a challenge to authority and leadership. Though *talanoa* implies there is room or space to dialogue within the Samoan understanding of community, this is still founded on the underlying principles of *ava*, *fa'a'aloalo* and *alofa* which can often hinder more than it facilitates dialogue. To cross the social boundaries of interaction or the *va* in the Samoan community and the CCCS is a sign of disrespect to others in the community. This can place New Zealand Samoans at a disadvantage as they seek ways which allow them to speak within the confines of the CCCS.

This divide within the CCCS between Samoan migrants and their children, this tension can be seen in how each approaches their identity within the greater New Zealand society. Whereas Samoan migrants are proud of their Samoan identity, New Zealand born Samoans live in a sense of double identity. For many of them New Zealand is their home despite the

issues that may arise, it gives them a sense of belonging (Tiatia 1998: 11). They are familiar with the language and culture of New Zealand, sometimes more so than the *Fa'a Samoa* and the culture of their parents, but strangely they still maintain a sense of identity with their Samoan roots (MacPherson and MacPherson 2002: 88).

Whereas Samoan migrants still see Samoa as the homeland, for New Zealand born Samoans New Zealand is their home despite the contested sense of identity. I posit New Zealand Samoans tend to view themselves as similar to non migrants, as people of New Zealand rooted in its society by birth and experience (Nagy 2009)-; as FS mentioned in his interview he viewed himself as being migrant only in regards to the colour of his skin, but felt that he was still a “boy from South Auckland.” He further expanded on this through description of the life experiences which shaped him, the greater part having occurred in New Zealand.

Another Samoan concept which may assist in creating a true sense of dialogue is *soalau-pule* – which means “to share authority”. A breakdown of the word shows that *soa* means to share and *lau-pule* means to authority and leadership (Lilomaiava-Niko 1993: 43). It is a strategy used by Samoans in communal interaction, allowing all people to make contributions in the decision making process and leadership, thus giving all participants a sense of empowerment. This is easier said than done as in the traditional Samoan setting or indeed the CCCS setting people can make contributions but full participation is hindered by as dictated by *Fa'a Samoa*. This means that though there are such concepts such as *talanoa* and *soalau-pule*, they are restricted and bound by rules of behaviour as outlined by the *Fa'a Samoa*.

It also highlights how the CCCS in Auckland, seems to be in a state of stasis: it is not engaging in any real sense of dialogue as the basis of its relationships within and without the church are based on an outdated and often confusing view of mission. For true dialogue to exist, the CCCS must embrace dialogue as “a quality that needs to pervade all our conversations and all our relationships” (Lochhead 1988: 76). Like the ocean which Samoans identify with, dialogue exists in a fluid state with the ability to go back and forth, thereby affecting all before and behind it. The problem of course with such a metaphor and perceived fluidity is that as easy as it is to engage, it is just as easy to disengage.

This idea of dialogue as learning from the past and current contexts to move is one which reflects the earlier mentioned idea of “bold humility” (Bosch 1991: 376). Acting in “bold humility” allows all parties to the encounter to not only touch but also to reach out to others. For many Samoan migrants brought up in the Samoan worldview with its set boundaries and

social structures, this “reaching out” can be difficult. Jione Havea the people of Oceania are still mired in the missionary mindset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; as such they cannot and will not be able to move beyond this barrier as to how they understand their experience of God unless they “break out”. To “break out” is to step out of the present understanding of mission, step out of the static position in order to arrive in a new location, and establish a new direction that speaks to them in light of their context (Havea 2016: 129-130). Doing so is a transformative exercise.

### **5.3.3 What is the Prophetic in the context of the CCCS in Auckland?**

The understanding of the “prophetic” has been intertwined with images of prophecy and the prophets of the Old Testament such as Moses and Daniel. It is this sense of the prophetic as a way that God speaks to His people which is evident in how Samoans view the issue of the Prophetic (Tuisuga 2011: 198)<sup>38</sup>. The wider scope of the Prophetic with its emphasis on speaking the truth of God’s Word in mission means it can reach beyond the narrow confines of its past, and seek new ways of understanding which are reflective of and applicable to its context (Bevans 2012: 14).

The Prophetic is more than God speaking through prophets and God speaking to people, the prophetic is about God acting towards and with people. In other words it is about God reaching out and embracing people. This gives it a wide scope with which to be applied compared to previous understandings of the prophetic within mission.

In the case of the CCCS, the prophetic in mission seems to be more about acting towards people rather than with, of telling people what to do and how to act rather than acting with them. In light of the Rugby analogy used in the beginning of this chapter, this can be equated to the “pause” phrase in which a side/team has “touched” the other side but remains in a position of stasis as it decides what to do next. For the CCCS it seems to be stuck in this “pause” phrase as it bases its engagement on its actions towards its members rather than with.

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<sup>38</sup> A common example of the Samoan understanding of the Prophetic is the legend of the Warrior Goddess Nafanua. Nafanua was a legendary Warrior Goddess who led her army to conquer most of Samoa. At the end of her reign she decided to delegate her authority to representatives of the different areas of Samoa. She called a meeting of her subjects to allocate distribute authority. After she had finished doing so Malietoa Fitiseanu arrived with his delegation seeking favour and authority from Nafanua. But alas it was too late and Nafanua told Malietoa that she had no more power to give. She then made a famous prophecy “O lau ao mai le lagi” which translates as “your authority will come from above or the heavens.” Thus saying Malietoa’s rule or authority will come in the future from above. This prophecy was seen as being fulfilled when the LMS missionaries landed in Samoa as they were received and accepted by Malietoa Laupepa, the grandson of Malietoa Fitiseanu who received the prophecy of Nafanua. It is for this reason that Samoans believed it was foretold that Christianity would come to Samoa and convert Samoans to follow the Christian God (Tuisuga 2011).

The Prophetic in the CCCS seems to be associated with its leadership and the clergy. As OL has mentioned it is the clergy who act as the conduit between the congregation and God. They not only speak to the congregation but also act with the congregation. The congregation looks to their Reverend as the first example of what it means to be prophetic. The Reverend leads the way in worship and interpretation of scripture but also the understanding of mission in the congregation.

RN mentions his ministry was not only in his leadership of his congregation, but also in how his family behaved. He was aware his congregation would judge his ministry not only by his leadership but also his family's behaviour. This rings true with my own experiences as the son of a Reverend in the CCCS. As my father would often say, the first example of his ministry was whether his family lived an authentic witness. He would say how could he preach to the congregation about living authentic witness as Christians, if his own family did not do so.

Another issue raised which speaks to the prophetic was mentioned by the young Reverend FS. FS is in the beginning of his ministry and leadership of a congregation after years spent as a Youth Pastor/Reverend in his own local congregation. He spoke of how for him mission is not about conversion and maintenance but rather about salvaging, trying to reclaim those members of the CCCS who have left, in particular the youth. He spoke of the need to reach out to the youth (the New Zealand born Samoan generation) who have different views and understandings which need to be accommodated. He spoke of different alternatives to the current practices of the CCCS, of programs which could be implemented to bring the youth back to the CCCS. This was also repeated by AF who said that the problem seemed to be that more effort needed to be made to reach out and explain to New Zealand born Samoans as to the running of the CCCS.

It is interesting to note that whilst AF, FS and OL mention the need for the CCCS to take a more inward look at itself and seek understanding of the issues it faces in regards to its New Zealand born members, for RN the issue is more about New Zealand born Samoans taking an active role in their local CCCS congregations. As RN has mentioned there is a lack of New Zealand born Samoans applying to become deacons, of being willing to serve the CCCS. For RN this illustrates a sense of disconnect as New Zealand born Samoans do not feel the need or urge to "speak out" in their congregations. This lack of disconnect as reflected by OL, AF and RN shows how the three approach the same issue from different sides: for OL and AF it

is the failure or lack of engagement on the part of the clergy in the CCCS, whereas for RN it is a lack of understanding on the part of New Zealand born Samoans as to what the CCCS is which has led to this state of disengagement Both illustrate a gap between views as to how to proclaim and to speak out or speak forth the Word of God.

Both sides are trying to understand God in light of their context and understandings through observation of the reality in which they experience God (Kritzinger 2013: 46). Thus the prophetic is about observation of the environment in which the experience of God is realised, and begins with noticing what is not right, what is causing pain, tension or “noticing strangers and outsiders, the marginalised and excluded” (Kritzinger 2013: 46). From the interviews and my own personal experience, there is a sense that the CCCS is aware of the issues in Auckland, but it is still not making any headway in terms of addressing the issue in a manner so the affected parties feel like they are being heard, they are being respected, that they are being listened to and engaged.

This highlights another sense of the prophetic which voices the uncomfortable. The CCCS as part of God’s mission needs to be not only aware of the issues it faces but also be willing to speak to these same issues. In regards to the lack of disconnect as mentioned in this thesis, the CCCS seems to try to bridge this sense of disconnect but hindered by their own practices and culture. The CCCS is not addressing the issues in any depth- in other words it mentions and “speaks of” the issue but does not really “speak to” the issue. As stated by some of the interview participants, the CCCS seems to be afraid of reform, as if to seek reform is to admit weakness.

## **CONCLUSION**

By viewing the understandings of mission through a lens of Prophetic Dialogue, we can see that there is a lack of communication within the CCCS in Auckland. Different generations are speaking but they are not being heard which has led to a sense of inaction in how mission is executed. Prophetic Dialogue with its emphasis on acting through “bold humility” can be one way to approach this issue of disconnect within the CCCS. The question is whether the CCCS is willing to act in “bold humility” regarding this issue.



## CHAPTER 6: HAVE WE ARRIVED YET?

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

As I began this pilgrimage/journey by exploring the issues of migration, culture and identity and mission, then placing the understandings of mission as reached through the lens of Prophetic Dialogue, the question is have we have now reached our destination. In Samoan tradition the end of any *malaga* is as important as the beginning. At the end of a *malaga* there is an open discussion between members as to whether the *malaga* was successful or not. This *talanoaga*<sup>39</sup> is important as it gives a sense of closure, as well as to reflect upon any lessons learnt from the *malaga*. This chapter will reflect this *talanoaga* by discussing the understandings as formulated and offer suggestions as to how the CCCS can approach the issues regarding the understandings of mission.

### 6.2 What understandings of mission in the CCCS in Auckland are there?

As stated in chapter 1 the question under examination in this thesis was “What are the understandings of mission amongst the members of the CCCS in Auckland?” There seem to be three understandings of mission as outlined in chapter 3:

- 1) Mission as directed by the leadership of the CCCS. The position of the clergy as leaders as confirmed in the Constitution of the CCCS and also through cultural norms and practices in *Fa'a Samoa*.
- 2) Mission as linked to the relationships within the context of the CCCS in Auckland. Mission is seen as reflecting the communal nature of the Samoan society in both its social and church structures.
- 3) Mission based on concept of service or the Samoan concept of *Tautua* service. *Tautua* has connotations of service which imply service for whole Samoan community or the greater good for all members of the CCCS.

All understandings overlap as they reflect Samoan understandings of community, respect and duty inherent in the *Fa'a Samoa* and as reflected within the understanding of mission. One important aspect that arose is that for the New Zealand born participants, none had any clear idea as to what mission actually is. There was no connection of mission with the concept of

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<sup>39</sup> *Talanoaga* means “the discussion”. Usually after a *malaga* there is a *talanoaga* akin to a debriefing of what has happened and what lessons can be learnt from the *malaga* the migration and in this case the exploration of mission.

*Missio Dei* or God's activity in creation. Even my own experience of the word mirrors this as before I began this thesis I did not really understand mission other than in terms of the missionary activities of the CCCS with its involvement in the CWM, WCC and other Christian organisations. This disconnect as to the meaning of mission in reality and as understood by academics and clergy reminds me of the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the CCCS in 2012, where there was confusion amongst members of the CCCS as to the meaning of mission.

This sense of disconnect within the CCCS in Auckland, is also reflected in the how the differing generations within the CCCS interact and understand their roles in regard to the mission of the CCCS. This disconnect I posit reflects the differences in how migration and mission are seen by the different generations within the CCCS. Migration for the Samoan migrants who came in the 1970s and 1980s was part of a missionary drive, first implanted by the LMS missionaries, to migrate *malaga* not only for future opportunities but also to spread the Gospel. For their children, the New Zealand born Samoans, migration has led to a sense of double identity as they seek to connect who they are with their reality of being "in between and in betwixt" in New Zealand (Phan 2012).

Problematic in this search migration for meaning is the place of culture or *Fa'a Samoa*. *Fa'a Samoa* underpins the Samoan world view and how Samoans interact behave and relate to others not only within but also without their own society. This culture is taught and emphasised in the CCCS, reflecting how culture and Christianity are intertwined in the everyday experience of members of the CCCS. For many in the CCCS, especially amongst the New Zealand born Samoans, it almost seems as if the *Fa'a Samoa* has overridden the Gospel. Indeed it has become a question of whether the Gospel is affirmed through and not in culture (Aram I 1999: 33).

*Fa'a Samoa* greatly affects how mission is practiced in the everyday reality of CCCS members. The local congregations in Auckland are run according to practices and understandings of *Fa'a Samoa*. As such although there are meetings and assemblies to discuss church matters, these meetings are run in a democratic format founded on Samoan concepts of *ava*, *fa'a'aloalo* and *alofa*. The problem is these concepts are also dictated by common understandings as to hierarchy reflecting the order of speakers and who may speak: a person does not speak out of place as to do would be to cross the social space or the *va* between Samoans. This highlights that though members of CCCS may speak of respect and love sometimes the reality of the experience does not reflect the intention.

## 6.3 SUGGESTIONS

Any discussion of mission can only reflect the abstract unless there are concrete approaches as to how to bridge the gap in understanding of mission in this thesis. The following are suggestions to begin a process to address the problems as outlined in this thesis.

### 6.3.1 Education

It is clear there is a lack of understanding as to what mission actually is, from the clergy to the laity. There is a real need to educate the members of the CCCS in Auckland as to what mission is and how it is understood. This means a real attempt to instil an understanding of mission amongst CCCS members as to the role of the CCCS in God's activity in creation.

This education will need to include an understanding or discussion as to the role of the *Fa'a Samoa* within the CCCS. Just as there is great confusion as to mission, there is also confusion as to how *Fa'a Samoa* fits in with the mission of God. This is reflected in the tension between Samoan migrants and their children each with different understandings of identity and the role of *Fa'a Samoa* within the CCCS in Auckland. This also needs to include discussion as to a new direction of the CCCS in terms of mission, as its original understanding of maintaining Samoan culture for future generations is firmly established it may be time to look at other directions for mission. This does not mean it has lost its way but rather it may be time for a new direction.

The confusion and tension inherent can cause feelings of marginalisation amongst migrants, but I suggest can also refer to a sense of disconnect between migrants and their children. The children in this case are representative of being akin to "non migrants" as they have grown up in this new context, for the large part their experiences are based in this context and so they identify with being a New Zealander. A case in point is my own situation, in which when asked my nationality, I usually answer as being a New Zealander of Samoan ethnicity. I, like the New Zealand born Samoan participants in this research, identify as being a New Zealander but with more than one aspect to that identity.

### 6.3.2 Change of Attitude

There is recognition of an attitude of authority within the CCCS which does not easily brook any sense of challenge. This attitude I suggest, as upheld in the Constitution and embedded through cultural practices, adds to the sense of disconnect. This raises the question of how to precipitate change in this context? I suggest with the proposed education of mission, there also comes the utilisation of Prophetic Dialogue as a guide to approach mission not only in the church but within church members as well. A sense of true dialogue and openness would allow members in the CCCS to approach each other with respect and honesty. Not only would this allow true interaction without any underlying rules or practices, but at the same time truly reflect Samoan concepts of *ava* and *fa'a'aloalo* in a context without the accompanying social rules which hinder attempts to bridge gaps between members of the CCCS.

In this light instead of a relationship between Samoan migrants and New Zealand born Samoans akin to parent and child, of teacher and student, it would be a relationship of equality. Each would see the other as equals and allow for a sense of true engagement. This would also affect the leadership of each congregation in terms of the relationship between the minister and his congregation. Such a relationship would mean there is a sense of mutual interdependence, whereby both learn from the other: in other words the relationship would be mutually beneficial for both the minister and the congregation – a reverse mission by which all parties, the minister and the congregation, parent and children learn from each other, instead of the often perceived one way traffic from the minister to the congregation or parents to children (Bevans 2011: 6).

It seems at times that the CCCS has forgotten that its members are not only objects of God's mission but also the subjects of mission (Bevans 2013: 168). This lack of understanding reflects members do not realise the power they have within the CCCS to act as missionaries to each other. I suggest that members of the CCCS may need to “break out” of a mindset which may reflect a 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary understanding and reach out to embrace a different more inclusive understanding of mission, one more in tune with who they are as a people and as Christians (Havea 2008).

This allows for an understanding of mission as being a force of reconciliation not only between people of different faiths, but in the case of the CCCS in Auckland, people of the same church. It asks that people realise the relationships they have as a people and as people

of God. In this way they can promote a balanced and settled face to the wider New Zealand community, one which reflects a Christian community and act as a counter cultural force to a secularised world (Hanciles 2008: 296).

#### **6.4 THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS**

This thesis is an exploration as to the understanding of mission and migration, and to a large extent is reflected in my own journey. In August 2015 I migrated to the Netherlands to study and expand my theological foundations and just as I moved from the South to the North, so too have my ideas and understanding of migration and mission. Before arriving in the Netherlands I had a fairly traditional view of mission as a one dimensional exercise which sought to save souls, cultural transformation and denominational expansion (Wachsmuh 2013). But my experience of travelling to the Netherlands and the contact I had with other views and people has made me realise that migration is indeed a traumatic experience (Pearson 2012) but also a life changing one.

I started to view migration and mission from a perspective based in my own experiences as a New Zealand born Samoan and member of the CCCS. I now began to see migration and indeed mission as part of a journey, a pilgrimage of movement in which both reflect a movement to and with God. Jesus Christ moved with and amongst the poor, the marginalised in his ministry, which is symbolic of God who moves with the church, its members and creation (Matt 5). This ties in neatly with the Samoan understanding of migration as a journey a *malaga* to connect, to build links and a better future - what better future is there that with God proclaiming His mission to one and all?

The wider understanding of mission as reflecting God's activity in creation mirrors the image of Oceania the Pacific Ocean as a vast expanse in which its people move and migrate – find meaning. This imagery and metaphor I suggest allows Samoans to frame their understanding of mission or at least begin to understand it as being part of the greater whole: God is the Ocean the vast expanse within which Samoans and indeed I have migrated and defined themselves. By moving with this “Ocean” we are actually moving within that which gives Samoans definition, meaning – we are not just moving in the Ocean but are part of it. Mission is not just another task to complete but rather is at the heart of who Samoans are : “Mission is not just another task on the church's to do list – rather it is at the heart for being, the centre from which everything else is directed and flows” (Wachsmuch 2013: 74).

By being within the mission of God, in this Ocean it means that as a Samoan I must navigate find my way in this vast fluid expanse. This asks questions as to how to I navigate, migrate and negotiate my way as a person and as a Christian? Using the Samoan culture – the *Fa'a Samoa* with its focus on relationships and dictates as to how interaction is to occur gives direction as I can begin to navigate, but the problem is with such a system of navigation it is bound by its own rules which affects how I navigate. Within the *Fa'a Samoa* I am always aware of the *va* the space the boundaries which can give direction but at the same time limits the direction I take.

This has been described as reflecting the inherent tension between how I experience God as speaking to my culture and context, as well as those aspects of how I experience God which need to change. The tension arises in that as God is experienced in the local context, to do so causes conflict with parts of our culture and identity or as Walls puts it the Gospel is both “prisoner and liberator” (2009: 133-145). This tension is also reflected in the understandings of mission as found in this thesis, where the intergenerational tension amongst members of the CCCS in Auckland has caused the *malaga* to come aground, to be beached using sailing terminology.

It is here that I advocate the use of Prophetic Dialogue as a guide to attempt to resolve the issues highlighted in this thesis. Not only because I find its ethos of openness and honesty both liberating and reflective of God’s love, but also because it fits in with the Samoan worldview. Prophetic Dialogue “speaks to me and with me” in that it allows movement back and forth between parties, and in a manner in which both are recognised as equal partners. This meshes nicely with the Samoan understanding of *talanoa* as open communication on a truly emotive level, which allows for a deeper connection between people. This idea of finding connection is important as it not only reflects how Samoans understand migration/*malaga* but also how they understand their world as a series of connections, interactions and relationships with other people, other faiths and importantly God.

This sense of honest, open and equal attempts to connect interact within creation, the vast expanse of life and God’s mission is the underlying feature of my own theological insight into the issues as raised in this thesis. The opening and understanding of mission as finding connections, of interacting, of being within the mission of God allows for a sense of hope to connect with others – other people, other faiths and other beliefs. I posit in this thesis such journey *malaga* must begin within before it can expand.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Though this chapter begins by asking if the destination or the end of this thesis has been reached, I would say it has just begun. Migration and mission are intertwined in history and their understanding within the Samoan migration to New Zealand. The *malaga* to find new shores of prosperity highlights a deeper need to find identity and place not only in the physical realities of the world but also within the cosmic scope of God's mission. Such a *malaga* always asks questions of its participants and subsequent generations as in New Zealand. The Samoan migrants to New Zealand have had to navigate rough waters both within their own community and without.

The subsequent generations of New Zealand born Samoan members of the CCCS have had to travel their own *malaga* as to who they are, where they fit in and how does their understanding of God's mission fit with those of their parents. I posit that the journey in New Zealand amongst the members of the CCCS in Auckland needs to engage in true equal partnership, with true recognition of the other. Whereas the other used to refer to those who were non Samoan, I use it here to refer to the different groups within the CCCS in Auckland – Samoan migrants and New Zealand born Samoans.

This thesis as I have mentioned earlier has allowed me to move in terms of my own personal *malaga* as a Christian both physically, emotionally and spiritually. It is a journey which reflects the complex and multi-layered journey *malaga* that lies before Christians and in my context the members of the CCCS in Auckland. This holistic approach to mission as highlighted as both movement to and with God, embraces a reality which is God's and not ours. This is a reality which asks questions of what we can do for the glory of God and not what God can do for us. A reality which is founded on a "bold humility" as the realisation that mission/*malaga* is "about God's gracious invitation to humanity to share in the dynamic communion that is at the same time God's self-giving missionary life" (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 285). This reflects that every person is on a *malaga* seeking to answer God's invitation honestly in light of their own contexts.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Interview Question Format**

The background of this interview is to explore how mission is understood in regards to the CCCS in a specific context. The lead question is therefore as follows: “What is the understanding/s of mission of the CCCS in Auckland?”

### **Interview Schedule**

Preamble: You have been chosen to take part in this interview due to your experience and membership of the CCCS in Auckland. I am interested in how you understand the mission of the CCCS in NZ.

Firstly please tell me a little something about yourself – a bio of your life thus far – where were you born? Do you consider yourself a migrant? Why do you think so? Who are your parents? Where were they born? Where are they from in Samoa? What church did they attend in Samoa?

How long have you been a member of the CCCS in Auckland and what are your earliest memories of life as a member of the CCCS in Auckland? How important is going to church? How important is church in your life?

When you were growing up how would you describe being a member of the CCCS? How did you view your role or experiences as a member of the CCCS in your teen age years and as a young adult?

What do you understand by culture? Does culture play a part in the CCCS? Can you explain? What does that mean for you as a Samoan and as a Christian?



How well do you speak Samoan? On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being being fluent and 5 being no or little ability to speak and understand Samoan? Can you speak about a Samoan culture? If yes how would you describe it? If not why not? On a scale of 1-5 similar to previous question how would you rate your understanding of what happens in Samoan culture from 1 – 5?

In terms of identity how do you view yourself in light of your context in NZ and experiences? How has your experience of God in the CCCS shaped how you relate to the CCCS and with being Samoan in Auckland?

Have you had experiences where you have questioned your membership of the CCCS?

What is your understanding in terms of mission? How would you relate it to your church and yourself?

What aspects of the CCCS their practices mission do you not understand or agree with? Do you attend churches other than the CCCS say for example a Charismatic church?

Do you attend a church other than the CCCS? And why do you do so?

How do you think being a NZ born Samoan/or Samoan affected your experience in the CCCS? How do you define yourself in this light?

What are the values or beliefs that you think you gain or benefit from by attending the CCCS? How has being a member of the CCCS been of benefit to you?

Do you think that the CCCS in Auckland needs to change and what areas do you think change needs to occur?

Do you think the CCCS is too traditional in terms of its outlook mission? What are the differences amongst members of the CCCS in your parish and the Auckland parishes as a whole?

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